Embodying the Goddess: Revealing the practice of tattooing in ancient Egypt

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While tattooing is an increasingly popular topic of study, it is rarely discussed in the past owing to the infrequent identification of tattoos in human remains. This is particularly true in dynastic Egypt, where physical evidence of tattooing is limited to a set of three female Middle Kingdom mummies discovered nearly a century ago. However, during the recent research with the mission of the Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale at Deir el-Medina, our team identified the first and only mummy to have Egyptian figural tattoos, with over 30 separate tattoos placed along the arms, neck, back, and shoulders. This talk presents the discovery and study of this fascinating mummy and her tattoos. Analysis of these tattoos not only reveals an Egyptian practice of tattooing, but also provides new evidence for the roles of women in religious practice during the New Kingdom (1550-1070 BCE).

The Road Less Traveled By?
History, Archaeology, and Landscape in southern Greece

Dimitri Nakassis
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At first glance, the tranquil valleys and mountain passes of the western Argolid give the appearance being of a rather isolated and unremarkable region in southern Greece. In reality, this fertile area is crisscrossed by ancient roads and dotted with ruins that testify to its importance to the major powers of Greece from Classical antiquity to the Ottoman Empire. The results on the ongoing Western Argolid Regional Project, an archaeological project co-directed by the lecturer, demonstrate that the western Argolid was a dynamic landscape whose study sheds new light on some big questions in Greek history and archaeology.
Early Hellenistic royal ideology in the marine thiasos of the neorion on Delos

In Greek mythology the most important thiasos, or procession of individuals dancing and singing in honor of a god, was that of Dionysios and his followers or just his followers (Schöne, 1987). Its aquatic counterpart, the marine thiasos, included Poseidon (sometimes), Nereids and Tritons accompanied by both mythical and real marine creatures (Barringer, 1995). Demetrios Poliorketes built the neorion on Delos to house a dedicated warship and decorated it with a monumental marine thiasos celebrating his naval victory at Cypriot Salamis (ca. 306 B.C.) (Wescoat, 2005). Scholars have mostly concentrated on the physical placement of the neorion’s thiasos, while noting that its fragmentary condition makes its meaning largely lost (Tréheux, 1987). In this paper based on the archaeological and textual evidence as well as the historical context I argue that the meaning of neorion’s thiasos can be reconstructed and, given its placement on a naval victory monument, conveyed aspects of early Hellenistic royal ideology.

The marine thiasos had two versions. The celebratory original has Poseidon (sometimes) and his followers swim across the sea cavorting and singing in his honor. In a 5th-century variant Thetis and Nereids riding see creatures carry a new divinely forged panoply to Achilles (Hom. Il. 19.1-8). By the Hellenistic period both versions of the marine thiasos were popular motifs appearing in numerous media from red-figure vases to pebble mosaics (Lattimore, 1976).

Marine thiasoi occur several times in the extant corpus of ancient literature. In his Europa 115-124 Moschus (ca. 150 B.C.) has a marine thiasos accompany Europa and her bovine paramour to Crete. In NH 36.26 Pliny gives us a glimpse of a marble multi-figural marine thiasos carved fully in the round and set up in the Temple of Neptune in Rome, which he attributes to the sculptor Scopas (ca. 350 B.C.).

I believe an Arms of Achilles variant of the marine thiasos would be most in keeping with the neorion of Delos’s raison d’être. The martial function and Homeric origins of this type of thiasos would have suited the military pedigree of the neorion. It also implied that Demetrios Poliorketes’ achievements, both past and future, were divinely endorsed and that he himself was either related to divine stock or indeed divine. All of Alexander the Great’s Successors assumed royal titles creating an ideology of kingship that included divine honors/status, a point of early Hellenistic royal propaganda highlighted by the Delian neorion’s thiasos (Paschidis, 2013).

OTHER EVENTS AND LECTURES OF INTEREST IN SPRING 2017

AHMA Noon Colloquium Series
http://ahma.berkeley.edu/ahma-noon-colloquium

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Sather Lectures
Seeing and Saying: Plato on Virtue and Knowledge
Mary Margaret McCabe, Professor Emerita of Ancient Philosophy, Philosophy Department of King’s College, University of London

Thursday, February 9th, 8:30 p.m., Alumni House, UC Berkeley
“No word in vain: reading Plato's dialogues (again)”

Thursday, February 16th, 6:00 p.m., 370 Dwinelle Hall, UC Berkeley
“The wandering ‘we’”

Thursday, February 23rd, 6:00 p.m., 370 Dwinelle Hall, UC Berkeley
“Parsing vision”

Thursday, March 2nd, 6:00 p.m., 370 Dwinelle Hall, UC Berkeley
“Rereading Glaucon's challenge: Plato's distinctions in goodness”

Thursday, March 9th, 6:00 p.m., 370 Dwinelle Hall, UC Berkeley
“Plato's lexicon of logos”

Thursday, March 16th, 6:00 p.m., 370 Dwinelle Hall, UC Berkeley
“Giving and taking an account: Plato on the language of conversation”

Nemea Center Seminar
Monday, March 21st, 5:30 p.m., 370 Dwinelle Hall, UC Berkeley
Dimitri Nakassis, University of Colorado Boulder
“These aren't the Mycenaeans we're looking for”

American Research Center in Egypt Lectures
All lectures are held in Room 20 Barrows Hall, UC Berkeley

Sunday, January 29th, 3:00 p.m.
Elaine Sullivan, University of California, Santa Cruz
“Virtual Saqqara: Re-imagining Egypt's most enduring cemetery”

Sunday, February 12th, 3:00 p.m.
Ellen Morris, Barnard College
“Egypt, Ugarit, the God Ba’al & the Puzzle of Royal Rebuff”

Sunday, March 12th, 3:00 p.m.
Nadine Moeller, University of Chicago
“The Ahmose Tempest Stela”

Sunday, April 30th, 3:00 p.m.
Aidan Dodson, University of Bristol, U.K.
“The Mysteries of Nefertiti”

Sunday, May 14th, 3:00 p.m.
Laurel Bestock, Brown University
“Violence and Power in Ancient Egyptian Imagery & Ideology”
For more information on:
AHMA Noon Colloquium Series, email evan.j.vance@berkeley.edu.

Ancient Arts Council programs, information and/or membership, see www.ancientartcouncil.org or email ancientart@famsf.org.

American Research Center in Egypt (ARCE), Northern California Chapter events, see http://www.arce.org/chapters/northerncalifornia/home.

The SF Society newsletter is available for download from: http://archaeological.org/societies/sanfrancisco. This website also lists the AIA lectures.

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