

CYBERSCRIBE-191

Menhedj, Volume One, Number 11 (July 2011)

The CyberScribe would like to use the opening portion of this month's column to note the passing of not just an Egyptologist, but a very important figure than few of us knew... Christiane Desroches-Noblecourt.

She was a prolific worker, but her greatest challenge and greatest success was the saving of the Nubian temples from the rising waters of the Nile after the completion of the Aswan High Dam. It is to her eternal credit that we can still visit and admire such places as the great temple of Abu Simbel...and many others.

A fine tribute to here appeared in the item below (from <http://tiny.cc/yfow9> and abbreviated somewhat here), where her work and success are related. Please read on:

'French Egyptologist Christiane Desroches-Noblecourt, known for her books on art and history and for saving the Nubian temples from flooding caused by the Aswan Dam, has died at the age of 97, her editor Telemaque said Friday.



'In a career spanning more than half-a-century, Desroches-Noblecourt also helped preserve the mummy of King Ramses II, which was threatened by fungus, and became the first French woman to lead an archaeological dig in 1938.

'Born on November 17, 1913 in Paris, she was captivated by Howard Carter's discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamun, and joined the Egyptian Antiquities department at the Louvre. During World War II she joined the Resistance, and hid the Louvre's Egyptian treasures in free areas of France.

'Desroches-Noblecourt's greatest accomplishment came in 1954 when the government of Gamal Abdel Nasser decided to build a new dam with a capacity of 157 billion cubic meters, which would extend into Sudan.

'Desroches-Noblecourt identified the threatened sites and then made a formal appeal for international support to move 14 temples and make urgent excavations at sites that would soon be under several dozen meters of water.

'Desroches-Noblecourt managed to find funding -- from 50 countries at the time of the Cold War. The rescue project, including the transportation and reconstruction of the temples on their new sites, took two decades.

'French President Nicolas Sarkozy paid tribute to the "Great Lady of the Nile" saying she possessed the rare combination of the "most exacting standards of scientists and the most passionate qualities of educationists."

For our next item, another important person is highlighted, a person that few Americans remember today...Georg Steindorf. He is much remembered in the Egyptological world for having been forced to emigrate to America during the Nazi era of Germany, because of his Jewish ancestry.

His modest collection of Egyptian objects had been collected on expeditions and augmented by purchases. The collection was a teaching collection for his students. When he left the University of Leipzig, he sold the collection to the school.

It has long been alleged that he was forced to sell it for a pittance because of Nazi pressures. Recently a Jewish group has sued for possession of the collection of the grounds that it was stolen from Steindorf, and because he was without heirs, they should receive the materials...somewhat as compensation for Jewish victims of the war,

Their suit was successful, and they planned to sell the objects...but then the story changed in an unexpected manner. There are two short pieces below (shortened for presentation here). The first records the Jewish groups lawsuit...and the second contains the surprise. Read on from Paul Barford's blog (<http://tiny.cc/l7qvvd>):

'Leipzig University has a small but important collection of ancient Egyptian antiquities which are used as teaching material. Part of it is material that was collected for that purpose by Georg Steindorff, a professor of Jewish origin and had been bought from him by the University in 1936. A court in Berlin has now decided that the collection must be handed to the Jewish Claims Conference (JCC), considering that Steindorff had sold it under duress for a value far below its actual worth.

'Leipzig university could produce no evidence to counter the charge that Steindorff had been forced to sell his collection under Nazi rule. It had taken the case to court in the hope of keeping the antique objects that the professor had collected on research trips. Steindorff, who held Leipzig's Egyptology chair, emigrated from Nazi Germany and died in the US in 1951.

'So, now these well-provenanced objects will presumably be appearing on the market. What is interesting is that the wishes of Steindorff's family in the US have been disregarded as his legacy is split up and destroyed. Thomas Hemer, grandson of Georg Steindorff, wants the collection to stay in Leipzig.'

But here is the surprise. There was an elderly heir to Steindorf, and he traveled to Germany to successfully protest the court's ruling. The result? The collection will remain where it is. Read on (much abbreviated) from a pdf posted by the International Association of Egyptologists (<http://www.iae-egyptology.org/>). This paper is much too long for the Menhedj format, but here are a few important statements from the document:

First:

'The sale of Steindorff's collection took place after the racist Nuremberg laws (September 1935) were in place, but did not seem to affect Steindorff's sales. According to current German law, all business activity of Jewish citizens in Germany during that period is potentially suspicious as it might have been involuntary.

'In response to a query posed by the university officials as to whether it was worth purchasing the collection or not, Professor Wolf states in 1936 that

the price is reasonable, the objects are very interesting and complement the current collection, the chance unique, and mentions the fear that other German Museum collections might snap them up. He had to apply for special funds from within the university to buy the Steindorff collection.

'Wolf's statement and more importantly, its date, Autumn 1936, are considered by the current court as being proof of a forced sale for less than the appropriate price, i.e., an involuntary or forced sale, because of Steindorff's Jewish ancestry. Even if the price were correct, the university has to prove that the sale was not forced due to Nazi rule. Similar sales in 1935 to other museums (e.g. Hannover's purchase of the collection of Frederick von Bissing, a non-Jew) show that the prices that were paid by Leipzig to Steindorff were in keeping with the market value of the time. It was general practice for the total not to be the sum of each individual item, but a global total. Furthermore, neither the papers from Wolf, where he praises the collection and his quest for special funds to purchase it, nor the fact that Steindorff took time over the sale and offered it to the university where he worked, as opposed to other museums, such as Hannover, are being taken as evidence by the court.'

And then:

'Steindorff's emigration is in all aspects exceptional: he was allowed to take antiquities in large numbers to the USA in 1939 and he continued to sell these antiquities in the US till his death in 1951. He also took his other precious possession, like the Bechstein piano and all of his antique furniture with him. He continued to receive free publications from Leipzig till summer 1941 and the start of war with the US. Administratively he was considered as a German citizen with residence in the United States as is attested by letters in the possession of the Leipzig State Archives. German authorities extended this status till March 1942, after which war intervenes.

'Professor Steindorff was clearly eager to sell the collection to Leipzig. Even though he might have got a higher price in Hannover or elsewhere, he did not want to start negotiations with another university before Leipzig definitely refused to pay him 8,000 RM. No doubt he felt a loyalty to and affection for the university that had been his home for so long. Furthermore, because he was very familiar with the financial situation of Leipzig University, he allowed that the payment be made in three installments. He could have easily sold his entire collection for a lump sum to another museum, or even divided it up amongst the highest bidders, yet he chose to sell the collection to Leipzig where it would form part of his legacy.

‘Steindorff himself considered that the business had been correctly conducted.’

And then the final verdict:

‘The University’s complaint against the Bundesamt für Zentrale Dienste und Offene Vermögensfragen was overruled on May 26th, 2011 by the Verwaltungsgericht court in Berlin. The result is that 163 objects from the Museum’s collections are to be restituted to the Jewish Claims Conference (JCC), despite the existence of Steindorff’s heir. The University’s case was overruled without any chance for negotiations. According to the courts, even though the price Steindorff was paid is probably a fair amount, in court the university should have proven that the rule of National Socialism was not even partially responsible for the sale of the collection. The facts, including the letters from Steindorff’s wife, seem to support the university’s viewpoint.

‘The representative of the JCC announced, that after an evaluation of the artifacts "reasonable talks" can start, so that the Egyptian Museum Georg Steindorff can re-purchase the artifacts that had been offered to it in 1936. By Steindorff himself. The JCC will be valuing the collection based on the current market value of the objects, not the value that would have existed in 1936.

‘It should be noted that Mr. Thomas Hemer, Steindorff’s grandson and heir, has no reason to support the claims of a small German University. Many members of his family were murdered in concentration camps; he lost his home, his cultural setting, his very life, to the Nazi’s. However, at the advanced age of 88 he made the exhausting trip from Nevada to Berlin to fulfill his grandfather’s wishes in maintaining the Steindorff collection of Egyptian Antiquities in the Leipzig University Museum, the Georg Steindorff Museum. What sort of justice denies the heir? Mr. Thomas Hemer left Leipzig on May 29th, saying: “I believe that there will be a good ending”. We hope that he is not disappointed.’

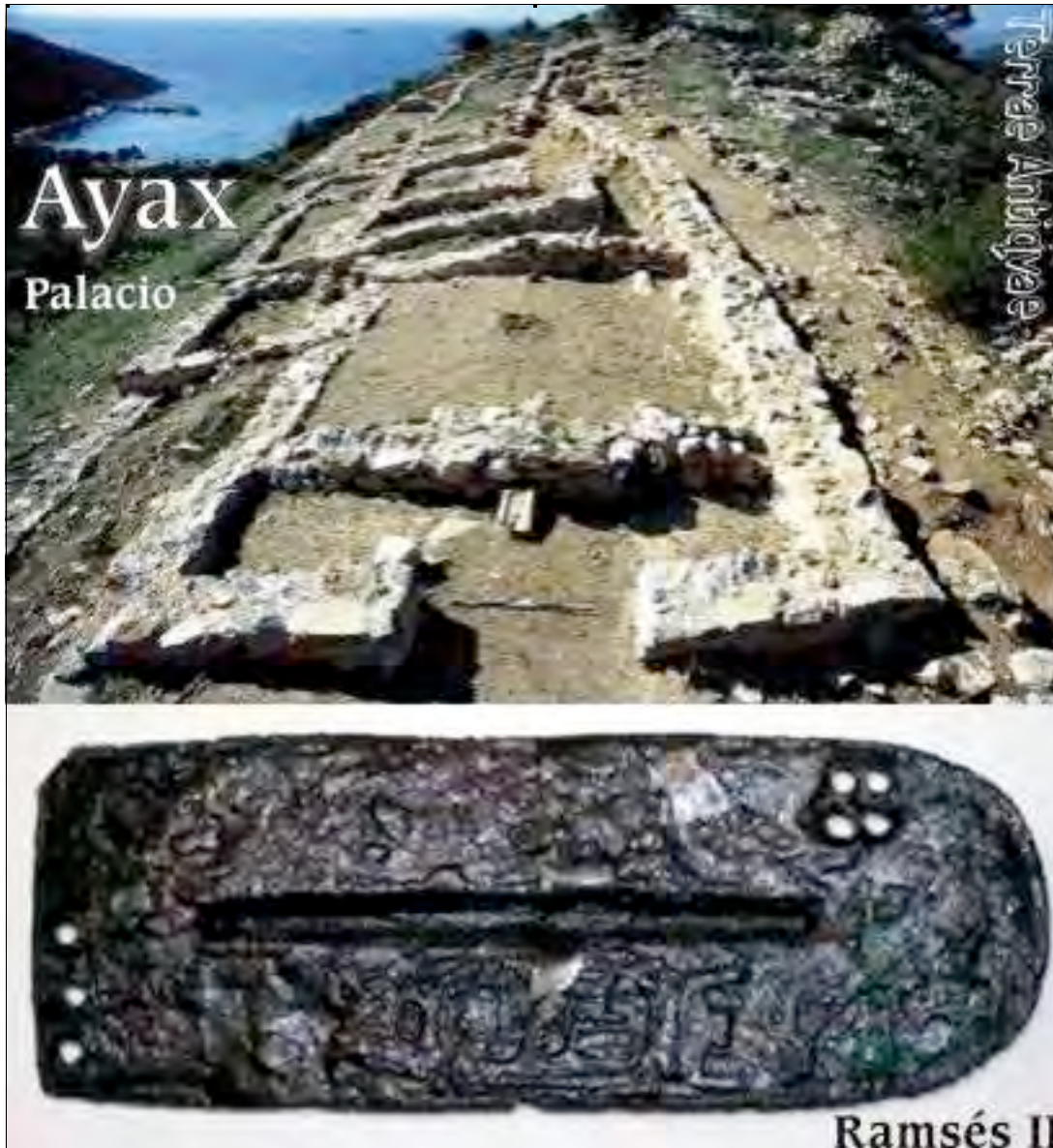
At this point the ‘Jewish Claims Conference’, the group appealing for the collection, quietly surrendered. The telling point was when Steindorf’s last legitimate heir traveled to the court and testified that he and Steindorf wanted the collection to be in Leipzig. The courts agreed and the collection was saved.

Here is an item for those who know the history and characters of the Trojan Wars...a semi-legendary event. One of the protagonists of that battle was the Greek king Ajax. Very recently it was confirmed that archaeologists have found the palace of Ajax.

Not only that, they found a piece of Egyptian scale armor plate...a plate bearing the cartouche of Ramesses II. The armor's owner was probably either a Greek or Egyptian mercenary soldier. To find such a link is an archaeologist's dream!!!

The publication 'IOL SciTech' (<http://tiny.cc/5d47g>) announced the finds as follows:

'On a deserted green hill above the Aegean Sea, archaeologists have unearthed what may be the palace of Ajax, one of the greatest heroes in Greek mythology.'



‘From a rocky outcrop among the tranquil ruins, it is easy to imagine the warrior-king of Homer's Iliad setting sail from the island for Troy more than 3300 years ago, as crowds lined the pine-covered slopes to wave farewell.

‘The idyllic location on Salamina island perfectly matches historical references, a fact which led archaeologists to wonder whether the scattered stones here might have formed one of the most famous kingdoms of pre-historic Greece.

‘Across the sea from Salamina lies the coast of northeastern Peloponnese, the peninsula of the kingdoms of Agamemnon's Mycenae and Nestor's Pylos.

‘The Iliad is the epic story of Greek cities joining forces to wage war on Troy and recover Helen, the kidnapped queen of Sparta. Ajax, son of Telamon, is



described as a massive man and a great warrior, second only to his cousin Achilles.

‘An icon of strength and dignity, he is mentioned by several writers of the ancient world. He appears among the early suitors of Helen, "the face that launched a thousand ships". In fact, the Greeks gathered 1 186 ships, including 12 offered by Ajax.

‘Six years of excavations at the site of Kanakia, on the south-western tip of Salamina island, have revealed a maze of stone walls making up at least two major palatial complexes, the settlement around them stretching down to the natural port. The building with the two great halls - or megara - covers 750 square meters and has 33 rooms on four levels. Unlike Mycenae, Salamina is not surrounded by great walls but is built with defense in mind, with narrow, guarded entrances.

‘Among the finds are tools, Cypriot pottery and bronzes, proof of relations with the eastern Mediterranean. But the most stunning discovery is a single bronze scale from an armor breastplate that bears the stamp of a famous Egyptian pharaoh.

Translated by professors Jacke Phillips and John Ray at Cambridge, it is the name of Ramesses II who ruled Egypt during the 13th century BC. Lolos said it was possible that Salamina men had fought as mercenaries in the army of Ramesses.

“The piece is... unique,” Phillips said. “I know of no other armor scale with a hieroglyphic inscription.”

‘With few tangible historical finds to prove the existence of the great Mycenaean kings, the discovery on Salamina is sure to fire up yet another academic debate about Homer, Lolos said.

Lolos said the ruins of Ajax's Salamina show that the city was abandoned around 1,200 BC, when the Trojan War ended, but there were no signs of violence or haste.

“Why it was abandoned is a great mystery ... Ajax was the last king; maybe after his death the system collapsed,” he said.

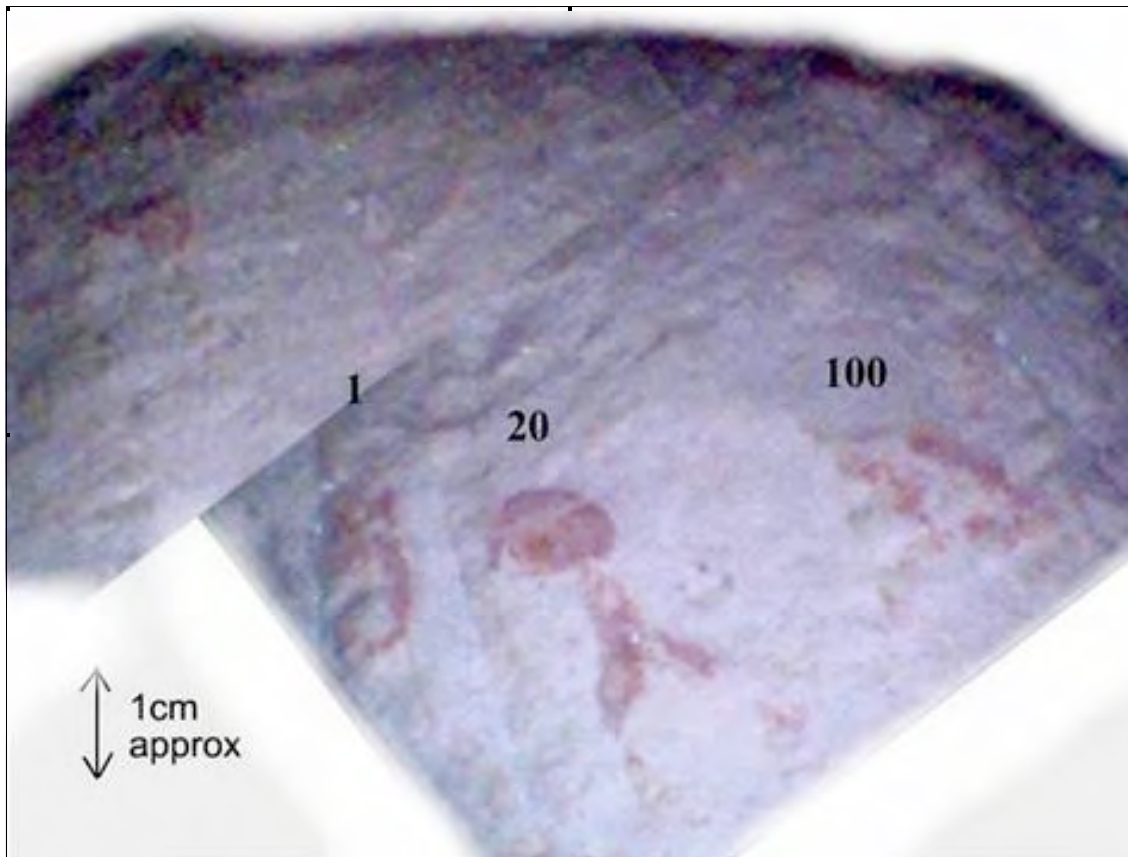
‘At Salamina in Cyprus, evidence has been found of a wave of settlement from mainland Greece. Is it possible that Ajax's people left and set up a new home there?



'By classical times a new city linked to Athens had been built on the other side of the Greek island of Salamina, today dominated by a large naval base. The old city was forgotten, but not its king - Ajax is the name of the island's soccer team.'

Remember those strange red painted symbols that the remote camera found far up the shaft in the Great Pyramid. The CyberScribe reported on this find last month. No one had a very good idea of their meaning, however, but now there may be an answer.

A report in MSNBC (<http://tiny.cc/yqcno>) presents a very reasonable and believable way to interpret these strange signs. Read on (abbreviated, somewhat):



Hieroglyphs written in red paint on the floor of a hidden chamber in Egypt's Great Pyramid are numerical signs meaning 100, 20 and 1.

'Mysterious hieroglyphs written in red paint on the floor of a hidden chamber in Egypt's Great Pyramid of Giza are just numbers, according to a mathematical analysis of the 4,500-year-old mausoleum.

Researchers were particularly intrigued by three red ochre figures painted on the floor of a hidden chamber at the end of a tunnel deep inside the pyramid.

'Luca Miatello, an independent researcher who specializes on ancient Egyptian mathematics, believes he has some answers.

"The markings are hieratic numerical signs. They read from right to left, meaning 100, 20, 1. The builders simply recorded the total length of the shaft: 121 cubits," Miatello told Discovery News.

'The royal cubit, the ancient Egyptian unit of measurement used in the construction of the pyramid, was between 20.6 to 20.64 inches in length, and was subdivided into seven palms of four digits (four fingers) each, making it a 28-part measure.

'Built for the pharaoh Cheops, also known as Khufu, the Great Pyramid is the largest of a family of three pyramids on the Giza plateau, on the outskirts of Cairo and has long been rumored to have hidden passageways leading to secret chambers. Archaeologists have long puzzled over the purpose of four narrow shafts deep inside the pyramid since they were first discovered in 1872.

'Robots have previously explored and sent back pictures from these 8-inch-square shafts, indicating that both shafts are blocked by a stone door. These stones are approximately equidistant (63.6 meters) from the Queen's Chamber. The new robot, named Djedi after the magician who Khufu consulted when planning the layout of this pyramid, has gone further than anyone has ever been before in the monument.

'The robot was able to climb inside the walls of the shaft while carrying a bendy camera, small enough to fit through a small hole in a stone door at the end of the tunnel.

"The floor of the chamber has a red ochre mason's line running parallel to the shaft from just beyond the rear of the first blocking stone to the second blocking stone," Hawass and colleagues write in ASAE.

"There is also a black mark where the red line meets the second blocking stone. To the right of, and at approximately 45 degrees to the red line are three red ochre figures," they added.

"Precise mathematical rules were followed in the design of the pyramid's tunnels," Miatello said.

'According to James P. Allen, a Wilbour Professor of Egyptology and Chair of Egyptology and Ancient Western Asian Studies at Brown University, the figures can indeed show the numbers indicated by Miatello.

"The signs are not easy to read, but Dr. Miatello's reading is entirely plausible," Allen, author of "The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts, Writings from the Ancient World" and a leading expert on hieroglyphics, told Discovery News.'

Although it's almost too soon to comment on this next item, they have begun to lift the giant limestone slabs that cover the second boat pit at the great pyramid. As the CyberScribe's readers no doubt recall, a second, though less well-preserved, boat lies in the pit. It is to be removed, stabilized and conserved, and then...hopefully...put back together and be put on display.

Zahi Hawass's own site (<http://tiny.cc/w74b6>) produced this announcement (abbreviated here):

'(The) uncovering of the second solar boat pit at Giza with Professor Sakuji Yoshimura, Director of the Waseda University Mission Team in Egypt (has begun). We revealed the delicate wooden boat in the pit and also had a surprise discovery!



[Dr. Zahi Hawass looking under the stone slab into the boat pit (Photo: Rania Galal)] Boats in Ancient Egypt

‘The first solar boat near the Great Pyramid was discovered in 1954 by the Egyptian archaeologist Kamal el-Mallakh. Following an excavation, the boat was lovingly restored by experts and is now on display in the Solar Boat Museum. But it was also during this initial survey that investigators located a similar structure just beside the first solar boat. The second boat was left untouched for over 30 years before the Ministry of State for Antiquities and a delegation from Waseda University in Japan carried out an electromagnetic wave survey in 1987.

‘The first phase of the project assessed the area surrounding the second boat pit by using both a topographical survey and a radar survey. A large hanger was constructed over the area surrounding the second boat pit, with a smaller hanger inside to cover the top of the boat itself. The hangers were

designed to protect the wooden remains during analysis and treatment. A laser scanning survey also documented the area and wall between the Great Pyramid and the boat pit.

‘Today marks the start of the second phase of the project that will involve raising the stone blocks covering the boat pit. The first stone block, out of a total of 41, was carefully lifted this morning. To give you some idea of the scale of the blocks, the biggest one measures 1m wide by 4.10m lengthways and weights 16 tons. Such an unusual operation requires unique techniques, in this case developed by the Egyptian and Japanese teams on site.



[The team inserts a piece of wood beneath the stone (Photo: Rania Galal)]

‘Egyptian and Japanese teams conducted an experiment to clean the fillings around the sides of the covering stones. During this procedure they revealed a cartouche for King Khufu and beside it was the name of the crown prince Djedefre, without cartouche. This is a very great discovery. It is the second cartouche of the great King Khufu to be found in the pyramid complex – the first was inside the Great Pyramid – and it proves to us that this boat was constructed during the time of King Khufu.

'The restored solar boat in the Solar Boat Museum lay in a boat pit displaying a mason's mark of a cartouche for Djedefre – Khufu's successor. It was therefore constructed at a later date, after the death of King Khufu when Djedefre became king.

'The wooden remains will be carefully extracted and preserved. The boat will be reconstructed and put on display in a special building designed specifically for the boat at the Grand Egyptian Museum.'

As is customary, a couple of lighter pieces have been reserved for the end of this month's column. Today we do beer and asteroids...what a combination!

The beer first. 'Smithsonian Magazine' (<http://tiny.cc/f3zre>) commented on yet another attempt to make a 'real' ancient Egyptian beer. (Read on (abbreviated somewhat):





‘It’s just after dawn at the Dogfish Head brewpub in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware, where the ambition for the morning is to resurrect an Egyptian ale whose recipe dates back several hundred centuries.

‘But will the za’atar—a potent Middle Eastern spice mixture redolent of oregano—clobber the soft, floral flavor of the chamomile? And what about the dried doum-palm fruit, which has been giving off a worrisome fungusy scent ever since it was dropped in a brandy snifter of hot water and sampled as a tea?

‘At last, Patrick McGovern, a 66-year-old archaeologist, wanders into the little pub, an oddity among the hip young brewers in their sweat shirts and flannel. Proper to the point of primness, the University of Pennsylvania adjunct professor sports a crisp polo shirt, pressed khakis and well-tended loafers; his wire spectacles peek out from a blizzard of white hair and beard. But Calagione, grinning broadly, greets the dignified visitor like a treasured drinking buddy. Which, in a sense, he is.

“Dr. Pat,” as he’s known at Dogfish Head, is the world’s foremost expert on ancient fermented beverages, and he cracks long-forgotten recipes with chemistry, scouring ancient kegs and bottles for residue samples to scrutinize in the lab. He has identified the world’s oldest known barley beer (from Iran’s Zagros Mountains, dating to 3400 B.C.), the oldest grape wine (also from the Zagros, circa 5400 B.C.) and the earliest known booze of any kind, a Neolithic grog from China’s Yellow River Valley brewed some 9,000 years ago.





Beer ingredients Ancient cultures used an array of ingredients to make their alcoholic beverages, including emmer wheat, wild yeast, chamomile, thyme and oregano.

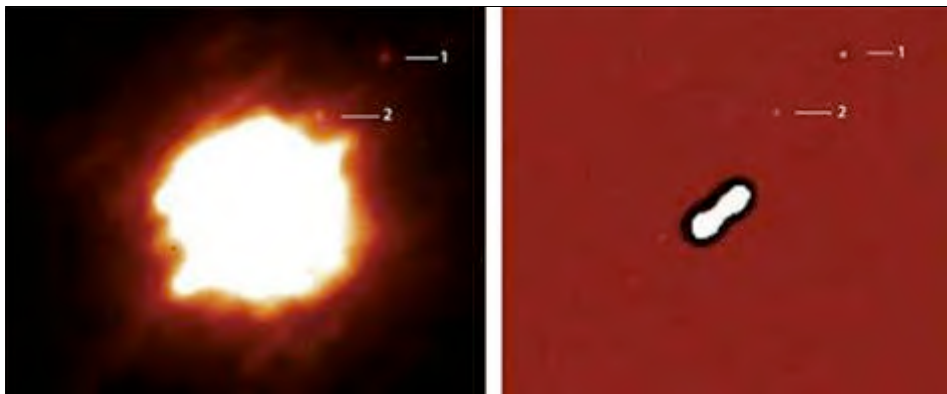
‘Widely published in academic journals and books, McGovern’s research has shed light on agriculture, medicine and trade routes during the pre-biblical era. But—and here’s where Calagione’s grin comes in—it’s also inspired a couple of Dogfish Head’s offerings, including Midas Touch, a beer based on decrepit refreshments recovered from King Midas’ 700 B.C. tomb, which has received more medals than any other Dogfish creation.

‘To devise this latest Egyptian drink, the archaeologist and the brewer toured acres of spice stalls at the Khan el-Khalili, Cairo’s oldest and largest market, handpicking ingredients and under the surveillance of cameras for “Brew Masters,” a Discovery Channel reality show about Calagione’s business.

‘Calagione and McGovern based their Egyptian selections on the archaeologist’s work with the tomb of the Pharaoh Scorpion I, where a curious combination of savory, thyme and coriander showed up in the residues of libations interred with the monarch in 3150 B.C. (They decided the za’atar spice medley, which frequently includes all those herbs, plus oregano and several others, was a current-day substitute.) Other guidelines came from the even more ancient Wadi Kubbania, an 18,000-year-old site in Upper Egypt where starch-dusted stones, probably used for grinding sorghum or bulrush, were found with the remains of doum-palm fruit and chamomile. It’s difficult to confirm, but “it’s very likely they were making beer there,” McGovern says.’

The CyberScribe notes that he saw the resulting TV program, and when the beer was served to a crowd of beer critics, it won great acclaim for flavors and other important beer characteristics. But, it's not on you the shelves of your local liquor stores...yet.

And last of all...an asteroid named 'Kleopatra.' Without otherwise introducing the item (from MSNBC <http://tiny.cc/mr8f4>), just move on, gentle Menhedj reader...and enjoy:



Images of the asteroid Kleopatra and its two moons, Alexhelios and Cleoselene. Studying the moons' orbit revealed the asteroid to be a jumble of loosely held rocks.

'Like the ancient Egyptian queen it was named for, the asteroid Kleopatra has birthed twins — a pair of moons that have helped scientists learn that the huge space rock is a rubble pile rather than a chunk of solid rock.

'These two moons, named Alexhelios and Cleoselene after the twin children of the queen, were discovered in 2008. Now, astronomers studying their orbits have deduced that their parent asteroid is a jumble of loosely held rocks.

'Having determined the orbits of Kleopatra's satellites, the team, lead by primary author Pascal Descamps of the Institut de Mecanique Celeste et de Calculs des Ephemerides (IMCCE) of the Observatoire de Paris, then was able to calculate the mass of the system as a whole.

"Our observations of the orbits of the two satellites of 216 Kleopatra imply that this large metallic asteroid is a rubble pile, which is a surprise," Marchis said in a statement.

‘But to find one in such a large system is surprising. At about 135 miles in length, Kleopatra is among the largest of these rubble pile asteroids discovered over the past few years, topped only by 174-mile 87 Sylvia.

“You expect something (this size) to be less porous,” Marchis told Space.com.

‘The rubble pile structure of the asteroid provides clues to its formation, as well as that of its satellites, researchers said. The collision of two larger, rocky asteroids likely resulted in the destruction of one, and the resulting rubble was held together by gravity.

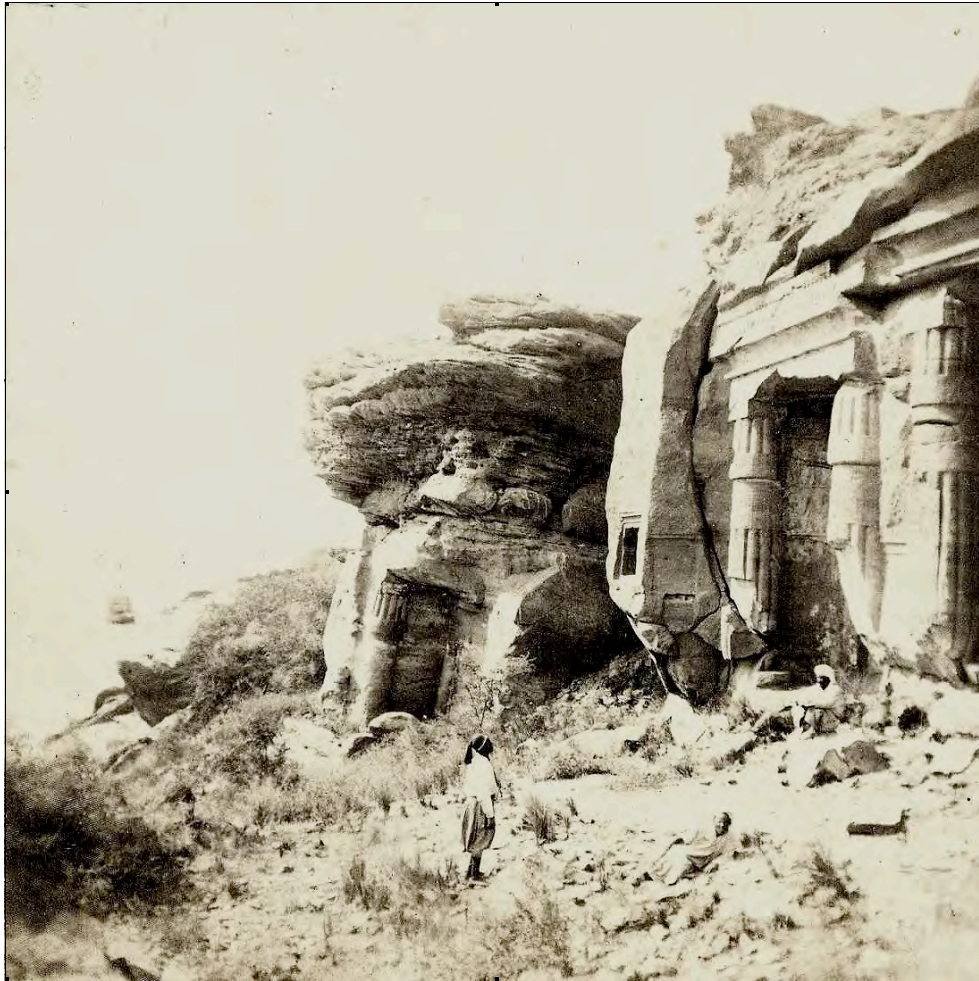
‘As the pile continued to spin, it slowly shed mass, including its two moons. The outermost moon, Alexhelios, likely spiraled out around 100 million years ago, while the inner moon, Cleoselene, began its journey within the last 10 million years.

‘Kleopatra was discovered in 1880. Astronomers used stellar transits to determine it was elongated, but it wasn't until 2000 that it was revealed to be shaped more like a dog bone than a cigar. Descamps' team wanted to study whether the bulges at the end were connected to the body of the asteroid or were separate pieces entirely.’

And that’s more than enough. See you next month!

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Where The Heck Is It? July 2011



A seldom-told story relates that the now-famous McDonald's hamburger chain had a rather slow and spotty history...first founded in the 10th Dynasty, but only becoming popular in the middle of the 1900 BCE. The largest part of the modern success was due to the golden arches.

Here is the original McDonald's restaurant in Egypt, brainchild of the famous Krok-Hotep. Popular at first, it lacked the signature arches...and the restaurant chain nearly failed

Or do you disagree?

If so, where do you think this building is located?

Who do you think built it?