

Newsletter

SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF EGYPTIAN ANTIQUITIES

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The Nudity of Cats and What It Reveals

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S.S.E.A

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There is a group of New Kingdom ostraca and papyri that depict animals acting as humans,¹ which have long puzzled Egyptologists, in part because the imagery has no relevant text to help us decode what is represented, and also because the images, though believed to

come from the workman's village of Deir el-Medina, have no clear provenance.² However, due to the persistent repetition of themes and figures, these images can be divided into a number of categories. For instance, some groups are associated with images of agriculture, while others are related to banqueting, or religious scenes.³ Many animals are depicted throughout the ostraca and papyri, including but not limited to, gazelles, lions, and hippopotami. But perhaps the most well known characters of the anthropomorphized animals are of the elite mice and cat servants, which are often understood to represent a “topsy turvy” world in which predators serve prey. (Figure 1) The mice are almost always depicted wearing fine, pleated linen clothing, and are clearly in a



Fig. 1: *Cat and Mouse*, ca. 1295-1075 BCE. Limestone, pigment, Brooklyn Museum, Charles Edwin Wilbour Fund, 37.51E. Photo: Brooklyn Museum (Gavin Ashworth, er). Fig. 1: *Cat and Mouse*, ca. 1295-1075 BCE. Limestone, pigment, Brooklyn Museum, Charles Edwin Wilbour Fund, 37.51E. Photo: Brooklyn Museum (Gavin Ashworth, er).

position of power and superiority over their feline counterparts. The cats, however, unlike the mice, and indeed, unlike the other animals depicted in these New Kingdom ostraca and papyri, are always nude and in subservient positions, with only one exception.

An ostracon from the Louvre (E32954) includes an illustration of a seated and standing cat, and is unusual not only because both cats are dressed, but also because in this instance, we see at least one cat assuming the role of an elite individual. (Figure 2) A number of questions arise when looking at this ostracon. For one, why is it that both cats are dressed in this ostracon while in every other representation cats are always nude? Second, why, after so many images of cats serving mice, do we have in this instance an image of a cat assuming an elite role?



Fig. 2 New Kingdom, Dynasty 19-20, 1292-1069 BCE. Limestone, pigment, Paris, Musée du Louvre, département des Antiquités égyptiennes. E 32954 © 2012 Musée du Louvre, Christian Décamps.



Fig. 3 Detail of the British Museum papyrus in which a gazelle is playing a boardgame with its natural predator, a lion. Dynasty 19-20, British Museum, EA 10016,1 © Trustees of the British Museum.

In the papyri and every other ostraca of anthropomorphized animals there seems to be no clear pattern as to when an artist decides to clothe an animal or not. This is especially true when there is no attempt to show the socio-economic relationships amongst animals in an image. For instance, groups of animal musicians can be shown nude or clothed, and in instances of game playing in which animals are pitted against one another as equals, dress is unimportant. (Figure 3) However, the state of dress and undress in images of mice and cats—particularly when they are shown interacting with one another— is important because these images illustrate different socio-economic classes.

Nudity and nakedness can signify a number of different aspects in ancient Egyptian culture. Nudity, for instance, can be an indicator of age, as children are almost always depicted without clothing. Or, nudity can be linked to religious concepts, such as rebirth in the afterlife; just as people are born naked, people are understood to be reborn without clothing as well. Perhaps most obviously, nudity is also associated with sex and eroticism, as is illustrated in New Kingdom love poetry and in the images of nude or scantily clad female entertainers depicted on tomb paintings. Nudity could also be an occupational costume, and reserved to lower status jobs that were hot and dirty, such as farmers, field hands, potters, herdsmen, and boatmen. Finally, nudity and nakedness were also signs of abject poverty and extreme deprivation, and was sometimes seen as a uniform of defeat and humiliation, particularly in representations of foreigners.⁴

With the images of anthropomorphized animals, it is more difficult to discuss what kind of nudity is being

referenced. For instance, should we understand all animals without Egyptian clothing to be completely nude, or would the Egyptians have understood their fur coats to be a type of clothing? I would make the argument that unclothed animals are typically understood to be nude, since they often are shown in positions or occupations in which nudity would be accepted. In contrast, in representations of animals in religious processions, or in depictions of elite animals, the animals are shown wearing human clothing.

The cats serving the elite mice, with the exception of the Louvre ostrakon, are all nude. In one ostrakon from Brussels, for instance, there are a number of canine musicians and offering bearers who are shown wearing kilts, and only the cat is shown without clothing, making its nudity conspicuous. (Figure 4) While it is impossible to determine the sex of the nude animals, perhaps in this case, the nude cat is a reference to the nude serving girls who are sometimes depicted in banqueting scenes from New Kingdom Theban tombs. Using this as a possible interpretation, the nudity of the cat in this instance may be logical.

However, in other images of cats serving mice, it is less clear as to whether a banqueting scene is being depicted. When there are no musicians to indicate a banquet, it is likely that these images may just be a standard offering scene. (Figure 1) If one considers offering scenes and how they are represented in New Kingdom Theban tombs, offering bearers are not typically, if ever, completely nude, making the nudity of the cats peculiar.

Cats are also shown nude when depicted on their own; most commonly they are shown herding a flock of birds, which corresponds to the idea of nudity as occupational costume, since the cat is being shown essentially working in the fields. Interestingly, however, when canines are shown engaged in the same activity, they are depicted with clothes on, making the cats' nudity, once again, a point of interest.⁵ It seems, then, that the cat in this world of anthropomorphized animals may have been of particularly low status. Even in situations in which other animals may be depicted as clothed, the cats are always naked, which may suggest that their nudity is related to the Egyptian conception of nudity as being symbolic of deprivation, or humiliation.

A vignette from Turin Papyrus 55001 shows the mice and cats at war. The clothed mice are riding chariots and charging at a fortress protected by a group of naked cats. This image is similar to battle scenes found in formal ancient Egyptian art, such as the depiction of Ramesses II storming the Hittite fortress at Dapur. If we draw a parallel between these two images, we can identify the cats as being representative of the enemy, or of the foreign, who were often depicted nude in order to emphasize their defeat and humiliation.

All of these instances of cats occupying lowly social positions, and seemingly the lowest in the world of anthropomorphized animals then brings us back to the one ostrakon from the Louvre and our question as to why in this instance we have an image of clothed cats enjoying some positions of status. To attempt to understand this ostrakon, we must then consider the possible function of the ostraca and papyri.

It has been argued by some scholars that these images of anthropomorphized animals may represent oral folklore that is now lost.⁶ The fact that there seems to be a stock set of characters and motifs in these images of anthropomorphized animals also strongly suggests that they may refer to a narrative that is no longer available to modern scholars. Indeed, the sometimes close similarity between the vignettes on the papyri and the drawn images on the ostraca also proposes the possibility that a specific visual assemblage was intended, or that the ostraca might have been laid out in a particular order, similar to the organization of the papyri. Emma Brunner Traut and Diane Flores have noticed that at least two ostraca from Berlin (Inv. Nr. 3317) and Boston (1976.784) may refer to the Legend of Tefnut, in which the goddess Tefnut runs away from Egypt in the form of a cat, while the god Thoth, who is transformed into a baboon, is sent to bring her back home. Similar and related iconography and imagery in other ostraca, such as the one from the Metropolitan Museum of Art's collection (60.158), may also be related to the aforementioned folktale, as they include images of bird's nests or cats carrying a bird's nest, as well as images of cats interacting with baboons. In the "Legend of Tefnut," Thoth tells Tefnut the story of a bird and a cat who make an oath to not harm each other's young while the other is away. It seems likely that the ostraca depicting bird nests and cats carrying birds nests represent different sequences from the Tefnut Legend.

There is another set of ostraca that also seem to refer to some kind of narrative.⁷ The ostraca, which are currently located in separate collections in Stockholm (MM 14 060), Chicago (OIM 13951), and Cairo (RT 29-12-21-



Fig. 4 New Kingdom, Dynasty 19-20, ca. 1295-1069 BCE, Bruxelles, Musées royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, E.6379. © kmkg-mrah

2) involve three characters: a young boy, a cat, and an elite mouse. In the Chicago ostrakon, the cat whips the boy while the elite mouse supervises the scene. The situation is reversed in the Cairo ostrakon, in which the boy whips the cat while the mouse stands to the left and watches. In the Stockholm ostrakon, both the cat and the mouse whip the boy. These drawings are different in terms of artistic style, which suggests that they were drawn by three different artists, and while one cannot know if they were drawn at the same time, they all seem to reference the same story. It seems as if the ostraca illustrate three different moments in a narrative that is now lost.

In regards to the images of the elite mice and cat servants, Emma Brunner-Traut has noted that the folktale motif of a war between mice and cats is widespread in literature from the Near East, and she references a tale known from Greek sources, in which a treacherous cat betrays its promise and provokes an organized retaliation by the mice.⁸ The mice gain supremacy after this retaliation but are eventually triumphed by the cats, which returns everything to its natural order. This part of the story is believed to be illustrated in a fragment of a painting dating to the Coptic period in which a delegation of mice present a cat with gift, possibly as a move to sue for peace.⁹ Could it be possible, then, that the image of the cat serving the cat in the Louvre ostrakon represents the part of this story that takes place soon after the cats regain their status?

Social turmoil is a topic that is known and attested in Egyptian literature.¹⁰ "The Prophecies of Neferti" and "The Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage" both recount "topsy turvy worlds" as a way of portraying social turmoil. For instance:

"The pauper will gain wealth;
The noble woman (will toil) in order to subsist..."¹¹

"Behold the poor of the land have become wealthy,
And he who owned property (now) has nothing."¹²

Ultimately, however, it becomes clear in the literature that no one, even the poor who become wealthy, benefits from this topsy-turvy world, and eventually it is the pharaoh who restores order to the land.

“The Prophecies of Neferti” is preserved in an 18th Dynasty papyrus, though smaller portions have been found on ostraca from Deir el-Medina. The text was written during the reign or after the death of Amenemhet I, presumably as propaganda justifying his seizing of the throne from the Mentuhotep family. The text describes a world turned upside down, in which the poor become rich and in which foreigners have power over Egypt. Historically, the poem laments the disasters that had occurred in Egypt during the First Intermediate Period, but at the end of the poem, Amenemhet I restores the proper order of the world.

“The Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage,” also known as “The Admonitions of Ipuwer” is preserved in a single copy on a papyrus that dates to the 19th Dynasty, though the text is a copy of an older document. Like “The Prophecies of Neferti,” the text describes the chaos and upheaval that took place during the First Intermediate Period. Throughout “The Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage,” the author describes a lawless and “topsy-turvy” world in Egypt, in which the rich are made poor and the poor are made wealthy through a series of sharp contrasts between a situation of order and one of disorder. Unlike “The Prophecies of Neferti” the text does not include any propagandistic aims toward a specific ruler, but concludes with a plea to the monarch to reestablish the natural order of the world.

When we study the images of the anthropomorphized cats and mice in light of ancient Egyptian literature, it seems likely that these may be representations of a similar type of story, in which the world is turned on its head. In this narrative, the cats have not only been placed in a subservient role, but are also humiliated in their nudity. It is only when the social order is restored that the cats regain their status and are dressed once again, as elite Egyptians. Given that the artists of these images are presumed to be the inhabitants of the workman’s village of Deir el-Medina, who were exposed to literature such as “The Prophecies of Neferti” and the “Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage,” it seems likely that these images would follow their narrative structure. This interpretation would place the Louvre ostrakon into a larger narrative framework and would explain why in this instance we see not only at least one elite cat, but also cats that are shown dressed.

Of course, it is unlikely that we will ever know exactly what these images mean, but I am convinced that the images of anthropomorphized animals are related to

stories that are now lost. Moreover, while some before have argued that these images of cats serving mice were satirical in intent, as a way for the artists to vent their frustrations with the upper elite Egyptians, I believe it is unlikely that people working on the royal tombs would want to openly mock their source of income. Secondly, it is likely that the artists at Deir el-Medina considered themselves to be elite members of ancient Egyptian society, making it implausible that political/socio-economic satire was the driving force behind the imagery. Furthermore, I believe that my most recent interpretation of the images of the cats and mice, and in particular of the ostrakon with the image of the cat being served by another cat, further supports the view that they were not intended to be maliciously satirical, but instead follow the narrative structure outlined in stories such as “The Prophecies of Neferti” and “The Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage.” The nudity of the cats, in addition to their subservient roles, possibly emphasized their new status as humiliated members of the abject poor, and their reappearance as dressed, elite members of society may represent a return to social order.

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Notes

¹ In total, there are seventy-eight figured ostraca with images of animals acting like humans that are known to me from various museum collections, as well as three papyri currently at the British Museum (EA 10016,1; EA 10016,2), the Egyptian Museum in Turin (55001), and the Egyptian Museum in Cairo (JdE 31199).

² McDowell, *Village Life in Ancient Egypt*, 25. See also Backhouse, "Figured ostraca from Deir el-Medina," 26. Backhouse explains that no excavation report provides any detailed contextual information regarding find spots of individual ostraca. Furthermore, I have not found any anthropomorphized animal ostraca that have a provenance linking them to a site other than Deir el-Medina or Western Thebes. They are likely assumed to be from Deir el-Medina because of the fact that they were purchased in Thebes and demonstrate high quality draftsmanship. Demarée also explains that the majority of unprovenanced ostraca are assumed to have come from Deir el-Medina due to stylistic similarities. See Robert Johanness Demarée, *Ramesside Ostraca* (London: The British Museum Press, 2002), 9.

³ I have created ten new different categories for the imagery so that the repetition of themes is made more apparent for the reader: "Elite Animals and Offering Scenes," "Chariot Riding," "Religious Scenes," "Agricultural and Food Production Scenes," "Animal Musicians," "The Legend of Tefnut" and "The Boy, Cat and Mouse," the "Hippopotamus and the Crow," "Miscellaneous," and "Unclear." Elite animals and offering scenes refer to the images of animals, usually mice, who are usually seated and receiving offerings from other animals. Chariot riding refers to images of an animal driving a chariot. "Religious Scenes" includes images of what appear to be religious processions or motifs that may be related to the Book of the Dead. "Agricultural Scenes" depict animals engaged in pastoral activities, such as shepherding or farming. The images included in "Animal Musicians" depict various animals engaged in playing musical instruments. "The Boy, Cat, and Mouse" consist of three ostraca that appear to relate to the same narrative or story, since all three characters are identical and appear to be involved in the same scenario. "The Legend of Tefnut" refers to five ostraca that seem to be related to "The Legend of Tefnut" in which the god Thoth in the form of a baboon tries to convince the goddess Tefnut, who is in the form of a cat to return to Egypt by telling her the story of a cat and a vulture who make an oath not to harm each other's young. The ostraca in this category usually include an image of a baboon and a cat interacting or images of cats, birds, and bird's nests with eggs. "Hippopotamus and the Crow" is a category that includes imagery involving a hippopotamus and a crow interacting. The most famous motif in this category is of the hippopotamus in a tree with a crow climbing a ladder which is found in both an ostrakon and in a vignette in the Turin Papyrus, however, there is another vignette in an ostrakon from the University of Missouri in which a crow and a hippopotamus are featured on opposite sides of a balance. Finally "Miscellaneous" includes any ostraca with images that depict an anthropomorphized animal but which do not clearly belong to any of the aforementioned categories. "Unclear" includes any ostraca that are damaged or fragmentary to the extent where it is no longer clear what is being depicted, other than that there are elements that would lead one to believe that there is an image of an anthropomorphized animal.

Twenty- two ostraca belong to "Elite Animals and Offering Scenes," four in "Chariot Riding," sixteen in "Agricultural and Food Production Scenes," eight in "Animal Musicians," five in "Legend of Tefnut," three in "Cat, Mouse and Boy," two in "Hippopotamus and the Crow," eighteen in "Miscellaneous," and three in "Unclear." Jennifer Babcock, "Anthropomorphized Animals on New Kingdom Ostraca and Papyri: Their Artistic and Social Significance" (PhD diss., New York University, 2014), 107-109.

⁴ For a full treatment of how nudity could express different emotions, cultic functions, and age, see Ogden Goelet, "Nudity in Ancient Egypt," *Essays on Nudity in Antiquity in Memory of Otto Brendel* 12:2 (1993): 20-31.

⁵ The ostraca depicting cats leading a flock of birds from a flock of birds are located in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo (JE 65429), and Medelhavsmuseet, Stockholm (MM 14501) and depict the cats without any clothing. The ostraca of canines shepherding birds, conversely, are clothed; these are located in the Fitzwilliam Museum (E.GA.4291.1943) and the Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, Brussels (E 6369).

⁶ For a brief discussion about how certain ostraca seem to illustrate parts of the Tefnut Legend, see Diane Flores, "The Topsy-Turvy World," in *Egypt, Israel, and the Ancient Mediterranean World: Studies in Honor of Donald B. Redford*. ed. Gary N. Knoppers et al. (Boston: Brill, 2004), 250-51. For a fuller discussion on how these images of anthropomorphized animals may be illustrations of various animal fables, see Emma Brunner-Traut, *Altägyptische Tiergeschichte und Fabel: Gestalt und Strahlkraft*. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968).

⁷ Flores describes this set of ostraca as belonging to a series that deal with the subject of punishment, and suggests that they depict different aspects of an unknown fable. Flores, "The Topsy-Turvy World," 239.

⁸ Brunner-Traut provides a summary of the known texts of folktales from the Near East that includes the motif of a war between cats and mice. Emma Brunner-Traut, "Die Katzenmäusekrieg im Alten und Neuen Orient," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 104 (1954): 347-51. The similarity of the war between cats and mice has been observed in the Greek Batrachomyomachie (the Frog and Mouse War), Siegfried Morenz, "Ägyptische Tierkriege und die Batrachomyomachie," in *Neue Beiträge zur Klassischen Altertumswissenschaft: Festschrift zum 60. Geburtstag von Bernhard Schweitzer*, ed. Reinhard Lullies. (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1954), 87-94.

⁹ Brunner-Traut, "Der Katzenmäusekrieg im Alten und Neuen Orient," 347 and Emma Brunner-Traut, "Ägyptische Tiermärchen," *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* 80: 1-2 (1955): 20, motif 1.

¹⁰ Flores is one of the first to recognize that the upside down world depicted may have been seen as the satirical reflection of social turmoil as attested in literature. Flores, "The Topsy-Turvy World," 236-237.

¹¹ Selection from "The Prophecies of Neferti," William Kelley Simpson, *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 219.

¹² Selection from "Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage," Simpson, *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, 199.

The Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities/ La Société pour l'Étude de l'Égypte Ancienne

2017 Scholars' Colloquium

First Call for Papers

The Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities/Société pour l'Étude de l'Égypte Ancienne invites all doctoral level graduate students and senior scholars to submit proposals for papers to be given at this year's Scholars' Colloquium, to be held **November 3rd and 5th** in Toronto. The deadline for submission is **August 31st, 2017**. Those who need early acceptance to apply for travel grants are urged to apply before this deadline, and to indicate the reason for needing early notification in their covering email.

Proposals for Scholars' Colloquium papers will be accepted from graduate students and senior scholars in the fields of Egyptology, Anthropology, Classics, Fine Arts, Archaeology, Nubian Studies and related fields on ANY topic connected with predynastic, pharaonic, Hellenistic, Roman or Coptic Egypt, but must represent an **original** contribution to the field. Presentations may be given in either English or French. Papers may not exceed 20 minutes in length.

Since a limited number of proposals will be accepted, papers will be vetted by committee. Interested scholars should send a title and brief abstract of their proposed paper to the Scholars' Colloquium Coordinators at scholarscolloquium@thessea.org or sseacolloquium@gmail.com. Please note that only proposals submitted in electronic format [i.e. via email and in the appropriate template] will be considered. Abstracts must not exceed 350 words in length. Acceptances of papers will be issued in September.

As noted elsewhere in this *Newsletter*, the SSEA/SÉÉA is also holding its 42nd Annual Symposium that weekend. Papers accepted for the Scholars' Colloquium are **not** limited to the topic of the symposium, and no preference will be given to proposals based on topic. Please also note that the SSEA is soliciting proposals for the Scholars' Colloquium only.

Beginning in 2016, the fee previously applied only to attendance at the Saturday Symposium will be applied to the whole weekend. This means that all participants in the Scholars' Colloquium will be expected to pay the appropriate registration fee in advance.

Steven Larkman Memorial Travel Grant

Once again this year a special travel award has been set up in memory of Steven J. Larkman, former President of Calgary Chapter, by his friends and colleagues. This award will be available to aid scholars wishing to travel to Toronto to present at the 2017 SSEA Scholars' Colloquium. This award will be given to aid scholars who would not otherwise have funding to travel to the event, and will be given as partial reimbursement of travel costs upon presentation of original receipts. Scholars wishing to apply for this award must be members of the SSEA/SÉÉA and must have submitted an extended abstract of their presentations for consideration in advance of the date of the Colloquium. If you would like more information about this award, or if you would like to make a donation, please email info@thessea.org

Call for Posters - SSEA/SÉÉA Annual Meeting

November 3rd - 5th, 2017

The Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities/Société pour l'Étude de l'Égypte Ancienne is now inviting proposals for poster contributions for its Annual Meeting, to be held **November 3rd - 5th, 2017** on the campus of the University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada.

Proposals for Poster Session will be accepted from organizations, projects, expeditions, graduate students and senior scholars in the fields of Egyptology, Anthropology, Classics, Fine Arts/Art History, Archaeology, Nubian Studies, ancient Coptic Studies and related fields on must represent an original contribution to the field. Posters may address any aspect of ANY topic connected with predynastic, pharaonic, Hellenistic, Roman or Coptic Egypt. However, poster presentation is best suited to material with a strong visual impact, rather than a great reliance on text. Posters may be in either English or French. (Ideally, posters will be available in a bilingual version.)

Poster abstracts will be published in the conference abstracts booklet. Authors of posters will have the option of uploading

a pdf of their poster to the SSEA/SÉÉA website. **Please note that the production and delivery of posters to the conference is the responsibility of presenters. If they wish the SSEA/SÉÉA to deal with printing and mounting the posters on their behalf, they must cover the costs.**

There will also be a limited number of poster positions available for notices of scholarly projects or organizations in Egyptology, Nubian Studies, Coptic Studies, Near Eastern Studies or Ancient Mediterranean Studies.

Since a limited number of proposals will be accepted, posters will be vetted by committee. Interested scholars should send a title and brief abstract of their proposed poster to the Scholars' Colloquium Coordinators at scholarscolloquium@thessea.org or scholarscoll@thessea.org. Please note that only proposals submitted in electronic format [i.e. via email] will be considered. Proposals must not exceed 350 words in length. Acceptances of posters will be issued beginning in mid-October.

The final deadline for receipt of proposals for posters is **September 30th, 2017**.

The Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities/Société pour l'Étude de l'Égypte Ancienne is also holding its Scholars' Colloquium and 42nd Annual Symposium on the same weekend in November, 2017. Papers accepted for the Scholars' Colloquium and the poster sessions are **not** limited to the topic of the symposium, and no preference will be given to proposals based on topic. Please also note that the SSEA/SÉÉA is soliciting proposals for the Scholars' Colloquium and poster sessions only.

Colloque Annuel de la Société pour l'Étude de l'Égypte Ancienne/ The Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities, Édition 2017 Premier Appel à Contributions

La Société pour l'étude de l'Égypte ancienne/The Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities a le plaisir de vous annoncer qu'elle prépare l'édition 2017 de son colloque annuel qui se tiendra du **3 au 5 novembre 2017** sur le campus de l'Université de Toronto à Toronto au Canada. À cette occasion, la Société invite les doctorants, les chercheurs postdoctoraux, les professeurs et les autres membres de la communauté scientifique à soumettre leur proposition de présentation orale avant la date limite du **31 août 2017**.

Les candidats doivent démontrer que leur proposition constitue une contribution **nouvelle et non publiée** à l'avancement du savoir dans les champs de l'égyptologie, de l'anthropologie, des études classiques, de l'histoire de l'art, de l'archéologie, des études nubiennes ou dans tout autre domaine dont le cadre spatio-temporel est l'Égypte prédynastique, pharaonique, gréco-romaine ou copte. Les présentations, qui peuvent être faites en anglais ou en français, ne devraient pas durer plus de vingt minutes.

Le temps de présentation étant limité, seul un certain nombre de propositions pourra être accepté, suite à leur évaluation par un comité de sélection. Les personnes intéressées à faire une communication au colloque sont invitées à en envoyer le titre et le résumé [d'un maximum de 350 mots, par courriel et dans le modèle approprié sera considéré] au comité organisateur à l'adresse courriel suivante: scholarscolloquium@thessea.org ou scholarscolloquium@gmail.com. Les candidats recevront une réponse à leur soumission en septembre. Ceux qui auraient besoin d'une réponse plus rapide, pour obtenir une subvention, par exemple, sont invités à soumettre leur proposition bien avant la date limite du 31 août, tout en prenant soin de bien indiquer la raison nécessitant un traitement plus rapide.

Veillez prendre note que la SSEA organise également la 42e édition de son symposium annuel le samedi 4 novembre 2017, soit la même fin de semaine que le colloque. Le présent appel à contributions ne vaut que pour le colloque et les sujets proposés par les candidats n'ont pas à être en lien avec la thématique principale du symposium.

À partir de 2016, les frais précédemment appliqué seulement pour la participation au symposium samedi sera appliqué à l'ensemble du week-end. Cela signifie que tous les participants au colloque des chercheurs seront tenus de payer les frais d'inscription appropriés à l'avance.

La Bourse de Mobilité Steven Larkman

Une bourse de mobilité est offerte cette année en mémoire du regretté Steven J. Larkman, ancien président du chapitre de Calgary de la SSEA. Gracieuseté de ses amis et collègues, cette bourse a pour but d'aider financièrement les chercheurs ne bénéficiant pas autrement de sources de financement leur permettant de venir à Toronto pour faire une présentation orale à l'édition

2017 du colloque annuel de la SSEA. Les récipiendaires pourront obtenir un remboursement partiel de leurs frais de déplacement sur présentation de leurs reçus. Les chercheurs désirant postuler pour cette bourse doivent, pour être admissible, être des membres en règle de la SSEA/SÉÉA et avoir soumis préalablement un résumé détaillé de leur conférence avant le début du colloque. Pour de plus amples renseignements au sujet de cette bourse ou si vous souhaitez faire un don, veuillez écrire à info@thessea.org

Recherché: Propositions d’Affiches Réunion Annuelle de la SÉÉA/SSEA 3e - 5e Novembre 2017

La Société pour l’Étude de l’Égypte Ancienne / The Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities est présentement à la recherche de résumés de présentations scientifiques sous forme d’affiches en vu de sa réunion annuelle qui se tiendra du 3e au 5e novembre 2017 sur le campus de l’Université de Toronto à Toronto au Canada.

Les propositions acceptées auront été soumises par des étudiants universitaires des cycles supérieurs ou par des chercheurs seniors œuvrant dans les domaines de l’égyptologie, de l’anthropologie, des études classiques, des beaux-arts, de l’histoire de l’art de l’archéologie, des études nubiennes ou coptes, ou encore de tous domaines reliés. Les affiches elles-mêmes pourront porter sur n’importe quel thème relié à l’Égypte prédynastique, pharaonique, hellénistique, romaine ou copte, pour peu qu’elles présentent une nouvelle contribution à la discipline n’ayant jamais fait l’objet d’une publication antérieure. Considérez de plus qu’une présentation sous forme d’affiche est particulièrement appropriée pour du contenu à forte teneur visuelle et sied moins bien à une quantité importante de textes. Les affiches pourront être en français ou en anglais ou, encore mieux, bilingues.

Les résumés des affiches seront publiés dans le livret de l’événement. Les auteurs des affiches auront aussi l’option de télécharger une version pdf de leur affiche sur le site web de la SSEA/SÉÉA. Veuillez s’il-vous-plaît noter que la production et l’envoi de l’affiche jusqu’au site de la conférence relèvera de la responsabilité du présentateur. Si celui-ci veut que la SSEA/SÉÉA s’occupe de l’impression et de l’installation de l’affiche, il devra en défrayer les coûts.

Il y aura aussi un nombre limité d’emplacements d’affiches disponibles pour la présentation de projets académiques ou d’organisations œuvrant en égyptologie, études nubiennes, coptes, proche-orientales ou des antiquités méditerranéennes.

Puisqu’un nombre limité de propositions pourront être acceptées, les soumissions seront choisies par l’entremise d’un comité. Les intéressés doivent faire parvenir un titre et un bref résumé (d’un maximum de 350 mots) de leur proposition d’affiche au comité organisateur, à scholarscoll@thessea.org ou à scholarscolloquium@thessea.org. La date limite pour la réception des résumés est fixée au **15 septembre 2017**. Les réponses aux soumissions commenceront à être annoncées dès la mi-octobre.

La Société pour l’Étude de l’Égypte Ancienne / the Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities tiendra aussi son Colloque et son 42^e symposium annuel lors de cette même fin de semaine. Les soumissions acceptées pour le Colloque et la session d’affiches ne sont pas limitées au sujet du symposium et aucune préférence ne sera accordée aux soumissions sur la seule base de leur sujet. Veuillez enfin prendre note que la SSEA/SÉÉA n’est à la recherche de soumissions que pour le Colloque ou les affiches.

Rexine’s Dig Diaries December 2016

Rexine Hummel

Friday, December 9, 2016

I am back in my favorite place again but I feel like I am in the centre of a whirlwind. I was brought to the hotel from the plane last Sunday night and was at my table in the desert working early the following morning. I am overwhelmed by the many different sites and sounds and smells whizzing around me. I have been so tired when I return to my hotel that I am still partly unpacked. The Wi-Fi which is only available free in the lobby is extraordinarily slow (it took me 35 minutes to get through to my email.) so this will be short.

General Impressions:

The hotel (the Cataract Pyramid Resort) where we are staying is beautiful. It is huge with acres of gardens that I have yet to see and I am certainly getting my exercise just walking from the room to the dining room or to the lobby. The rooms are built around a large swimming pool with sliding doors out to a little hedged-in patio. The dig directors, Sarah Parcak (the famous space archaeologist and her husband Greg Mumford, are long time friends of mine who have the concession to dig at Lisht. At present there is a tomb on the site that is vulnerable to looters and they are cleaning it and planning to put protective doors



The large swimming pool in the gardens of the Cataract Pyramid Resort Hotel

on the openings. My roommate is Kira, a lovely young British/Greek girl who is an aspiring novelist as well as being the official dig artist. She also sings opera which makes me very happy. We have two beds, two tables, and a sunken living room with a chesterfield, chairs and tables. With all the technical equipment there is competition for electrical outlets; cameras, ipads, computers, toothbrushes, phones, kettle, etc. The electricity is unfriendly and showed its contempt for us on the first night by shooting flames out of the outlet when we plugged in the kettle for a cup of tea. The hotel is out near the desert south of the pyramids and is the closest nice accommodation that we could get to our work site in Lisht. Unfortunately it entails a long drive in very intense traffic 1 and ½ hours each way. This also means that we leave in the dark and come back in the dark. I was quite surprised today (my day off) to actually see the pool and the flowers and see just how beautiful the place is. The hotel caters to weddings and large parties. Although a buffet breakfast goes with the room we leave before the kitchen opens. However, they feed us Egyptian breakfast and Egyptian big lunch on the site. More about that later. I will attach some pictures of the hotel.

Monday, December 12, 2016

I am living in a whirlwind. We have just returned from work and my roommate has just dropped her gold ring down the bathroom sink and we are waiting for the plumber. I am beginning to feel my age and I am tired. The drive each way is one and one half hours and we fill all of the fifteen seats in the van. I would like to close my eyes on the way except the local scenery is so interesting, the traffic so alarming, and the road so full of potholes that rest is impossible. We start out on a

narrow two way local highway running south from Cairo that is full of trucks, cars, three wheeled cars, donkeys pulling carts, people on donkeys leading cows or goats to pasture and pop-up pedestrians. After an hour we turn towards the desert onto a single track alongside a canal/irrigation ditch. Children dressed in their school uniforms leap out of our way, we practically touch the sides of the cows and goats as they trudge along the path and women are washing their clothes and dishes in the canal. We finally reach the village of Lisht with its very narrow and twisting lanes. Our driver is very skilled manoeuvring between the houses with only about 12 inches available on each side of the van. A few times we have become lost and have had to back up and start over. As we drive, people (mostly children) are plastered against the

walls just as curious about us as we are about them. Once through the village we enter the land of the dead, cemetery after cemetery, some very old, litter the landscape. Their tombstones are full-sized mud-brick coffin-shaped structures coated over with cement with the name of the deceased incised in the cement on one end of it. Apparently they place the body on a cement pad and build the mudbrick structure over the body. I have to walk through a cemetery to get to the site and with my wobbly arthritic knees and hip these monuments make good railings to hang onto.

The site itself is an ancient tomb (about 3800 years old) carved into a rock outcrop. Later, after the tomb was closed three shafts were dug deep into the ground nearby (probably for relatives of the original tomb owner). It is the goal of the project to empty the fill that has blown into the shafts, uncover the entrance to the tomb and build steel



One of the wonderful rooms at the Cataract Pyramid Resort Hotel



Our supplies tent, out on site

doors and gates to protect it from looting. They have constructed a wooden tripod over the shaft entrances with a rope to lower the workmen and the archaeologist down into the hole. The first day there was a huge commotion as the workmen saw a viper at the bottom of the shaft and they refused to go down. The problem was resolved when the guard came over with his long shotgun and blasted the poor creature into little bits.

They have erected a tent in which all our supplies are kept, another long tent which is supposed to be for us to work in but has been taken over by the Egyptians for a breakfast and lunch tent, and of course a loo tent out in the desert which is necessary but a bit of a challenge to use. More about that later. We are three ceramicists, Bettina Bader from Vienna who is a top specialist in Middle Kingdom pottery, an Egyptian woman, Geehad, who is studying pottery and here to learn and myself. They have provided us with lovely tables to work on and lots and lots of pottery. Must go. The plumber has just arrived – success – he retrieved the ring.

Friday, December 16, 2016

I see on the internet that you have snow. I don't miss it at the moment. Actually it is rather chilly here. The last two days here have been specially challenging. Two days ago we woke up to dark overhanging clouds and the weather report said rain. (I have never seen rain in Egypt). We grabbed our jackets and hats and began to plan how we would cover the sherds and where we could work under cover. Actually once on the site, the sun came out a little and we relaxed until gale winds hit us with amazing vigour.

The air was filled with so much dust and sand we could hardly see each other. Our papers and the smaller sherds flew off our tables sending our helpers into frenzied running around chasing them. Sand was in our eyes, ears and in our mouths. Even walking from table to table took an enormous effort pushing against the wind. Too bad we could not harness it into electricity for us.

Especially difficult was trying to use our WC facility. There are so many tent poles and ropes that even walking to the building involves dipping under ropes and avoiding pegs, all made more difficult because of the wind and the sand blowing. The WC is in a tent and inside the zippered door there is a toilet seat perched on a three-legged base. The three legs stand precariously on three bricks hovering over a deep pit. The highest part of the tent is over the pit and anywhere else you can stand there is very little head room. Your face is usually pressed into the tent wall while you try to carefully manoeuvre around the seat. All this is much more difficult with a storm raging outside



Our desert 'facilities'



At work on the dig

blowing the tent back and forth. I am terrified of dislodging one of the legs and falling into the pit. It is not an unreasonable fear since two people have fallen in already. I have attached a photo of our WC.

We have five Egyptian students with us trying to learn archaeological practices. Yesterday was the turn of the ceramic department to teach the students the rudiments of collecting, sorting and analysing pottery. It is an enormous subject to try and explain in an hour without turning them off pottery all together. Our helper is an Egyptian female professor who can draw pottery very well and is here to learn the forms of Middle Kingdom pottery. We chose her to teach the students in Arabic and it worked out very well. They need to learn how to recognize diagnostic sherds like rims and bases, as well as the difference between the inside and outside of a vessel from a single small body sherd. It is harder than you think but rewarding when you can do it.

We were exhausted when we finally finished the day and crawled into our minibus to go home. The trip takes one and one-half hours although it is only about 50 kilometers. The roads and traffic prevents us from going fast. The first hour was normal until we got closer to Cairo and had to turn left across one of the very few bridges over the canals. We were stopped completely behind a truck carrying a load of bricks. There was a long disorderly lineup of huge trucks, vans, donkey carts, motorcycles and people. We sat there for an hour with horns squawking, and drivers angrily yelling at each other. I had visions of us staying there all night. Drivers do not follow the rules of the road in Egypt even if there are rules. The approach to

the bridge was totally jammed with vehicles and carts wedged in tight facing all directions and no one could move. I am impressed at the donkeys and cows in the middle of this that seemed utterly unstressed by it all. In our van we have an official policeman and a high level security man. Finally these two men along with Omar our chief facilitator walked up to the car jam and began yelling and negotiating with all the drivers to try and untie the knot of vehicles. With yelling and shoving, and backing up and sliding over they succeeded in producing some space. Our van driver then got into the lane of traffic that was coming against us and slowly, slowly picked his way through the spaces that our three valiant men managed to create. Once safely across the bridge without a scratch (although his mirror was snapped off when he passed a truck really

closely) we were on our way again clapping our hands and praising Omar and his helpers. I don't know how the Egyptian drivers drive in such close quarters. Even the pedestrians carrying babies appear to be accustomed to squeezing between moving trucks. The drive home that day took three hours. We are trying to think of how to avoid that bridge in the future but there are really no options.

I am also attaching a picture of some of the cemeteries that surround our site. Must go.

Wednesday, December 21, 2016

The dig closes tomorrow and we have to pack up everything. I hope the pottery can be placed in the tomb so that we can easily get to it next season. It has been a crazy week with pressure on us to finish up what we started (which is always impossible) and we are all getting tired. Bettina and my helper have left and I alone am left to bag and label all the remaining pottery tomorrow.

For three days this week the film crew of 60 Minutes has been on site interviewing our director Sarah 'the space archaeologist'. They came in two vans loaded down with huge cameras, microphones on long poles and boxes of mysterious equipment. They seemed strangely out of place as we watched them wind their way through the tombs and up to our site. We are surrounded by modern and ancient cemeteries. They held some of the interviews near our pottery tables and we had to be told to stop talking so we would not interfere with their sound system. The host Bill Whittaker, a tall charming fellow, even interviewed Bettina and me about our pot sherds. He even



Ancient and modern: The cemeteries of Lisht

pretended very convincingly to be interested in them. We will probably end up on the cutting room floor. Greg has promised to tell me when the program is airing. I am the only one on the dig living in Canada.

Our hotel has been lovely, the staff friendly and attentive: it caters to Egyptian weddings and so every Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings we can expect the drums to start beating at 9 PM. The wedding party gathers at one end of the long swimming pool which fills the large rectangular courtyard and processes behind about 20 drummers and a clarinet player up towards the party pavilion. The pavilion is lit up like the CN tower with the colours changing from pink to blue to yellow. At the sound of the drums I run to the patio window so I can watch. They process very slowly with video cameras flashing all around them and the drums throbbing. The drummers stop now and again, turn and face the bridal party and burst into

song. They put on a very entertaining performance and are a must at every wedding. We also encounter on our long drive every day sadder occasions: coffins being carried aloft by mourners (always men) or sometimes in the back of pickup trucks to the cemeteries. On these occasions the streets are crowded but unusually quiet.

For the last few days there has been a huge tank equipped with a soldier in the turret outside our hotel. It faces the road and sits across from a black army truck with about 8 armed soldiers. I heard that this road has had some problems with some shootouts with the police. A little too much drama for me.

I leave here tomorrow in the middle of the night and I will miss Egypt. I arrive home on Friday afternoon.

The opinions expressed in the Newsletter do not necessarily represent the views of the Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities. Are you a member of the SSEA? The SSEA/SÉÉA has Chapters in Calgary, Alberta, Montréal, Québec, Toronto, Ontario and Vancouver, British Columbia. The Chapters host lectures and events on Egyptological topics. Full Individual and Student Memberships in the Society includes a volume of the scholarly Journal of the SSEA and the SSEA Newsletter, and free or discounted admission to SSEA events. Associate Membership in the SSEA includes the Newsletter and free or discounted admission to events. Associate Membership is only open to members in provinces which have a Chapter. All categories of membership, excluding institutional members, are entitled to vote at the Annual General Meeting. To apply for membership, write to the address on the front of this Newsletter or email us at info@thessea.org. For updates, schedule changes, and further information, see the SSEA website at: www.thessea.org.