



## NEWS FROM ABU RAWASH: A Project of IFAO

### JUNE-JULY 2010 SEASON

Abu Rawash lies 8 km to the northwest of the Giza Plateau and 15 km to the west of Cairo. Its archaeological region belongs to the northern end of the Memphite Necropolis and is made up of archaeological sites that include many different periods, ranging from the Predynastic through until the Coptic Period. The earliest occupation corresponds to the Early Dynastic 'M' Cemetery, which is situated upon a small knoll east of the plateau of Abu Rawash. This cemetery was investigated by Pierre Montet in 1913 and 1914. Montet studied 25 tombs belonging to members of the elite class. These were made of mud-bricks dating from Nagada III C2 (middle of 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty). But results obtained during that time remain to a great extent unpublished.

Starting in 2007, on behalf of the French Archaeological Institute (IFAO), I initiated a re-excavation of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty M Cemetery, which would enable us to understand better the earliest activity in the area, its relationship to the Early Dynastic Period and to the region as a whole. The aims of the project are two-fold: to better understand the development of funeral architecture during the Archaic Period and to reinstate Abu Rawash to its former prestigious status, as it has been left in the shade for too long.

The Early Dynastic tombs discovered at the M Cemetery are elite mastaba tombs with mud brick superstructures, their facades decorated with recessed niches. These are massive structures comparable to fortified walls. Niching on the mastabas is



PORTCULLIS IN FRONT OF THE FUNERAL CHAMBER OF MASTABA M11:  
THE UPPER PART HAS BEEN DAMAGED IN ANTIQUITY BY ROBBERS.



A SECONDARY BURIAL BESIDE M10

similar to that of the earliest serekh panels, which are stylised representations of the palace-façade. The substructures of the tombs were cut into the rock. Each of the tombs consists of an open pit and side chambers. The dead may have been buried in one of the side chambers, with the other chambers devoted to offering material. Around the mastabas were rows of secondary burials forming a cluster of tombs sometimes surrounded by an enclosure wall that includes the main burial and secondary burials. The Abu Rawash mastabas are clearly among the most striking examples of early monumental architecture in Egypt.

The main focus of the activities undertaken in June-July 2010 was around Tombs M10 and M11. Situated at the northern edge of the hill, they have suffered much damage in antiquity – probably during the Old Kingdom – as shown by the evidence of the use of the tombs as quarries. Limestone slabs from this area have been used for the building of tombs in the neighbouring 'F' Cemetery. However mastabas M10 and M11 are still preserved. The funerary chamber of M10 has been destroyed but plastered walls and floor are still visible. Two notches in the pit correspond to the vertical grooves fitted out on both sides of the entrance in order to close the funerary chamber with stone slabs. At the north and the east, two side chambers still exist. The mud-brick superstructure is preserved only for a few millimetres around the rectangular pit.

Mastaba M11 is the only tomb which still conserves a portcullis *in situ*; two massive slabs will still slide into two vertical grooves fitted out on both sides of the entrance. There are also three other rooms made for the offering material. On the eastern side of the mastaba, two secondary burials were still preserved. They are primary and individual burials. The skeletons' orientation followed a north-south axis and in the majority of cases the heads were oriented to the north with the face looking to the east. The bodies always were buried on the left side, in a contracted or a hyper-contracted position with hands in front of or under the face. The presence of containers made with perishable materials (mat and wooden coffins) was observed in all the graves. Grave

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goods (pottery) were associated with particular bodies. The position of the pots differs from one tomb to another. The bones are in a poor state of preservation, which did not allow us to determine whether they were male or female.

Results from the previous seasons of work already confirmed that the 'M' Cemetery could be dated to the middle of the First Dynasty, quite possibly to the reign of king Den. This is not only supported by the inscriptional material, but by the pottery evidence studied by Jane Smythe (ARCE, Cairo) since 2007. Cleaning of mastabas brought new information concerning the architecture of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty elite tombs and the organisation of surrounding tombs with secondary burials. We now have a comprehensive map of the tombs that we hope to verify in the coming seasons.

Future archaeological seasons will be devoted to a full cleaning of Mastabas M07 and M08 which belong to the main structures of the site. Archaeological research will then continue methodically from the west to the east of the cemetery. **Yann Tristant**

**Editor's Note:** Dr Yann Tristant started the project at Abu Rawash when he held a fellowship at the Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale (IFAO) in Cairo. Following his appointment as Lecturer at Macquarie University, he will continue as Director of the project at Abu Rawash, establishing an important link between Macquarie and the distinguished French institute of archaeology.

## Update on Helwan

According to the SCA's rules concessions are granted to institutions and not to individuals. Accordingly the Helwan concession will remain with Macquarie University, with continuing annual funding to the project. Macquarie University will however cooperate with the University of Vienna and Prof. E. Christiana Köhler has been appointed Director of the project and Dr Yann Tristant of Macquarie as Deputy Director.

## THE NEW LIFE OF AN OLD TOMB:

### The Coptic Monks in TT233

Nearly every site in Egypt has more than one life to be examined: one can see layers of habitation and appropriation as space was used and reused by successive generations. Coptic Studies researchers from Macquarie are now following this theme by tracing the afterlife of the tomb of the 19th Dynasty 'scribe of the offering table' Saroy, TT 233, at Dra Abu'l Naga in Luxor, which is being studied by an ACE team led by Boyo Ockinga.

In the sixth to eighth centuries, the 'mountain of Jeme', (which took its name from the Coptic period town in Medinet Habu) was covered in monastic settlements whose memory is preserved in the frequency of the Arabic word *deir*, 'monastery', for the place names on the mountain. Every major tomb and mortuary temple housed a monastery or monastic cell, from the Temple of Hatshepsut down to the smaller tombs and caves which dot the landscape. The whole necropolis had a 'second life' in which it was home to one of the most thriving monastic settlements in Egypt.

In the sixth to eighth century TT233 was home to a group of Christian monks. Just over the hill to the north lay the largest monastery in the region, known in modern times as the Deir el-Bakhit. The monks who dwelt in TT233 were no doubt connected in some way to this monastery, but the remains of a series of mud-brick buildings on the northern end of Dra Abu'l Naga suggest that there may have been a smaller independent

monastery there. As well as a Coptic period oven in the forecourt of TT223, papyri and ostraca written in Coptic and Greek were also found in the forecourt, and Coptic graffiti in the broad hall of the tomb. From these, we can reconstruct something of the life of the monks who gave the tomb its second life as a monastic cell. Four letters on papyrus are addressed to a certain Posidonius, who presumably lived in the tomb. Notable among the ostraca are a number of writing exercises, in which monks practiced their numbers, letters, and handwriting. In one, a monk called 'Andrew the Less', who probably also lived in the tomb at some stage, practices writing a letter. Among the papyri and other ostraca, are a list of Old Testament books (perhaps owned by the monks) and a wide range of correspondence generated by the monks in their daily lives. In the broad hall of the tomb, monks have written Coptic graffiti on the east wall: one reads 'Ezekiel, Dios, Jeremiah, Priests and anchorites'. Dios and Jeremiah were probably monks who also lived in the tomb or in the immediate vicinity. The name Dios recurs several times, as does Ezekiel: rather than the name of a monk, the latter may have been a sort of invocation, as it also appears above a list of apostles and bishops of Alexandria.

Via this textual record and the material record from the Late Roman and early Islamic period found in the tomb, the team of Heike Behlmer, Matt Underwood, and Malcolm Choat are reconstructing this small monastic community and its relations with the surrounding monasteries and towns. Together with the team investigating the Pharaonic period of the tomb's use, it is possible to investigate the changing nature and use of sacred space on the Theban mountains over several millennia. In the courtyard of the adjoining tomb TT149 are mudbrick walls: in coming seasons it is hoped these can be revealed, extending our knowledge of the monastic community. The investigation of TT233 illustrates the potential of the Ancient Cultures Research Centre, in which the ACE is now united with the Ancient History Documentary Research Centre: within this environment, projects which combine the interests of diverse Macquarie researchers with complementary interests and expertise are possible.

**Malcolm Choat**

## A Landmark for Egyptology at Macquarie

It is not uncommon for one and sometimes two Egyptology students to graduate PhD at Macquarie, but on Thursday 23rd September four students were awarded their doctorate. They are: Todd Gillen ("Narrative, rhetoric and the historical inscriptions of Ramses II at Medinet Habu"), Eve Guerry ("Terms for transgression: A lexical study of ancient Egyptian words for wrongdoing and evil"), Joyce Swinton ("Egyptian resources and their management as shown in tomb scenes and inscriptions in the Old Kingdom") and Elizabeth Thompson ("The depiction of the tomb owner in the Old Kingdom cemetery of El-Hawawish in Upper Egypt"). At a party held in the Museum of Ancient Cultures following the graduation ceremony, Professor Kanawati told the graduates, their families and friends that this was a 'vintage year' for Macquarie Egyptology; he was certain no other university in the world would be graduating so many Egyptology doctorates in one ceremony.

Todd, who was awarded the Vice-Chancellor's Commendation, has taken up a post-doctoral position with the University of Liège in Belgium.

The Newsletter congratulates Todd, Eve, Joyce and Beth and the academic staff who guided them through the long years of research.



## Where are they now?

Macquarie University graduates are doing some wonderful research work overseas and here two such postgraduates talk to us about their work.

### Camilla di Biase Dyson

It's a funny thing, completely changing your 'work language' at the beginning of your research career. Funnier still, if you simultaneously decide that you want to change research field. And so it was early in 2009, when I left Sydney for Berlin to take up a Junior Fellowship of the Excellence Cluster TOPOI: The Formation and Transformation of Space and Knowledge in Ancient Civilizations, that I decided to investigate not ancient Egyptian literature, my *raison d'être* as a Macquarie doctoral student but instead Egyptian language with a cognitive twist. In German. Almost two years on I wouldn't exchange a moment, even if the brain-morphing anguish it took to be able to use German day in and day out shaved months (if not more) off time I could have been productively publishing. Ahem.

Fundamentally, though, I felt like I had been given the opportunity to conduct the sort of research I had long dreamt of doing – one which investigates the link between an ancient language like Egyptian, its cultural context and that most enigmatic of organs, the human brain. What does a human perceive? If we accept that all eyes are created equal and therefore that we humans can all see the same thing, how does culture affect the brain so as to make us express what we see so differently? How can we even begin to answer these questions with respect to ancient languages, and therefore to the ancient brain, when we are still so unsure about the ongoing research into the modern brain? I don't believe that I can answer these questions, but I do believe that the questions are worth asking (thank goodness the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, of which I am now a Postdoctoral Fellow, thinks so too).

My current research approaches these huge issues from a very little corner – prepositions, some of the smallest linguistic items committed to writing. How can little words help us answer big questions? Well, what I'm specifically investigating is why it is that the prepositions used to express time are the same as the ones used to express space. In other words, the Egyptians used the same words to express both 'in front of' and 'before' and the same to express 'behind' and 'after'. When I'm further into my data analysis (again – Ahem.) and when I feel a bit braver, I want to assess whether writing about time also tells us about thinking about time.

Modern linguistic research and cognitive science of course leads the charge on this issue. The main bone of contention between scholars is whether temporal concepts (like 'before' and 'after') derive from more tangible spatial concepts (like 'in front of' and 'behind'). Of course this all makes sense: even in English, we have a spatial 'before': "he stood before the class" and a temporal 'before': "don't tell me you didn't know that before!" But even if we can imagine that a word that carries spatial and temporal meaning originally only had spatial meaning (indeed, a preliminary study of mine seems to suggest that this was the case for at least for some Egyptian spatio-temporal prepositions), this does not necessarily mean that later on, in later contexts of use, the human brain makes this metaphorical leap from the more concrete spatial term to the more abstract temporal term.

I mean, try it for yourself! When I first said 'before', I'm sure you had no trouble recognising that I was talking about a temporal concept. However, when I mentioned the possible link to space, you could see that this link of before = in front and before = past is very reasonable. But it's also very likely that you didn't need to do this mental gymnastics until I asked you to, did you? Well, that's what some psycholinguists are arguing, to poke holes in Cognitive Metaphor Theory, around which these ideas are based. Clinical tests, they say, show that humans have no trouble understanding idioms

with metaphorical bases ('spilling the beans' is a favourite example) even if they have no idea what the real, tangible meaning behind the metaphor is. So it might be like that for the description of time as well.

And the issue gets particularly interesting when it comes to ancient Egyptian, because unlike in English, where, for instance, 'after' is temporal, but sometimes spatial, 'behind' is exclusively spatial, with Egyptian prepositions, one term has both spatial and temporal meaning. In other words, *m-ht* means 'behind' AND 'after'. Another edge that Egyptian has is that it is a pictorial language, so sometimes the spatio-temporal terms are iconic too: *h3.t* [FOREQUARTERS OF LION] literally means 'front', so with simple prepositions like *m* you can get *m-t* 'in the front' (spatial) and 'before' (temporal). So, if it's so visual, did that mean that the Egyptians 'naturally' saw time in a physical, spatial way?

So hopefully the next two years will allow me some insight into the usage, the meaning and the development of these little words. But for now I have exceeded my space and robbed you of your time. My best wishes from Berlin, **Camilla**.

### Todd Gillen

*The city of Liège - Belgium*

Liège is a very nice place with really friendly people. It's more or less a university town, and is typically European with infinite cafés, *über-trendy* people and quaint cobblestone streets that have been around for centuries. Despite the cold that's now setting in, I'm enjoying it a lot!

*The Ramses Project, University of Liège, Belgium*

<http://www.egypto.ulg.ac.be/Ramses.htm>

The project started in 2006, is headed by Prof. Jean Winand, and has 11 members. I occupy a post-doctoral position in the project, which is research only (no teaching...yet) and can run up to three years in duration. My job is: A-- to encode the Ramesside monumental texts into the database and check texts already encoded, and B-- to work on my own research (for the near future that will probably take the form of attempting to re-write the PhD thesis and whip it into publishable format!)

The goal of the Ramses project is to build an annotated electronic database containing all the texts written in Late Egyptian, in the broadest meaning of the term. For the encoding, the objective is therefore to integrate all the material written in Late Egyptian from the Eighteenth to the Twenty-fifth dynasty, including the texts written in softer Late Egyptian, what has elsewhere been called «néo-égyptien mixte» and «néo-égyptien partiel». This corpus is intended both as a resource for philological and linguistic research and includes several levels of linguistic analysis:

- hieroglyphic coding
- transliteration
- lemmatization (with semantic information)
- morphological and flexional analyses
- syntactic analysis
- translation

Upon completion, the Ramses database will contain approximately four thousand documents and more than one million words. The corpus will be available through the Internet and it will be possible to search by the criteria above, including any combinations. [http://www.egypto.ulg.ac.be/images/R\\_TextEditor.jpg](http://www.egypto.ulg.ac.be/images/R_TextEditor.jpg) for a screenshot of the database text editor in action.

The members of the project all have their own research interests and the project also intends to publish analyses in the form of a dictionary and a (or more than one) grammar, with particular emphases on historical and descriptive linguistic approaches to language change. A short bibliography of articles already published in connection with the project can be found on the Ramses homepage cited above.

## 2011 Annual Mini Conference

### RECENT EXCAVATIONS IN EGYPT

Sunday, April 3, 2011 at 1.15 pm for 1.30 start

Ryde Eastwood Leagues Club Auditorium

Macquarie University Egyptologists will discuss their recent work in Egypt. Speakers will include Prof. Naguib Kanawati, A/Prof. Boyo Ockinga, Dr Yann Tristant, Dr Alex Woods and Dr Elizabeth Thonpson.

A booking form is included with this Newsletter.

Cost \$25 includes afternoon tea

## Diary Dates

### Annual Mini Conference

Sunday April 3 2011

Ryde Eastwood Leagues Club Auditorium

1.15 pm for 1.30 start

### Annual Conference

Saturday August 13 2011

Ryde Eastwood Leagues Club Auditorium

10 am sharp

## 2011 Annual Conference

Saturday August 13, 2011

Ryde Eastwood Leagues Club Auditorium

9.30 for 10 am sharp

*Guest speakers:* **Professor Tamás Bacs,**  
Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest Hungary  
**Professor Karol Myśliwiec,**  
University of Warsaw, Poland

Details of the lectures will be available in the next Newsletter.

The conference price includes morning tea, a light lunch and afternoon tea. As this is a catered function, tickets will need to be prepaid to guarantee admission.

Cost: Members \$70, Non-Members \$80

Students and Pensioners \$50

School Groups with a minimum of 5 students \$40 per student,

Teacher with 5 students FREE



## GROW YOUR DIGITAL LIBRARY

### THE ORIENTAL INSTITUTE INTEGRATED DATABASE (IDB)

[HTTP://OI.UCHICAGO.EDU/RESEARCH/IDB/](http://oi.uchicago.edu/research/idb/)

In an effort to merge all of the Oriental Institute's records, documents, photographs, and field records into a single integrated computer database (IDB), the Institute has purchased the KE Software Emu (Electronic Museum) database system. Software installation and training will start in November 2010, with data migration to follow over the winter, and the new integrated database should be up and running in the spring of 2011. Access to the public component of the Integrated Database will start soon after the system is up and running in spring 2011, via a link from the Oriental Institute website.

### KING TUT EXHIBITION MELBOURNE - APRIL 2011

For information see:

[HTTP://WWW.KINGTUTMELBOURNE.COM.AU/EXHIBITION.HTM](http://www.kingtutmelbourne.com.au/exhibition.htm)

### OXFORD EXPEDITION TO EGYPT

[HTTP://WWW.OXFORDEXPEDITIONTOEGYPT.COM/ORDERING.PHP](http://www.oxfordexpeditiontoegypt.com/ordering.php)

The Oxford Expedition to Egypt has advised that the third volume of the Expedition's Egypt in Miniature series is now published: Title: *The Chapel of Niankhhknum and Khnumhotep: Scene Details* (Plates volume). The print-run of this book, and the text-volume which will follow in 2011, is 50% smaller than previous print-runs in the series, therefore early ordering is recommended. To purchase a copy of the Plates volume, go to the Website link above and follow the ordering instructions provided: SPECIAL NOTE: In order to clear space in the warehouse the expedition is offering Volume I (Kagemni) and Volume II (Ptahhotep) at greatly reduced prices for a limited period only: £20/£30 per volume, incl. delivery.

More next issue

## Telemachus announcement

We are thrilled to announce that the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) has selected the Telemachus Ancient History Mentor Program (more commonly and affectionately known as Tele's Angels) for the Award for Programs that Enhance Learning in the 2010 Australian Awards for University Teaching. We are ecstatic with this news and exceedingly grateful to the ALTC for this great honour. As the first student group ever to receive a national tertiary teaching award, we are proud to share this moment with all Australian university students as a demonstration of students' capacity to contribute to teaching and learning in a meaningful and productive way. We, Tele's Angels Mentors past and present, want to thank all the staff and societies in the Department of Ancient History's learning community here at Macquarie University for giving us so much support, encouragement, endorsement and latitude over our nine years of service, as well as the Faculty of Arts, the Learning and Teaching Centre and the University Executive who have also provided unfailing encouragement and support. Most importantly, however, we want to thank each and every Ancient History student who has participated in our events since 2002 – you have inspired us, challenged us, befriended us and informed us – but most significantly taught us that, in education, "to give is to receive". Thank you!

**Ronika Power**

Please visit our website at [www.telesangels.com.au](http://www.telesangels.com.au)

## Volunteers needed

As Members are aware, the ACE office is staffed solely by volunteers. We are seeking people who would be able to commit one day a week or a fortnight to working in the office.

Duties include answering the telephone and emails, writing receipts, banking, issuing publications, taking bookings for functions and directing inquiries to the appropriate people.

Volunteers will be given training in these tasks. As we all work on different days, a team spirit and willingness to communicate are very important. If you enjoy working in such an environment and would like to spend a regular day helping to keep the ACE office "afloat",

please contact us on Mondays on 9850 8848

or by email: [egypt@mq.edu.au](mailto:egypt@mq.edu.au)

**All Cheques should be made to MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY and all prices quoted include GST**

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