

# THE NECROPOLIS OF ER-RIZEIQAT

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**Abstract:** *Er-Rizeiqat is an Upper Egyptian cemetery located ca. 10 km west form Armant, which was in use from predynastic times to the Greco-Roman period. The aim of the paper is to present this poorly known archaeological site, which was for many years neglected by scholars, despite its informative potentials. Previous publications and some of the unpublished artefacts were analysed in light of the reconnaissance undertaken in 2013 and 2016. From the results, it was possible to gather information on the topography and state of preservation of the necropolis as well as specific dating of its use. An evaluation of its significance and an attempt to relate it with the local settlements have contributed to the better understanding of the settlement pattern in the southern part of the Theban nome. It is suggested in this paper that the site served as a cemetery to settlements of: Iumiteru, Iusut, and Mniry/Mnity, as well as Sumenu from the First Intermediate Period onward.*

**Keywords:** *er-Rizeiqat, Iumiteru, Sumenu, Theban nome, cemetery.*

The site of er-Rizeiqat<sup>1</sup> is a provincial necropolis in Upper Egypt. Its name occurs mostly in the context of the First Intermediate Period and the Middle Kingdom but it was also used during the Predynastic period, the New Kingdom, the Late period and the Graeco-Roman period. Surprisingly, this place is fairly unknown as an archaeological site.

In 2013 and 2016 an archaeological reconnaissance was conducted at the site, resulting in the acquisition of new data concerning its topography and general distribution of archaeological material. The results are presented here together with studies on the place in its regional context. They contribute to a better understanding of the settlement pattern in the southern part of the Theban nome.

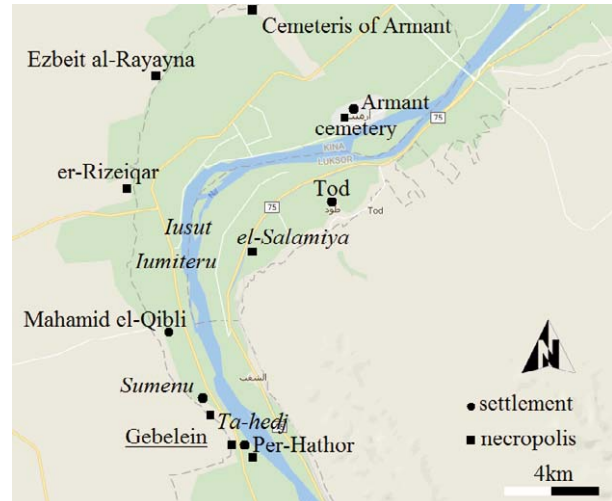


Fig. 1 Location of er-Rizeiqat and other archaeological sites mentioned in the paper. The names in *italics* are presumed locations of ancient toponyms or archaeological sites (base map by Google Earth).

## Location, topography and research history

Er-Rizeiqat<sup>2</sup> (location: 25°35'39.0"N 32°26'28.9"E; archaeological site number 220206) is located c. 10 km west of Armant and its cemetieris,<sup>3</sup> c. 10 km north of Gebelein<sup>4</sup> and 2 km west of the modern village of er-Rizeiqat on the west bank of the Nile (Fig. 1). It occupies a small elevation at the edge of the low desert and the alluvial plain of the Nile Valley.

The site extends along a longitudinal north-south axis (Fig. 2). Currently, cultivation has partly destroyed the southern part of the site, where a small number of lithic artefacts have been discovered as well as some pottery fragments. The central part of the area contains tombs partially covered by sand. Outlines of the wide rectangular pits lined with mudbricks have been identified. Mudbrick walls (which are sometimes preserved up to

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<sup>1</sup> Others spellings of the Arabic name (الرززيقات) of the place: Rizeikat, Rizaqat, Rizeiqât, and Rizeigat.

<sup>2</sup> Location coordinates according to Google Maps, archaeological site no. according to the *General Map of Qena Archaeological Sites*.

<sup>3</sup> See MOND and MEYERS 1937, vol. II, pls. I and II.

<sup>4</sup> EJSMOND 2017a.

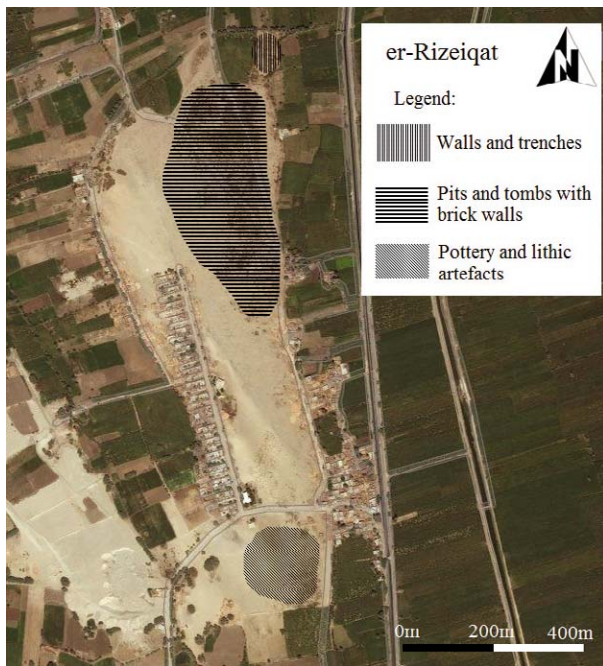


Fig. 2 Er-Rizeiqat (satellite image by Google Earth 2017).

c. 1 m above the ground level) of unknown date were observed at the northern part along with two large rectangular trenches (Figs. 2–3) of unknown excavations. A pile of earth is located east of them, where Predynastic black topped, and New Kingdom blue painted pottery sherds were found as well as sherds that are more difficult to date.

The site was already heavily looted at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>5</sup> The place was visited and described by G. Maspero in 1882<sup>6</sup> and later by M.L. Legrain;<sup>7</sup> it was excavated by L. Lortet and C. Gaillard in 1907<sup>8</sup> as well as surveyed by H. de Morgan in 1907.<sup>9</sup> In the next year É. Baraize extracted a burial chamber from the site.<sup>10</sup>

At some point, before 1910, A. Weigall also visited the site. He estimated the number of graves at

er-Rizeiqat at several hundred, writing: “[The tombs] mainly consist of mud-brick structures in the form of a deep rectangular shaft, from the bottom of which a vaulted burial-chamber leads; wide rectangular pits lined with bricks, and entered by a sloping passage or stairway at one end; and other well-known forms.”<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately, he did not provide any information on their dating. It is possible that remains of the aforementioned tombs are the structures located in the central part of the cemetery.

During the field reconnaissance many looted and destroyed graves were noticed. Today, the biggest threat to the site is irrigation which has resulted in a rising water table in the area and the rapid spreading of wild vegetation at the site.<sup>12</sup>

### Dating of the site

According to the published information, the cemetery at er-Rizeiqat is a multiperiod site.<sup>13</sup> The oldest artefacts from the site are dated to the Predynastic period (Naqada II<sup>14</sup>), but their exact context is unknown.<sup>15</sup> No findings dated to the Early Dynastic period<sup>16</sup> or the Old Kingdom have been reported in publications or discovered during the present reconnaissance.

During the First Intermediate Period the site was widely used. This might be related to a suggested dense population in the region and the presence of Nubian mercenaries.<sup>17</sup> Many stelae have been discovered here or are attributed to the site.<sup>18</sup> The case of Iti of Iumiteru’s stela (CG 20001)<sup>19</sup> is of particular interest. It has been attributed to Gebelein, but according to the *Journal d’entrée* it came from er-Rizeiqat.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, the provenience of this important artefact cannot be established without a doubt. Many other, similarly dated stelae came from these two sites as well.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>5</sup> LORTET and GAILLARD 1909, 201–208, 239; DE MORGAN 1912, 49; WEIGALL 1910, 296–297.

<sup>6</sup> MASPERO 1889, 186.

<sup>7</sup> DE MORGAN 1897, 41.

<sup>8</sup> LORTET and GAILLARD 1909, 201–208, 239.

<sup>9</sup> DE MORGAN 1912, 49. In the quoted paper the date of the research is incorrect. According to N. Needler’s research, H. de Morgan conducted his survey in 1907, not 1908 as it is stated in his paper published *post mortem* (NEEDLER 1984, 70).

<sup>10</sup> HAYS 1939, 5.

<sup>11</sup> WEIGALL 1910, 269.

<sup>12</sup> EJSMOND, CHYLA, and BAKA 2016.

<sup>13</sup> WEIGALL 1910, 296; MASPERO 1889, 186; PORTER and MOSS 1962, 161–162.

<sup>14</sup> HENDRICKX and VAN DEN BRINK 2002, 361.

<sup>15</sup> See the original publication of the works: LORTET and GAILLARD 1909, 201–208, 239.

<sup>16</sup> H. DE MORGAN’S (1912, 49) mentioning of ‘archaic’ artefacts discovered at the site may mean both Predynastic as well as Early Dynastic. His statement is too generic to draw definitive conclusions.

<sup>17</sup> MORENZ 2010, 57–59, 80–83; EJSMOND 2017b.

<sup>18</sup> FISHER 1961.

<sup>19</sup> LICHTHEIM 1973, 90.

<sup>20</sup> LANGE and SCHÄFER 1902, 1.

<sup>21</sup> ROSATI 2004.



Fig. 3 Central part of er-Rizeiqat (general view at northern direction) and northern part of the site with walls and trenches (view at south-west) (phot. T. Kuronuma).

One Middle Kingdom tomb with painted decoration was reported at er-Rizeiqat by G. Daressy<sup>22</sup> and some Middle Kingdom cones were found at the site as well.<sup>23</sup> Together with numerous stelae,<sup>24</sup> they confirm the elite status of some of those buried at the cemetery during the Middle Kingdom.

<sup>22</sup> DARESSY 1926, 18

<sup>23</sup> HAYS 1939, 5–6.

<sup>24</sup> KUBISH 2000.

G. Maspero mentioned some remains of two funerary pyramids, which he dated to the New Kingdom.<sup>25</sup> According to W.C. Hays, they served as chapels like those in Deir el-Medina.<sup>26</sup> In 1908, a burial chamber of an inhabitant of Sumenu,<sup>27</sup> the Royal Treasurer of Amenhotep III – Sobekmose,

<sup>25</sup> MASPERO 1889, 186.

<sup>26</sup> HAYS 1939, 6.

<sup>27</sup> HAYS 1939, 24.

was extracted from the site by É. Baraize and sold to the Metropolitan Museum in New York.<sup>28</sup> The burial chamber and the remains of the pyramids also confirm the continued usage of the site as an elite necropolis during the New Kingdom.

In the antiquities magazine at Moalla are three New Kingdom funerary cones from the site, two of them with badly preserved inscriptions mentioning Neb-nefer, who was a scribe (*sš*); the rest of his title is, however, illegible. It is believed that such items were part of the decoration of pyramids during the New Kingdom,<sup>29</sup> which corroborates G. Maspero's interpretation of the remains spotted at er-Rizeiqat being pyramids.<sup>30</sup> Other funerary cones had been reported by G. Daresy<sup>31</sup> during his visit, but their inscriptions were not described. Sets of beads from mummy nets in the magazine in Moalla have shed a light on the possibility that the site was continuously occupied after the New Kingdom, since such ornaments were used from 21<sup>st</sup> Dynasty to the end of the Ptolemaic period.<sup>32</sup> Ch. Wilbour mentioned that the site was also used as "a Roman cemetery [judging] by the pottery and the terra cotta sarcophagi."<sup>33</sup>

### Regional context


The cemetery of er-Rizeiqat is an isolated archaeological site.<sup>34</sup> Also, no habitational site<sup>35</sup> has been reported in its direct vicinity. Therefore, it is difficult to relate it to any settlement and one needs to analyse written sources.<sup>36</sup>

The following order of place names from the south to the north is presented by A. Gardiner in

his compilation of toponyms' lists: Per-Hut-Heru (Per-Hatho/Pathyris – a town at the eastern mound of Gebelein), Ta-hedj,<sup>37</sup> Sumenu (Ptolemaic – Roman Crocodilopolis), Iumiteru, Djerty (Tod), Mniry/Mnity and Iwny (Armant).<sup>38</sup>

There is no doubt about the location of Per-Hut-Heru, Armant and Tod (see Fig. 1). Between Per-Hathor and Armant near Mahamid el-Qibli village (the place is also known in the literature as Dahamsha), a temple of Sobek dating to the New Kingdom was discovered.<sup>39</sup> Since Sobek is often called "Lord of Sumenu",<sup>40</sup> the discovery was historically thought of as evidence for this being the location of Sumenu during the New Kingdom.<sup>41</sup> However, the situation is not as clear as it seems. There are New Kingdom inscriptions mentioning "Sobek Lord (*nb*) of Iumiteru",<sup>42</sup> and "Sobek who is residing (*Hr(y)-ib*)<sup>43</sup> in Sumenu".<sup>44</sup> The latter one also mentions "Sobek Lord of Sumenu". It seems that both settlements were closely located; both could have had temples for Sobek or they were "sharing" one temple, which ostensibly led to some confusion about the cultic epithets of Sobek.



The toponym Iusut  (Island of Crocodile) is also related to Sobek. It is attested in Ankhtifi's biography,<sup>45</sup> and is spelled as Isut during Graeco-Roman times.<sup>46</sup> In the aforementioned biography, the place is located at the northern limit of Ankhtifi's rule, which is usually placed near Armant.<sup>47</sup> One cannot exclude the possibility that it was another name for Iumiteru or Sumenu, or a close-by location.

<sup>28</sup> HAYS 1939.

<sup>29</sup> KENTO 2009.

<sup>30</sup> MASPERO 1889, 186.

<sup>31</sup> DARESSY 1926, 18–19

<sup>32</sup> SILVANO 1980.

<sup>33</sup> WILBOUR and CAPART 1936, 146. I would like to thank Alexander Ilin-Tomich for informing me about that letter.

<sup>34</sup> The closest site is Ezbeit al-Rayayna, where two Middle Kingdom tombs (nos. 1213 and 1214) were excavated by R. MOND and O. MEYERS (1937, vol. I, 22, vol. II, pls. II and XI). This site was confused by D. POLZ (2007, 265) with er-Rizeiqat. There are also some archaeological sites related with A and C Group west of Armant, at the border of the low desert and alluvial plane which were researched by R. Mond and O. Meyers (*op. cit.*). Their exact locations are unknown and the results of the research remain unpublished (KEMP 2008, 118; see also VERNUS 1986, 144).

<sup>35</sup> DE MORGAN 1912, 49, mentioned some probably Predynastic settlement site which he found on his way on the desert edge from er-Rizeiqat to Armant, but its exact location is unknown.

<sup>36</sup> See below and MORENZ 2010, 86–92. According to MORENZ 2010, 57–59, 62–72, this area was densely populated.

<sup>37</sup> "The downing land" – necropolis at Gebelein under protection of Anubis (see KEES 1935).

<sup>38</sup> GARDINER 1947, pl. XXIV.

<sup>39</sup> BAKRY 1968; 1971.

<sup>40</sup> For examples and spellings, see KUENZ 1929; MORENZ 2010, 86–92.

<sup>41</sup> HABACHI 1956, 56–58.

<sup>42</sup> NIMS 1952, 41.

<sup>43</sup> This adjective is localising deities worshipped away from their own cult place (GARDINER 1947, 582).


<sup>44</sup> Brooklyn 66.174.2, see SAUNERON 1968, 60–61.

<sup>45</sup> VANDIER VI.α.5/10; EDWARDS 2016, 11.

<sup>46</sup> KLOTZ 2009, 114.

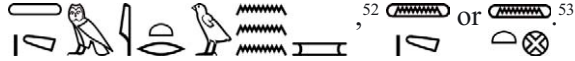
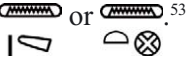
<sup>47</sup> MONTET 1961, 73.

The name Iumiteru<sup>48</sup> (Iu-m-iteru/Iu-m-itur, usually translated as “Island on the River”<sup>49</sup>) is

known since the 6<sup>th</sup> Dynasty ,<sup>50</sup> but there is no common spelling of the name, e.g. in the Middle Kingdom it is sometimes spelled

<sup>51</sup>

. From the times of the late 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty and especially during the Ramesside times, the fluvial element in the name is particularly pronounced, e.g.

<sup>52</sup> or <sup>53</sup>

It should be noted here that the Nile could have changed its riverbed so Sumenu, Iusut as well as Iumiteru could have changed their locations. The spelling of the name Iumiteru indicates that during the New Kingdom it was an island or was considered as such.

Apart from aforementioned temple indicating the location of Sumenu during the New Kingdom, there was a *kom*, located just north of the western mound of Gebelein. It consisted of remains of unknown date. A Predynastic and/or Early Dynastic settlement was reported in the area, possibly identical with the *kom*.<sup>54</sup> It is difficult to give a clear answer whether or not those remains belonged to Sumenu or some other settlement since it is completely destroyed nowadays. The cemetery south of the *kom* is of substantial size and wealth, and was used from the Predynastic period until the Middle Kingdom. The titles of the people buried in the necropolis indicate that they were inhabitants of Sumenu.<sup>55</sup> No cemetery later than the Middle Kingdom has been reported in the northern part of the group of archaeological sites of Gebelein (with the exception of one collective Ptolemaic times' burial in a Middle Kingdom tomb at the northern necropolis and an unclear statement by A. Weigall about the dating of the

cemeteries on the western hill of Gebelein).<sup>56</sup> Increased activities may be observed at er-Rizeiqat since the time of the First Intermediate Period. Therefore, conclusions may be drawn that the northern necropolis of Gebelein was related with Sumenu until the Middle Kingdom. The town was moving northwards and during the First Intermediate Period its inhabitants preferred to be buried at er-Rizeiqat, eventually abandoning the Gebelein necropolis during the Middle Kingdom, most likely due to convenience (they probably found it easier to transport their deceased downstream rather than upstream).

Pathyris (capital of the Pathyrite nome encompassing er-Rizeiqat) and Crocodilopolis (Greek name of Sumenu) were important cities during the Ptolemaic period, but their cemeteries are unknown.<sup>57</sup> It is possible that at least part of the inhabitants of the latter (as well as probably Iumiteru and/or Iusut) were buried at er-Rizeiqat. The other competitor for that is el-Salamiya (located south-west of Tod).<sup>58</sup>

There were no systematic and well published excavations conducted at er-Rizeiqat and Salamiya. Both are located opposite each other on the two sides of the valley (Fig. 1) and were related with a settlement or settlements in the vicinity. There is a Nile-bend in this area, which makes the river more likely to change its bed creating islands, thus making the settlement pattern more fluid.

### Relation of the necropolis with settlements

In conclusion, there were habitational site(s) at the Nile-bend, of which er-Rizeiqat was the cemetery. The only settlements in the vicinity (known only from the texts) are Iumiteru, Iusut and Mniry/Mnity. The necropolis in question could have served them. The cemetery is located 10km west of

<sup>48</sup> There is no certainty about the meaning of the name. Originally, it might have been the name of an Old Kingdom funerary domain, comprising the word island – *iw* – and *mjtr* – an administrative title (FIORE MAROCHETTI 2010, 7).

<sup>49</sup> GAUTHIER 1925, 4, 48; GAUTHIER 1927, 149; GOMAA 1986; MORENZ 2010, 86–92. According to JACQUET-GORDON 1962, 119, the toponym is derived from the Old Kingdom name of the domain.

<sup>50</sup> ROCCATI 1968, 17.

<sup>51</sup> E.g. the text on the Medamud temple from Sesostris III's reign (BALDACCI 1974, tab. C).

<sup>52</sup> Louvre pap. 3226 (BALDACCI 1974, tab. C).

<sup>53</sup> Medinet Habu, for this and other examples, see BALDACCI 1974, tab. C.

<sup>54</sup> The *kom* is visible on the map made during Napoleon's expedition to Egypt (JACOTIN 1826, pl. 5). For the discussion on the Predynastic sites at Gebelein, see EJSMOND 2013. The name of Sumenu has been attested since the Early Dynastic period (REGULSKI 2010, 130).

<sup>55</sup> E.g. nomarch Ini (see: DONADONI ROVERI 1990, 26–27).

<sup>56</sup> DONADONI ROVERI 1990, 27; WEIGALL 1910, 298.

<sup>57</sup> See, e.g. VANDORPE and WAEBENS 2010.

<sup>58</sup> GOMAA 1999, 1026. It is usually located to the west of Tode (e.g. GOMAA 1982, cols. 423–424) but the precise location of the site is unknown.

Armant, but nothing indicates that it was related with that town.<sup>59</sup> During the First Intermediate Period/Middle Kingdom Sumenu possibly moved toward the north, eventually changing its burial ground from the northern necropolis of Gebelein to er-Rizeiqat.

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<sup>59</sup> The cemeteries of Armant were explored by MOND and MEYERS (1937), another cemetery was located directly west of the temple in Armant (WEIGALL 1910, 295).

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