



The Rundle Foundation

for

Egyptian Archaeology

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MACQUARIE THEBAN TOMBS PROJECT - DRA ABU EL-NAGA^c

The Macquarie Theban Tombs Project conducted a successful season at Dra Abu el-Naga^c in November and December 2005. Most of the activity was concentrated in TT 147, the tomb of the scribe and counter of the cattle of Amun, Neferhotep, where the excavation of the main burial complex (Burial Complex A) was completed.

At the end of the last season (January 2005) worked had stopped in Burial Complex A after the Upper Burial Chamber had been excavated to floor level, exposing the top of a rubble-filled pit at the northern end of the chamber. When excavation continued in November 2005, this revealed itself to be the top of a shallow vertical shaft, which gives access to the entrance of a lower, second chamber. The debris in the upper part of the shaft and the chamber consisted of coarse rubble, including large stones, but below this, as in all the passages of this underground complex and the Upper Burial Chamber, the material largely consisted of compacted silt (*hibe*) that had been washed into the tomb by successive flash floods. The chamber was filled to over 1 m with rock-hard *hibe*, which had to be cut through and extracted in large blocks. There was evidence of human activity in this lower chamber: ca. 1 m into the chamber, in its right half, 30 cm from the right (eastern) wall, a roughly elliptic, man-size hole had been hewn into the *hibe* layer by removing the *hibe* in blocks, which were heaped up at the far end of the chamber along the north wall. This was probably the result of illicit excavating activity to judge from the presence of the same types of matches, with a round rather than square cross-section, as had been found in the higher levels of Burial Complex A and of the Sloping Passage in the previous season. Beyond the hole, strewn among and under the blocks of cut-up *hibe*, a hoard of 58 undecorated, fired clay shabtis and shabti fragments was uncovered, presumably deposited and abandoned there by the illicit diggers. Considering the confined space in the Burial Complex, it is a puzzle how anyone could have got into these underground regions without full excavation.



SHABTI FROM LOWER BURIAL CHAMBER



COFFIN IMPRESSION

When it was fully excavated, the Lower Burial Chamber proved to be very crudely cut and irregularly shaped with maximum dimensions of 3.30 x 2.30 m, and a height varying from ca. 1.50 m at the front to 1.70 m at the back.

Because the chamber had repeatedly been flooded and the water subsequently evaporated over an extended period of time, all the perishable material the chamber had contained was all but destroyed; only very few fragments of wood were recovered, as were tiny fragments of painted plaster that could have been part of a Late New Kingdom coffin. On these fragments, the paint decoration had been applied on a thin layer of white plaster over a thicker layer of fine light-brown *hibe* plaster. Some of the decoration indicates that the fragments were part of the decorative broad collar of a coffin. Further evidence of the existence of a coffin is provided by a most unusual find, the impression left by the coffin's base in the layer of fine silt ca. 4–5 cm above the floor level of the chamber. While all the wood of the coffin is lost, this impression indicates that it was an anthropoid coffin: there is the clear outline of the rounded head-end of the coffin at the northern end of the impression, and ca. 160 cm of the base with the reinforcing cross-pieces of wood are more deeply impressed into the dried, cement-hard silt.

In the uneven layer of 7–13 cm of more *hibe* and debris on the *gebel* floor of the chamber, under the coffin-

imprint, more shabtis were found embedded in the silt, two of which still bore faint traces of a vertical inscription in black ink down the front. The inscription would have given the name of the owner, but unfortunately the writing is so worn that the name cannot be read fully; only the first element of the name, *Ns-///*, is recognizable.

The only other material that survived the repeated flooding and washing in of debris were two scarabs and two amulets as well as pottery. Most of the pottery is very fragmentary, but several vessels could be partially



SCARAB FROM BURIAL CHAMBER

reconstructed and identified as being of Late New Kingdom or Late Period date and belonging to the secondary use of the Lower Burial Chamber. But there is also material from the original 18th Dynasty occupation of the tomb in the form of numerous further fragments of the tall, long-necked, single-handled marl jugs first found in the previous season. With the fragments, we were able to reconstruct four vessels of this kind, which adds considerably to the corpus of known vessels of this type. They are of particular interest as they can be dated to the fairly narrow timeframe from Amenhotep III to Tutankhamun.

Boyo G. Ockinga

WHAT IT MEANS TO GRADUATE IN COPTIC STUDIES AT MACQUARIE

On September 27, 2006 Lisa Agaiby and I were privileged to be the first graduates of the MA program in Coptic Studies at Macquarie University. Many of us study history, but very rarely are we lucky enough to be called to help make it. I consider myself honored to not only have helped start the program, but to have been one of the first graduates.

As a Copt, and as a graduate from Macquarie's Egyptology program, I was very keen to learn about the next major phase in Egyptian history, the period of Egyptian Christianity. What I did not fully realize at the start of the course was the magnificent historical and cultural continuity that the Coptic period shared with the time of the pharaohs. I was soon to discover that the journey through history that I had begun years ago with Ancient Egypt was about to be continued through Coptic Egypt.

Something that is easy to lose sight of is that Egypt did not cease to exist after the Pharaohs. The Egyptians today, independent of their religion, are cultural descendants of the ancient Egyptians as they continue to live, work, play, pray, die and bury their dead in the land blessed with the Nile and flanked by the deserts. Many traces of the ancient civilization can be seen in the Egyptian people today. Egyptologists, like Champollion for example, realized this when they used modern liturgical Coptic to help decipher ancient hieroglyphs.

The Coptic Period is a vital link between ancient and modern times. Although the essence of the Egyptian civilization remained, Coptic Egypt was tempered by a new world of Roman and Greek cultural influences, and by a new religion, Christianity, which was spreading rapidly across the world.

Customs and practices, for example, did not escape the new world influences as seen in the burial traditions of the elite in the Fayum portraits. These portraits typically depicted Egyptians with clothing, jewellery and hair styles from the Roman world. They were life-like Roman style portraits of the deceased that were attached to the mummified body above the subject's head, probably as an analogy to the burial masks of ancient times. A modern observer looking into the eyes of these portraits cannot help but feel an uncanny sense of history, as these second to third century paintings are some of most beautiful and vivid testimonies to the people of antiquity.

The most distinguishable feature of the Coptic era is the rise of Christianity in Egypt. Often referred to as the great Egyptian age of Christianity, the contribution that Egypt made to the development of Christendom cannot be underestimated. Monasticism sprang forth from the barren Egyptian desert as its tradition was defined by the pioneering efforts of Anthony, Pachomius and Shenoute. The impression of Egyptian monasticism left on modern monastic orders is undeniable as many European traditions can trace strong influences in their origin and development back to Egypt.

Theologies and Christologies were defined and contested in these formative years and the Egyptian church played an important role in the great Christian debates of antiquity. It is not surprising that the Egyptian should embrace Christianity with such fervor, as in ancient times the beliefs in the gods and the afterlife resulted in temples, tombs and pyramids that are an undeniable and permanent legacy left to the world.

The Coptic language itself is an eloquent and well designed evolution of the ancient Egyptian language. The

language, that uses predominantly Greek script to represent the spoken tongue, was probably driven by the need of Christians to efficiently spread their scriptures. Some of the rich legacy of Coptic literature that remains today includes the 'Sayings of the Desert Fathers', which are wisdom teachings handed down from the ascetics who made the desert their home in the fourth to sixth centuries.

Coptic Studies is thus at the intersection of Egyptology, Early Christian Studies and Greek and Roman History and as such has found a great home at Macquarie University. It is a discipline that could previously only be studied as a specialisation in one or two unique universities in the world, but now can be studied at MA level at Macquarie entirely online on the internet! Because Coptic Studies have not received much focus in academia, it provides students at Macquarie with enormous scope for research opportunities as there are so many interesting historical questions waiting to be answered.

We are lucky to have a real star in Dr Heike Behlmer. Not only is she a great and dedicated teacher, but her depth of knowledge and expertise in the field will help assure its success at Macquarie. Coptic Studies was born from, and lives alongside, the strong tradition of Egyptian studies at Macquarie and, as such, Coptic studies will always be Egyptology's younger brother here, so make sure you look out for him!

NIGHT OF A THOUSAND YEARS - BRIAN BURNS

We were all saddened to learn of the passing of long-term member of the Australian Centre for Egyptology Brian Burns late last year. I first met Brian many years ago at the Friday evening gatherings organized by Joan Beck when we each gave a short talk on our subject of interest. Brian stunned us all with his lecture on the geological strata of the Nile over the centuries. Should we have then suspected he was an avid Egyptophile? He sat next to me on the plane to Egypt in 1989, very quiet, and I later learned it was his first overseas trip; he was somewhat overwhelmed. Needless to say, the trip was everything he had hoped for. Brian's steadfast commonsense approach was most helpful on the trip when one day a bus arrived to take us out into the desert – it looked much like a 1949 Nyngan School Bus – Brian stood his ground, firmly having a Stella on the hotel's front verandah and we all refused to board – then surprise, a brand new Mercedes bus arrived! At another memorable time in Jordan, Brian became the granite stele behind me as I negotiated with the travel agent. One doesn't forget these silent "tower of strength" episodes, plus his subtle sense of humour. At the Mini-Conference last year it was apparent Brian was not well, but I think we will all remember him as the Mayor of El Minya!

Our deepest sympathy is extended to Beryl and all Brian's family on their loss. The wonderful and extensive collection of Egyptology books which Brian bequeathed will be used, cherished and valued by students for years to come and ensure that the name of Brian Burn will not be forgotten. Dianne Herbert

EGYPTIAN TREASURES FROM THE LOUVRE COACH TRIP

Sunday November 26, 2006

We will be leaving Macquarie University at 8am SHARP on Sunday 26 November for a day trip to Canberra's National Gallery of Australia to see the extraordinary collection of over 200 objects from the Louvre's Egyptian antiquities possessions – some never having been on public display. The cost of \$55 per person includes coach travel, entry fee to the exhibition and our own guide from the Gallery. We will have preferential entrance, ie we not be in the queue! Dr. Colin Hope will be giving a talk at 2pm.

It is envisaged that the day will be: 4 hours down including morning tea stop – 4 hours at the Gallery – 4 hours back stopping for afternoon tea, returning to the university at approx. 8pm. You may prefer to bring your own refreshments.

Bookings finalise on November 20 and numbers are limited.

All enquiries: Australian Centre for Egyptology Office - 9850 8848. Cheques payable to Macquarie University.

WEBSITE

Our website has recently been upgraded and has received some very welcome comments. You may wish to log on to the site yourselves. Many thanks to Tom Lockley and Kylie Hilton for their time and efforts with this project.

www.egyptology.mq.edu.au

REPORT ON ACE ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2006



L - R: PROF. GAY ROBINS, DR. LESLEY KINNEY
AND PROF. LISE MANNICHE

The Annual Conference was held on Saturday August 19, 2006 and as usual attracted a large audience of interested participants. The theme of the conference was *Music, Dance and Sexuality in Ancient Egypt*. Our guests were Professor Gay Robins from Emory University and Professor Lise Manniche from Copenhagen University.

Professor Robins delivered two papers: *Masculine Bodies and the Construction of Masculinity in New Kingdom Art* demonstrated how Egyptians viewed the concept of 'masculinity' and depicted it by a range of iconographic conventions; *The Small Golden Shrine of Tutankhamun and Ankhnesenamun* was a detailed examination of the beautiful shrine found in Tutankhamun's tomb. This lecture looked at the iconography of the scenes depicted and tried to interpret them in the context of the function that the shrine played as a focal point of a ritual of regeneration for the king.

Professor Manniche's papers were entitled *Music in the Amarna Period* and *The Hidden Beginning of Human Life*. The former looked at all the representational evidence for musicians and musical instruments in Amarna art. The paper made comparisons with the general scope of such depictions from other times and from foreign countries. It also considered themes such as the 'blindfolded harpist'. The latter lecture presented a study of representations of the womb, and the significance of the womb and the placenta, in the Egyptian understanding and symbolic interpretation of the cosmos and cosmic processes.

Thus, the whole program provided some wonderful information about Egyptian thought on the basic aspects of life and death, giving us all a greater appreciation of the sophistication of Egyptian society and belief structures.

The academic program was supplemented by some very entertaining experimental archaeology. Dr Lesley Kinney presented her Absolutely Ancient Dance Company, the outcome of her recent PhD from Macquarie University, as described in an article in our January 2006 Newsletter. The dance group specialises in reconstructions of Egyptian performances with music played on instruments similar to those depicted in the ancient artworks. The audience was particularly intrigued by a dance sequence based on decorations from the tomb of Mereruka, in which archaeological drawings were projected depicting the exact movements which the dancers were making. The same sequence also was the basis of the design of the ACE teatowel, this year's new item of merchandise. Coincidentally, Professor Manniche was one of the examiners of Dr Kinney's PhD thesis, *Dance and related performance in the Old Kingdom*, and was delighted to see this concrete outcome of Dr Kinney's work.



Tom Lockley

RUNDLE FOUNDATION SUBSCRIPTIONS

Please note that a Reminder Notice and Renewal Form has been included with this newsletter for those members whose wish to keep their membership current.

NEW PUBLICATIONS

Reports 23: N. Kanawati (2005) *Deir El-Gebrawi, Volume 1. The Northern Cliff*, Oxford.

Reports 24: N. Kanawati (2006) *The Tomb of Inumin*, Oxford.

The price of Reports 1 to 18 is \$44 each (incl. GST) and Reports 19 onward are \$55 each (incl. GST).

Lists of the contents of BACE (1990--2004) and of ACE current publications are available on request

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

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