

THE OSTRACON



EGYPTIAN
STUDY
SOCIETY

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Publication of *The Ostrakon* is supported by a grant from
THE PETTY FOUNDATION

IN THIS ISSUE

Page	
2	<i>Egyptian Diplomacy in the Amarna Era: Dramatis Personae - Friends, Foes, Rivals and Dependents, Part II</i> by Robert Bigelow
6	<i>The Ptolemaic Eagle on Greek Soil: An Event of the Late Dynastic Period.</i> by Randall T. Nishiyama
10	<i>Lecture Reports</i>
12	<i>House of Scrolls</i>

Egyptian Diplomacy in the Amarna Era

"Dramatis Personae": Friends, Foes, Rivals and Dependents

Part II

by Robert C. Bigelow

About the Author

Robert Bigelow has long had an interest in the Middle East. His interest in archaeology of the region began in earnest when he and his wife Jane visited Egypt several years ago. More recently they visited two Indus Valley dig sites while on a trip to India.

Introduction

In the last issue, Part I of this article discussed diplomatic activities and described many of the states Egypt dealt with during the Amarna period. This part will describe some of the major cities of the area and will present conclusions.

SYRIAN AND COSTAL CITIES

Carchemish

A very powerful city-state that was intermittently independent or, in the Amarna period, under the domination of the Mittani and then the Hittites. Carchemish was located in the area where the modern Turkish-Syrian border intersects the upper Euphrates river, and it sat athwart one of the major trade routes between Great Hatti and Mesopotamia. For that reason, it became a great trading center and was fought over by the Hittites, Mittani, Assyrians et al. Suppiluliumas was besieging Carchemish when he cautiously responded to Queen Ankhnesenamun's first letter.

Aleppo

Another powerful city-state, Aleppo (now Halab) is still located in Syria, south of Carchemish. Aleppo was nominally an Egyptian vassal which was usually enough to protect it. However, Aleppo apparently attacked Suppiluliumas and was conquered for its effrontery¹.

Ugarit

A city state on the coast of Syria (modern Ras Shamara) that traded with nearby Alasiya and with other cities up and down the Levantine coast. The libraries of Ugarit included tablets written in Canaanite, Hittite, Hurrian, Egyptian and Babylonian². Ugarit traded with Alyshia (only 100 miles away) but not with Crete or Minoan Greece. In the Amarna period, Ugarit was in the Hittite sphere of influence if not under Hittite control.

Byblos

Historically, Byblos (now Jubyal) a very important trading partner of Egypt, it was probably wealthier than Ugarit. It is believed that the famous cedars of Lebanon came to Egypt through Byblos. In the Amarna period, Byblos was an Egyptian vassal, but was adjacent to the Hittite-dominated Amurrites.

The Amurrites or Amorites

Around 2000 BCE, the Amurru, a western Semitic people, first appear in the written records as a threat to the city-state of Ur which they later defeated. Hammurabi who formed first Babylonian Empire was an Amorite. In the Amarna period, the Amurru were living along the coast of Syria. They came under the domination of the Hittites whereas previously they had been subject to Egypt. The Amurrites organized a State along the coast of Syria just at the beginning of the Amarna period; however, we know little about it because its capital city and its records have not been found. Ramses "swept them up" and presumably put an end to their independent existence on his way to Qadesh.³

Canaan

A region packed with individual cities such as Sidon, Tyre, Jaffa, and Meggado. Canaan is important in Egyptian matters as far back as we have records. Recently, an Egyptian tomb containing a potsherd with the *serekh* of Narmer was found in the Negev (southern Canaan)³. Most Canaanites presumably spoke western Semitic dialect(s)⁴. Egypt always at least tried to exercise influence in Canaan and often dominated its cities as it did during the Amarna period. The Canaanites are the direct ancestors of the Phoenicians; however, the distinction is arbitrary. Usually, Canaanite is the term applied before the year 1000 BCE and Phoenician afterward. Southern Canaan later became the home of the Philistines whose ancestors, the "Sea Peoples", invaded and subjugated lands bordering the eastern Mediterranean between 1250 and 1150 BCE and so the Philistines do not figure in the Amarna Letters.⁵



Left: Semitic visitors to Egypt are distinguished by their colorful garments of dyed wool or appliqued leather. In tomb-paintings, Egyptians always dress in white.

NORTHERN MESOPOTAMIAN CITIES

Mari

Mari is the site of fabulous finds of ancient statuary and 13,000 cuneiform tablets written in Old Babylonian. These tablets give us a very complete look at life in Mari, the workings of government, intrigues and diplomatic activities in that period.⁷ This northern Euphrates city-state was founded around 2700 BCE, probably about when the Akkadians began drifting into Mesopotamia. As with Assur and Nineveh on the Tigris river, it was a center for trade up and down the Euphrates and shows definite mercantile ties to the Indus Valley civilizations.⁸ Mari was prominent in a 50 to 75 year period around 1800 BCE after the Empire of Ur and before the rise of Hammurabi; R.W. Ehrich refers to this time as the "Mari Age".⁹ Mari was later allied with Hammurabi who repaid this loyalty by invading and subjugating it. Mari disappeared before the Amarna period when a Kassite Kingdom called Hana emerged in northern Mesopotamia.

Nineveh

Nineveh is on the Tigris river near modern Mosul in northern Iraq. The earliest strata of human settlement at Nineveh hark back to 5500 BCE. It flourished until the time of the Akkadian Empire and then again briefly during the "Age of Mari". In the Amarna period it was first under the Mittani and then the Assyrians. Later on, Nineveh really came into its own as the Assyrians Empire's last capital; 704-612 BCE.¹⁰



SOUTHERN MESOPOTAMIAN CITIES

All these cities were trade centers in southern Mesopotamia and are part of the Sumerian-Akkadian-Assyrian-Babylonian etc succession of Empires; they are near modern day Naseriya, Iraq. Their inhabitants spoke Semitic dialects and the cities were part of Kassite Babylonia during the Amarna period. As vassal states, they probably were forbidden to communicate with Egypt.

Ur

Founded about 4300 BCE, Ur is one of the oldest south Mesopotamian cities. It may have been a Sumerian capital; royal graves are found there. Around 2000 BCE, the Third Dynasty of Ur created its own empire over most of Mesopotamia and reasserted the Sumerian culture. Ur built a wall from the Tigris to the Euphrates to keep out the Amorites, but the effort failed and with it the Empire of Ur.

Uruk

Uruk goes back to 3900 BCE and what is called "the Uruk period" spans the 4th millennium BCE. About 3500 BCE its inhabitants began writing in a kind of pictographic syllabary in a language which cannot yet be read. A highly regarded German excavation team has uncovered the remains of the Anu Ziggurat and a vast complex called Eanna¹¹ at the site of Uruk.

Nippur

Nippur was a holy city in southern Mesopotamia on the Euphrates near Ur and Uruk. It was a unifying force for the Sumerians because it was a religious capital but not a political one. Under later empires, it was sometimes spared destruction because of its religious significance.

Kish

Kish may have been the first city in lower Mesopotamia to extend its power over the others. Early Akkadian rulers took the title "King of Kish" even when they did not rule from there. Sargon first came to power in Kish but called himself "King of Nations".

CONCLUSIONS

Some have seen ancient Egypt as an isolated, inward looking state whose isolationist outlook compares with that of medieval China. This notion is possibly inspired by contemptuous references to "wretched Asiatics" and "Libyans" in Egyptian writings. As Cohen's article and the Amarna letters themselves make clear, Egypt was fully engaged with its neighbors even during its religious turmoil of the 14th Century BCE. Trade, war, and diplomacy were all practiced on an area wide basis. Diplomacy, in particular, was quite fully developed; so much so that we can see in the surviving records almost all the features of diplomacy as we understand it today. Whether the Greeks learned diplomacy from Egypt is debatable but they may have done so. Certainly the problems of the relationships between states appear to be timeless and the methods of dealing with them seem not to have changed very much either. The "gift exchange" to demonstrate status has few obvious modern parallels but may simply be trade under another name. Trade as a sophisticated component of diplomacy certainly has modern parallels. Diplomacy also went hand-in-hand with mutually comprehensible writing in Akkadian, even then an ancient, nearly-dead language. Comparisons with Latin are inevitable and appropriate. It may be that some such written *lingua franca* is a necessary component for the existence of an effective multinational diplomatic system.



Notes

1. Sanders, N. K. "The Sea Peoples", 1978, Thames and Hudson Ltd. London, p48.
2. I infer this from passing comments by several authors, but I have been unable to confirm that it was indeed Aleppo that attacked Suppiluliumas.
3. Sanders, *ibid* p38.
4. Sanders, *ibid* p45.
5. Kasdan, Andrew "Egyptian Tomb in Israel" letter in "Archaeology" Jan/Feb 1997 V. 50 No. 1 Archaeol. Inst. Amer. NY p25.
6. Chadwick, Robert; "First Civilizations: Ancient Mesopotamia and Ancient Egypt", 1996, Les Editions Camps Floury & Robert Chadic, Quebec, p54:

"Semitic languages can be divided into the following major groups:

1. Akkadian, which probably appeared in Mesopotamia in the fourth millennium B.C.
2. The West Semitic languages, including Amorite, Canaanite, Phoenician, and Hebrew, which first appeared during the third and second millennia B.C.
3. Aramaic, which appeared in the 12th century B.C. and was eventually spoken over most of the Near East, replacing Akkadian and cuneiform writing.
4. Nabatean a pre-Islamic form of Arabic which appeared in the second century B.C..
5. Arabic, which has been the dominant language of the Near East since the seventh century A.D."

7. Sanders, *ibid* pp 165 et seq. treats the identity of the Philistines/Palistinians in detail along with that of the other "Sea Peoples".
8. Chadwick, *ibid* p70, is a good overview of the archaeological treasures from Mari.
9. Ehrich, Robert W. (Ed.) "Chronologies in Old World Archaeology", 1965, U. Chicago Press, Chicago and London p17 et. seq. discusses Mari and its interactions.
10. Ehrich, *ibid* pp 178-179 presents a comparative chronological table from which I have estimated the duration and timing of the "Mari Age"
11. Sherratt, Andrew, (Ed.) "Cambridge Encyclopedia of Archeology", 1980, Cambridge Univ Press, New York City, Chapt. 26.
12. Sherratt *ibid* p115-119 gives an overview of what is known about Uruk.



Appendix: Time Line of the Ancient Middle East

(KASSITE PERIOD c. 1600-1200 B.C.)

B.C.	BABYLONIA	ASSYRIA	HURRI-MITANNI	ANATOLIA OLD HITTITE EMPIRE since C. 1680	SYRIA-PALESTINE	EGYPT <i>Hyksos period</i>	ELAM DYNASTY OF EPARTI since C. 1850
1600	<i>c.1595: Babylon conquered by the Hittites</i> KASSITE DYNASTY Agum II kakrime (C. 1570)	Erishom III Ishme-Dagan II Shamshi-Adad III	Shamshi-Adad II Kirta Shuttarna I (C. 1560)	Hantilis I (1590-1560)		NEW EGYPTIAN EMPIRE XVIIIth DYNASTY	Tata (1600-1580) Atta-merra-halki (1580-1570)
1550	Burnaburiash I	Ashur-nirari I (1547-1522)	<i>Formation of the Kingdom of Mitanni</i>	Zidantas I	<i>The Hyksos expelled from Egypt</i>	Amosis (1576-1546)	Pala-ishshan (1570-1545)
1500	Kashtiliash III Nur-ili	Puzur-Ashur III (1521-1498) Enlil-nasir	Parattarna (C. 1530)	Ammunas Huzziyas I	Idrimi, King of Alalah	Amenophis I (1546-1526)	Kur-Kirwesh (1545-1520)
	Ulamburiash	<i>Assyria under Mitanni rule</i> Ashur-rabi I	Saustatar (C. 1500)	Telepinus (1525-1500)	<i>Egyptian campaigns in Syria</i>	Thutmosis I (1526-1512) Thutmosis II (1512-1504)	Kuk-nahhunte (1520-1505)
1450	Agum III Kadashman-harbe I Karaindash Kuriglazu I	Ashur-nadin-ahhe I Enlil-nasir II Ashur-nirari II Ashur-bel-nisheshu Ashur-rem-nisheshu	<i>Archives of Nuzi</i> Artatama I (C. 1430)	Alluwanash Hantilis II Zidantas II Huzziyas II	<i>Syria conquered by the Egyptians</i>	Thutmosis III (1504-1450)	Kutir-nahhunte II (1505-?)
1400	Kadashman-Enlil I Burnaburiash II (1375-1347)	Ashur-nadin-ahhe II Eriba-Adad I (1392-1366) Ashur-uballit I (1365-1330)	Shuttarna II (C. 1400) HURRI-LAND MITTANI Artatama II Tushratta	NEW HITTITE EMPIRE Tudhaliyas I (1450-1420) Arnuwandas I (1420-1400) Tudhaliyas II Hattusilis II Tudhaliyas III (1395-1380) Suppilulumas I (C. 1380-1336)	<i>Amenophis' campaigns in Syria-Palestine</i>	Amenophis II (1450-1425) Thutmosis IV (1425-1417) Amenophis III (1417-1379)	
1350	Karahardash Kurigalzu II (1345-1324) Nazimaruttash (1323-1298) Adal-nirari I (1307-1275)	Enlil-nirari Arik-den-ili (1319-1308)	Shuttarna III Shutatarra = ? Shattuara I	Mattiwaza Arnuwandas II Mursilis II (1335-1310)	<i>el-Amarna period (C. 1400-1350) Northern Syria conquered by the Hittites</i>	Amenophis IV (Akhenaten) (1379-1362) Tut-ankh-Amon (1361-1352)	IGEHALKIDS Ige-halki (1350-1330) Hurpatila
1300	Kadashman-Turgu (1297-1280) Kadashman-Enlil II (1279-1265) Kudur-Enlil Shagarakti-Shuriash (1255-1243) Kashtiliash IV Assyrian governors (1235-1227)	Salmanasar I (1274-1245)	Wasasatta Shattuara II	Muwatallis (1309-1287)	<i>Archives of Ugarit Alphabetic cuneiform writing</i>	Ay (1352-1348) Horemheb (1348-1320)	Pahir-ishshan I (1330-1310)
1250	Enlil-nadin-shuni Adad-shuma-iddina Adad-shuma-usur (1218-1189)	Tukulti-Ninurta I (1244-1208)		Hattusilis III (1286-1265) Tudhaliyas IV (1265-1235)	<i>Battle of Qadesh (1300)</i>	Rameses I (1319-1317) Sethi I (1317-1304)	Attar-kittah (1310-1300) Humban-numena (1300-1275)
1200	Melishipak (1188-1174) Marduk-apal-iddina (1173-1161) Zababa-shuma-iddina Enlil-nadin-ahhe (1159-1157)	Ashur-nadin-apli Ashur-nirari III Enlil-kudurri-usur		Arnuwandas III (1235-1215) Suppiluliumas II (1215-?)	<i>Egyptian-Hittite treaty (1286)</i>	Rameses II (1304-1237)	Untash-napirisha (1275-1240)
1150	<i>End of the Kassite dynasty (1157)</i>	Ninurta-apal-Ekur (1192-1180) Ashur-dan I (1179-1134)		Arnuwandas III (1235-1215) Suppiluliumas II (1215-?) <i>The Phrygians and Gasgas destroy the Hittite Empire. (C. 1200)</i>	<i>Moses and Exodus</i> <i>Invasion of the Peoples of the Sea Philistines, the Israelites begin to conquer Canaan</i>	Merneptah (1237-1209)	Unpatar-napirisha Kiten-Hutran (1235-1210?)
						XXth DYNASTY Rameses III (1198-1166)	SHUTRUKIDS Hallutush-Inshushinak (1205-1185)
						Rameses IV to Rameses XI (1166-1085)	Shutruk-nahhunte (1185-1155)
							Kutir-nahhunte Shilhak-Inshushinak (1150-1120)

The number, order and chronology of the kings of the Kassite dynasty who reigned before Burnaburiash II are extremely uncertain. The same applies to the last kings of the Old Hittite Empire. Taken from Roux, Georges *Ancient Iraq* 3rd Ed., 1992, PenguinBooks USA, NY (chronological table V)

The Ptolemaic Eagle on Greek Soil

An Event of the Late Dynastic Period

Supported by Epigraphic, Literary, and Archaeological Evidence

By Randall T. Nishiyama

About the author: *Randall received his degrees in the engineering sciences and is employed at the University of Colorado at Boulder. He is a member of the ESS and the Boulder Society of the Archaeological Institute of America. He excavates in Oppido Mamertina (Contrada Mella) under the Mamertion Foundation in Calabria, Italy. While traveling along the eastern shore of Greece on a hot summer's day in 1998, his eyes rested upon a reminder of a long forgotten war ... Ancient Koroneia.*

In the Middle 3rd century BC Egyptian forces landed on the shores of Greece and marched inland to the aide of their Athenian allies who were besieged by a strong Macedonian army. Archaeological excavations at Koroni, east of Athens along the Attic coast, provide evidence of one of their military camps.

PRELUDE TO WAR

Hellenistic Greece witnessed a short war from 265-261 BC known as the Chremonidean War. It was fought between Macedonia under Antigonos II, and both Athens and Sparta under Areus. During this period, Ptolemy II (285-247 BC) of the 32nd Dynasty, allied himself with Athens, and with Sparta and her allies of the Peloponnesian League. (Figure 1.) Fragments from an Athenian marble stele describe the decree of Chremonides passed in the fall of the year of the archonship of Peithidemos (266 BC). The following spring, Antigonos attacked and laid siege on Athens.

In the archbishop of Peithodemos, in the (prytany) of Erechtheis (which is) the secondary prytany; ninth (day) of Metageitnion, ninth (day) of the prytany; main assembly; the motion was put to the vote by (the chairman) of the proedroi, Sostratos, son of Kallistratos, from Erchia, and by his fellow proedroi; resolved by the People; Chremonides, son of Eteokles, from Aithalidai, introduced the motion ... (Since these things are so and) as there is a unity of purpose common to the Greeks, in order, therefore, that they shall be vigorous fighters against those who have now wronged and broken faith with the cities -- they and King Ptolemaios [Ptolemy II] and the others -- and that in the future, with unity of purpose, they shall save the cities; with good fortune it has been resolved by the People that the friendship and the alliance between the Athenians and the Lakedaimonians [Spartans] and the kings of the Lakedaimonians and the Eleians and the Achaians and the Tegeians and the Mantineians and the Orchomenians and the Phigalians and the Kaphyans and the Kretans, as many as are in the alliance of the Lakedaimonians and [of Areus], as many of the other allies shall be valid for all [time, (namely, the friendship and alliance) which] the ambassadors have brought ...¹

THE CHREMONIDEAN WAR

It has been suggested that Ptolemy's personal motive for initiating first an alliance with Athens and the Peloponnesian League and subsequently war against Macedonia was to guard against Macedonia's growing maritime activity in the Aegean, especially along the coast of Asia Minor.² This little known war is described by Pausanias in the 2nd century AD

While Akrotatos's son Areus was reigning at Sparta, Antigonos son of Demetrios attacked Athens by land and sea. An Egyptian expeditionary force under Patroklos [son of Patron, a Macedonian] came to defend the Athenians, and the whole Lakonian people [Spartans] marched out to fight, with King Areus commissioned to command them. Antigonos surrounded Athens and prevented the Athenian allies from entering the city, so Patroklos sent messengers to get Areus and the Lakonians to open a battle, promising he would himself attack the Macedonians from behind as soon as the battle started, but saying that it was not sensible for Egyptian sailors to make a first attack against Macedonians on dry land. Out of good will to Athens and out of their longing to do something future generations would remember, the Lakonians were ready to put themselves in danger, but Areus withdrew his army, because his provisions were exhausted. He preferred to bottle up their careless courage for home consumption, and not pour it away so generously on other people's occasions. But Athens held out a very long time, and Antigonos made peace, with the condition that he installed a garrison in the MUSEUM. As time went by, Antigonos withdrew the garrison of his own free will ...³

The Ptolemaic fleet suffered defeat at Kos in the Dodecanese soon afterwards. Egypt did not again regain its sea power until fourteen years later when it defeated Antigonos at Andros in the northern Cyclades.⁴



Fig. 1. Cartouches of Ptolemy II.

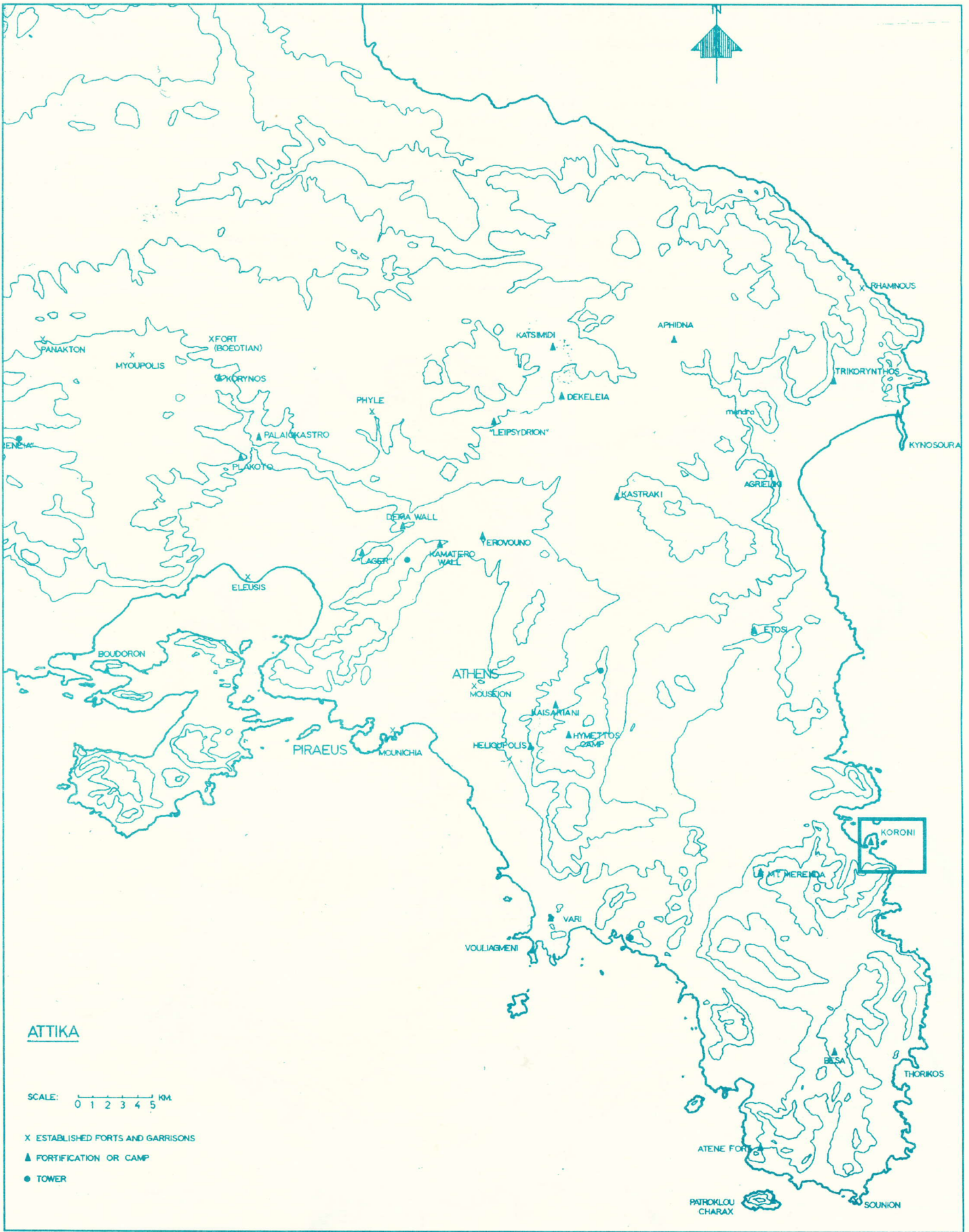


Fig. 2. Map of Attica. (Reprinted from 'Koroni: A Ptolemaic Camp on the East Coast of Attica'.⁷)

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION AT KORONI

Until nearly forty years ago, there lacked any substantial evidence to support that Ptolemaic forces under Patroklos were active on the Greek mainland during the war, although they had occupied Keos in the western Cyclades and a smaller island near Sounion. Patroklos and his expedition are described in inscriptions found on the islands of Crete, Thera, and Keos.⁵ But it was in 1953 when the late Eirene Varoucha-Christodouloupoulou, of the Numismatic Museum in Athens, reported numismatic evidence indicating Ptolemaic camps at Koroni, Cape Zoster (Vouliagmeni), and Helioupolis, which lies a mere 5 km. from the center of Athens. She also mentioned epigraphy at Rhamnous as evidence of Ptolemaic forces on Greek soil.¹ In 1959, a survey was conducted on the east coast of Attica at Koroni

(Ancient Koroneia) by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens.⁶⁺ An excavation followed in 1960 under the direction of the late Eugene Vanderpool.^{7,8} Margaret Thompson helped with the analysis of the coins while G. Roger Edwards advised on the pottery.

Koroni is a peninsula off of eastern Greece measuring 1 km. from north to south and from east to west and at its center and highest point is at 120 m. where sits an acropolis. (Figures 2 and 3.) Koroni's northern and eastern slopes are very steep. It is connected to the mainland by an isthmus to the southwest. The acropolis was fortified by a 1.50 m. thick, 2 m. high unworked stone wall and tower that offers a commanding view of the south. Barracks and store-rooms cover the acropolis. Another wall, 950 m. long and 2.25 m. thick with nine towers, protects the peninsula at the isthmus.

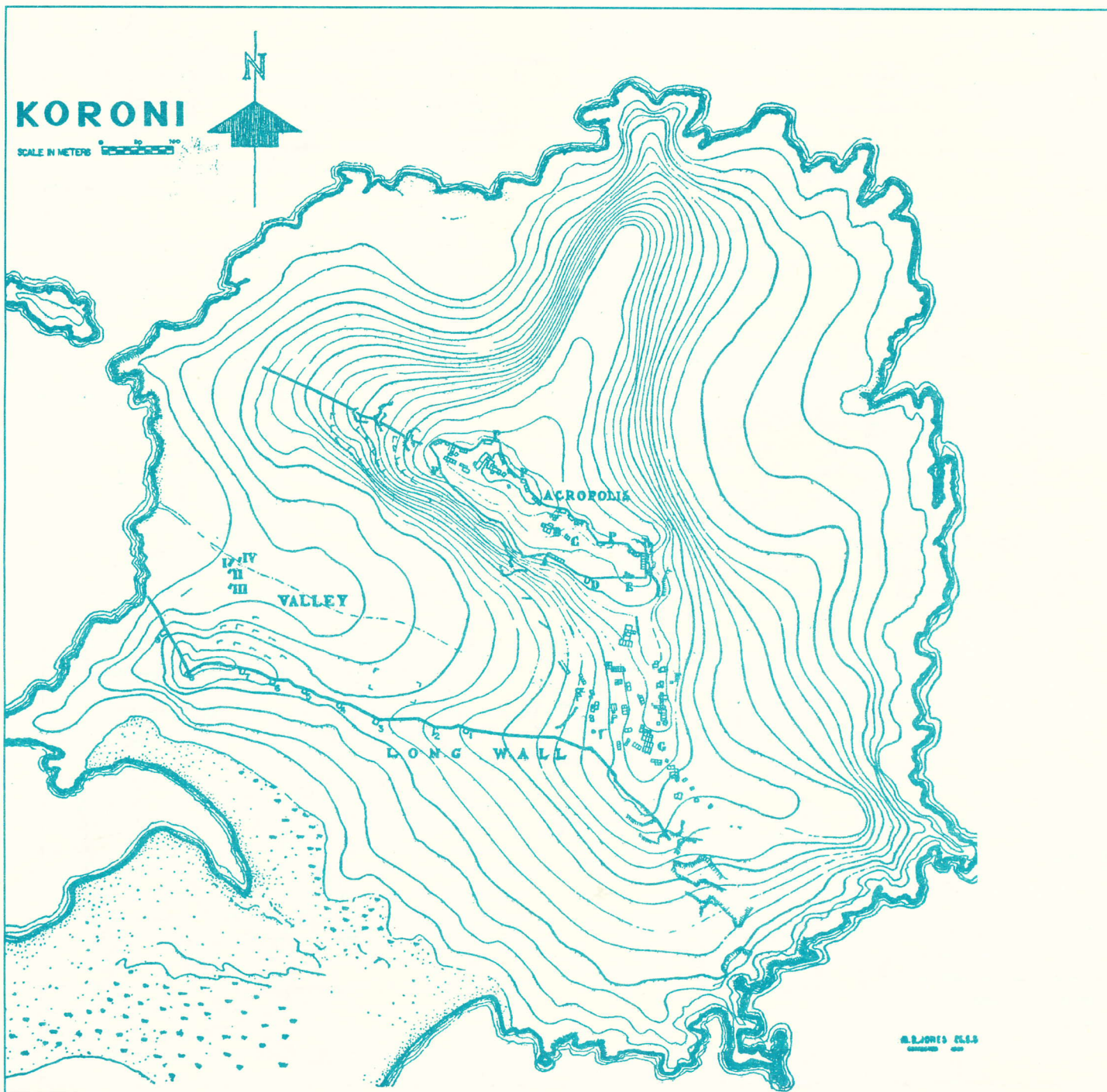


Fig. 3. Site Plan. (Reprinted from 'Koroni: A Ptolemaic Camp on the East Coast of Attica'.⁷)

Seventy-five percent of the coins found at Koroni were Ptolemaic. The majority were bronze coins of Ptolemy II dating from 285/4-267/6 BC. The coins depict the laureled head of a bearded Zeus on the obverse side of the coin. On the reverse side was the Ptolemaic eagle facing left with open wings, an overstruck SW monogram, Ptolemy II's symbol of a Celtic type shield, and the inscription ΠΤΟΛΕΜΑΙΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ - Ptolemy the King. (Figure 4.) The source of the coins is uncertain, but they may have been minted in either Cyprus or at Alexandria.^{5,9} Nineteen coins of this type were found. They averaged 27 mm. in diameter and 15.13 gm. in weight, probably in the Phoenician standard.^{10*}

The vast majority of stamps found on pottery handles indicated that the pottery was originally from Egypt. The pottery dated to the late 4th century and early 3rd century BC. It is assumed that these styles were still being used in Attica even during the middle of the 3rd century B.C.[^]



EPILOGUE

The Ptolemies, after the division of Alexander the Great's Empire, followed a strong maritime policy and maintained a large and powerful navy consisting of huge galleys for the defense of the Nile.^{14,15} The composition of the fleet probably was not very much different from that during Alexander's time where according to Arrian, 2nd c. AD, Alexander's fleet was manned by Carians, Cyprians, Egyptians, and Phoenicians.¹⁶

It is not clear whether the native Egyptian element in the fleet was influential during the Chremonidian War. Although Ptolemy II, like his predecessors, relied on mercenary troops consisting of Greeks, Macedonians, Persians, and Hellenized Asiatics for his army, W.W. Tarn believes that perhaps Patroklos's 'Egyptian sailors' may have been native epibatah (marines) who, although not as well trained for land warfare as Macedonian troops, were a heavily armed contingent.^{18,19}

Fig. 4. Bronze coin of Ptolemy II. (Reprinted from *Early Hellenistic Coinage, From the Accession of Alexander to the Peace of Apamea (336-188 BC)*.⁹)

NOTES

+ The site was first described by Lolling in 1879.⁸

* Coinage was introduced to Egypt by Alexander the Great when he invaded Egypt, then under the Persian satrap Mazacês, in the winter of 332/1 BC. Prior to Alexander, Persian silver coinage known as sigloi may have been used, but not on a regular basis.

^ Refer to G.R. Edwards, V.R. Grace, and E. Vanderpool; J.R. McCredie; and A. Steinberg for arguments relating to this matter.^{11,12,13}

~ Native Egyptian troops historically displayed their influence during Ptolemy IV's victory over Antichus III of Syria at Raphia in 217 B.C.¹⁷

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For additional information on the Ptolemaic Dynasty, refer to the World Wide Web at 'The House of Ptolemy' (<http://pw1.netcom.com/~aphilipp/index.html>). There is also information on the Antigonid Dynasty of Macedonia at 'Ancient Macedonia' at <http://www.greektown.net.ancient.html>.

LECTURE REPORTS

ANCIENT EGYPTIAN BOARDGAMES

Presented by Graeme Davis
ESS Meeting, April 20th 1999

The ancient Egyptians have sometimes been represented as a people obsessed with death, but the great care they took over preparations for the afterlife show that they were deeply in love with life, and wanted to assure themselves of an eternity that was equally enjoyable. Games were among many pleasures they enjoyed, and as a professional game designer, Graeme Davis offered some observations on the wide range of boardgames that have been discovered in ancient Egyptian contexts, along with some thoughts on how they may have been played.

Quite a number of gaming sets of various kinds have been found in ancient Egyptian tombs, but as yet, there is no documentary evidence for the rules of these various games, which means that an educated guess is the best that can be offered at this time. While there is no shortage of images of games being played (including one satirical papyrus which comments on the decline of traditional values by showing a lion and an antelope sitting down to a game together!) the Egyptian artistic convention of the side elevation means that nowhere can we see the top of a board with a game in progress, which would provide some valuable clues as to how a game was played.

With these caveats in mind, Graeme took a brief look at that various gaming sets and game boards that have been found from ancient Egypt.

The most common was *senet*, also known as the Game of Thirty squares. Played on a 3 x 10 board, this seemed to be a race game - since a war game, such as chess or checkers, requires much more room for maneuver than a 3 x 10 board can provide - with both players moving their pieces along a zig-zag course. In many cases, the last four squares were marked X, III, II and I, markings identical to those on the ancient Egyptian "long die," which seem to count down to the end of the track.

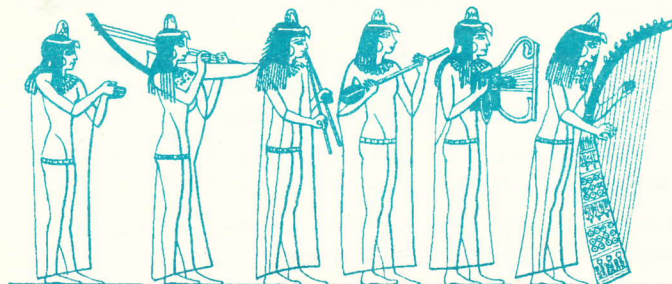
Almost as popular was the Game of Twenty Squares, which is called *tau* or *djau* (meaning "robbers") in some sources, although this name seems to have fallen out of favor with Egyptologists lately. In many cases, dual-purpose gaming boxes have a *senet* board on one side and a Twenty Squares board on the other, with a drawer to hold the pieces and dice or throwing sticks. This board is banjo-shaped, with a block of 3 x 4 squares at one end and a single central file extending out to the end of the board - almost as though the famous gaming-board from Ur of the Chaldees had been "unrolled" at one end. Some sets have certain squares marked with a

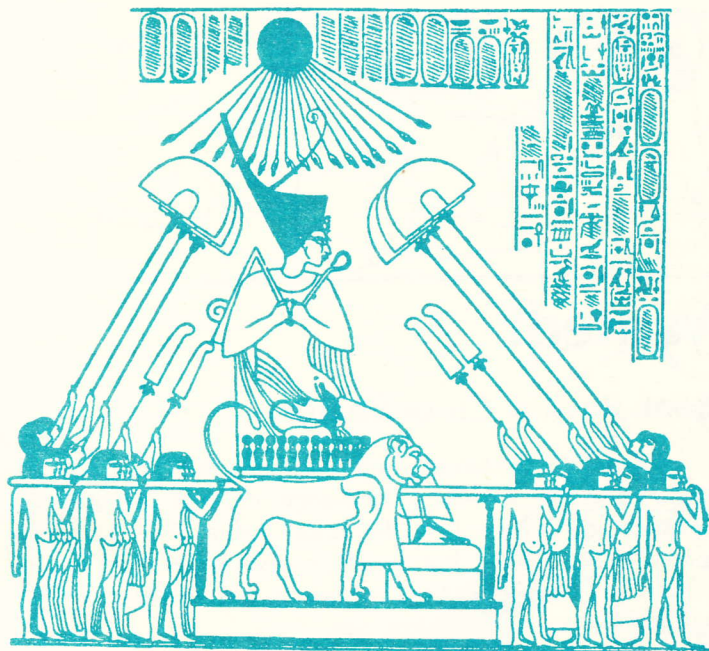
flower pattern, making another similarity to the board from Ur. Again, this seems to have been a race game, with each player having four "safe" squares on the file nearest them, where they could set up their pieces for a race down the center file to the end of the board. Pieces could probably have been captured or made to start over by colliding with them, just as in many popular race games today.

The game of Hounds and Jackals is known from one splendid example excavated at Thebes by Carter and Carnarvon, and from a small number of humbler examples in clay. The set from Thebes was a miniature table, with turned legs and a drawer for the pieces, which were long carved pins topped with the heads of hounds and jackals respectively. Again, movement seems to have been controlled by dice, but it seems that the players followed separate tracks, making their way up the trunk of a palm tree carved into the board and toward a large hole at the top, surrounded by a carving which suggests the hieroglyph *shen*, or eternity. Some spaces were marked with a design similar to the hieroglyph *nefer*, which can loosely be translated as joy or beauty, suggesting that the conferred some bonus - allowing the player an extra throw, of the dice perhaps. Others were linked together by curved lines, which might have acted as "snakes" or "ladders," though in the absence of any documentary evidence this must remain pure conjecture.

The temple at Qurna has a number of gaming-boards scratched into its roofing-slabs, suggesting that games were not the exclusive pleasure either of the rich or of the dead. Some closely resemble the boards for the "morris" family of games, of which *merels* or nine men's morris is the best known. The simpler three men's morris plays very much like tic-tac-toe. Another board seems to have been left unfinished, possibly due to an error in carving one of the lines, but it seems very similar to the board for a game called *alquerque* in a medieval Spanish manuscript, and known to the Saracens as *al-qirkat*. A descendent of this game, called *seega*, was played in Egypt well into the 19th century.

The range of board games found in ancient Egypt is both wide and intriguing, and merits further study. One can only hope that at some future date a "Papyrus of Hoyle-hotep" might be found, so we no longer have to guess at how they were played!





THE TRAGEDY AT AMARNA AND ITS AFTERMATH

Presented by Bob Hanawalt
ESS Meeting, May 18th 1999.

No report was received on this program. Please see *House of Scrolls* on the back page of this issue if you would like to help out with lecture reports.

GIZEH - MORE THAN JUST PYRAMIDS

Presented by Dennis MacDonald
ESS Meeting, June 15th 1999.

Dennis treated the ESS to another of his fast-moving and entertaining lectures, this time examining the myriad structures and points of interest that visitors to Gizeh generally overlook in their rush to see the Pyramids and the Sphinx.

These included a number of pyramids besides the famous ones. A satellite pyramid lies between the Queens' Pyramids and the Pyramid of Khufu, which may have had some connection to the *heb-sed* festival, or may have been a separate burial-place for the royal viscera. A so-called "test shaft" often attributed to Khufu seems to have been abandoned before its completion. Many of these lesser-known pyramids are overlooked by visitors because they have been so thoroughly robbed of their stone that only a few courses survive.

As well as little-known pyramids, Gizeh boasts more boat pits than are commonly advertised, and the tombs of cult-priests, lesser royals and court officials are too often overlooked. The tomb of Meresankh III is particularly interesting, since it was originally built for her mother, Hetepheras II, who outlived her daughter and had the tomb re-inscribed for her.

There is also the enigmatic "Hetepheras shaft" (Hetepheras was a popular royal name at that time; this particular one was the wife of Sneferu and the mother of Khufu), which was dis-

covered by accident in 1925 when a photographer's tripod-leg broke through its covering. The shaft was found to go down 100 feet to a sealed door, leading to a small tomb with an empty alabaster sarcophagus, and a canopic chest hidden in a small sealed alcove.

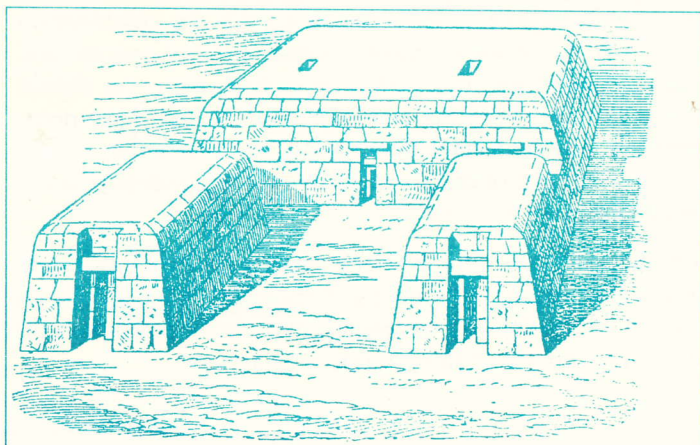
The western cemetery at Gizeh was reserved for officials, but perhaps the best find to be made there is the Antiquities Office, cunningly hidden away behind a knoll to discourage visits from casual tourists! Given the right approach, a serious visitor to Gizeh can find all sorts of doors become open - both figuratively and literally - if one pays a visit here. The trick, says Dennis, is to know what you want to see and why you want to see it. A simple show-me-all-the-good-stuff approach will mark you as a time-waster, but by showing you know something about the site and its monuments, and specifying an area of interest, you can find the Inspectors more than willing to show you around. Since the only way to get into many of the tombs is with an Inspector, they are well worth cultivating!

The northwest corner of the western cemetery is currently being excavated by Zahi Hawass. This area includes the Tombs of the Dwarfs, and discoveries are being made day by day.

In addition to the tombs, Gizeh offers workshop areas, the workers' village, quarry areas (including the quarry tombs of various nobles), and the "Wall of the Crow," the remains of a royal enclosure wall and gate.

The workers' cemetery was discovered in the 1990s when the horse of an unfortunate tourist (or a fortunate one, depending on one's point of view) fell through the roof of a tomb. It is currently being excavated by Zahi Hawass. It was here, surprisingly, that the first-ever tomb curse was found - despite decades of Mummy movies, no previous curse inscription has been found on a tomb. Perhaps less surprising is the fact that the bones from the workers' cemetery show a high incidence of back injury, from carving and moving all that stone around!

This lecture was as informative as it was entertaining, and will no doubt prompt members who visit Gizeh in the future to take a little more time and wander off the whistle-stop tourist track; the rewards are clearly considerable.



House of Scrolls



Scribes Wanted!

Your hardworking publications committee has been a little under strength lately, and we need volunteers to help us continue bringing you the *Scribes' Palette* and the *Ostrakon*. If you feel you can help out with any of the following jobs, please contact Graeme Davis (303-422-5342 or graemed@vr1.com) or Frank Pettee (303-777-5494 or fpettee@earthlink.net).

If you enjoy reading the Society's publications, then why not lend a hand in producing them? If you're a high school or college student, we can't give you credit hours (though if you put your school in touch with us, we might be able to work out some kind of work-study or internship arrangement), but working with the publications committee will definitely look good on your resume, especially if you're considering a career in Egyptology, museums, journalism or publishing.

So take a look at the following vacancies, then get in touch and lend us a hand!

Lecture Reports Co-ordinator

The ESS has a program of ten lectures a year: one every month except for August and December. In addition to these regular programs, the ESS co-hosts, or is otherwise involved with, a number of other lectures during the course of a typical year. The Lecture Reports Co-ordinator's job is to make sure that a brief report is written on each lecture, and handed over for typesetting in time for the next issue of the *Ostrakon*.

If you already attend most or all of the Society's lectures, then all you have to do is write a brief synopsis - 300-500 words is just fine. Or if you know people who, between them, cover all the year's meetings, you could ask them to make notes and then type them up and pass them along. Or any combination of the two. If, for some reason, neither you nor anyone you know is able to get to a particular lecture, then you should borrow the tape from the Museum's library and make notes from that. The important thing is that, by any means necessary, some record of the Society's lecture program appears in the *Ostrakon*.

Commitment is the number one quality for this job. Good writing and editing skills are also important, and you must be able to turn the finished lecture reports over for typesetting on time, either on a 3½" floppy disk or by email.

Book Review Co-ordinator

Twice a year (in the January and July issues) the *Ostrakon* runs the *House of Scrolls*, a one-page column devoted to Egyptological material in the print media. This normally means book reviews, but the occasional review of a magazine is also possible; *KMT* magazine was reviewed in the *House of Scrolls*, some while ago.

Each edition of the *House of Scrolls* has 1-3 reviews, totalling 700-800 words. As Book Review Co-ordinator, your job will be to scare up reviews, compile them into a single word processor or text file of the right length, and turn them over for typesetting, either by email or on a 3½" floppy disk. If you can't get enough material for a particular edition, you should be prepared to make up the shortfall yourself.

If you are an avid reader of books on ancient Egypt - or if you know one or more people who are, and could persuade them to write short book reviews (or give you their opinion on books they have read, as you take notes), then we need you for this job. It's not a tremendously heavy commitment - just four book reviews a year, or thereabouts - but by helping us out with this you could make a tremendous difference.

Assistant Editor/Typesetter

Right now, there is only one person on the publications committee who knows how to do layout and typesetting. If that person gets sick, or goes on vacation, or gets another job and moves out of state, or gets burned out and decides not to do it any more, ESS publications are in trouble. We desperately need a second person, both to help spread the load and as a backup in case of emergencies.

If you can use Quark Xpress 4.0 or higher and have email access, we want to hear from you. Any additional expertise - especially with Photoshop or other graphics programs - would be a bonus. You will be provided with the necessary fonts, templates and a graphics library.

This job would especially suit someone who is perhaps studying journalism or desktop publishing, and wants to get some practical experience and build their resume a little. As with the other two jobs, commitment and reliability are absolutely vital; we can work around almost anything else.