



INSCRIPTIONS

The Newsletter of the Friends of the Egypt Centre, Swansea

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Saturday Fun Club – is Fun!

Many of you may remember that in the December 2001 issue of *Inscriptions*, we told you that the Egypt Centre and the Friends of the Egypt Centre were launching a new scheme to be called 'Out of School Hours Learning'. The scheme has funding from the New Opportunities Fund (NOF), but both the Friends and the Egypt Centre also have to raise a certain amount. So THANK YOU to all who supported the Fun Day before Christmas. PLEASE support the next one on May 11th, if you possibly can.

Over the Christmas period the Friends and the Egypt Centre asked for applications for staff to run the project and just after New Year, Sandra Hawkins, Moodie Khaldi and myself were appointed. We are all volunteers at the Museum during the week, so are familiar with the topics to be covered on the Saturdays and also with working with school groups.

The Saturday groups of 15 children, cover all the activities in both galleries - the House of Life and the House of Death such as the ever popular mummification, hieroglyphs and Maths & Measuring, etc. They also have Arts & Crafts sessions, Quizzes & Puzzles. At the end of the second Saturday, each child receives a certificate as a young Egyptologist, a folder to take home all the worksheets they have completed, plus their craft work.

In some respects it is exhausting keeping up with 15 enthusiastic children all day, but it is also fun for me. I work on a voluntary basis for the Boys' Brigade and help other young people during the week separately from the Egypt Centre. It is very rewarding to see children achieve something they never thought they could do before. Sometimes it doesn't work out quite as planned, but as long as the children have fun trying, this is the main thing. Even if they do not succeed 100% at everything - any success is still an achievement. The children think it's great fun and do not always realise that they are actually improving their literacy, numeracy and social skills into the bargain.

So far we have had two schools take part in the Saturday project and the feedback from the first school was overwhelming. During the week, in between the two Saturdays, the children did work at school and during the second Saturday we gave them their certificates, they presented us with a book of 'thank you' notes, all written on paper, shaped like Anubis' head. Each note was coloured and written by the children themselves - one from each of them with their name in hieroglyphs too. I was very impressed. The children had a great time and some even said they would be back with their parents during the school holidays so we are very encouraged by the scheme so far.





I know I was a little nervous at the beginning, but now I'm getting used to the routine a little better and hopefully it will improve further as we try new ideas each month.

I would like to add my personal thank you to all the Staff and Volunteers at the Egypt Centre and to all the Friends of the Egypt Centre, for their support and encouragement during the setting up and the start of the scheme. I hope it will continue to be a great success. A BIG thank you also to Sandra and Moodie - I hope they enjoy it as much as I do!

Alison John, Saturday Leader

*Egypt Centre
Out of School Hours Project*

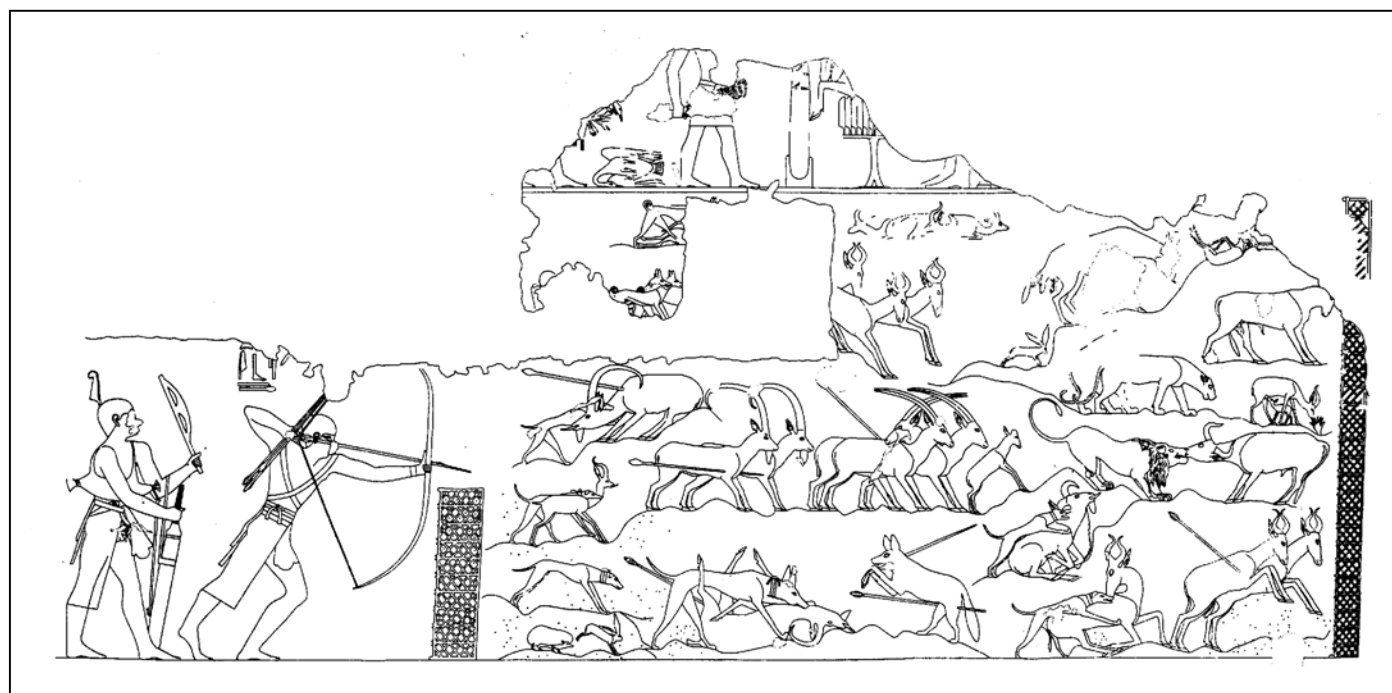
A visit to Meir

I joined the Cairo branch of the Egypt Exploration Society (EES) on its journey to Middle Egypt including the rarely visited tombs of Meir, belonging to Dynasty VI and VII governors of Cusae. These tombs involve a lengthy walk and climb over very soft sand, and are not in the best of condition, but what remains shows the high degree of craftsmanship and range of interesting motifs. Examples include the naturalistic desert hunt of Senbi (shown below), bull fighting, fishing and fowling, and ceremonies to the goddess Hathor. The last of these tombs (from the time of Senwosret II) shows Ukhotep III accompanied by his five wives and seven concubines, and women wearing kilts taking the roles of men. We saw, by the aid of flashlights in otherwise total darkness, the almost complete portrayal of a funeral procession in the VIth Dynasty tomb of Pepiankh, known as Heni the Black.

Well worth the climb, although the drawing can easily be viewed in Aylward Blackman's excavation reports in the University Library!

By Olive Harding

Illustrated below: Desert hunting scene from the East Wall of the tomb of Senbi at Meir



Did you know?

Ancient Egypt was inhabited by mummies and they all wrote in hydraulics.

Sent in by Phil John, from the Boys Brigade Gazette.





Editorial

Welcome to the tenth issue of our Newsletter.

We are pleased to announce the installation of two new open storage cases, donated by the Friends. As a result, a lot of new objects can go on display. Come to the Egypt Centre and have a look!

Contributions to the next issue of *Inscriptions* will be gratefully received and should be sent to the Egypt Centre, marked for the attention of Mike MacDonagh. Shortage of space has meant that we haven't been able to include everything sent in for this issue, but they'll be in the next one!

Mike Mac Donagh

Book Review

Amarna Studies and other selected papers

ed. J.G. Griffiths, ed. 2001. *Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis* 182. University Press Fribourg Switzerland Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht Göttingen.

Without Dr. Kate Bosse-Griffiths there would have been no Egypt Centre. Kate and her husband Professor Gwyn Griffiths were instrumental in arranging for the transfer of the objects to Swansea. Kate was honorary curator of the predecessor of the Centre, the Wellcome Museum, from 1971 to 1995. As well as this association with us, Kate also wrote a number of articles on Egyptological themes, many of which concern objects in the Centre. These articles have been brought together in one volume by Professor Gwyn Griffiths.

The following Egypt Centre objects are included. From the House of Life there are: the Amarna bead collars; the Beset amulets which are on the collars; a ring bezel with a lute player; the mandrake amulets; a gold cowrie shell which is on loan to us from Swansea Museum and gold leaf from Queen Tiy's tomb also from Swansea Museum; a granite object from Amarna showing the early name of the Aten and a fragment of an offering tray also from Amarna. The following are included from the House of Death: some Egyptian beadwork faces; the coffin on display in the House of Death; our Ptah Sokar Osiris figures; the Book of the Dead papyrus.

We are sure that those of you who are interested in the collection would be interested in this book. If you cannot afford to purchase your own, we have a copy in the Egypt Centre library where it can be consulted.

By Carolyn Brown

Art in the Ramesside Period

In early December Mr Peter Reason came to give us a talk on Egyptian Art. He was a particularly welcome guest, being a former student of the University, and tutor of several of the Friends and Volunteers from the Egypt centre.

It appears that most Ancient Egyptian Art wasn't for general consumption, since few people would get the chance to see it. Primarily it was intended for religious purposes and was, therefore, locked away in temples and tombs. Even then it seems that most art didn't set out to provide a mirror image of real life. The image had to be recognisable but was intended to be read and interpreted. In the after life it would be beneficial to the deceased.

From the time of King Narmer in the 1st Dynasty until the Amarna Period very few changes took place in art. Figures were still portrayed in the same way as they always had been - head in profile, eye side on, shoulders front on, and legs in profile. In the Amarna Period art seemed to become more natural, but even now depictions of Akhenaten, complete with long neck and pot belly still follow the established basic pattern.

It was in the 18th Dynasty that, for many, Egyptian art reached its height. There are beautiful illustrations of hunting scenes – Neb-amun with his wife behind him and daughter beneath him, in a papyrus boat. There are also butterflies, cats and fish to be seen. It's a picture of comfortable leisure and pleasurable life. Great care was taken over the work and the detail is quite beautiful, which isn't the case in later periods.

The Ramesside Period (Dyn. 19) was a time of great prosperity. The 'nouveau riche' appear - plenty of money but no taste! But papyrus art from this period provides fine examples of artistic work from the aesthetic as well as a functional viewpoint. Extracts from the "Book of the Dead" provided spells to help the deceased into the after-life and survive perils. These spells are often illustrated. We see Hunefer's 'opening of the mouth' ceremony, which will give him back breath and assist his rebirth. It is very finely drawn. He stands upright with Anubis behind him. Anubis takes him to the scales where his heart will be weighed against Ma'at (truth/justice): if he's good enough the scales will balance but if not Ammt will devour the heart. Hunefer passes the test and is brought by Horus before Osiris, behind whom stand Isis and Nephthys.

I think it is safe to conclude that quality art didn't die out with the 18th Dynasty. Fine examples exist from the later period too.

I'm sure I speak for everyone when I say we had a most enjoyable evening in Peter's company.

By VMS





The Temple of Isis at Philae

I suppose everyone has a favourite temple in Egypt and in spite of the grandeur at Abu Simbel I feel that mine is the mainly Graeco-Roman temple of Philae, dedicated to the goddess Isis. The original temple now stands on Algilkia Island, to which it was removed in the 1960s as many islands were submerged under the waters of Lake Nasser.



The temple was a cult centre for Isis who was revered throughout most of the Roman world. My first visit was at night. We had moored at Aswan and were attending a Son-et-Lumiere performance in the temple. We were driven to a creaky landing stage where a series of small boats carried us to the island, which was lit by subtle spotlights. We disembarked at an equally creaky landing stage which was formerly the ancient quay and walked along the old processional way. Near the main pylon an ancient nilometer can be found. These were used to measure the height of the river and predict the annual flooding, on which life in ancient Egypt was highly dependent.

The main temple was lit to have the appearance as if by an inner glow that made one feel that at any moment some ancient priests would emerge from within, but our guide was of this world and accompanied by subtle changes of lighting we were conducted on a walking and talking tour of the main temple.

I really felt as though I had gone back through the ages. Inside the sanctuary there was a sense of surprise that there was no-one offering sacrifices to the goddess. Darkened doorways beckoned us to explore further and added more than a hint of mystery. Our exploration over, we were then seated in a small arena with Trajan's kiosk as a backdrop to the small dais, and the story of Isis and Osiris began to unfold. Finally we were returned from whence we had come, feeling that further exploration was a must as the island and its temples faded into the night.

Yes, I did say temples – for the very next day we repeated the journey but in the heat of the sun. The island rose up before us, its rocky shoreline swarming with white ibis who watched our approach with a jaundiced air. Looking so different today, calm and

serene in the light of day, the mystery of last night expelled from its columns. My first impression? It's not symmetrical! The mathematicians amongst you will know the feeling. I was later to discover that the "new" island was slightly smaller than the original, so the main temple had to be slightly skewed to accommodate it. The appeal was still there. This was the last outpost of the old pagan religion and not officially closed until the reign of Justinian circa. 550 AD. Allegedly the priests were slaughtered and the understanding of hieroglyphs was lost to the world for over 1200 years.

There are actually several monuments on the island, the ancient quay where we landed, the processional way leading to the main temple of Isis, the birth house, a few ruins of temples in honour of other minor gods. In the main temple many scenes depict the story of Isis and Osiris. One inner room in particular contains scenes relating to the collection of Osiris' scattered remains.

Interestingly, to the east of the Isis temple are the ruins of a temple to Hathor, the columns carved with some of the best heads of Hathor that I have seen.



To the south is Trajan's Kiosk, nicknamed Pharaoh's bed, its wooden roof long since gone, it has become a haven for birds. This was at one time the formal entrance to the complex.



As we rowed away and the island faded into the distance, I only wished that I had had more time to explore and ponder at the fate of the old religions in favour of the new.

By Merlys Gavin





A tour diary of Middle Egypt - November 2001

Organised by Ancient World Tours

Saturday 3rd November. Left Bridgend on 6 a.m. coach for 2 p.m. flight to **Cairo**. Met by James, our tour leader for the trip, and Aidan Dodson, our accompanying Egyptologist. We are listed as a group of 34 but two people are not coming. Flight is late and Egypt time is two hours ahead so it is 11 p.m. when we reach the Cosmopolitan Hotel, a scene of past splendour but its glory is rather tarnished. The city is still vibrant. We smile at a car draped with Christmas tree lights, ablaze. We meet our guides Salah and Hymal, our driver Makhmud and our accompanying armed guard, Aler.

Sunday 4th November. Cairo Museum - always a wonderful experience! We have a comprehensive tour with our guide and Aidan and then some time to browse. We revisit old favourites, notably the Amarna section and the treasures of Tutankhamun, and see some new finds such as an intricately carved statue of a nurse with four princesses. The guide smiles wryly when the man told off for using flash is an Egyptian!

The afternoon is free so people elect to do various things. Jane, Maurice, Gwen, Jack and I take a taxi to the Giza Plateau. The driver assured us his car would take five but Gwen ended up in the front, half on Jack's lap! We wanted to find some recent excavations on The Wall of Crows behind the Muslim Cemetery but, although Jane climbed a very high sand dune to locate its position, we weren't allowed near. Our compensation was when a policeman opened two tombs especially for us and gave us a private tour: the tomb of Yunmid (Dynasty IV, Menkaure Period) and the tomb of Debhen, an overseer of Nekheb. These were well worth the tramp across the sand. Walking back to the road, we spotted a small modern bungalow with red bougainvillea blossoms climbing over the door. This must be one of the excavation houses to accommodate those working on the site. It looked incongruous in the middle of antiquity.

The taxi driver had waited patiently and the ride back to the hotel was hair-raising, hitting the rush hour with blaring horns and constant criss-crossing of assorted vehicles and pedestrians right in front of us.

Monday 5th November. 6 a.m. start, heading for **Lisht**. Cairo is already awake. Laden trucks carry cabbages and cauliflowers. A buffalo and calf are being transported to the fields. Stalls of fruit and vegetables are set up. We pass a large Muslim cemetery with its distinctive stones of turquoise and yellow. We transfer into mini buses for the rough road to the pyramid field of El Lisht, the first necropolis of Amenemhet I's capital **Itjtawy**.

The stone pyramids of Amenemhet I and his son, Senwosret I, were badly built. They are being excavated by a team from the Metropolitan Museum. Many blocks are from Giza and it can be seen how the kings wished to associate themselves with past monuments. The burial chambers are now under water. There were ten small pyramids - nine for the royal family and one subsidiary for ritual purposes. We

climb to the top to overlook the causeway. The tombs of the nobles and one of a vizier, Imhotep, are outside the complex. We are standing on the spot where the ten statues we saw in the museum were discovered.

It is now 9 a.m. Women and children are washing clothes and pots in the river. A little dog on his back, legs in the air, rolls in the sand. We see a buffalo-drawn water wheel not so much used for irrigation now since Japanese pumps arrived. We visit the tomb of Imeni, royal seal-bearer and chief of the army. We climb down to see the wall reliefs, hunting scenes and the remains of three shrine temples. A truck of armed guards drives before us and another behind.

The Fourth Dynasty pyramid at **Meidum** is a more mysterious monument: no-one knows for certain who built it but it was likely to be Snofru. If so, this is his third pyramid with two at Dashur (the Bent and the Red). [*Snofru may have built or completed the pyramid for his father Huni - Ed.*] The mortuary temple is the earliest known: 2515 BC. There is an offering table between two stelae. Even here, there is evidence of high security with armed guards in towers above the monuments. We are the only ones there. We see the two tombs - the first to Nefer Maat (the reliefs we saw in the museum came from here) and the second to his wife Itet which had the lovely painting of the Meidum geese. There are lots of hornets buzzing around so we are warned not to go too close.

We drive on through miles of desert and sand quarries. Coming towards **Il Lahun**, we have a different landscape. The Nile flows slowly here and houses have to be raised above water level. The new dam is one of the American schemes to aid irrigation. Another local market. Basket-making industry from the leaves of the palm trees and reeds. Our coach is the newest in Egypt and cost £250,000. The Lahun Pyramid is typical Middle Kingdom mud brick belonging to Senwosret II, grandson of Senwosret I. North of the pyramid, there are eight rock tombs of the royal family and a small pyramid of the queen with burial chamber. Much of the pyramid was built into the rock. The position of the entrance was changed from the north face for tomb security. The town of Kahun is where the black granite statue was found and hieratic papyri from here give an indication of daily life. To the south there are four tombs and to the east, the workers' city. The Fayum (epiglottis) area controls the water.

On to **Karanis**, a Late Ptolemaic site. There is a small museum, the remains of a town with baths, a necropolis, a southern temple to Sobek which was the place of the oracle and a northern temple to Isis. We drive past the beautiful lake, now shrunken in size with the tops of several submerged houses showing. Our hotel tonight is the Auberge El Faiyum. It was once owned by King Farouk as his holiday residence and still retains an air of past splendour. A string of coloured lights has been draped across the entrance - very pretty but, unfortunately, too low for our coach to drive in. All the luggage has to be carried by the staff from the road. This is Egypt!

Tuesday 6th November. 8 a.m. start for **Hawara**. French party in hotel - quite an event as we've seen no other tourists. We stop at **Biahmu** to see Colossus of Amenemhet III - two pedestals remain of two gigantic statues. They stood inside





the enclosure wall which would have been on the edge of the lake in the Twelfth Dynasty. Maybe they were linked with the Inundation - a retaining wall could have held water for 100 days. This was an important agricultural area enabling food to be stored. We walked the stony, thistly path. Our guards were with us and there was one on every high boulder. The path is lined with oleander bushes and the little white egrets dot the fields. We pass through Emasala, a bustling village with a market. The taxis here are motor bikes! We see three camels hidden under huge loads of dried bamboo, except for the head of the second one peeping out to eat from the pile in front. Transfer to our mini buses which took the wrong road somewhere so we had to wait for the police to get a message to them!

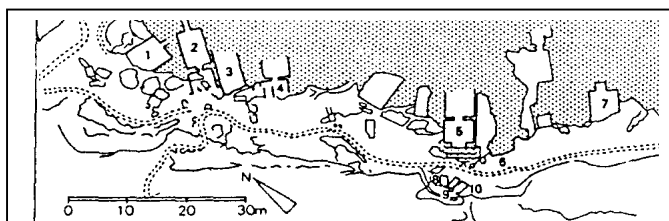
Down a very rough sandy road right into the desert. Stop at **Medinet Maadi**, a temple complex of the serpent goddess of the harvest, Renenutet, initially built by Amenemhet III and IV with later Ptolemaic additions. The first pylon has reliefs and there are several sphinxes. The police car got stuck in the sand. Jack suggested all the men could help to push. Bill said, 'I've never co-operated with them yet - I'm not starting at my age'. Just then, a tractor arrived and many photos were taken.

Hawara has the pyramid of Amenemhet III - the second built by him after the Black Pyramid at Dashur. It is of brick with a complicated interior of sliding trap doors and dummy passageways. It is now flooded. The burial chamber is carved in quartzite. It has a south east entrance, like the Djoser Step Pyramid. The complex is different from others with a large rectangular enclosure, the southern half a mortuary temple. Herodotus left a description of the 'labyrinth' but there is not much to identify it today. Aidan called this a 'big area of very little' and, indeed, it is much devastated. There is a major Greco-Roman cemetery to the north. The bodies were embalmed with encaustic wax face painting. It seems they were not buried immediately, perhaps kept in the house or in a central mummy depot which was emptied when it became full.

On to **Minia**. We see a white donkey running away with its owner on a bike pedalling furiously to catch it. The donkey was winning! To Hotel Mercure for a three night stay. We are told if we wish to go out in the evening, we must take an armed guard.

Wednesday 7th November. 7 a.m. start. A long, busy day today. Driving past a sugar factory. Sugar growth is between May and December. Delay at train crossing. Apartments with pictures of George and the Dragon hanging outside. We reach the ferry to cross the Nile. There are separate sections for men and women - we've never seen this in Egypt before. This is a strong Fundamentalist area with the biggest Christian community on this side allied to the Virgin and St. George and the other side totally Muslim. Our guide said relations are good between them. The whole population seems to be out waving and calling to us. A rough ride in open trucks to **Deir El Bersha** with limestone quarries and rock cut tomes from Dynasty XII. A long, steep climb up to the tombs of the governors of the local province. Along the hillside we can see the shafts for the middle-class burials.

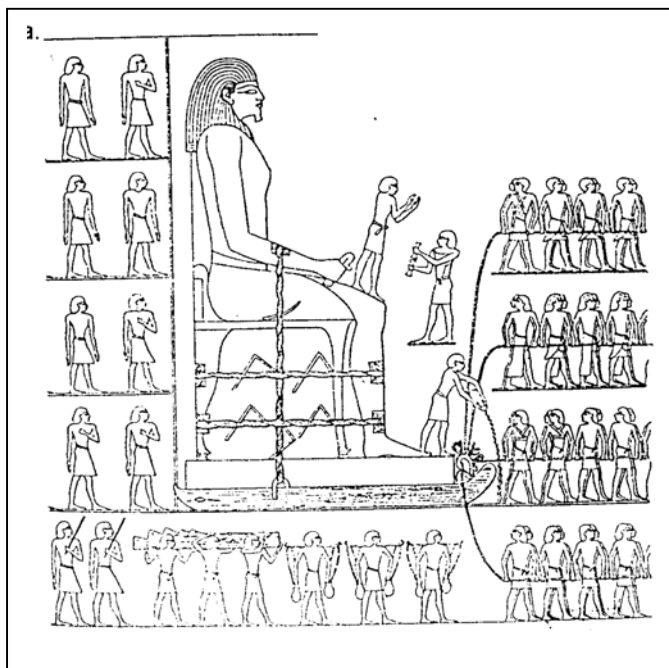
Quarry of Nectanebo. Relief of stela of Amenhotep III on far rocks. The map below shows ten of the eleven tombs now available:



Map of the Wadi el-Nakhla, near Deir elBersha, showing the location of rock-cut tombs:

1. Djehutinakht VI, nomarch and vizier
 2. Djehutihotep II, nomarch under Senusert II and III
 3. Sepi, general
 4. Neheri, (only back wall survives)
 5. Ahanakht, nomarch and vizier
 6. Djehutinakht
 7. Neheri, great priest of Thoth
- Three smaller tombs at a lower level:
8. Ahanakht, nomarch
 9. Khnum-nakht
 10. Ahanakht

We see the tomb of Djehutihotep; the front is damaged by earthquake and quarrying. Reliefs of hunting, offerings and the famous transfer of the huge statue from the alabaster quarries at Hatnub, illustrated below:



172 men were needed to move it. Many of the ancient inscriptions were covered by the red cross of monks of the 6th century. 1000 monks once lived in the monastery here. The area of mud tombs used to be houses.

Tuna El Gebel. There is a stela of Akhenaten, a tomb of the high priest of Thoth, Petosiris, with Greek work in Egyptian style. Lovely painted reliefs - wine making etc. There is a chance to see the Roman mummy of Isodora but I'm not keen on viewing her. I always feel it's a bit of an intrusion. There is an ancient well which some of the group





explore before going down to the catacombs of mummified ibis and baboons. Just one small baboon body remains and the guardian opens a drawer to show us an ibis. There is a burial shaft for the priest - baboons were linked with Thoth so, perhaps, he would have wanted to be here with them! We climb up to see a boundary stela in an area which would have been part of the Amarna complex. The city is opposite, across the river so we are in the area!

On to **El Ashmunein**. The pylon of a Ramesside temple is in the distance. An open air museum is just being completed. We have a preview. The villagers wave to us wherever we go.

Thursday. 8 a.m. start for **Amarna**. We cross the river again at a different point and this time men and women are not segregated. The river police accompany us as well as our usual guards. Children sell colourful baskets made from corn leaves. We take to our little trucks and have a drive all around. We walk the royal road, stop at the royal house, the palace. Barry Kemp has restored one of the original columns at a cost of \$17,000. The shape of the hieroglyph sign for horizon can be clearly seen between the cliffs and the sanctuary is lined up with it. Panehsy's house - chief of the area - the house and the storehouse of the servitor of the Aten. The white hut across the sand belongs to Paul Nicolson of Cardiff University currently excavating there. The ancient brewery has been filled in as have many of the places excavated - makes the area full of little mounds. Our guide points out the storeroom where Nefertiti's head was found. Climb up to the second boundary stela, in good condition, and back to see the Queen's palace.

Akhenaten's tomb is in a ravine which divides north and south section of the cliffs. He may not have been buried there. There are 25 rock cut tombs. We visit four: Huya, superintendent of the royal harem; Merirere, high priest of the Aten. This one shows scenes of the pharaoh riding a chariot and visiting the temple. There is the famous depiction of the blind harpists; Panehse, vizier of Lower Egypt with scenes of Akhenaten and family attending ceremonies at the Sun Temple. Ay's is a fine tomb with streets and palace scenes and Akhenaten and Nefertiti presenting Ay and his wife with gold collars.

Today has been well planned (as every day) and we have seen as much as possible and had time to contemplate the history of this wonderful place.

I say, 'Well. That's it. I've seen what I came for.'

John says, 'Hey. The show's not over 'til the fat lady sings' and a little voice from the back says 'I haven't sung a note yet!' Nicky is young, pretty and very unfit. She's found some of the week hard going but is still game!

On our drive back as the sun is setting, we pass the largest canal in Egypt which branches into smaller canals.

Friday. Another 8 a.m. start to **Beni Hasan**. We cross by bridge. A man is working in the fields with a donkey waiting in the bushes and, by its side, a gleaming bicycle! The Government is knocking down houses built illegally on agricultural land. We are told of the Mubarak Housing Development sponsored by various charities for those who cannot afford housing.

Necropolis on the east bank with more than 30 tombs carved into the limestone cliffs. We climb up. The view is breath-taking.

Kheti. Governor of the nome of Oryx (Dynasty XI). Scenes of daily life in the Middle Kingdom: an attack on a fort, and two copulating cows.

Baget. Wrestlers and gazelles. A hunt for unicorns and winged monsters.

Khnumhotpe. A beautiful tomb. He was a governor under Amenemhet III. Scenes of acrobats.

Amenemhat, governor of Oryx nome. Addition of false door facing west.

Looking south, we can see Speos Artimedos, a rock temple dedicated to the lion goddess, Pakhket, built by Hatshepsut. Here is the text denouncing the Hyksos but, alas, we do not go to see it.

Tihna El Gebel. Rock cut tombs date back to the Old Kingdom. One has a curved ceiling, unusual for the period. This is our most dangerous climb from the point of view of the terrain with deep shafts. Hyma says not to talk, to concentrate on our feet! There are guards on every peak. The guardian says that a Japanese team recently discovered part of a solar boat down the shaft of a spectacular tomb in the hills.

Further around the narrow slippery path is the cave of mummified crocodiles and even further a birth chapel. On the way down, we stop at a quarry with a gigantic pillar lying at its base.

Zawyat El Amwat. The remains of a step pyramid from Dynasty III or IV and more rock-cut tombs which belonged to ancient Hebenu, the earlier capital of the 16th Upper Egyptian nome. It is Friday, the local holy day, and the villagers are coming back from worship. We wait for our guards to finish their prayers. Another lovely sunset. It gets dark early - about 5 p.m. Back to Cairo and the Cosmopolitan Hotel. We had a nice tour of Cairo by night - all light and colour and noise. We see the wide streets with the expensive shops and the narrow lanes with bright cafes. We pass the oldest Faculty of Medicine and University in Africa, the Houses of Parliament, the Supreme Court, a new building of ancient design. Good view of Coptic Cairo.

Saturday 10th November. 6.30 a.m. Assemble in foyer for transport to the airport. The new ring road gave a much quicker run. Our bus driver reveals that he was John Major's personal chauffeur when he came some years ago. Cairo airport is much improved and everything passes smoothly. For security, all luggage has to be checked individually. There's red carpet out along the runway: Mubarak is expected. He is going off somewhere. A small plane painted in camouflage colours hovers around. Good flight. Back in London by 12.30 p.m. U.K. time.

A memorable trip!

By Joyce James





The cult of Amun

*Amun was arguably the most powerful god in Egyptian history, and his cult was an important part of royal and upper class life. This article outlines the main features of the cult of Amun as described by Barbara Watterson in her book **The Gods Of Ancient Egypt**, with input from the other scholars whose works are listed in the bibliography.*

According to many scholars, Amun's name means "Hidden" or "Invisible", and he was an air deity. Written evidence shows that the oldest god known by the name of Amun was a member of the Ogdoad of Hermopolis. At the end of the 1st Intermediate Period, the name of Amun appeared in the 4th (Sceptre) Nome at Waset (Thebes) in Upper Egypt. That both these gods are the same god is not certain; what is certain that Amun displaced the indigenous god of the Theban Nome, Montu, and was raised to power as the King of the Gods. Amun's consort was Amunet and later, in the Thebian Triad, his wife was Mut (Mwt) and their son Khonsu.

Amun himself did not have a ram's head, though the ram was considered like Amun to have virility and pugnacity and became his symbol. He was shown in human form wearing a cap surmounted by two tall plumes and a sun disk. The soul of Amun was supposed to be enshrouded in a serpent-shape sceptre known as Kem-at-ef (He-who-has-finished-his-moment), which perhaps was his original fetish. The virility and fecundity of Amun was not just represented by the ram but also the goose.

In the early Middle Kingdom, Amun had a temple in the Sceptre Nome at Waset (Thebes). Very little is known of Thebes' early history, though it was of strategic importance because of its geographical position on both sides of the Nile, close to desert and not far from Nubia. After Amun 'arrived', Thebes grew even more important and the cult of Amun flourished. The city became known as 'The City of Amun' or just 'The City'. 'The City of Amun', is known today for its two famous temples, Karnak and Luxor.

The Kings of Dynasty XI, natives of Sceptre Nome and adherents of Montu, made Thebes the capital of Egypt, which it remained for fifty years. In 1963 BC

the last king of Dynasty XI, Mentuhotep IV was succeeded by his vizier who was called Amenemhat, 'Amun is at the head', the founder of Dynasty XII. He built Amun's temple at Thebes and called it *Ipt-šwt*, which means 'The most select of places' and is known as Karnak today.

King Ahmose, founder of Dynasty XVIII, chose Thebes as his capital. Amun became a major state god and under Thutmose III, Amun was given sovereignty over all deities of the countries subjugated to Egypt. He became supreme god of Egypt and was also god of war who brought victories to Egypt. Amun achieved great importance in the New Kingdom, with the warrior Kings Thutmose III and Ramesses II engaged in conquest in the near east and Nubia, which brought dedications of great wealth to Amun.

Two Theban kings named Amenophis III and Tuthmosis III brought opulence, wealth of conquests and colonial policies into Egypt, while the 'clergy' organized and expanded Thebes into a religious city of a size never attained before. Their new power eclipsed such favour as the old gods of the capital enjoyed here and elsewhere in Egypt. Amun was the god of great kings, and, during the Hyksos occupation, the god of the national resistance which finally triumphed over the Hyksos.

In 1390 BC the character of Amun changed: no longer was he the god of war, but he took over the position and function of Ta-Tanen of Memphis and Re of Heliopolis. The priests claimed he was a cosmic creator god, self-engendered who 'had not mother or father but shaped his own egg, mingled his seed with his body to make the egg' and that Amun ruled as 'Lord of Time'. The priests often at times added Re's name, so that he was then known as Amun-Re, King of the Gods. His name is often printed as Amon, Amen or Amun Ra. *[We cannot be certain of the original Egyptian pronunciation and have to make use of such clues as we find – Ed.]*

A time of religious change

The power of Amun was such that it proved oppressive, and late in Dynasty XVIII there was a religious revolution, though this was short-lived: by the end of Dynasty XVIII he was reinstated and

by Dynasty XIX he had regained his supremacy.

During Dynasty XVIII Amenhotep IV changed his name to Akhenaten, abandoned Thebes and built a new city Akhetaten (now called Amarna). He dedicated this city to the Sun-Disk, the Aten. In his 13/17 year reign a nationwide programme was put into force to erase all hieroglyphic reference to the god Amun, to Mut and the entire corpus of Egyptian gods, though in Amarna today some statues of Bes have been found. Why did he do so? Was it because he believed in the Aten, or was it because the Priests of Amun had become so powerful he felt his position threatened, or was it their wealth that he needed to build his town? Tutankhaten, when he came to the throne with his wife Ankhesenpaaten, returned to the old religion and changed his name and that of his wife to Tutankhamun and Ankhesenamun.

A country of unrest

Around 1648 BC Memphis came under Hyksos control. Thebes fell into some obscurity for a hundred years or so until descendants of the Theban rulers of Dynasty XIII, having made a rallying point for Egyptian resistance to the Hyksos, formed themselves into what Manetho later designated Dynasty XVII. Around 1550 BC they finally drove out the Hyksos, and Ahmose chose Thebes as his capital and as Thebes grew in glory so did her chief god Amun.

In 663 B.C.E Assurbanipal the Assyrian sacked Thebes and took all its wealth, and Thebes never recovered from the blow. Amun still received attention from the rulers of Egypt. In October 332 B.C.E Alexander conquered Egypt. He took care to observe local religious susceptibilities, and three weeks afterwards he took a journey across the Libyan desert to the temple of Amun at Siwa Oasis, to consult the Oracle of Zeus-Ammon.

After the death of Smendes and the coronation of Psusennes I the country was split into two parts ruled by the High Priest and the Pharaoh respectively, with the Pharaoh expressing the will of Amun to exercise royal power. Then Menkheperre (a priest-king) faced the final after-effects of civil war, because of the growing power of the Chief Priest, which engulfed Thebes.





Women in the cult of Amun

The role of the Queen in the temple is anomalous, because some royal wives seem to have exercised a number of prerogatives of their husbands, though most did not make offerings to the gods or are never shown doing so. Reliefs in the Chapelle Rouge at Karnak and of Amenophis III at the Luxor temple show that the god's wife played an important role, acting as the consort of the god. During certain temple rituals, such as the Opet festival of the god Amun, she would play an important part in the ceremonies. Ahmose Nefertari, mother of Amenhotpe I, was the first royal woman to have the title 'god's wife of Amun'. The title carried with it the endowment of the resources the Estate of the Domain of the God's Wife.

Another role played by women was the sacerdotal title which occurs in the New Kingdom as Duat Nejer or Divine Adoratrice. This post was held by the High Priest Amun's daughter in Hatshepsut's reign. In the Old Kingdom women of well-to-do families held the title of Hemetnetjer, 'god's servant' or 'Priestess'. During Dynasty XVIII Hatshepsut claimed that she was the daughter of Amun, as her mother had conceived Amun's child as shown on the temple walls of Deir el-Bahri. Women often took on the role of priestess to a female god, but there are some who were priestesses of Thoth, Ptah and other male gods. There is no evidence, however, that a female ever took the role of High Priest; this was always a male role.

Priests in the cult of Amun

The High Priest Amun at Thebes was known as 'The Opener of the Gate to heaven' or simply 'First servant of Amun'.

'When a priest dies,' Herodotus tells us, his son is appointed to succeed him. In practice this was not an absolute rule but was an established tradition. In the Old Kingdom there are testaments of priests bequeathing their office to their heirs. The high priests were appointed by the king, but as even the highest office could be passed from father to son, nominally with royal permission, there was a tendency for them to become hereditary. In Dynasty XVIII a number of trusted military officers were inducted into high-priestly offices. It is thought this was done to prevent those positions

becoming hereditary and to help break the increasing power of the priesthood.

The complex system of rotating phyles (watches) doubtless needed priestly administrators as well as servitors. In Dynasty XXII part-time priests assisted the full-time servants of the gods. Many temples had hour-priests who served set shifts within a period of service which was normally one month out of every four on duty.

The priesthood of most temples consisted of two classes, the *hem-netjer* or god's servant (priests who were admitted to the temple sanctuary) and the *web* or 'pure' priests (whose roles often involved non-ritual tasks, though they were not permitted access to the sanctuary). A *web* priest could attain the rank of *hem-netjer*, though in later times the term *web* was used for both classes of priest. *Sem* priests, recognized by their leopard skins along with a side lock, were originally associated with the rituals of embalming, fulfilled by sons of the deceased father in early funerary cults.

The Houses of Amun

The major temple of Amun was at Karnak though there were others at Luxor, Heliopolis and Memphis, and at Deir el Medina during the 3rd Century BC in the reign of Ptolemy IV. There were sanctuaries to Amun-Re-Osiris on the eastern side, and on the western side sanctuaries to Amun-Sokar-Osiris. There were chapels of the Divine Adoratrices of Amun in the Medinet Habu complex, at Gebel el Sisila (which was Graeco-Roman), and Horemheb had one built on the west bank of the Nile during Dynasty XVIII. Although throughout Egypt, temples of Amun tended to replace those of other gods, small chapels were erected within the temple of Karnak and those deities were seen to be subordinate to Amun.

At Amara West Ramesses II built a temple of Amun, and the Pi-Ramesses religious centre had a temple of Amun. There was also a statue of Amun, along with Ptah, Re and the king, at Abu Simbel in Nubia. The people of Kerma and Gebel Barkal worshipped a rain god which led the Egyptians to accept this Nubian god as Amun. There were other temples, sanctuaries, chapels and statues in other temples dedicated to Amun throughout Egypt.

The wealth of Amun

The Papyrus of Turin shows the number of people at the Karnak temple during the reign of Ramesses III when Amun was at the height of his power. The temple had priests, peasants in the fields, hunters, boatmen, administrators and workers of all sorts, totalling 81,322 persons. The estate of Amun had 433 gardens, 591,320 acres of fields, 83 boats, 46 construction sites and 65 towns. So Amun was a very wealthy god, and his estates were held by the High Priest and administrators.

In Heliopolis there were about 12,963 personnel, 45,544 animals, 64 gardens, 108,973 acres of fields, 3 boats, 5 construction sites and 103 towns. In Memphis there were about 3,079 personnel, 10,047 animals, 5 gardens, 6,919 fields, 2 boats, no construction sites and 1 town. During war, they captured the enemies such as Libyans, who, together with their wives and children were put into servitude, and their herds and goods were confiscated and transferred to the estate of Amun.

Religious festivals

The Egyptian calendar had three seasons: Akhet (Inundation); Peret (Growth); and Shemu or Shomu (Harvest), each divided into four 30-day months. In addition, five so-called epagomenal or additional days were dedicated to the birthdays of certain deities in order to bring the year to a 365 day total. However, the seasons moved progressively forward, beginning a little earlier each year, due to the quarter day discrepancy between the length of the Egyptian calendar year and the actual solar year.

Festival of many types were scheduled throughout the year, with special provisions for each new moon as well as festivals tied to specific seasons. The dates and offerings of these recurrent festivals were carefully recorded and were inscribed on temple walls from Old Kingdom times. Some of the major festivals of the Egyptian year are shown in the panel overleaf. According to the calendars at Karnak, Abydos Elephantine and Western Thebes most festivals without an allocated location were of regional or national character.

The most important need of any festival was the floral offerings to the gods, as to them the scent of the flowers





was very important. Floral offerings at the Great Temple of Amun totalled:

Fan bouquets 124, tall bouquets 3,100, scented bouquets 15,500, bouquets 1,975,800, flower bundles 1,975,800, wreaths 60,450, large flowers 620, strings of flowers 12,400, flowers ('hands') 465,000, flowers ('heaps') 110, lotus ('hands') 144,720, lotus bouquets 3,410, small lotus ('hands') 110,000, lettuce & flower bouquets 19,150; sum total of floral offerings 4,786,184.

The god/goddess each morning and evening was washed and clothed in clean linen and given food three times a day. Any leftover food was shared out among the priests. On festival days, they would do the same, only this time the king would first make an offering to the barque of the god. The god Amun was put into the barque along with his wife Mut and her son Khonsu and they would travel to Luxor. On the festival of Opet they would either go by river, in which case there would be four barques pulled upstream, or they would go over land and stop on the way at the 'Way Station' where they would rest. On the way the people could ask the gods questions and the barque would move to give either a yes or no answer. There would be food, music, dancing and acrobats. Some festivals would last up to 15 days, though I am sure that the working class still had to work as on normal days.

The Pharaoh himself was a god, though he was also the servant of the gods. From the 12th Dynasty to Graeco-Roman times and also into the Christian period the god Amun was still worshipped. Religious cults became powerful due to the god that the Pharaoh worshipped, though some kings actually changed their god when they came to the throne. We don't know for certain if there was corruption in the cult of Amun, but there certainly was at Elephantine with the cult of Khnum, as it was written down on the Papyrus of Turin. Amun stayed in power only, it seemed, when Egypt was stable, and at those times Amun was the most wealthy of all the Egyptian gods. There is still a lot more to learn about the cult of Amun. Information can be found in the books listed in the Bibliography.

Only in Akhenaten's reign did the influence of Amun fade, because Akhenaten changed the religion in favour of the one solar disk, the Aten.

Do you think he changed it because:

- he believed in the Aten?
- he wanted to reduce the power of the priesthood?
- he needed the wealth of Amun to help build his city?

Please let us know what you think, at Egypt Centre, Singleton Park, Swansea.

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by Sandra Hawkins

Forthcoming Events in 2002

17 th April Callaghan Theatre 7.30	<i>The God's Wives of Amun</i> Robert Morkot
15 th May Esso Theatre 7.30	<i>Howard Carter and the Tomb of Tutankhamun</i> Harry James
12 th June Callaghan Theatre	<i>Dreams and Nightmares</i> Kasia Szapakowska Social evening

The festivals of the Egyptian calendar

Akhet: Season Of Inundation

- | | |
|------------|---|
| 1st month: | Opening of the Year
Wag festival of Osiris
Festival of the Departure of Osiris (Abydos)
Festival of Thoth
Festival of Intoxication (a festival of Hathor) |
| 2nd month: | Festival of Ptah south of his wall (Memphis)
Opet festival (Thebes) |
| 3rd month: | Festival of Hathor (Edfu & Dendera) |
| 4th month: | Festival of Sokar
Festival of Sekhmet |

Peret: Season Of Growth

- | | |
|------------|---|
| 1st month: | Festival of Nehebkau
Festival of the coronation of the Sacred Falcon (Edfu)
Festival of Min
Festival of Departure of Mut |
| 2nd month: | Festival of Victory (Edfu)
Great Brand festival |
| 3rd month: | Small Brand festival
Festival of Amenophis |
| 4th month: | Festival of Renenutet |

Shemu: Season Of Harvest

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| 1 st month: | Festival of Khonsu
Festival of Departure of Min |
| 2nd month: | Beautiful feast of the Valley (Thebes) |
| 3rd month: | Festival of the Beautiful Meeting (Edfu & Dendera) |
| 4th month: | Festival of Re-Horakhty
Festival of the Opening of the Year |

Epagomenal Days

Festival of Osiris, Horus, Seth, Isis and Nephthys -
(celebrated on five successive days).

