CyberScribe February 2012, number 197

Often the CyberScribe will focus on humorous events, but the things that you are happening in Tahrir Square in Cairo are deadly serious to those who have gathered there to make their voices heard and to demand a new government.

People have died in this demonstration and in the one last year, and they have been memorialized in a strange but very moving way. A huge obelisk consisting of a wooden frame and a cloth covering has been erected in the square. Its surface is entirely covered with the names of people who have died fighting for the revolution. The obelisk is lighted at night and the effect is very powerful. A column was later added, with its surface covered with hieroglyphs and ancient symbols.

The story got little attention in the West, but the photos below which came from a site called "TechFleece" (tinyurl.com/7cqxbs2) tell the story. Few words are needed.

"The people of Egypt are currently raising a new obelisk in Tahrir Square in Cairo, Egypt at the site of last year's focal point of anti-Mubarak demonstrations. The anachronistic obelisk has the names of those killed in last years uprising."



Thousands of people gathered in Cairo's Tahrir Square today to mark the first anniversary of the start of the popular uprising that toppled longtime authoritarian leader Hosni Mubarak.





A much happier story involves the solar boats buried alongside the great pyramid at Giza. Most everyone knows that one of these vessels was founded nearly perfect condition many years ago, and was taken out of its pit to be restored and exhibited. Many of you may have seen this wonderful ship.

There is a second pit and a second boat, but it has long been known that the second boat was less well preserved than the first one. Recently it was noticed that the second boat and seriously deteriorated since the first time examination was made into the still sealed pit. Unfortunately it has turned out that the pit was not resealed after its first examination, allowing water and insects to get into the pit.

Now this pit is to be completely opened and the second ship taken out. The wooden parts will be taken out and stabilized, if possible, and perhaps they will be able to reconstruct the second ship.

The current activity involving the ship is well summarized in an article from "Al Ahram" (tinyurl.com/7eeacu5):



'An international press conference is expected to announce the launch of the second phase of the Khufu solar boat restoration project, which is being carried out in collaboration with a Japanese archaeological team from Wasida University. Ibrahim told Ahram Online that the team would collect samples of the boat's wooden beams for analysis on Monday in order to draw up accurate plans for the boat's restoration in a special museum located on the plateau.

'The first phase of the project, carried out two years ago, assessed the area surrounding the second boat pit with the use of topographical radar surveys. A laser scanning survey has also documented the area, particularly the wall between the Great Pyramid and the boat pit.

'The second boat, found along with the first one in 1954 by late Egyptian archaeologist Kamal El-Malak, is currently on display on the northern side of Khufu's Great Pyramid. The first boat was removed piece-by-piece and reconstructed by late Egyptian engineer Ahmed Youssef over the course of a 20-year period.

'The second boat remained largely buried in sand until 1992, when a Japanese archaeological team from Waseda University offered a \$10 million grant to unearth, restore and display it to the public.

'Abdel Hamid Maarouf, head of the ministry's ancient Egypt department, said the team had cleared the pit of insects and found a hieroglyphic cartouche bearing the names of Fourth Dynasty King Khufu and Crown Prince Djedefre.

'Ali El-Asfar, head of operations at the Giza Plateau, said that the Japanese team had also found that water had leaked from the nearby museum housing the first solar boat. The leak, they noted, had adversely affected some of the boat's wood, making it necessary to quickly wrap up the analysis phase and restore the water-damaged wood.'

Egyptians made pilgrimages to sacred sites, often to places sacred to a God with an animal associated with its image. In some of these places the animals associated with that God were mummified and apparently sold to the pilgrims to be used as votive offerings.

One of these animals commonly mummified was the Egyptian ibis. There are so many thousands of these Ibis mummies that their preparation must have been a major industry alongside the temples. The treatment of these animals before they were killed and mummified has been a concern of numerous investigators. A new paper has investigated this with some interesting discoveries. The article appeared in the "Journal of Archaeological Science", but unfortunately the CyberScribe does not have access to this journal.

A source called "New Scientist" (tinyurl.com/72qhkjp) offered a short discussion of the problem:

'Ancient Egyptians paid special attention to the organs of their dead, embalming them so they would continue to function in the afterlife. Now it seems they did the same for sacrificed ibis birds, and even packed their stomachs with food so they wouldn't go hungry.

'Ibis mummies are found in their millions at shrines in Egypt, where they were sacrificed to Thoth, the god of writing and wisdom. Andrew Wade at the University of Western Ontario in London, Canada, and his colleagues used a CT scanner to look inside two mummified adult ibises and one hatchling. This revealed that embalmers had removed their internal organs. The adult gizzards, complete with snail shells, which may have come from the birds' last meals, were then replaced. The hatchling's body cavity had been stuffed with grain.

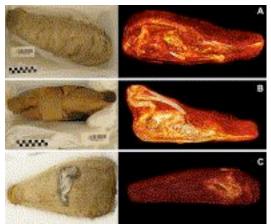
'Studies of human mummies show that ancient Egyptians often removed and embalmed the lungs and digestion organs before placing them back inside the body – perhaps so they might work in the afterlife. The ibis mummies suggest Egyptians believed that birds also travelled to the afterlife, says Wade. "It suggests the provision of an afterlife food source to the bird," he says, "and lends support to the idea that the viscera of ibises and humans alike were meant to continue their living function within the afterlife."' Ices

The CyberScribe can only quote the abstract from the article that appeared in "Journal of Archaeological Science" (tinyurl.com/7jfdn63), but it reveals some interesting details:

Recent excavation of a mummified ibis, in whose bill were found numerous snails, and the 2010 radiological study of ibis mummies from Yale's Peabody Museum drew attention to the presence of bird foodstuffs intentionally placed inside mummified ibises following evisceration. The foodstuff packing in the Peabody's ibises was likely contained within the birds' own viscera. Radiographs of a hatchling ibis mummy at McGill's Redpath Museum demonstrated similar placement of foodstuffs within the eviscerated body cavity. This pattern of ibis evisceration, with the previously unreported practice of foodstuff packing, suggests the provision of an afterlife food source to the bird. These findings lend support to the idea that the viscera of ibises, and humans alike, were meant to continue their living function in the afterlife. Given that organs of digestion and respiration were specifically preserved and retained within, or in conjunction with, human mummies, the implication is that animals were also treated with similar respect and care, and the crucial role of the viscera was recognized.



Sketch of the Egyptian Sacred Ibis (after <u>Cuvier, 1804</u>:Plate LIII) and photo of the head of an ibis mummy from Abydos, showing snails packed into the beak.



Photos of the wrappings (left) and sagittally sectioned 3D reconstructions (right) of ibises

The ancient Egyptians were apparently fascinated by life history of the dung beetle, known to us Egyptophiles as a model for the scarab beetle, which is found throughout much of ancient Egyptian time. A couple of new papers that appeared dealing with the dung beetle and some of its life habits. The first of these two papers, which appeared in a source called, "NewScientist" (tinyurl.com/7xps4e6) discusses some of the peculiar life habits of these beetles:



'The ancient Egyptians would have nodded sagely: scarab beetles perform a dance to the sun atop a ball of dung. They're not worshipping a sun god, though: the beetles dance to orient themselves and – crucially – to roll their dung ball in a straight line.

'Dung beetles were sacred in ancient Egypt, their dung-rolling linked with the nocturnal activity of Khepri, the god of the rising sun. Khepri was supposed to roll the sun through the underworld at night, pushing it over the horizon in the morning. Now Emily Baird of Lund University in Sweden and colleagues have shown that a diurnal dung beetle in South Africa (*Scarabaeus nigroaeneus*) uses celestial cues to ensure it keeps going in a straight line away from the dung pile.

"As a fresh dung pat can attract many beetles, it is necessary for individual beetles to try to avoid the others that may try to steal their ball," says Baird. "To do this, the beetles roll their ball away from the dung pile in the most efficient manner possible. That is, in a straight line."

'When beetles have fashioned their ball, they climb to the top and "dance" – actually rotate on the surface – before returning to the ground and pushing. Their aim is to find a suitable patch of ground where they can bury the ball and eat it. The beetles shove the ball facing backwards, with their head down and rear legs pushing the dung.

'The biologists found that beetles perform the dance before moving away from the dung pile, and also when they encounter an obstacle or lose control of the ball. Baird's team sent beetles down semicircular tunnels to put them off course, made them roll balls down rotating pathways, and used a mirror to change the apparent position of the sun. In both cases, most beetles performed the orientation dance before changing the direction they pushed the ball.'

The second, and more scholarly article appeared in "PLOS One" (Jan 2012, vol. 7, issue 1) will tell you much more about dung beetles, cow manure, and bug dancing than you probably ever wanted to know. If you want to see the actual article go to: tinyurl.com/7vs7gl8 and all will be revealed.

The paper's conclusions state: "Unlike many other animal navigators, the task of the dung beetles is not to find their way back to a familiar location after a foraging trip. Instead, foraging dung beetles need to roll from a known location to an unknown destination in the most direct and efficient manner possible, which is in a straight line. Here, we propose that the characteristic dance that dung beetles perform before rolling away from the dung pile, and after encountering a disturbance while rolling, is an orientation mechanism that allows beetles to set an initial roll bearing, and to regain this original bearing if they experience an unintentional disturbance."

The technology available to archaeologists today is rather awesome, but your own computer has resources that are also quite amazing. The free program called Google Earth will allow you to see high-resolution images of places all around the world.

Although the images below probably do not qualify as news, they are quite striking and the CyberScribe hopes you will find them interesting:







Abu Sir



Saqqara



Meidum

The next bit of news possibly brings up a nightmare common to every visitor to Egypt: getting arrested for stealing artifacts. Well, the nightmare became real for a British couple recently. They were apprehended, sort of, as they tried to smuggle priceless Egyptian artifacts.

The best version of the of the story seen by the CyberScribe appeared in the news source "The Independent" (tinyurl.com/87f9glm). The story is presented here, with minor condensation, and ought to amuse you.

'Michael Newey, 65, and his wife Angela, 62, were stopped at Luxor International Airport by officials trying to clamp down on the burgeoning illegal trade in looted antiquities. Well hello a up.

'According to international news agency reports the couple, who are believed to have lived in Egypt for the past nine years, were carrying 19 objects *in their do you wish you* luggage.

'These were said to include Pharaonic statues, a Greco-Roman bronze coin, ancient manuscripts and a 16th century Bible which are protected under Egypt's antiquity and cultural laws. It was reported that Mrs. Newey smashed three of the items as they were being examined by experts from the Ministry of Antiquities and that the police were called.

'The seized pieces are now being prepared to be transported to the Egyptian Museum in Cairo where they are due to be examined by a specialist committee.

'However it has emerged that the couple were released after it became clear that the objects were almost certainly cheap fakes purchased in the local market where convincing reproductions – often made in China – are openly on sale to tourists.

'The Britons told officials that the coin, originally believed to date back to Roman times, was in fact from Romania.

'A spokesman for the Foreign Office in London said the couple were on their way home. "I can confirm the arrest of two British nationals at Luxor International Airport. They have been released and are travelling back to the UK," he said.

'The local English language newspaper the Luxor Times said the Britons deserved an apology once it had been established the items were fake.

"Otherwise don't expect any tourists to buy a souvenir from the local market for five pounds as it may fool someone who should have studied for many years to be a professional and think it is genuine," it added.' A most amazing story emerged from Russia, complete with photographs, of the frozen bodies of extraterrestrial aliens. They occurred in two varieties, but one of the discoveries was posted on the Internet as a YouTube video and immediately went viral. Unfortunately for the finders a newspaper editor began asking questions...and everything quickly unraveled.

The news item written by Dennis Bodzash presented below was posted by the "Examiner" (tinyurl.com/7dczj98 ) and is most amusing. Read on:





'For a few days, the Internet was abuzz over a Youtube video that reportedly showed the corpse of a space alien being discovered in Siberia. However, a mere 3 days after the video was posted online, it has been revealed to be a hoax thanks to Russian police.

'The buzz began when UFO news website All News Web picked up the video and posted a translation on its website. Once having such a prominent platform, the video went viral as people all over the world started watching to the tune of nearly 3.5 million viewers in just 3 days. In short order, this became the most-watched video on Youtube, with new comments often pouring in by the time the 1 minute, 25 second video had finished playing.

'Unfortunately, the story unraveled almost instantaneously once a concerned Russian newspaper editor decided to phone police.

'Upon watching the video, one cannot help but notice the tiny size of the alien corpse. In most alien encounter stories, the big-headed, bug-eyed aliens like the one seen in the video are reported to be around 4 feet tall, give or take a little. However, in the Youtube hit, the alien looks to be only about half that size. The diminutive stature of the dead alien led newspaper editor to call police, fearing that the partially-decomposed body may actually be that of a child.

After the call, police were soon knocking on the poster's door, demanding to know the full story. Not wanting to get into legal trouble, the poster, Youtube name 'SashafromBaikal,' told police that the 'alien' was actually nothing more than painted bread and chicken. Police left without pressing charges.'

And if that wasn't enough excitement from Russia, look what the CyberScribe found in an unimpeachable source...a supermarket tabloid:



NEWSPAPERS around the world have been captivated by this breaking story. **Diggers find Red pyramids** Associated Pres BARNAUL, Euseia d fune territory

BARNAUL, Russia – The recent discovery of a set of huge, reddish pyramids complete with mum, set of huge, reddish pyramids complete with mum, set of huge, reddish pyramids complete with mum, set of subscription of the process of the pyramids of the process of the pyramids in Mexico. The subscription of the Americas – ex- We now have proof that Straits to the Americas – ex- We now have proof that Straits to the Americas – ex- We now have proof that beak to the 4th extractores back to the 4th extractore

Martha Washington madeup those

famous stories about husband George!

determined that the structures that are clearly Egyptian in date back to the 4th century origin, including a bird-like B.C., Pyotr Shulga, head of the Inheritance Scientific Research soul in Egyptian religion. And Center, recently announced. The towering stone monu-like the pyramids of Egypt And Central America, are be-lieved to have been built as tombs for monarchs. "There are store store back and the Mayans in Mexico and one time allowed prices to elsewhere in Central America.

Viait the dead, revealed Proj. For example, the entrance to Urinsky. "The researchers each byramid is an opening in were able to find these en-trances and gain access to the hidden sepulchers." We believe that these new-hidden sepulchers." We believe that these new-ly discovered pyramids are a Inside each of the three pyra-mids at the site was a male ments built as tombs for ADVERTHEMENT.

one time allowed priests to visit the dead," revealed Prof. For example, the entrance to Urinsky, "The researchers each pyramid is an opening in



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