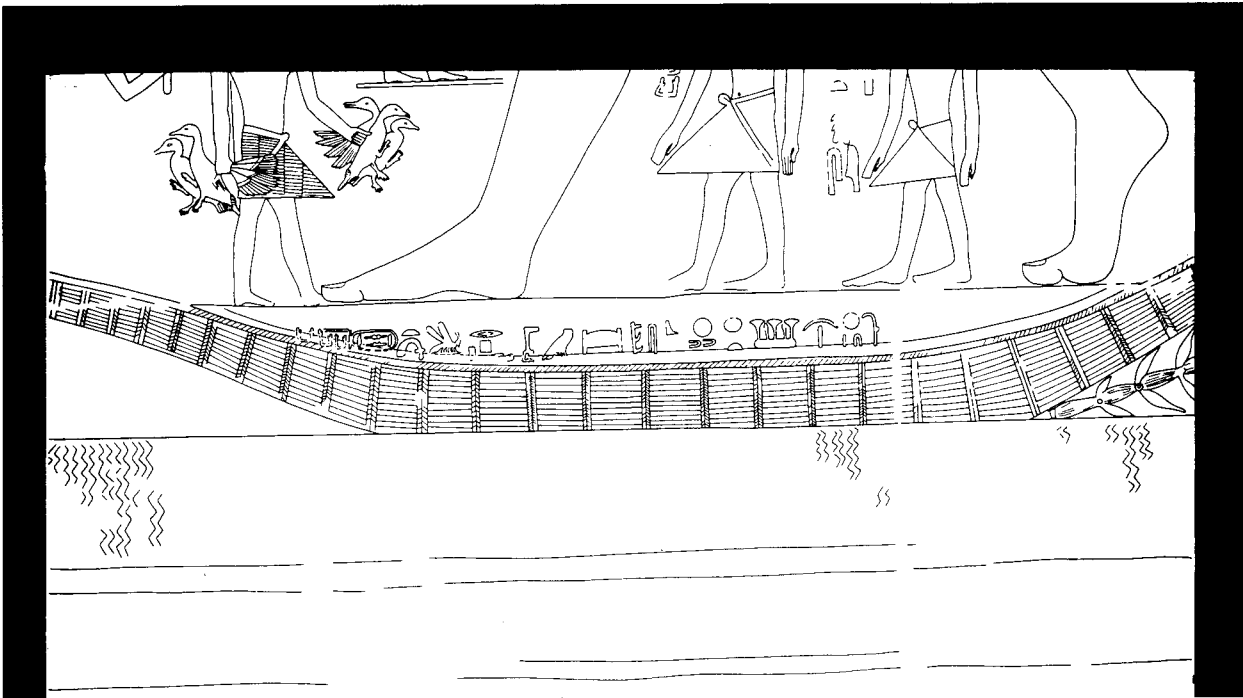


The Rundle Foundation for Egyptian Archaeology

NEWSLETTER NO. 75

January 2001



NIKAUISESI IN A FOWLING SCENE WITH THE DATE OF HIS BURIAL INSCRIBED IN BLACK INK IMMEDIATELY BENEATH HIM

NIKAUISESI

A RECONSIDERATION OF THE OLD KINGDOM SYSTEM OF DATING

The tomb of the overseer of Upper Egypt, Nikauisesi, has just been published in the ACE series "The Teti Cemetery at Saqqara". The date of the tomb owner is very secure as he appears as one of the officials represented on the causeway of King Unis and later he was the addressee in a Royal Decree from King Teti. The position of his tomb, between that of Kagemni and Hesi, suggests that he, like them, started his career under King Isesi the predecessor of Unis. The excavation of the burial chamber revealed that the skeletal remains of Nikauisesi were still in situ and these have been independently examined by two scholars, Dr Mark Speigelman and Professor Eugene Strouhal, who agreed on an age of forty to forty-five years for Nikauisesi.

The date of burial of the tomb owner is recorded in the tomb as the "11th count, 1st month of inundation, Day 20". Scholars believe that in the Old Kingdom, an animal count took place every two years and became annual from the Middle Kingdom onwards. With such a system of counting Nikauisesi should have been much older at the time of his death. If he started his career under Isesi he could not have been younger than 15-20 years. Unis is credited with a reign of 30 years in the Turin Papyrus and 33 years by Manetho. Most scholars accept 30 years as an approximate length of his reign. If the count was bi-annual as generally believed, then Nikauisesi died in year 22 of Teti (the 11th count). If he was 20 at the death of Isesi he should have been 50 at the death of Unis and 72 in year 22 of Teti which totally contradicts the results obtained from his skeletal remains as agreed upon by the two experts who examined him.

Perhaps the answer to this problem is that the count in the Old Kingdom was not bi-annual but, as in the later periods, undertaken every year. If this was so, then Unis should not be credited with more than 15 years and Teti with more than 11 years. That would fit with the estimate of 45 years as Nikauisesi's age at death.

It seems very likely that the animals, the wealth of the country, would be counted every year on their return from the marshlands and it seems rather peculiar that the Egyptians only counted their wealth every other year particularly since we are certain that the count was annual from Dynasty 12 onwards. Although such a conclusion sounds logical, it will require a major reconsideration of the Old Kingdom dating system. Certainly, though many scholars will object to the validity of this argument, it is healthy to constantly reassess accepted views in the light of new evidence.

NAGUIB KANAWATI

EGYPT BY TOUCH

The exhibition "Egypt in Touch" was launched on the 19th of October by the Chancellor of Macquarie University, Tim Besley, in the presence of the Governor of N.S.W., His Excellency The Honorable Sir Gordon Samuels AC and Mrs Samuels. The Ambassadors of the Czech Republic and Egypt as well as many Members of Parliament were present. The launch coincided with the opening of the Paralympic Arts Festival. The opening was followed by a dinner organised by the Black and White Committee of the Royal Blind Society. Dr Val Rundle and Professor Naguib Kanawati each gave a speech at the black tie occasion. The exhibition has since been very popular with more than 1800 people visiting it in the first week. It has not been restricted to those with a visual impairment although the latter found it particularly fascinating and of great benefit.

The collection consists of 32 objects ranging from pottery and statues to objects of everyday life such as a mirror. Rather than providing a description in Braille as originally envisaged, each object is provided with an audio narration, electronically triggered when the object is touched. The equipment, narration recording and expertise were generously provided by Radio station 2UE.



After closing at Parliament House on 10th November, the collection moved to Macquarie University for permanent display from early 2001. Arrangements for the display will be made after staff returns from their annual excavation season in Egypt at the end of February. For details of opening times please ring 9850 8848.

MINI-CONFERENCE

A mini-conference about life on an archaeological dig featuring excavation team members will take place over a weekend in late April on a date to be announced.

EVENING LECTURE

THE HEB-SED: A ROYAL FESTIVAL OF RENEWAL

The sed-festival was an ancient religious festival associated with the powers of Kingship. The rites are well known from temple and tomb scenes but its exact significance remains debated. Dr Michael Birrell will examine a range of evidence and assess directions for future research in this lecture which will commence at **7.30 pm. RSVP by 16th March.**

DATE: Thursday, 29th March, 2001

VENUE: Museum of Ancient Cultures, Level 3 X5B

COST: \$10 Members

\$15 Non Members

FIRST SEMESTER COURSES WITH DR MICHAEL BIRRELL

THE PYRAMIDS OF THE PHARAOHS: A five week course on the development of royal pyramid tombs from Prehistory to the end of Dynasty IV. Starts: Thursday 8th March.

THE LATER PYRAMIDS: A five week course examining royal pyramid tombs from the beginning of Dynasty V to the end of the Middle Kingdom. Starts: Thursday 3rd May.

COST: \$75.00 each course or attend Part I and Part II of the course for \$130.

TIME: 7.30pm to 9.30pm (both courses) **RSVP Part 1- 23rd Feb, Part 2 -19th April.**

PUBLICATIONS

Reports:

No. 14 N. Kanawati & M. Abder-Raziq, *The Teti Cemetery at Saqqara*, Vol. 6, *The Tomb of Nikauisesi*.

No. 15 A. McFarlane, *The Unis Cemetery at Saqqara*, Vol. 1 *The Tomb of Irukaptah*

A NEW CHAPTER FOR THE ACE IN QUEENSLAND

Members of the ACE should note that a Queensland branch of ACE is being established in Queensland. A conference is proposed on Sunday 20 May 2001 at Women's College, The University of Queensland commencing at 10 am. The speakers will be Professor Kanawati (Macquarie) and Dr Colin Hope (Monash). The next mailout will give further details, but members are asked to spread the word in support of this branch in order to attract international speakers in July/August. If you are interested in assisting or wish to be included in our mailing list, please contact Lorraine Millard at:

lorraine.millard@bigpond.com or (07) 3369 0860.

CHANGES TO PROCEDURES

RETURN OF RECEIPTS: All receipts will now be forwarded with the following Newsletter mail out. If a receipt is required urgently would you please send a stamped addressed envelope and the receipt will be mailed immediately.

PAYMENT BY CHEQUE: All cheques should be made payable to "MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY" – all items can now be included on the one cheque.

E-MAIL ADDRESSES: A reminder that we would like to have members E-mail addresses on file so that we can make contact if necessary. Changes to the membership form are now being made to allow more space for these details. We would appreciate E-mail addresses being clearly printed so as to eliminate problems in reading them.

LATE CHANGES TO ARRANGEMENTS: A recording will be left on our answering machine regarding any changes made to venues or times for lectures, etc. Please ring after **5 pm in the week before the function** as due to insufficient initial response, courses have in the past been unnecessarily cancelled, or difficulty encountered in booking appropriate substitute venues. In future we ask that bookings be returned no later than the given closing date.

PEN PALS

Knut Dammschneider who resides in a village near Luxor is anxious to contact fellow "Egyptomaniacs" and would be happy to correspond with members either through the post at P.O. Box 17, Luxor, Egypt **OR** by E-mail at mailto:plinge@globalnet.co.uk

WEB SITE

Please continue to check the web site for last minute information regarding our activities. Make sure you are looking at the current website, – the address is:

www.egyptology.mq.edu.au

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