

News & Notes

The Oriental Institute

Issued confidentially to members and friends

No. 33: January-February, 1977

Not for publication

Tutankhamun



"THE MAGIC OF EGYPTIAN ART" - PREVIEW

Members are invited to attend a preview of "The Magic of Egyptian Art," an exhibit at the Oriental Institute Museum held in conjunction with "The Treasures of Tutankhamun." In addition to this exhibit of materials selected from the Institute's permanent collection, many of which have never been on view before, a large number of pottery vessels will be displayed which were used in the embalming of Tutankhamun's mummy and in his funerary banquet. You are invited to preview this exhibit on April 13 and 14 before it is opened to the general public.

HOURS: April 13, 12:00 Noon - 9:00 P.M.

April 14, 10:00 A.M. - 4:00 P.M.

BE A FRIEND

Invite your friends to join the Oriental Institute this year. It is a friendly gesture for those who will attend the Tutankhamun Exhibit or who might participate in any of the complementary membership programs. Members of the Oriental Institute, Field Museum of Natural History, and the faculty and staff of the University of Chicago may visit the exhibit without charge and as often as they wish on a special admission basis which will decrease time waiting in lines. If your friends would like to share in this privilege, suggest that they join the Oriental Institute. Being a friend in this way also supports the Institute and its work.

TUTANKHAMUN LECTURES

The Membership Office is making available cassette tape recordings of the Tutankhamun Lecture Series (with the speakers' permission) and will be able to provide copies on request to interested members who were unable to attend the lectures. A fee of \$4.00 for postage and handling should accompany the request; \$3.00 will be refunded when the cassette is returned to the Membership Office.

PLEASE NOTE: LECTURE RESCHEDULED

The last lecture in the Tutankhamun Lecture Series has been rescheduled. Dr. Bernard Bothmer will deliver the lecture entitled "Egyptian Relief Art of the New Kingdom" at 8:30 P.M. in Mandel Hall on Monday, May 17 instead of May 24 as was announced previously.

RETURN TO THEBES

by Allen Drury (Doubleday, 1977) \$8.95

There is perhaps nothing in Egypt quite so disappointing as the tomb of Tutankhamun. Of course, some visitors to the Valley of the Kings do not enter this tomb right away but leave it for the end of their excursion. They go instead to inspect other hypogea in this wonderful valley: that of Thutmosis III, imbued with the vigor of the early Eighteenth Dynasty, or that of Seti I, the grandest of them all, but somehow slightly clumsy in its imperial display, or that of Ramses VI, arcane and introspective, a fitting monument to the solipsistic religiosity of Egypt's last millennium. Finally, all visitors descend into Tutankhamun's sepulchre. Straight ahead is the antechamber. To the right is the decorated burial chamber. Finally, there are two more small rooms. And almost always, the first-time visitor will say: "Is this all? But it's so small!"

Yes, sadly, that is it, very unimpressive compared with the rest of the royal tombs in the Valley. You would think that something better could have been prepared during the nine years of Tutankhamun's reign under normal circumstances. So you wonder if the circumstances were so normal, and the mystery around the early death of this king deepens. In Allen Drury's new novel, *Return to Thebes*, Tutankhamun is assassinated because he is suspected of wanting to restore the religion of the Aten that his dead brother Akhenaten began.

Return to Thebes is really a continuation of Mr. Drury's earlier novel, *A God Against the Gods*. At the end of that story you will remember the pharaoh Akhenaten standing virtually alone as he and the Aten are about to plunge down into final destruction. The new novel is the chronicle of Akhenaten's downfall and the concomitant rise to power of the general Horemheb. The first step along this bloody road is the poisoning of the coregent Semenkhkara and his wife Merytaten. But even the loss of his favorite brother does not deter Akhenaten from pursuing his "heresy," and so his own death (and that of Queen Nefertiti) becomes inevitable. It is Horemheb himself who slays the misshapen king on that northern ridge at Amarna. So the last son of Amenhotep III and Queen Tiye, Tutankhamun ascends the throne as what Horemheb hopes will be a sovereign very easy to influence. Tutankhamun fills the bill for several years, but he and his little bride Ankh-esenamun have a surprise of their own in store. For it is their intention to restore the harmony of their troubled land by achieving a balance in the worship of the gods, and this means *all* the gods, including the now disreputable Aten. To Horemheb and his supporters this means nothing less than a return to Amarna. So when Tutankhamun announces his plans for a mortuary temple in the shape of a sun disk with arm-like staircases descending from one side, Horemheb casts aside any vestige of restraint. Tutankhamun's death is engineered in such a way that the

general can maintain a pose of "plausible deniability" and thus eventually become pharaoh himself.

Once again I praise Mr. Drury for the unusual way in which he approaches his subject. There is no anonymous narrator, but each of the principal characters describes in a series of monologues his own participation in and feeling about certain events as they transpire. Mr. Drury usually has them speak in a calm, reflective, and even slightly formal manner. By doing this he imparts to the reader a fine sense of "Eternal Egypt," where events of great violence and significance take place behind a facade of unchanging categories. It is only Horemheb who consistently breaks out of the mold and speaks and acts in a brutal and direct way. Ironically, he is ultimately the most successful, and his contemporaries seem to regard his progress toward the throne as only something to be delayed but not prevented. Perhaps Mr. Drury should be faulted here for producing too overwhelming a character, an echo of Victor Mature in the movie, "The Egyptian," rather than of the real Horemheb, the last king of the Eighteenth Dynasty. But this is a very insignificant flaw.

Mr. Drury's attention to historical detail is commendable, and the trouble he has taken to incorporate all those odd little bits of history into a coherent narrative is much appreciated. A few omissions or missteps are to be expected. I find it surprising that no direct reference (at least I couldn't find one) is made to the famous "Amarna cache" of Tomb No. 55 in the Valley of the Kings. It lies right next to the rest house, directly across the path from the tomb of Tutankhamun. It was discovered in 1907 by Theodore Davis and found to contain, among other things, a gilded wooden shrine for Queen Tiye's burial, a coffin originally designed for a princess but refitted for a king, a body inside this coffin belonged to a young man (Semenkhkara?), and four magical bricks intended for the protection of Akhenaten himself in the beyond. This seems like a gold mine for the imagination of a novelist, as it has been for many Egyptologists over the years.

Finally, I find the site that Mr. Drury has Tutankhamun select for his mortuary temple extremely implausible if not impossible: ". . . on that rocky spur which, slightly north of the mortuary temple of the Good God Hatshepsut (l, p, h!) curves toward the river." Now, going north from the mortuary temple of Hatshepsut, you wind up right in the sheer cliffs of Deir el-Bahri, certainly no place for anything but an elevator. Possibly Mr. Drury has been tripped up by terminology here. He might have had in mind the "valley" temple of Hatshepsut, due east of her mortuary temple, at the edge of the cultivation. The rocky spur north of this temple would probably be the hill behind Dra' abu'l-Naga. This is still unsatisfactory, for the kings of the Eighteenth Dynasty built their funerary temples in a strict sequence from the northeast to the southwest along the edge of the cultivation, and

by the time we reach the temple of Aye and Horemheb, we are just north of Medinet Habu, quite a ways from Dra' abu'l-Naga. But, really, what's the use of haggling over this question? Now, thanks to Mr. Drury, we know that Tutankhamun was assassinated before a single stone of this temple had been put down.

If you liked *A God Against the Gods*, you will certainly like *Return to Thebes* also. I did.

Mark Ciccarello



MEMBERS' COURSE: READING EGYPTIAN HIEROGLYPHS

We would like to invite you to take the Members' Course this spring. Mr. James Allen, Research Assistant on the Tutankhamun Exhibition and degree candidate in Egyptology, will conduct this course designed to teach the basics of the Ancient Egyptian language. The Egyptian alphabet and grammar will be explained and emphasis will be on the reading of specific texts. Many of the inscriptions to be studied will come from objects on permanent display at the Oriental Institute and at Field Museum.

To benefit from this course, members should be prepared to study, complete assignments at home, and participate in classroom discussions.

This eight-week course will be sponsored by both the Oriental Institute and Field Museum and will be offered at both locations each week. The course is limited to 40 participants at each location: Field Museum: Mondays, 7-9 P.M., April 18 through June 13 (no class on May 30).

Oriental Institute: Saturdays, 10 A.M.-12 Noon, April 23 through June 18 (no class on May 28).

\$50.00 for members of the Oriental Institute and Field Museum.

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Please complete and mail to: Adult Education Program
Field Museum of Natural History
Roosevelt Road at Lake Shore Drive
Chicago, Illinois 60605

I would like to register for the Egyptian Hieroglyphs course at:

_____ Field Museum, Mondays, 7-9 P.M.

_____ The Oriental Institute, Saturdays, 10 A.M. - 12 Noon

Enclosed is my check for \$50.00, payable to "Egyptian Hieroglyphs Course."

_____ I am a member of the Oriental Institute

_____ I am a member of Field Museum

_____ I am not a member, but am enclosing a separate check for membership (\$15.00), payable to:

_____ The Oriental Institute

_____ Field Museum

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

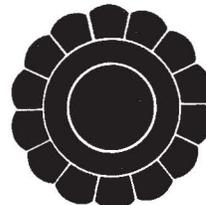
PHONE: _____ (daytime) _____ (evening).

VISIT IRAN

A TOUR, open to members only, of the archeological sites and treasures of Iran will be sponsored by the Oriental Institute. The tour, limited to 25 in number, will depart September 30 and return October 18, 1977. The tour will include not only the well-known sites of ancient Persia such as Persepolis but also the famous centers of the Islamic period such as Shiraz and Isfahan. Further information including price will be announced in the near future.

WESTERN SUBURBS AFFILIATES

The Western Suburbs Affiliate Group will mark their second successful year on Friday, March 18, 8:00 P.M. at the Unitarian Church in Hinsdale. The program will feature a slide presentation on the geology and archeology of Israel by Linn Buss. The presentation will be followed by a wine and cheese reception (\$1.50 donation per person). Guests are welcome. For more information, please call 354-4285.



The Oriental Institute

The University of Chicago

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FIRST CLASS MAIL