

'Origines 2005', Toulouse

In September 2005, The Second International Conference on the Origins of the Egyptian State took place in Toulouse. **Joanne Rowland** summarises the event.

The Second International Conference on the Origins of the Egyptian State was staged between 5 and 8 September 2005, at the Conseil Régional Midi Pyrenées in Toulouse, proving a worthy successor to the first gathering in Krakow in 2002. Colleagues from across the globe were drawn from a diversity of specialities (Egyptology, archaeology, bioanthropology and archaeobotany, Near Eastern archaeology and prehistory) to share their research into every conceivable aspect of the study of pre- and early-historic Egypt.

The conference tackled issues surrounding the rise of the state through themed sessions that focused on craft and craft specialisation, environmental sciences, bioanthropology and human ecology in Predynastic times, foreign relations, interactions between the desert and the Nile Valley, interactions between Upper and Lower Egypt, the birth of writing and kingship, and cult, ideology and social complexity.

Research into current and recent fieldwork, for example at Adāima, Helwan, Hierakonpolis, Kom el-Khilgan, Tell el-Farkha and in the eastern Sahara, was presented side by side with new interpretations of material excavated over the past 100 years, including the objects found in the 'main deposit' at Hierakonpolis. The chairs and respondents for each session reviewed the current state of research and initiated valuable discussion amongst the participants. Representatives from the Supreme Council for Antiquities in Egypt, Mohammed Abdel Maqsooud, Ateya Radwan, Holeil Ghaly, Salem Gabr el-Baghdadi and the head of the SCA's recently-formed prehistory department, Khaled Saad, were key in discussions calling for a focus on fieldwork in the most endangered regions of Egypt, and for a common data bank.



The conference in progress. Photograph: Frédéric Guyot

The breadth of the topics of communication and the ensuing discussions both in and out of the conference hall further forged links between the community of scholars, and the organising committee headed in France by Béatrix Midant-Reynes and Yann Tristant is to be congratulated and thanked for providing this second forum for a topic, which was, until surprisingly recently, less focal in research into ancient Egypt.

A full summary of the papers of the Toulouse conference will be available at: <http://origines2.free.fr>

The papers of the Krakow conference (2002) have been published as S Hendrickx, R Friedman, K M Ciałowicz and M Chłodnicki (eds), *Egypt at its Origins: Studies in Memory of Barbara Adams* (Peeters, Leuven, 2005).

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The participants in The Second International Conference on the Origins of the Egyptian State. Photograph: Frédéric Guyot