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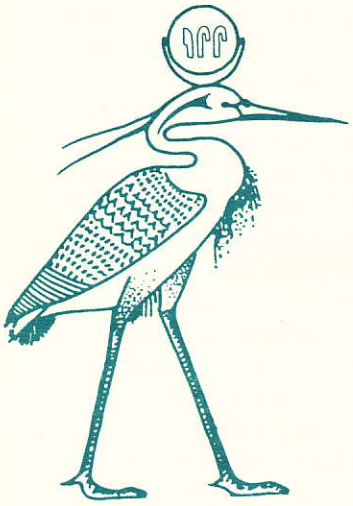

EGYPTIAN
STUDY
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The OSTRACON

A collection of research papers written by Egyptian Study Society members.

Ostracon provides a wealth of information by ordinary people

Limestone flakes and pottery fragments, when written or drawn upon, are called ostraca (plural) or ostracon (singular) and provide a recorded history of and by the ordinary people. Ostraca were regularly used by the ancient Egyptians for writing and drawing that was not deemed important enough for the brushes and papyrus scrolls of the learned scribes; yet the information contained thereon has been the most valuable means of bringing us close to the lives and daily activities of the people who were not part of the governing class. It seems fitting then, that the name of the Egyptian Study Society publication be a name which reflects the efforts of the "ordinary" people, thus "The Ostracon" was chosen.

Discovery of Deir el-Medina pit

In 1922 when Bernard Bruyere seriously undertook to clear the workman's village known as Deir el-Medina, he was rewarded with an unusual discovery. The richest of his finds was a large pit (its original purpose still in question) filled with thousands of limestone chips with writing, drawing and painting on them. This find is unsurpassed in its wealth of domestic and archival information and in its state of preservation. The day-to-day written accounts on these ostraca provide a window into the daily life of the villagers 3000 years ago. We learn about work schedules, equipment, delivery of supplies, excuses for skipping work, rewards and punishments, promotions and interaction between management and staff. It brings to life the people of Deir el-Medina and their loves and hates, disputes and scandals, their humor and leisure, their favorite stories and most popular literature.

Deir el-Medina was a unique village of Egypt's finest artisans and craftsmen, housed together in the Theban hills. Their sole purpose was to build the tombs of the kings and queens. These workmen of the royal "gang" were particularly inclined to sketch casually on the smooth, handy chips from the surrounding limestone hills. In some cases the drawings are formal and conventional, like the royal scene of Ramses IX gesturing toward two fan-bearing men. More commonly, they are informal, sketched in a free manner. Many drawings on ostraca convey a feeling of immediacy.

Formal and informal images

Some of the casual drawings are little more than doodles, but even the doodles of a skilled draftsman contain the essence of his art. One flake of limestone bears a donkey's head which captures its appealing charm; on another, two jackals are sketched with a few bold lines, showing complete confidence of the artist. A number of chicks casually fill the space of another flake while a rooster's strength

This Issue...

is conveyed through the artists strong thick strokes. The Egyptians found it amusing to show animals performing human functions, often in reverse to their normal relationships, such as cats acting as servants to mice. This type of animal caricature is often termed satirical and is common on ostraca as well as papyri.

Sometimes the drawing is accompanied by short inscriptions and may serve as an informal votive offering to one of the deities. Sometimes the drawings of people are caricature-like. Two scenes on one small ostracon show women engaged in activities not commonly shown in formal art. The upper portion of the drawing shows a scantily dressed woman with an elaborate head-dress, seated on a stool and suckling a child. The other scene is a boldly drawn girl, her hair arranged in widely spaced strands with a top-knot. As she prepares her toilet, she holds a mirror and eye paint. Many of the details are exaggerated in both scenes and the face of the girl is grotesque to the point of caricature.

A plan of the proposed tomb of Ramses IX, painted on stone, was actually found abandoned in the very tomb itself. Other ostraca show the workmen in action. On one such stone fragment a workman is depicted breaking up the stone with his spike and mallet. Though crudely drawn, the artist was accurate to the point of showing that this man was in need of a shave. One unique sketch is a copy from an actual monument. It can be recognized as the Queen of Punt, depicted on the walls of Queen Hatshepsut's Temple at Deir el Bahri. Maybe some of the temple likenesses on ostraca were actual trial pieces for larger works of art.

Most males wrote hieratic

To stave off boredom, or perhaps purely for their own amusement, or maybe simply to bare one's soul, people passed their time by sketching or writing-much as people have done since recorded history began. A number of illustrated obscene ostraca similar to the Turin Papyrus (The Obscene Papyrus) have been found at Deir el-Medina. There are also written accounts of adulterous acts. Where limestone was not found, then pottery sherds were used for the same purpose. Inscribed on a pot that was eventually broken, was a man's love poem addressed to "sister," a term of endearment, respect and honor:

My sister has come, my heart is exultant.
My arms spread out to embrace her.
As for my heart, it is overjoyed and its place is like a fish in its pond.
O night may you last an eternity for me
Now that my lady has come.

The limestone flakes from the workmen's village cover almost all aspects of daily life for which writing was needed. They bear accounts, note work in hand, work completed, lists of workmen and of their tools and rations, court proceedings and the classic literature of the period. It is believed that a substantial portion of the male inhabitants of Deir el-Medina were literate in hieratic, if not hieroglyphic. Hieratic was a shorthand version of the formal hieroglyphic script which seems to have been restricted to decorative purposes for monuments, temples, tombs, stelae, coffins, etc. Everyday letters were written in hieratic and ordinary workmen are known to have written in hieratic without the aid of a scribe.

One of the most popular and best-known stories is the tale of the adventures of Sinuhe, a prominent young Egyptian who took political refuge in Palestine during the reign of Senworsret I, and who, in his old age, returned to his home and his people. Several examples of this story have been found but a complete version of the story is written on the largest ostracon yet known, measuring approximately 35 inches high and 12 1/2 inches wide, with text on both sides.

In a number of cases, the pit at Deir el-Medina yields the sole evidence for the existence of certain literary pieces. Many of the compositions were written on both papyri and ostraca. Contrary to popular belief, recent studies have shown that papyrus was well within the workman's budget, but it may have been difficult to obtain. Though many literary ostraca remain unpublished, over 1500 examples are available in museums and other places of safe-keeping throughout the world.

Perhaps the most frequent work on ostraca is the famous *Satire On Trades* by the author Khety. It appears to be an open letter, ridiculing all professions except that of scribe and is quite "flowery" and lengthy, but ends with the advice: "as for the scribe, no matter what position he finds himself in in the (royal) residence, he will not be uncomfortable in it." It has been suggested that this piece may have been a primer for students in scribal school. Examples of Khety's piece have been excavated from El-Amarna also.

Absenteeism from work

A limestone attendance register was kept by the scribe of the tomb in progress and recorded the days absent after each workman's name. Reasons for absence were indicated in red and were much the same as reasons for absence from work today. A workman might be absent to do personal work for his superior or family events such as attending the purification rituals after childbirth, or a death in the family might prevent him from reporting for work. In year 40 of Ramses II, Neferabu was away embalming his brother, while Hehnekhu was bandaging the body of his mother. Another workman was absent mummifying one of his friends. Illness of ones self or a family member was another reason for absence. Workmen could also be away for religious obligations or for brewing beer. Perhaps, even in the 19th dynasty, personal days were given, as Pendua was away for a day drinking with Khons, while Wadjmose took a day off to build his house, and yet another workman had a row with his wife which resulted in time off.

Many hundreds of ostraca bear business documents of various kinds. In Reignal Year 6 of Sethos II, an ostracon describes the court proceedings when Nebnufe, a workman, issued a complaint against the woman Herya, accusing her of stealing a tool of his. A complete account of the proceedings is recorded, including the verdict: "Exceedingly guilty is the citizeness Herya, and worthy of death. The workman Nebnufe is vindicated."

The ostracon is then signed by all the people present. Such a severe sentence was given because in the course of the proceedings it emerged that the woman had also stolen a ritual vessel from a shrine of Amun, and both stolen objects were found buried in her home.

Another writer recounts the difficulty of getting what is rightfully owned by him when the borrower is a policeman. One ostracon from Deir el-Medina shows that a workman's basic monthly wage (received ideally on the twenty-eighth day) was four 76 liter sacks of emmer for bread and one and one-half sacks of barley to make beer. This amount would have nourished a family of ten. Another villager, it is recorded, exchanged the equivalent of two deben of copper to obtain a shawabti box.

Ostraca in Denver

Two ostraca were on display at the Museum during the exhibit of Ramses II. One was particularly interesting to this writer: the 4 inch by 5 inch limestone piece with the elderly harpist stroking his elaborately carved harp, drawn in confident black strokes and decorated with colors. This harpist, as with other harpists represented, is clearly without eyesight and is clearly an older man as evidenced by his bald head and the wrinkles on his neck. His harp has 14 strings. It cannot be determined if he is standing or seated, as the bottom portion is broken away.

Most likely, the villagers had no idea that they were recording their own history or that, through the ostraca texts and drawings, we would be brought closer to the daily lives and activities of these people of Deir el-Medina. We have the opportunity to taste the true flavor of life in ancient Egypt, and to discover the many similarities and parallels to our lives today. Might someone read the ESS *Ostracon* in 3000 years and say the same thing?

By **Jonna C. Castle**

Jonna is one of the founders of the ESS and serves on the Board of Directors and is on *The Ostracon* staff. She just returned from a visit to Deir el-Medina.

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Sophisticated Sciences Used by Egyptians

Practical applications

As the world's first Nation-state, Egypt had many practical applications for its arithmetic: from constructing monumental royal and public buildings, to predicting how much farming land would be flooded each year by the rising Nile River.

The inundation of the Nile forced the populace to remeasure their property each year (the science of surveying), and monitor the heavens (the science of astronomy), so they could predict when the river would flood.

The ancient Egyptian's religion taught that all his possessions needed to be protected for eternity. This gave rise to the desire to build permanent structures of stone (the science of engineering).

Also, artistic conventions were strict. Paintings, wall carvings and statuary were all laid out in exacting, geometric proportions.

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All of these activities required an understanding of arithmetic (including adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing), an understanding of geometry (to compute angles, and volumes), and an understanding of standards of construction and commerce (weights, measures and lengths). The Greek philosopher Aristotle, tells us that "the mathmetical sciences originated in Egypt."

However, it is in the practical applications of these concepts that the Egyptians so marvelously excelled.

The science of surveying

The ancient Egyptians found it necessary to recalculate property boundaries after the annual flood waters receded each year. The harpenodaptai, or rope stretchers used knotted cords and boundary reference markers to determine property lines. Measurements required a standard of length. In ancient Egypt the "cubit" used was equal to 20.6 inches, supposedly the distance between the royal elbow and the tip of the middle finger. The Egyptian name for this unit was the meh. The meh was subdivided into 7 "palms" called shesep, each of which were further subdivided into 4 digits called djebao (fingers)

One hundred cubits equalled a length called a khet, the common unit used in land surveying. Land areas were measured in setat, or "square khet," equal to 10,000 square cubits.

Since land ownership claims and the resultant wealth of the people's harvests (and the king's taxation!) were in the hands of the surveyors, they held important positions in the government. Surveying instruments were often placed in the scribe's tomb for his use in the afterlife.

Applications in engineering

The scribe Ahmose, who copied the Rhind papyrus during the Middle Kingdom of Egypt, tells us at the beginning of the scroll that the title of the work is, "the correct method of reckoning, for grasping the meaning of things and knowing everything that is." He goes on to talk about the mysteries, obscurities and secrets contained in the papyrus. The papyrus contains problems of geometry and algebra. Although no formal proofs are contained in the papyri, such as one would find in the more modern Greek manuscripts, the ancient Egyptians knew how to calculate the area of the circle (requires an accurate approximation for pi), areas of geometric figures and volumes of geometric solids.

These papyri problems were used to train the architects and engineers of ancient Egypt, much as textbooks do today.

Some of the problems listed on the papyrus involve practical building projects, such as constructing pyramids. To measure the slope of a pyramid, the Egyptians used a concept equivalent to the cotangent of an angle, called the seked. It is the steepness equivalent to the reciprocal of the "rise" over the "run". In the old kingdom pyramids the seked was either 5 1/2 (the step pyramid and Khufu's pyramid slope), or 5 1/4 (Kafre's pyramid slope).

See Science *on pg. 7*

Members traveling to Egypt with the first ESS study trip have done research related to their particular interests. New findings, research information and developments from that study will be presented in a series of articles.

Journey to the past

Studying the pyramids

The pyramids of Egypt have long been a topic of wonder and debate. In the first century BC, Diodorus Siculus wrote in Book I of Historical Library: "they are among the seven most famous works of the world." Many other scholars would study these ancient structures to see what secrets they would yield. Following is a glimpse into the findings of some of the pyramids and tombs of the Old Kingdom.

First and second dynasty

In tracing the early stages of the architectural development of the pyramid, W.B. Emery excavated at the Saqqara site what have become known as mastabas. Mastabas, from the Arabic word meaning bench, were developed by the early dynastic kings as a type of super-structure over the burial pit; a type of safeguard to protect graves from being destroyed. The oldest mastaba at Saqqara has been dated to the reign of Aha, second king of the First Dynasty. Mastabas, such as those associated with Aha, were replicas of royal palaces, thus giving form to the theory that the tomb was intended as a place where the deceased would spend eternity.

The kings of the First and Second Dynasty also possessed another type of memorial in a second location: Abydos. These memorials are known as a cenotaph, a monument to one buried elsewhere. In his book, The Pyramids of Egypt, I.E.S. Edwards offers two explanations for the two locations. Abydos held a position of importance due to its association with the god Osiris and it was the ancestral home of the early kings. Saqqara was the actual burial place because of its proximity to the capital of Memphis. Another theory is that Abydos symbolized the king's rule over upper Egypt, while Saqqara was the counterpart for his rulership over Lower Egypt.

Third dynasty

The use of stone in the building of tombs above ground began in the Third Dynasty. The innovative architect of this procedure was Imhotep, the builder of the Step Pyramid of Djoser. Imhotep was as legendary as the king for whom he designed the tomb.

The Step Pyramid rises to 204 feet above ground in six unequal steps. The pyramid shows obvious changes in design plans. The pyramid started out as a mastaba, which then became the lowest stage of a four-stepped pyramid. At the fourth step of the pyramid, the design changed yet again, with the final plan adding a little to each side and rising to the completed sixth stage. The Step Pyramid is the central feature in a complex of buildings and courtyards, surrounded by a stone wall.

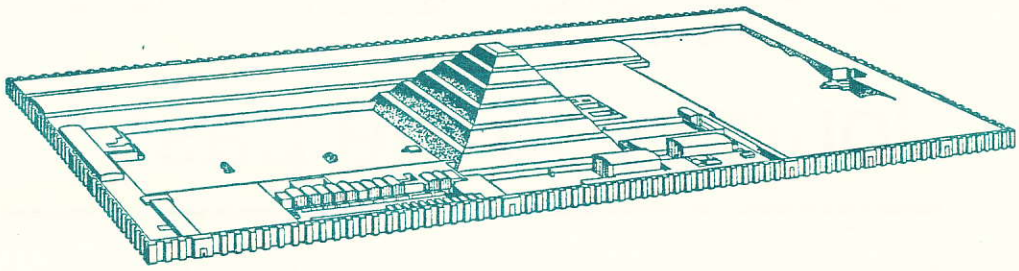
This complex was designed to afford Djoser the setting to repeat his heb-sed in his afterlife. Edwards identifies heb-sed as a jubilee ceremony of renewal, to which every Old Kingdom pharaoh was entitled after occupying the throne for a certain number of years, the exact period varying from time to time during ancient history. The most striking portion of the heb-sed was the re-enactment of the coronation, where the king received the permission of the gods of Upper and Lower Egypt to continue his reign.

Djoser's pyramid would be a paradigm for his successors in the Third Dynasty. In 1951 the Pyramid of Sekhemkhet was excavated. Since Sekhemkhet's reign lasted only six years, his pyramid was never completed. With the excavation of the tomb, there were hopes that it would hold the body of the king. There was no evidence that robbers had ever penetrated the depths of the tomb. The discovery of the sarcophagus, a magnificent alabaster coffin, showed that it was still sealed with the remains of a wreath on top of the lid. However, when the sarcophagus was opened, it was empty. Two theories are that the body was stolen as part of a conspiracy during the burial, or that the tomb/sarcophagus was intended to be a dummy, with the body buried elsewhere.

Fourth dynasty

The Fourth Dynasty began the transition of the step pyramid to what is the true pyramid, a structure with a square base and sides sloping inward to the point

of the summit. The Pyramid of Meidum is a good example of this transition. Meidum, the tomb probably begun by Huni and finished by Seneferu, the first king of the Fourth Dynasty, bears graffiti. Some of the graffiti shows that a scribe of the cult of King Tuthmosis I visited the tomb on "the twelfth day of the fourth month of summer in the forty-first year of the reign of Tuthmosis III."



The Step Pyramid enclosure.

The bent pyramid

Also built by Seneferu was the bent pyramid, so called because of the way the angle of increase changes from 54 degrees 31 minutes to 43 degrees 21 minutes. It also shows that the design changed during construction, probably due to the collapse of Meidum. The bent pyramid has a distinction among pyramids of the Old Kingdom in having two entrances. Its second passageway faces south, the only known instance of an Old Kingdom corridor differing from the usual north facing. The reason for this could be to provide support, and to counter lateral pressure on the walls.

North of the bent pyramid stands the red pyramid, the earliest tomb to be completed as a true pyramid. This also belonged to Seneferu, according to Edwards, because Seneferu's so-called Horus name, Neb-maet, was written in red ochre on a casing block found at the northeast corner of the pyramid.

The Giza pyramids

Khufu, Seneferu's son and successor, was motivated by his father's ambitious constructions and chose a plateau on the edge of the desert that would be the site of the most famous group of monuments in the world: the Pyramids of Khufu, Kafre and Menkaure. These pyramids are sometimes known by the Greek names of Cheops, Chephren and Mycerinus.

The great pyramid

Khufu's pyramid, also known as the great pyramid, earns its title justly. It has been calculated that St. Peter's Cathedral, St. Paul's Cathedral, Westminster Abbey, as well as the Cathedrals of Florence and Milan, could be grouped inside the area of its base. In 1925, J.H. Cole of the Survey Department of the Egyptian government ascertained the following measurements of the base: north, 755.43 feet; south 756.08 feet; west 755.77 feet; east, 755.88 feet. The greatest difference between the longest and shortest side is only 7.9 inches and the area covered by the base is 13.1 acres.

The pyramid has three chambers: The king's chamber, the uncompleted queen's chamber and the unfinished lower burial chamber. Outside of the pyramid lie boat-shaped pits where one wooden boat was discovered in 1954. Many scholars believe these buried boats were intended to provide the deceased king with a mode of transportation in the afterlife. It would be needed for joining the Sun God on his daily journeys and for reaching the gods that lived beyond the eastern horizon. However, there is evidence that at least one buried boat was actually used in the water, thus giving a different viewpoint to the first theory.

Khufu learned a lesson from the mistakes made in his father's collapsed pyramid of Meidum and added stability to his pyramid by designing a very slight inward tilt to the structure.

The information and theories associated with the pyramid and its role in the lives of the ancient Egyptians are vast. For further reading on this subject, the reader might refer to The Riddle of the Pyramids by Mendelssohn; The Pyramids by Fakhry; The World of the Pharaohs by Hobson.

By **Dennis McDonald**

Dennis is one of the founders of the ESS.

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Sciences, *continued*

Measured in palms of lateral displacement per cubit 7 palms vertical drop, several sekeds calculated in the Rhind papyrus correspond to these later values at 5 palms and 1 finger (per cubit), or 5 1/4.

Skilled at working in stone, the ancient Egyptians applied these mathematical methods of measuring and calculating lengths, areas, volumes and slopes into building truly monumental structures which have, for the most part, survived the ravages of time.

The discovery of writing

The earliest settlements known to man were located in the area known today as the Near East. Around 4000 BC, villages were transformed into city-states, and people began to become very specialized in their trades. Ancient merchants traveled from town to town, trading their wares and spreading culture via a process called "cultural diffusion."

The early peoples of Egypt and Mesopotamia used written records for lists of items and tallies of goods in a form of picture-writing. Writing must have been a product and a convenience of commerce.

These writings originally started as pictographic representations, but then they rapidly evolved just before 3100 BC into phonetic alphabets. Although both the Egyptian and Mesopotamian civilizations spoke a Semitic language, writing appears to have developed separately.

Several hundred years after the written records began, however, it is clear that although similar principles may have originally been at work (perhaps via cultural diffusion) the two writing systems were significantly different. Egyptian hieroglyphs began to be written in an abbreviated form with a reed pen on papyrus in a shorthand script called hieratic; whereas the Mesopotamian script by this time had changed into wedge-shaped symbols called cuneiform, which were inscribed on wet clay tablets with a stylus.

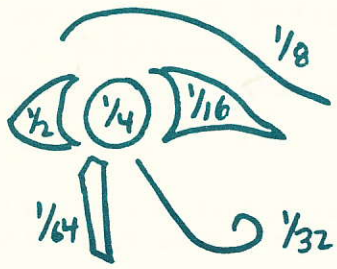
Standards of commerce

The values of different articles during the times of the Ramesside kings (approximately 1150 BC) were expressed in terms of deben and kitay of gold, silver, or copper. The deben was a standard metal ring weighing some 91 grams (or 3 ounces). A kitay was 1/10 of a deben. For smaller weights, fractions of a kitay were used.

Dry volume measurements for grain were by the jar. The base measurement of these jars was called a hekat, 4.54 litres (or a little over a gallon). Sixteen hekats made a sackful, called a khar.

A curious kind of primitive expression for fractions, obtained by successive halving, is found in the wedjat eye.

The wedjat represents the eye of the falcon-headed god Horus. Taken apart, and then restored, in Egyptian mythology the Horus eye is really a numerical series which sums to 63/64.



Liquid volume measurements were standardized to 1/10 of a hekat, called the hin. In practice, liquids were measured by the jugful, the jug being inscribed with its capacity in hin. The value of the hin was close to half a litre.

A unit of measure of the strength of beer or bread was the pesu. It was a measure of the amount of grain used to make the loaf of bread or jug of beer. If one hekat of grain made one loaf of bread, the pesu was one. If one hekat of grain made two jugs of beer, the pesu was two. The Rhind mathematical papyrus has ten pesu problems. Modern authorities call the pesu the baking ration. The greater the pesu, the lower the nutrition value of the bread or beer. Temple offering lists often included the pesu of the food being donated. Nothing but the best for the gods, it seems.

By **David Pepper**

This is the conclusion of a two-part article written by **David**. The first part was published in the first quarter isssue under the title "Counting and accounting; the ancient way."

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Modern calendar originated in ancient times

In prehistoric time keeping track of the days was relatively unimportant. Three seasons were sufficient for the needs of the people: the germination season, the worm harvest season and the inundation (or flood) season.

Around 4200 BC it became necessary for an accurate means of keeping count of days and years. A year was devised of twelve months of thirty days each. Each day consisted of twelve hours of daylight and twelve hours of darkness. Previously, the first day of the year began when the dog star Sirius appeared at the same time as the sunrise on the eastern horizon. However, it was found that the appearance of Sirius occurred five days before the beginning of inundation. How could the Nile dwellers account for five additional days?

According to mythology

The people called upon the gods for an explanation. The god Ra, creator of all living things was the parent of the first divine couple, Shu and Tefnut, who were the parents of Nut (the sky) and Geb (the earth). Nut and Geb made grandfather Ra very angry and he told them Nut could not bear a child in any month of the year. Nut at the time was very pregnant with Osiris, Isis, Set, Nephthes and Horus. One can imagine the shock and horror that came over the couple.

They implored Thoth, god of magic, for help. Taking pity on the couple, Thoth played a game of senet with the moon in which he won 1/72nd of the light of the moon. With this light he fashioned five extra days and Nut delivered one of her children on each day. The birthdays of the five divine children were thereafter celebrated as holidays.

Intense observation of the heavens was carried out in prehistoric times and the construction of a practical calendar began. The Egyptian year of 365 days was not quite in accord with the true solar year which had an additional quarter of a day. The rising of Sothis (Sirius the dog star) was affected by this error and accounted for the loss of a quarter day every four years. The Egyptian calendar was adopted by the Greeks and Romans who developed the concept of leap year and is the calendar in present use.

By **Frank Pettee**

Frank is a founder of ESS, on the board of directors and has completed his fourth trip to Egypt.

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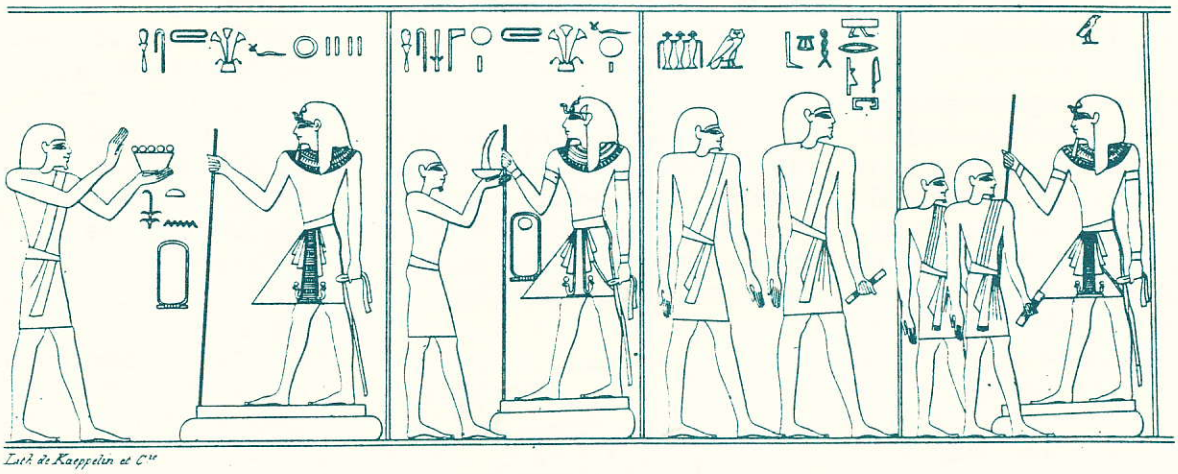
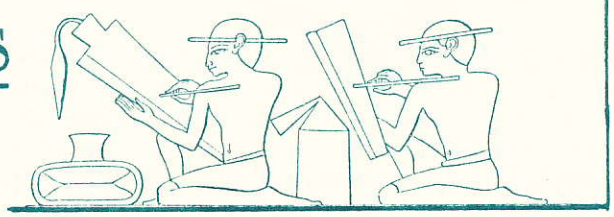


Ricci's drawing, published by Champollion, of a part of the 'Opening of the Mouth' ceremony from the walls of the tomb of Seti I. From *Valley of the Kings* by John Romer

House of Scrolls

Book Review



Valley Of The Kings

by John Romer
281 pgs. illustrated $29.95
New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1981

"Scratch upon a rock on these cliffs or deserts of the Nile Valley and the mark is left forever; it is a timeless place....Some of the cliffs of Thebes have drawings and writings on them that chronicle all the time that man has passed in the Nile Valley...the careful records of the ancient Egyptian scribes on tours of inspection of the tombs, and modern archaeologists who document the ancient records."

These words from John Romer in *Valley of the Kings* are the essence of his exquisitely written and authoritative book. In his first book he weaves together the stories of the European archeologists who journeyed there to uncover the majesty that lay hidden for thousands of years.

Romer's fascination with the Valley started in 1966 when he first visited the site as a recent graduate of the Royal College of Art in London and was given the assignment to draw the wall reliefs and paintings on the tombs. It was then he noted "that there is something very particular in the air of the place; it is as if the rock-bound tombs radiate a strong presence of an incomprehensible and distant past." He returned in 1977 when he organized an expedition that would be concerned with the documentation and conservation of the tombs. In 1979 he continued his efforts when he helped establish the Theban Foundation, whose goal is to help preserve the tombs.

The opening chapters of the book help set the stage for the adventures that follow. Romer gives the reader a vivid description of the landscape while outlining the history of the New Kingdom. He then delves into the philosophy and beliefs of the funerary rites of the kings with these poetic thoughts written by the ancient people:

King Tuthmosis III went up to heaven
He was united with the sundisk;
The body of the god joined him who had made him.
When the next morning dawned
The sun disk shone forth,
The sky became bright,
King Amenhotep II was installed on the throne of his father.

When the Europeans traveled to the Valley, we learned more about the pharaohs and their tombs through their eyes. Napoleon's campaigns into Egypt brought along Baron Vivant Denon, who helped establish the collections of the Louvre and who wrote of the natural gate that guarded the Valley, which since has been destroyed to provide a road for buses and cars. Through Romer's description we "see" the high narrow crack in the steep cliffs and get a feel for how it was so many years ago.

Throughout the pages of this beautifully illustrated book, we make the acquaintance of such historically significant figures as Jean Paul Champollion, Giovanni Batista Belzoni, Sir Gaston Maspero and Howard Carter. Romer gives thorough details of their excavations, while educating the reader on the royalty of the Eighteenth, Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties and their magnificent tombs.

Amenhotep III—a drawing in his tomb copied by Nestor l'Hôte of Champollion's expedition

For anyone who wishes to embark on a study of the Valley or to read a definitive book on the subject, *Valley of the Kings* will give the reader many hours of enjoyment while traveling back in time to where "the rock-bound tombs radiate a strong presence of an incomprehensible and distant past."

Reviewed by **Barbara Fenton**

Barbara is on the Board of Directors and on *The Ostracon* staff.

The Stone Column

In keeping with the focus of current work in Egyptology, this column will highlight up-to-date news and information concerning recent discoveries, new national and international exhibitions and conversations with key individuals who are devoted to the study of ancient Egypt.

A March 29 telephone conversation with Dr. Zahi Hawass, director general of the Giza Plateau and Saqqara, centered around the newly announced discovery of the remains of the Valley Temple of Pharaoh Khufu, builder of the Great Pyramid. Dr. Hawass was extremely excited about the uncovering of a 59-foot-long row of basalt rocks which he labeled as the "main prize"-the floor of the valley temple! He indicated that the find had been uncovered by workers involved in a US financed sewage project near the canal at Nazlett el-Samman, a village located at the foot of the Giza plateau. Dr. Hawass feels that this discovery will confirm some of his personally held theories concerning the layout of the plateau area, and help piece together the little-known history of Khufu (also known as Cheops), whose 23-year reign ended in 2528 B.C.

Dr. Hawass ended the conversation by suggesting that the ESS-sponsored visit to the Giza Platea just a few weeks prior to the find, had been the "blessing" that allowed this great discovery!

By **Barbara Stone**
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