



The Rundle Foundation for Egyptian Archaeology

NEWSLETTER No. 29

July 1989



Undisturbed Burial at El-Hagarsa

Archaeologists usually have little or no expectation of discovering undisturbed burials in Egypt. They know only too well that tombs have been robbed in both antiquity and recent times. The discovery of an undisturbed burial of El-Hagarsa was therefore a most rewarding find for the Macquarie expedition and the find was unusual in many ways. While burial chambers usually contain one coffin - as it was sealed after the burial not to be re-opened - this tomb contained 6 coffins - 5 adults and a child. The 5 adults were 3 men and 2 women, this is clear in the cartonnage covering over the upper part of the body as well as from the inscriptions recorded on the coffins. The child, whose sex is undetermined at present, is placed in an un-inscribed coffin which may suggest that it was not yet officially named.

Above the male coffins were placed staffs of office, sandals and bows and arrows. This last feature may explain the curious collective burial of all members of this family. (The similarity of names of sons and daughters to those of father and mother suggest, according to Egyptian traditions, that all are related.) It is possible that they died in the wars which raged in the area during the First Intermediate Period. An application has been submitted for the Egyptian Antiquities Organisation for X-ray of all 6 mummies with the purpose of establishing whether the cause of death in all cases was injury.

The expedition will continue work on the same level of the mountain in the coming season in the hope of uncovering further evidence on this less-known period of Egyptian civilization.

The Activities Committee

The members of the Activities Committee co-opted Mrs Margot Glass to the Committee and elected Joan Beck and Ann McFarlane as the Committee's representatives on the Board of the Foundation.

The Committee members: Joan Pollett (Convenor) 44.3788
 Joan Beck (Sec./Treas) 805.8848
 Leonie Donovan
 Margot Glass
 Valerie Hutchinson
 Ann McFarlane
 Sue Paul
 Licia Ranucci
 Chebby Valkenburg

At a meeting in April it was decided to order T-shirts and wind-cheaters for sale at the Conference and to provide refreshments. Both ventures proved very successful and a second order of garments has been required. These are now available from Joan Beck (W6A 429).

Discussion Group

Enquiries have been received regarding further Discussion Group meetings. At present there are two options. a) Arabic and b) Discussions Group Meetings. If the enrolment for Arabic is insufficient (the Course is set down to commence on Friday 28 July), then Discussion Group Meetings will commence on Friday 4 August from 7-9 p.m. in W6A 420.

"Egypt & Ancient Israel" Conference

170 members and friends attended the Conference on Saturday 13 May at which Professor Kenneth Kitchen, the Visiting Fellow for 1989, presented two papers and Dr G. Bunnens (Melbourne), Mr P. Crocker (Melbourne), Dr D. Barrett (Queensland) and Dr B. Ockinga (Macquarie) each presented a paper.

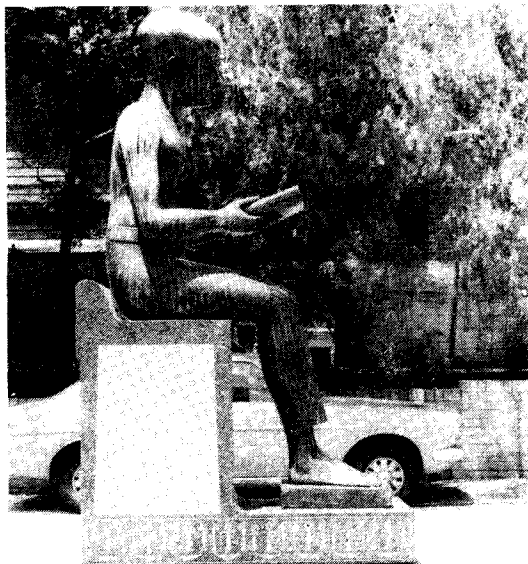
Professor Kenneth Kitchen's Visit

Professor Kitchen, the Foundation's Visiting Fellow for 1989, spent a very busy two weeks in Australia. He gave four lectures in Melbourne before arriving in Sydney where he lectured at The Museum and at Macquarie University. He also lectured at Moore College and at New England University as well as meeting post graduate students and attending a seminar and conferences at Macquarie University and Newcastle University.

Everyone enjoyed meeting Professor Kitchen and appreciated the help he so willingly gave to students and to interested members.

IMHOTEP

THE VIZIER AND ARCHITECT OF DJOSER WHO BECAME IMOUTHES/ASKLEPIOS THE GOD OF HEALING



Imhotep lived in the Early Dynastic Period of Egypt. His floruit occurred during the 19 year reign of King Djoser Netjerykhet (c.2593 - 2575 B.C.) of the 3rd Dynasty. Since his tomb has not yet been discovered, the contemporary occurrences of the name Imhotep are limited to an inscription on a statue base of Djoser, found near the entrance colonnade of the Step-Pyramid at Saqqara, and a graffito at the adjacent unfinished pyramid complex of Djoser's successor Horus Sekhemkhet. Therefore, a reconstruction of Imhotep's career must depend rather heavily upon inscriptions and texts written centuries and even millenia after his death. Indeed, there are two histories of Imhotep; the story of his life and of his career beyond life. Later generations credited him with the design and construction of Djoser's pyramid complex, the first large scale buildings in Egypt made entirely of stone. He was one of a very small number of persons in Egyptian history who were raised to the status of a god, his apotheosis being fully realised only in the 27th Dynasty (c.500 B.C). About this time Imhotep came to be revered as a divine healer and when the Greeks came to Egypt they identified him with their own god of healing Asklepios. By the 5th century A.D. Imhotep was the major native Egyptian deity at Memphis and was extremely important throughout the whole land, easily surpassing Ptah, Amun and Sarapais.

The site of the great temple and healing centre of Imhotep at North Saqqara, the Asklepieion, remained a place of pilgrimage for the sick and troubled throughout the Christian and Moslem eras down to the early 19th century!

Who was Imhotep? What was his background? An inscription of Ptolemy IX (c.110 B.C.) states that Imhotep's mother, Khredu-ankh, hailed from Mendes in the Delta and that she gave birth to him at Ankh-tawy in Memphis on the 15th of the month Epiphi. These details are probably late inventions however, because the place-name Ankh-tawy does not appear until the late Old Kingdom and the personal name Khredu-ankh is not attested until the 26th Dynasty (c.650 B.C.). An inscription of the time of Darius (c.500 B.C.) states that Imhotep's father was a certain Ka-nefer but this claim receives no support from any other source. From the 26th Dynasty onwards Imhotep's father was said to have been the god Ptah, He-who-is-south-of-his-wall, Lord of Ankh-tawy - that is, the particular form of Ptah worshipped in Memphis as a craftsman and creator god and as the principal deity of the city. Henceforth Imhotep was known as Great One, Son of Ptah and he too became Lord of Ankh-tawy. In the Ptolemaic era the deified Imhotep appears accompanied by a wife for the first time and in these scenes both wife and mother are dressed as goddesses - the wife, Renpet-Nofret, as the goddess Renpet and Khredu-ankh as Hathor. However, the accompanying inscriptions indicate that they had not actually been deified. The divine connections of the family were expanded further by declaring that Khredu-ankh was the daughter of the god Banebdjedet (Ram Lord of Mendes) who had a cult place beside a lake near Saqqara. Despite this welter of supposed genealogical data it has to be admitted that there is no reliable information about the members of Imhotep's real family. We do know that the Egyptians of a much later era had come to believe that his birth was the result of a union between a great god and a mere mortal, the temple singer from Mendes, Khredu-ankh. The fact of Imhotep's previous earthly existence was acknowledged in that the accepted dates of his birth, death, burial and resurrection were commemorated with great annual festivals at Memphis. There were six annual festivals of Imhotep in the Graeco-Roman era.

What were the qualities that inspired the Egyptians to deify and worship this man and that have inspired modern writers to dub him the Leonardo da Vinci of the ancient world? When the evidence is assessed in chronological order Imhotep appears elusive and enigmatic, a figure whose attributes and associations changed with every shift in the social and religious climate of Egypt over the centuries. When all the different skills and achievements ascribed to Imhotep throughout the historical period are synthesized into a composite picture he appears as a genius of the first rank. This image of Imhotep is somewhat artificial however; it was probably held by the Egyptians themselves only at the very end of their history and we should be wary of projecting the image back in time onto the man himself.

The statue base of Djoser mentioned above, gives Imhotep's titles as; Seal-Bearer of the King of Lower Egypt (one who acted on behalf of the King, perhaps analogous to a government department head); Chamberlain (?) of the King; Ruler of the Great Mansion (meaning uncertain); Hereditary Noble (an honorary title of the very highest rank); Greatest of Astronomers/Astrologers (the title of the High-Priest of Re-Atum

at Heliopolis); Chief (?) of Stonemasons and Relief-sculptors (this title was probably associated with the priesthood of the craftsman god Ptah but in this instance it is almost certainly not the title of the High-Priest of Ptah).

The earthly titles credited to Imhotep by later ages were; Count (or Mayor), Vizier, Overseer of Constructions of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Overseer of the Pyramid-town (? of Djoser), Chief Scribe of the King, Scribe of God's Book (a title associated with the sacred scriptorium, the House of Life), Chief Lector-Priest, One-Who-Knows-Spells and Greatest of Physicians.

A quick comparison reveals that not a single title is common to both lists. There are many possible explanations for this. For example: (a) there may have been two prominent men called Imhotep in Djoser's reign, perhaps even related to one another; (b) the statue base, which is damaged, may have contained titles from the second list on a missing fragment; (c) some of the titles in the second list may be updated versions of titles in the first; (d) the statue may have been carved early in Imhotep's career before he gained the other titles; (e) as the personality of the demi-god acquired different qualities over the centuries, the Egyptians may have retrospectively attributed them to him during life and then conferred the corresponding titles upon him. For example, when Imhotep became a god of healing, they may have concluded that he must have been a physician during life, indeed, a Greatest of Physicians. The most plausible explanation for the gross discrepancies between the two lists is that the Imhotep on the statue base was not the same Imhotep as the one who was later deified. Alternatively, if they are one and the same man, then the later Egyptians appear to have tampered with Imhotep's titulary.

The Vizier was similar to a Prime Minister and was the second most important person in the land after the King. The name of a vizier from Djoser's reign is known, a certain Menka who is in fact the earliest recorded holder of the title in Egyptian history. Another official of Djoser's reign, Hesy-Re, is known to have held the title Greatest of Dentists (?) and Physicians. His tomb is located in the northernmost sector of the Saqqara necropolis, perhaps very close to where Imhotep was buried. The shorter title, Greatest of Physicians, was the title of the High-Priest of the goddess Neith at Sais in the Delta, or else of the High-Priest of Bastet/Sakhmet at Bubastis. A Chief Lector-Priest of Djoser's reign is referred to on stone vessels found beneath the Step-Pyramid but he is not named. A Lector-Priest was a scribe and magician who had charge of the sacred ritual texts, his role being to impersonate and deputise for different gods when officiating at religious ceremonies - for example, at the burial of the King when multitudes of such stone vessels were utilized and then interred with the King. Where is the famous vizier, physician and lector-priest of Djoser, Imhotep? It is intriguing that the archaeological evidence from Djoser's reign, sparse though it may be, fails to associate Imhotep's name with any of the titles which later Egyptians believed him to have held during that reign.

Between the 3rd and the 26th Dynasties Imhotep almost disappears from view. The autobiography of Weni of the 6th Dynasty mentions a Gateway of Iyihotep, probably located in or near Memphis, but the identification of this name with Imhotep is problematical. A 6th Dynasty Pyramid Text reads, "Commend me to Him who is greatly noble, the Beloved of Ptah, the Son of Ptah, that he may speak on my behalf...". This passage is a puzzle because there is no known Son of Ptah for this period, except perhaps the god Nefertem, but he was really the son of Sakhmet, not of Ptah. The whole passage fits Imhotep like a glove but there are major obstacles to this identification, not least of which is the fact that, as far as is known, Imhotep's filial relationship to Ptah was first proclaimed almost 2000 years after the date of this text.

The song of the Harper, which probably dates from the Second Intermediate Period (c.1600 B.C.), reads in part, "Now I have heard the sayings of Imhotep and Hordjedef which are quoted in the proverbs so much. What of their cult places? Their walls are dismantled and their cult places exist no more, as if they had never been." Apparently, Imhotep had had a thriving cult in the Middle Kingdom, but under the foreign Hyksos rulers, the cult was neglected and the cult place fell into a state of ruin. Papyrus Chester Beatty IV of New Kingdom date affirms that Imhotep's fame stemmed from his wisdom writings, proverbs and books of instructions which had been passed down through the generations for more than a millenium. In this era it was as a sage that Imhotep was most venerated and it was with the scribal profession that he was most closely identified. At the end of a day's work scribes poured the dregs from their water-pots upon the earth as a formal libation offering for the spirit (ka) of their patron and demi-god, that most famous of ancient scribes, Imhotep. This scribal custom of invoking Imhotep and libating to his ka every day persisted until well into the Christian era. It is pertinent at this point to draw attention to the fact that there is no evidence which demonstrates that Egyptians living prior to the 26th Dynasty associated Imhotep with medicine and healing, or even with architecture. He is not mentioned in funerary papyri or stelae, in the medical papyri nor in any temple inscription of the New Kingdom.

In the Saite (26th) Dynasty a priestly family of Memphis constructed a temple of Imhotep. This family had maintained the cults of King Djoser and Imhotep at Saqqara for generations, perhaps since the early New Kingdom. The fact that Imhotep appears suddenly here in his full iconographic form suggests that an important change in his status had occurred sometime in the Third Intermediate Period (c.1000-700 B.C.). Imhotep's iconography is as follows: seated on a low-backed throne identical to Ptah's; his hands hold open a papyrus roll in front of him or resting on his lap, the posture and symbol of a scribe and sage; he wears a plain ankle-length pleated linen garment extending from the waist, identifying him as a priest; he wears a tight-fitting skull-cap. As this cap was worn by stone masons and metalsmiths in the Old Kingdom and by their patron deity Ptah, it identifies Imhotep with the Old Kingdom, with these crafts and with Ptah. It is in the 26th Dynasty that Son of Ptah as an epithet of Imhotep, is first encountered. He was still only semi-divine however, and it was not until the next dynasty, the Persian Period, that he became a full deity and was called 'god'. Only in the Ptolemaic era did Imhotep begin to be depicted wearing the beard, the short kilt and holding the w3s and ankh sceptres which were all insignias of full divinity.

Eighth Annual Dinner

The Eighth Annual Dinner of the Foundation was held at the North Sydney League Club where 174 members and friends attended what turned out to be a Surprise Party for Joan Beck, celebrating her 70th Birthday. It was a very happy evening and everyone enjoyed Professor Kitchen's anecdotes of his visits to Rio de Janeiro.

Courses Completed

Introduction to Hieroglyphs:

60 persons attended Professor Kanawati's Hieroglyphs Course and 36 have continued to a "follow-up" course being held each Friday night for the next eight weeks.

Ancient Egypt: The Amarna Age:

Mrs Juliette Bentley conducted another successful course with over 30 persons attending the classes each Wednesday evening.

Ancient Egyptian Religion

Dr Boyo Ockinga will conduct a 10 weeks course, Ancient Egyptian Religion, in E7B T4 each Wednesday night, commencing Wednesday 26 July, from 7-9 p.m. Fee: \$75 (members \$65). Enquiries: Joan Beck, 805.8848 (between 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.)

Egyptian Colloquial Arabic

A 12 weeks course, "Egyptian Colloquial Arabic", will be conducted by Professor Kanawati in W6A 420, from 7 - 9 p.m. each Friday, commencing Friday 28 July, 1989. FEE: \$80. Enquiries: Joan Beck.

Activities in Melbourne

Professor Kitchen visited Melbourne for 3 days on his arrival in Australia and gave four lectures, the first only a few hours after his arrival in Australia.

He lectured at Melbourne University and at Victoria College also at Ancient Times House and delivered the William Culican Memorial Lecture at Melbourne University.

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