CALL FOR PAPERS

‘Compulsion and Control in Ancient Egypt’

3rd Lady Wallis Budge Egyptology Symposium, Christ’s College, Cambridge

27th and 28th August 2020

https://budgesymposium3.wordpress.com

Abstracts of no more than 300 words, emailed to Dr. Alex Loktionov (al621@cam.ac.uk) by 12noon GMT on 15th January 2020, will be assured full consideration.

The 3rd Lady Wallis Budge Egyptology Symposium is pleased to announce a call for papers on the subject of ‘Compulsion and Control in Ancient Egypt’. Papers should be of a length that can be presented in a 30 minute conference slot, and it is hoped that contributors will subsequently submit their work for publication in a proceedings volume. While researchers at all career stages are welcome to submit proposals, the Symposium is especially keen to encourage the participation of younger scholars.

Achieving an awareness of how a given society gains and maintains effective control over the actions of its individual members is of crucial importance to almost any line of enquiry within social, economic and political history. Within Egyptology, there is a long tradition of studying how society was controlled in the legal sphere, going back to Wilhelm Spiegelberg’s pioneering Studien und Materialien zum Rechtwesen des Pharaonenreiches, published as early as 1892. Well over a century has since elapsed, and our understanding of Ancient Egyptian judicial process continues to advance apace. A vast corpus of Egyptian legal documents has now been translated, ranging from wills and records of property transactions to transcripts of criminal proceedings, themselves encompassing anything from conspiracy to murder the Pharaoh to theft of workmen’s tools. However, there has not been a comparable drive to combine detailed study of Egyptian justice with the other, potentially no less significant, mechanisms available to society for the purpose of compulsion and control of individuals. This is the gap in scholarship which this conference seeks to address.

In Ancient Egypt, the formal judicial process was certainly not for everyone. While the plethora of documents it produced might make it a favoured treasure trove for Egyptologists, most Egyptians probably never stood before a formally constituted court. Even at the greatest heights of centralised Pharaonic power, the legal apparatus of the state was unlikely to be prominent in outlying provinces, considering the obvious expense and logistical difficulty that this entailed. Thus, it is essential to
consider other strategies for compulsion and control, which would have allowed both the official state and locally powerful elites to get individuals to do their bidding without relying on the force of the law. This conference will encourage scholars to look at as many such strategies as possible, as well as the potential ways in which they may have interacted with the law. Possible avenues of enquiry might include, but are not limited to:

- Compulsion associated with Egyptian ideas of decorum, as expressed, for instance, in works of wisdom literature. This might include investigations of social norms compelling individuals of lower rank to obey superiors, pupils to obey teachers, etc.

- Compulsion derived from Egyptian religion and worldview, such as obedience to specific individuals as a way of upholding Maat, and the influence of ‘lucky’ and ‘unlucky’ days of the calendar in determining when particular acts could be carried out.

- Compulsion emanating from the mantic sphere, such as the perceived wishes of the dead or deities obtained through oneiromancy, necromancy, or other forms of divination.

- Compulsion found in a military setting, associated both with army discipline and with use of the military as a means of subjugation.

- Compulsion and the material world, such as manifestations of state control as visible in architecture, art or the funerary domain.

- Economic aspects of compulsion, such as principles of debt recovery, mechanisms for inheriting and disinheriting, and financial penalties imposed by the legal system.

- Interactions between compulsion and the law, including the degree to which judicial principles were applicable across different social strata, and the various law enforcement strategies available in Ancient Egypt.

- Notions of legal pluralism – the various forms in which justice could be carried out in Egypt, including different sources of judicial authority such as the king, high officials, different types of court, and customary law.

- Parallels between compulsion mechanisms in Ancient Egypt and other cultures which may have influenced it or been influenced by it, such as those of the wider Ancient Near East or the African world.

- Responses to compulsion, such as Egyptian conceptions of the emotions and appropriate responses to oppression.

It is hoped that the conference will attract a very wide array of different approaches, encompassing also the entire chronological breadth of Egyptian history. As such, studies based on evidence from all phases of Egyptian history are welcomed, with the ultimate aim of collating the contributions in an edited volume which will represent the very latest Egyptology has to offer in the multifaceted study of social control.

Potential contributors are very welcome to contact Dr. Loktionov (al621@cam.ac.uk) if they have any questions prior to submitting an abstract. A £50 conference fee is payable by participants: this covers the cost of all social and networking events associated with the Symposium, including a formal conference dinner in Christ’s College.