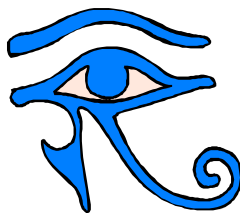


ESSEX
EGYPTOLOGY GROUP



Newsletter 59
May 2010

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- 2nd May The Petrie Museum and the Birth of Egyptian Archaeology – Jan Picton
6th June Going to God's Land: Egypt's trade with Punt – Lucia Gahlin
4th July Recreating an Ancient Egyptian Market Place - Members
1st August "Free Mike Night" – 10-minute presentations by Members
5th Sept Queen Hatshepsut – Beloved Queen or wicked stepmother? – Victor Blunden

MAY MEETING

This month we welcome Jan Picton from the Petrie Museum.

REVIEW OF LAST MEETING

SUE MOSELEY - THE END OF THE 18TH DYNASTY

After a slight technical hitch, Sue Moseley started her talk on the end of the 18th dynasty, by way of a general introduction. This former Essex girl admitted that she came late to the world of Egyptology having been a history teacher but, following the usual Nile cruise she is now, like so many of us, well and truly hooked. Having listened to the Nile cruise guide she felt the need to ask, in fact to demand, that they produce evidence for their statements and, while it can be annoying at times, we all need to either see such evidence or at the very least have the statements prefixed by the words possible or probably.

Sue then took us away from Egypt to examine the case of the Princes in the Tower and Lord Lucan, this was by way of showing that even relatively more recent events have an outcome that is still unknown to us and as such we can hardly be expected to have the definitive answer to events that happened further back in history. The use of firm statements of fact on lack of evidence was well illustrated by Sue showing us a statuette pictured on the web that could be Akhen-Aten, Saa-Ka-Ra, and Tut-Ank-Aten but is confidently attributed to Saa-Ka-Ra yet, as Sue pointed out, the logic doesn't really follow. It is so easy just to accept opinion as fact. Assumptions are made and have always been made to cover what isn't known. While agreeing with her whole heartily on this, her assumption that the famous Head of Nefertiti is too Aryan in features and thus a possible forgery, got my attention and clearly shows that our speaker is not afraid to question everything. We always need to be on our guard and look at what is being said 'is this actual evidence' or what the author simply

believes or assumes to be the case, something that Sue brought us back to time and again during her talk. Could there be alternative explanations?

We then moved on to the beginning of the 18th dynasty with Ahmose and the question of the Hyksos. Sue is of the mind that the defeat and expulsion from Egypt of the Hyksos could be the source of the biblical exodus story and that by linking in with the eruption of Thera may even explain the plagues of Moses. I think that may be going a step too far but as with much of her talk Sue certainly had our minds thinking of things in a new and sometimes unexpected direction. The reference cited by Sue to the Ahmose Tempest Stele is certainly intriguing and in need of some deeper investigation. Hatshepsut was next and the question of why known Pharaohs are missing from the 'King Lists'. Sue made the point that history is written by those who come after and should be seen as their view as to how it should have been. What we see is more often than not what they want us to see, not necessarily what actually happened. Again the need to question everything was brought home to us.

Sue now brought our thoughts to examine the Amarna period, a time in Egyptian history that even those like me whose main interest lies in the Pre Dynastic and Old Kingdom can't help but be intrigued by. Sue first examined the question of the new city site of Akhetaten and whether it was ever the Capital and if so did the officials ever view it as such. Egypt moved the base of the Pharaoh on several occasions but to my knowledge and understanding the seat of administration stayed in Memphis and as Sue demonstrated so many tombs of high officials are located not in Amarna but in the old necropolis site of Saqqara. The issue of how many and who followed Akhenaten to the new site and whether willing or not, is made difficult for us, as so many of them changed the 'god' element of their names. Sue drew our attention to Theban Tomb TT55 of the official Ramose. This beautiful tomb was used to show wall decoration that was started under Amenhotep III then moved on to show Akhenaten before, for some unknown reason, it was not completed. Perhaps by then Ramose had moved and was to be buried in Amarna, but by now Sue had clearly got us all questioning the established view and the fact that we simply do not know was how we left it. The question of the co-regency was next to be tackled. The argument for this is still much debated, was there a co-regency between Amenhotep III and his son Akhenaten and if so was it a long or short period. Sue appeared to be in favour of a long overlap, but freely admitted that here as in so many other respects the jury is still out and new finds or interpretations could easily change her view. For some reason that I failed to understand our speaker placed the end of Akhenaten's reign at year 12. Certainly one of the few things that we know for sure is that many of the Royal family are no longer present in the records after the festival in year 12, but year 17 is the generally accepted last date for Akhenaten, as attested by amongst other things a wine docket held in the Petrie Museum. Did Nefertiti die in year 12 or did she, as Sue and some others believe, carry on under a different name as Smenkhara and have a co-regency with Akhenaten and even go on for a short time as Pharaoh in her own right as Smenkhara. The issue of who is buried in KV55 and the age at death is linked to all these questions and has still to be satisfactorily answered. It was clear that Sue had a firm opinion on this but in the spirit of the talk left it open for us to examine the evidence and decide for ourselves.

The Family tree of the end of the 18th dynasty was touched upon and Sue is of the view that Tutankhamen is the son of Nefertiti. Sadly for us the recent DNA test results have only just been released by the SCA and do not form part of the analysis in Sue's book. And there this lively talk ended. For those who were interested in pursuing Sue's research, copies of her book were on offer. Sue left us with much to ponder and the thought that it is down to all of us to question the established theory and ask 'where is the evidence'.

Sue Moseley's book "Amarna – The Missing Evidence"

For those who are interested, I can recommend Kate Phizackerley blog 'News from the Valley of the Kings' and Dylan Bickerstaffe's 'Exploring Ancient Lands' web site. Both look in depth and with great clarity at the recent DNA test results published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA).

Rosemary Ackland

LECTURES AT THE EGYPTIAN CULTURAL BUREAU

The lectures begin at 6.45pm (75 minutes, followed by refreshment), held at the Bureau, 4 Chesterfield Gardens, London W1 (020 7491 7720). They are free of charge.

- 13th May – Lucia Gahlin – How much do we really know about Akhenaten?
- 27th May – Bob Partridge – News from Egypt
- 10th June – Dr Patricia Spencer – Recent work of the EES Delta Survey

Here is the second of the articles that Joyce Filer has written especially for us on health problems in Ancient Egypt – part three will be in next month's issue.

SOME NOTES ON HEALTH PROBLEMS IN ANCIENT EGYPT AND NUBIA

Part Two: Problems With Broken Bones

Throughout time and place people have suffered from fractured, or broken, bones. The ancient Egyptians and Nubians were no exceptions to this fact: from predynastic times right through to Christian Medieval periods we have evidence of such injuries.

Patterns of fractures to post-cranial remains (that is bones other than the skull), in different societies of the world, can be compared. The site of the fracture on these bones may often indicate the cause of the injury. For example, research has indicated that fractures to the wrist and to the lower ends of the radius and ulna (the lower arm bones) are relatively common in modern Britain and America, as a result of people accidentally falling onto hard surfaces and using outstretched arms to help themselves. Yet, in ancient Egypt and Nubia we see a notable number of cases of fractures to the central section of these bones. This would suggest an intentional blow as the forearm is raised to defend against an aggressive attack. [Illustration 1]



In many cases fractures to arm bones healed very well with little shortening of the affected bone. This was not always the case with fractures to leg bones. A number of ancient Egyptian cases of fractures to the femur (the upper leg bone) certainly show good healing but there may have been a cost to the person affected! In modern societies broken legs receive traction or plaster-of-Paris support allowing the bone to heal in the correct position. However, in ancient times, the real problem with broken leg bones is that

the leg would need to be both splinted (supported) and rested. This may not have been practical in Egypt and Nubia, being largely active agricultural societies. If the injured person attempted to walk then the weight of the body would displace the fractured bones. The fractured bone could easily heal but the ends of the bones could 'overshoot', thereby mending in an incorrect position. The possible cost might have been a considerable shortening of the affected leg, perhaps causing an unsteady gait.

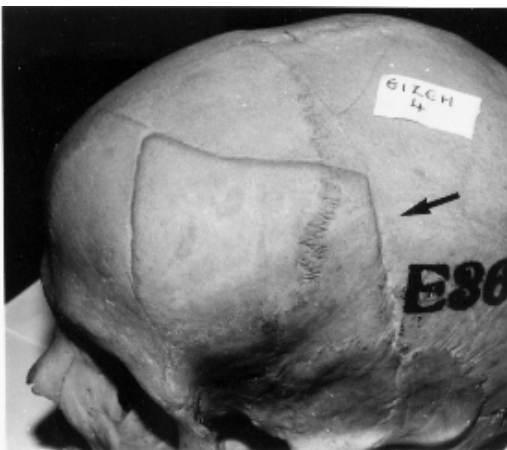
In contrast to post-cranial injuries there seems to be more 'universal' patterns in head injuries. This occurs throughout the world, no matter which ancient civilisation we study. Apart from the defensive arm fractures noted above, the majority of fractures to post-cranial bones were probably accidental. When we consider head injuries, however, they do seem to be more a result of intentional violence. Types of head injuries reflect the type of weapon used. For example, in a large group of Nubian skulls I studied, the injuries were mostly depressions - some round, some ovoid, others longitudinal. The injuries on these skulls, from Kerma and dating to the Middle Kingdom, clearly reflected the types of weapons and tools available to that society at that particular period: mallets, throwsticks and maces.



[Illustration 2]

By contrast, a large group of Egyptian skulls from Giza which I studied - from a much later period (600 - 300 BC) - showed far more serious injuries: gashes, blows and deep penetrating wounds. By this period the ancient Egyptians had developed iron technology resulting in some heavy duty weapons - axes, swords and knives - capable of causing quite massive injuries.

[Illustration 3]



As in most ancient cultures, Egyptian and Nubian head injuries were sustained by more men than women - probably because they were more involved in military action and so forth. Many Egyptian tomb scenes show men engaged in combat, often with unprotected heads. The majority of head injuries were inflicted to the left side of the head indicating a right-handed face-to-face assailant and possibly reflecting the Egyptian preference for right-handedness; some injuries affected the top part of the head. My personal research has found injuries to the back and right side of skulls but they seem to be in the minority.

Broken bones are interesting to study as they offer an insight into ancient societies. At times we may feel that, through such injuries, we get a glimpse of the behaviour and attitudes of the peoples of ancient Egypt and Nubia.

Illustrations courtesy of Joyce Filer

1. Broken but healed right radius, Medieval Period, Gabati, Nubia. Compare with left radius beneath.
2. Healed injury to top of skull, Kerma, Nubia.
3. Skull, healed injury to left side, Giza (noted as Gizeh by excavator), 600-300 BC.

(Illustrations: Joyce Filer)

Joyce Filer
Egyptologist and Physical Anthropologist

JOYCE FILER – STUDY DAYS

Tutankhamun: the latest information - £35

Find out about the new examination of the mummy of the 'Boy-King'

Saturday 29 May 2010: 11am - 5 pm

Hughes-Parry Hall, Cartwright Gardens, Central London

The Forensic aspects of Ancient Egypt - £30

Find out how age at death, gender, health (and more) is discovered.

Saturday 19 June 2010: 11am - 5 pm

Hughes-Parry Hall, Cartwright Gardens, Central London

For more information on both events contact:

Richard at: rikki_promo@yahoo.co.uk or tel: 07973 6951 68

EGYPTIAN DREAMS

The Egyptians believed dreams to be sacred, and honoured priests had the responsibility of interpreting them. References to the meaning of specific dreams were found in some of the earliest surviving texts of the human race, clay tablets, bearing cuneiform script. From Babylonia and Assyria, are found at the site of the great library at Nineveh. And temples were built for one of the Babylonian deities Mamu, the Goddess of dreams.

Dreams were originally believed to be messages from the gods or supernatural communications of some kind. During the 12th dynasty (1990-1786 BCE), the Egyptians were certainly attempting to interpret their dreams, for they published a book setting out some of the conclusions they had reached about dream symbols. It was in ancient Egypt that the process of "dream incubation" began: a person, who was sick, emotionally disturbed or wanted to ask the gods for help, would be put to sleep in a temple and the priest (or Master of the Secret Things) would interpret their dreams.

In temples known as Serapeums (named after the god of dreams, Serapis) dream "incubation" was accomplished. The extremely ritualistic practice was intended to encourage an especially enlightening dream that originated from the gods and world to be interpreted by the oracles or "learned men of the magic library."

The person undergoing the dream incubation was called the incubant and would sleep at the temple after having taken part, perhaps for several days, in various rituals of cleansing, fasting, abstention from sex, making offerings and praying. Sometimes harmless snakes were placed near the bed. These extraordinary circumstances probably put the incubant in a suitably expectant mental state for a meaningful dream. It also seems that dreams could also be incubated through the use of a "stand in incubant".

Incubation appears to have been extremely fashionable and successful; major dream temples existed at Thebes and Memphis in Egypt and at many other locations in the Near East. Incubated dreams were used for a great assortment of purposes, including discoveries of the appropriate herbal remedy or other cures for a sickness, to obtain guidance on topics such as what to do about a relationship and even to predict the future.

One prophetic dream that seemingly did not require incubation was the dream of Prince Thutmose, later Thutmose IV of Egypt. Visitors to the great sphinx at Giza can see today an inscription he placed on it recording that, while asleep by the sphinx, he was promised the kingdom of the god Hormakhu in return for clearing away the sand from the base of the statue.

Some ancient Egyptian papyri provide lists of dream themes and their meanings. One document, from the 13th dynasty (1770 BCE) says that if a woman dreams of kissing her husband, problems lie ahead. This is an example of an “opposites”, a view that often crops up in modern dream interpretation, in which a dream means the opposite of what it appears to mean.

(An extract From: Dreamtime. (A History, Mythology, Physiology and Guide to the Interpretation of Dreams,) by Linda Louisa Dell. Published by Capall Bann, £17.95. www.capallbann.co.uk)

Linda Louisa Dell

TOURS BY LUCIA GAHLIN

1 Alexandria, Siwa, Bahariya Oases and the Faiyum, leaving November with Andante Travels – for details
email: tours@andantetravels.co.uk
or call: 01722 713800

2 The Complete Egypt - a grand tour of Egypt, leaving 11th September with Ancient World Tours
Email: peter@ancient.co.uk
or call: 020 7917 9494.

ANCIENT WORLD TOURS/FRIENDS OF THE PETRIE MUSEUM CONFERENCE

The 2010 AWT/Friends of the Petrie Museum Conference is taking place over the weekend of 21st and 22nd August in the Cruciform Theatre, Central London. Speakers include Mansoor Boraik, Adam Lowe, Ian Mathieson, Jaromir Malek, Elizabeth Bloxham, Nick Jackson, Dylan Bickerstaffe, Sam Nixon, Sally-Ann Ashton and Medhat Saad. Details on the AWT website

Conference price £165 (to be confirmed)
Accommodation £45 per night (to be confirmed)
e-mail info@ancient.co.uk or telephone 020 7917 9494

CONTRIBUTIONS

This month thanks go to Linda Louisa Dell, Joyce Filer and Rosemary Ackland

The Newsletter Editor, Janet Brewer, welcomes all articles, letters, reviews and quizzes.

All articles express the views and opinions of their authors

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