

Ottobre Egitzio

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Sunday, October 5, 4 pm

Graffiti in the temple of Amun at Karnak: profane acts or expressions of devotion?

Chiara Elena Salvador, University of Oxford

In contemporary societies graffiti are generally perceived as illicit acts of defacement of public places and monuments as well as more or less spontaneous expressions of a sub-culture in opposition with official institutions. Graffiti, in their broadest definition of deliberate marks left on a surface not originally meant to receive them, are a widespread practice in all past and present societies.

In Egypt graffiti are attested as early as pharaonic time in tombs, temples, quarries and desert roads. Their presence, long neglected by scholars in favour of more formal texts, is recently acknowledged as a useful source to investigate aspects of the Egyptian society otherwise ignored by the official sources.

This talk will consider the many graffiti from the processional way of the temple of Amun at Karnak, the major sacred complex still extant in southern Egypt, as a means to repopulate the temple and examine how the people who were granted access interacted with the sacred space.

Saturday, October 25, 4 pm

The Bologna "dream papyri" and the art of oneiromancy in ancient Egypt.

Luigi Prada, University of Oxford

It is not widely known that, amongst the gems of the Egyptian collection in Bologna, there are two demotic papyri from Saqqara, which date from the II century BC (EG 3171 and 3173) and preserve two enigmatic lists of dreams. In all likelihood, these jottings had been written in order to be submitted to the examination of a dream interpreter.

Moving from these fascinating Bologna texts, the audience will hear about the role and popularity that the art of dream interpretation, i.e. oneiromancy, enjoyed in ancient Egypt. The first known manual attesting this ancient divinatory practice dates from the reign of Ramses II, and similar handbooks are attested for approximately a millennium and a half, until the III century AD, when the indigenous Egyptian culture and religion were collapsing under the increasing pressure of Christianity.

This talk will also offer the opportunity to introduce the audience to a wide range of still unpublished documents, which are currently being studied in preparation for their edition within the framework of a larger research project on dreams and their interpretation in ancient Egypt.

The lectures (Italian language) will be held in Bologna, Museo Civico Archeologico, Sala del Risorgimento. Admission is free.