

respond seem stereotyped. I want to believe that we can break out of our entrenched ideologies. But even in our criticisms of each other, and in our debates, we make certain common assumptions which seem themselves beyond criticism. As a result western science and notions of free speech do indeed appear universal. My greatest sadness and disillusion occurs when it is realised that intellectuals themselves in America and England who might be

expected to be able to provide a critical position, only reproduce the dominant ideologies of their own governments and countries. Unwittingly they establish ideology as truth, the arbitrary as universal. We do indeed seem duped by our own ideologies, caught passively within systems of ideas that we cannot change, because we do not even see them.

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The Tomb of Maya

Since 1922, Egyptian archaeologists have languished in the shadow of Carter and his tomb of Tutankamen -- a tomb full of treasure is, after all, a difficult act to follow. It was therefore perhaps not surprising that in February 1986, the discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamen's treasurer, Maya, became another great media event.

An Anglo-Dutch expedition to Saqqarah, financed jointly by the Egypt Exploration Society and the Leiden Museum, began working in the New Kingdom area of the Necropolis in 1975. Their original aim was to locate the tomb of Maya, the ground level of which had been discovered by Lepsius in the mid 19th century. Instead, however, over the past ten years, Geoffrey Martin (University College, London) and Jacobus van Dijk (Groningen University) have discovered several other tombs of New Kingdom date, including that of Homerheb, a contemporary of Tutankhamen who became the last king of the 18th Dynasty. Their excitement at stumbling upon the tomb of Maya, while clearing that of an official named Ramose, was therefore partly a result of the feeling that the

original aim of the expedition was about to be achieved. The subsequent media hysteria, however, seems to have had more to do with the magic of the name of Tutankhamen.

The point at which this archaeological event became transformed into a full-blown piece of front-page news can perhaps be pinned down to a BBC radio interview with Geoffrey Martin, a couple of days after the find, at which he was asked whether this was the most important find since Tutankhamen. The negative reply was mysteriously ignored and, the next day, television newsreaders were confidently assuring the public that "some archaeologists" considered this to be the greatest discovery since Tutankhamen's tomb. "Eminent Egyptologists" were coaxed out of museums and universities in order to provide answers to such questions as "Is it likely to be full of treasure?" The Saqqarah excavation team was besieged by journalists for a week or so, until the impact of the story petered out and their digging season drew to a close.

The enduring impression left in the minds of the public must have

been that Egyptian archaeology is mainly concerned with trying to find another tomb as rich as Tutankhamen. It is tempting to think that this only demonstrates the ways in which the media like to pigeon-hole things. But it is probably truer to say that the popular conception of Egyptology has not changed since 1922. Indeed until the late 1960s, such a conception would have been largely correct. In the mid-1960s, when New Archaeology was bursting onto the scene elsewhere, the Egypt Exploration Society (the principal body of British excavators in Egypt) was still preoccupied with bursting into temples and cemeteries.

There are many reasons for the recurrence of treasure hunting in Egyptology, but the main reason has always been finance. Even a scientific excavator such as Flinders Petrie was compelled to tailor his research so that he could be sure of satisfying his financial backers. After a season at the crucial urban site of el-'Amarna, he was obliged to apply for permission to excavate some tombs in the area in order to provide trophies for the museums. The appearance, in recent years, of government grants (from such bodies as the British Academy), replacing the treasure-hunting subscriptions of museums and art historians, must therefore be regarded as something of a turning point in the history of Egyptian archaeology. These new sources of finance, with few strings attached, could begin to be used for the excavation of sites hitherto considered unviable. At the same time, this trend was accelerated by the Egyptian Antiquities Organisation's policy of gradually reducing the number of objects foreign expeditions were allowed to keep, until, today,

special permission must be obtained even to take a coprolite out of the country. There is still a high proportion of art historians and philologists among Egyptologists and a glance through the Annual Egyptology Bibliography reveals that, for most of the century, Egyptological books as Gardiner's Egypt of the Pharaohs (1961) are clearly based on this type of data. However more recent publications (notably Ancient Egypt: a Social History, [Trigger 1983]) have begun to supplement the history of pharaohs and statuary with much-neglected study of day-to-day economic and social patterns.

The detailed studies of temple and tomb walls are finally beginning to be counterbalanced by a few slim reports on the excavation of settlement sites. The publication of Egyptology and the Social Sciences (Weeks 1979) showed the increasing gravitation of some Egyptian archaeologists towards social history. Current excavations at el-'Amarna (Kemp 1986 *inter alia*), Balat (Soukhiassan *et al.* 1985), Tell ed-Dab'a (Bietak 1981) and Memphis (Jeffreys 1986) are producing useful stratified material from Dynastic settlements. These meticulous excavations are gradually providing the kinds of primary evidence (particularly organic remains such as textiles, bones and seeds) which enable the material culture of ancient Egypt to be properly reconstructed. The idealistic pastoral scenes in the tombs of the New Kingdom nobles can now be supplemented and sometimes contrasted with the evidence of real agricultural products and implements. The el-'Amarna excavation, for instance, indicates an important pork component in the ancient diet (Hecker 1984) which neither texts nor tomb paintings

had ever suggested. This 'new wave' of scientific archaeology in Egypt is therefore providing the basis for new histories, dealing with the artefacts and conditions of the people against a mere background of kings and empires.

All of this is therefore a far cry from Maya's tomb: the more traditional and glamorous face of Egyptology. It is difficult to imagine how the rags and bones of the Egyptians' daily life can hope to compete for the front page with the gold from their tombs. Nevertheless, an opportunity was perhaps missed, during that week of lime-light, to indicate that Egyptology has actually grown up since Carter's time.

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19 APR 1991