



# The Rundle Foundation for Egyptian Archaeology

NEWSLETTER NO. 95

January 2006



**PIONEERS OF COPTIC STUDIES AT MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY: THE INTERNAL STUDENTS OF "EGYPT IN THE FIRST MILLENNIUM CE" WITH THEIR LECTURER AT THE BEGINNING OF THEIR VERY FIRST SEMESTER IN MARCH 2005.**

## ONE YEAR OF COPTIC STUDIES AT MACQUARIE

The First Millennium CE is a fascinating part of Egyptian history which at least equals the earlier stages of Pharaonic civilisation in complexity and sophistication. In these 1000 years Egypt underwent enormous political changes: at the beginning of the millennium it had just lost its independence to the Roman Empire and was to share its varying fortunes for the next 700 years. In the 7<sup>th</sup> century it was conquered by an Arab army and became part of the Caliphate.

Its population underwent equally far-reaching religious change: it had started out worshipping traditional Pharaonic deities, but had already in the later part of the First Millennium BCE adopted and adapted Greek gods and goddesses. By the 4<sup>th</sup> century, Egypt had become almost completely Christianised and was one of the strongholds of Christian theology and practice. In the wake of the Arab conquest in 642 CE, Egypt progressively became a country with a Muslim majority, while at the same time remaining a centre of Christian learning and Coptic literature.

Not everybody in Egypt spoke the same language. At any time during this millennium, at least two, but frequently even three of the following languages were spoken and written in Egypt: Demotic, Greek, Latin, Coptic and Arabic (in the chronological order of their appearance in Egypt).

From this short description, one can already see the large number of fields with which Coptic Studies fruitfully interact. Church historians will be interested in the immense contributions of the Egyptian church to the history of Christianity. Papyrologists will feed on the wealth of Coptic papyri and ostraca from Egypt, which, similar to the Greek and Demotic papyri from an earlier period, provide us with important information about the society and economy of Egypt. Arabists and Islamic historians will study the interaction between Christian and Muslim cultures. Last but not least, Egyptologists have traditionally been interested in the later stages of the Egyptian language. Coptic is the first stage of the Egyptian language to be written in an alphabet script and has been of vital importance for Egyptology, starting with being the basis for the decipherment of the hieroglyphic script in 1822.

So it is only natural for Macquarie University to be interested in introducing Coptic Studies, which for little more than a year has found its home in the Department of Ancient History at the intersection of Egyptology, Early Christian Studies and Greek and Roman History. The Coptic studies programme is also supported by Sydney's large Coptic community, and the help and encouragement of the Coptic Orthodox diocese of Sydney and Bishop Daniel, in particular, has been essential in building a community profile for our degree.

From the first semester of 2005 Coptic Studies were offered as an independent M.A. degree. This is an M.A. by coursework open to all students who have a B.A. or equivalent degree regardless of their major. Individual units are also open to undergraduates and non-award students.

The completion of the degree will enable students to read Coptic texts in the original language, to become knowledgeable about the fascinating history of First Millennium Egypt and to have an in-depth view of several of the most important aspects of Coptic culture: Egyptian monasticism, Coptic art and archaeology, and Coptic literature.

We have now come to the end of a very successful first year in which four subjects were offered as part of the M.A. programme: Coptic I and II, Egypt in the First Millennium CE, and Monasticism in Egypt. Studying these subjects were approximately 50 students – an enormous number for a small field such as Coptic Studies – equally distributed between students from a Coptic Orthodox background and non-Coptic students.

What makes this programme unique in the world, though, is the possibility to study completely online as an external student. In fact, the students were not only Australian-based, but some were studying from countries as far away as China, Cambodia, the USA and Austria. In 2006 three more subjects will be offered: Coptic Art and Archaeology, Coptic Dialects and Advanced Coptic. In addition, Coptic I and II will be offered again.

I am confident that the programme will prosper on the strength of post-Pharaonic Egypt and Coptic language and literature being of importance for just about anybody interested in Egyptology, the history of Christianity, or the Roman Empire, and on the possibility to study it from just about anywhere in the world.

**Heike Behlmer**

## **MUSINGS FROM OUR RECENT PHD GRADUATES**

### **BECOMING "ABSOLUTELY ANCIENT"—POSTDOCTORAL OPTIONS**

With the dust firmly settled and my back soundly patted after my doctoral convocation, the question arose "What does one actually do with a doctorate in Egyptology?" Whilst

undertaking a doctoral thesis it is easy to fall into thinking its completion is the destination but in reality the degree marks the beginning, or at least the continuation, of the journey. The obvious solution to post doctoral blues is to simply continue the research and prepare for publication so that the information gathered and assimilated can reach the public domain. This, however, cannot be achieved without food on the table. Egyptologists the world over lament the paucity of suitable positions in the academic realm and Coles (Katoomba's major employer) was heartily unimpressed with my accomplishment as a testament to my ability to stack shelves (surely, I argued, after years battling Dewey Decimal and Library of Congress, I was well equipped to tackle the correct positioning of food on supermarket shelves!).

A fellowship appeared to be the obvious avenue to pursue so I enthusiastically embarked on preparing an application. Some days into the process it became apparent that the submission was a mini thesis in itself, requiring input not only from me, but a number of others were also required to write letters of endorsement assessing my work and my capability of proceeding to a tangible outcome. After some days spent on the signature run-around, I managed to submit the application on time. While awaiting the result, I noticed an obscure advertisement in the local paper encouraging applications for cultural grants for participants in a programme instigated in an effort to reinstate the Blue Mountains as a cultural as well as a tourist destination. I only had a week to throw together an application but thought I'd have a shot at applying for a grant to establish an Ancient Egyptian dance company thus utilizing my thesis topic (Dance in the Old Kingdom). The application form didn't open on my Macintosh and so I literally had to cut and paste typewritten inserts with scissors and glue. I handed my décapaged submission over the counter one minute before the closing time and retreated exhausted to await the outcome.

October came and went with no word on either application so I went ahead unfunded assuming all had failed. In early November I found my fellowship application had not even gone through to the first round. As I was meant to have been contacted in October regarding the cultural grant, I assumed that that too had been unsuccessful. After all, visions of Ancient Egyptian dances performed alongside didgeridoo players at Echo Point had a distinctly eccentric ring. Late one day in November, however, I received the call. Surprisingly, the Blue Mountains City Council had deemed my proposal to be of substantial merit and I had been awarded one of the largest grants. Dauntingly, I find myself at nearly 52 the manager, choreographer and principal dancer of a regional dance company. As I was about to perform at the bitterly cold Wintermagic Festival in Katoomba, I was asked the name of my company. "Absolutely Ancient", I retorted, at the prospect of compromising my body into positions dictated only by ancient gods. The name has stuck and so I fear have a number of my joints. So it seems my research will reach the public domain assimilated into a living, kinaesthetic interpretation. Perhaps like Carmen Miranda, I shall die dancing but I sincerely hope the opportunity arises to complete and publish my academic research. **Leslie Kinney**

### **DATING FUNERARY STELAE OF THE TWELFTH DYNASTY A STATISTICAL STUDY**

It seemed probable that, by statistically relating the characteristics (both text and tableaux) of stelae internally dated by the ruling pharaoh's cartouche, one could determine the reign in which an undated stela was made. Using seventy stelae from the Twelfth Dynasty (twenty from the reign of Senusret I, fifteen from Amenemhat II, three from Senusret II, eleven from Senusret III, seventeen from Amenemhat III and four from Amenemhat IV), I tabulated 180 characteristics from them in four groups:

*Stela pattern* – shape, contents of the lunette, and kings' names

*Text content* – gods and their epithets, formulae of address to the living and the deceased, and offerings included;

*Tableau contents* – number of registers, furniture and offerings, persons depicted and their dress;

*Miscellaneous information* – titles, biographical details, festivals and prayers listed.

Because the stelae from the reigns of Senusret II and Amenemhat IV were few, they were grouped with those of Senusret III and Amenemhat III respectively, and the characteristics were analysed statistically in the resulting four regnal periods. This analysis produced a decision table that allows any stela known to have originated in the Twelfth Dynasty to be dated to one of the four regnal periods.

The seventy stelae were analysed using this table and only two were wrongly assigned, a result well within the statistical expectation. This justifies the approach, but it applies only to stelae from the Twelfth Dynasty. It has been successfully tried on over forty undated stelae thought to belong to that dynasty. Given sufficient internally dated stelae from several dynasties, it could be extended to estimate the dynasty and the reign of origin of an undated stela.

**Des Bright**

### CONTINUING EDUCATION COURSES 2006

AHST 100	Egyptian Archaeology: An Introduction	Dr Köhler
AHST 260	Egyptian Hieroglyphs A	Prof. Kanawati
AHST 261	Egyptian Culture and Society	Dr Köhler
AHST 364	Egypt in the 18 <sup>th</sup> Dynasty	Dr Ockinga

For further information please contact Anne Irish on 9850 8833

### UPCOMING DATES FOR 2006

Following are some dates to put in your 2006 Diary. If you wish to book for the Mini Conference **please use the form we have included with this mailout** as we will not be able to contact you again before this event.

Mini Conference	Sunday afternoon 9 <sup>th</sup> April
Annual Dinner	Saturday 17 <sup>th</sup> June
Annual Conference	Saturday 19 <sup>th</sup> August

### NEW PUBLICATIONS

#### Reports 23:

N. Kanawati (2005) *Deir El-Gebrawi*, Volume 1. The Northern Cliff, Oxford

All cheques should be made to MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY and all prices quoted include GST.

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