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Disciplinary Measures? Histories of Egyptology in Multi-Disciplinary Context

William Carruthers

Institute of Linguistics — Research Work in the Northern Territory” and State Records Office of Western Australia 1969/0271 “Australian Aborigines Branch of the Summer Institute of Linguistics - General Correspondence.”

⁷ Arthur Capell, *Linguistic Survey of Australia* (Sydney: University of Sydney, 1963). Many of the word-list forms are incomplete. This reflects the fieldworkers’ inability to elicit particular words in particular speech forms, not failure to transcribe the lists from the recordings.

⁸ On the Summer Institute of Linguistics, see Lise M. Dobrin, ed., “SIL International and the Disciplinary Culture of Linguistics,” *Language* 85, no. 3 (2009): 618–658.

⁹ Variant spellings (e.g., Wunumbal, Wunambal) are reproduced here as they appear in the transcript, with no attempt at regularization.

¹⁰ In the transcript, parentheses indicate speech in indigenous languages.

¹¹ The transcript suggests that Albert Barangga is drawing a map in the dirt as he speaks, but there is no parenthetical indication to this effect.

¹² See Nicholas Evans, “Warramurrungunji Undone: Australian Languages in the 51st Millennium,” *Language Diversity Endangered*, ed. Matthias Brenzinger (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2007), 342–373.

¹³ See Nicholas Evans, “The Last Speaker is Dead—Long Live the Last Speaker!” *Linguistic Fieldwork*, ed. Paul Newman and Martha Ratliff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 250–281.

¹⁴ Peter Sutton and Michael Walsh, *Revised Linguistic Fieldwork Manual for Australia* (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1979), 1–2.

CONFERENCE REPORTS

Disciplinary Measures? Histories of Egyptology in Multi-Disciplinary Context, June 10-12, 2010, London.

William Carruthers, Department of History and Philosophy of Science, University of Cambridge

Sponsored by the University College London Institute of Archaeology Heritage Studies Research Group; the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, Centre for Cultural, Literary and Postcolonial Studies; and the Egypt Exploration Society, the conference brought together Egyptologists and persons who have written on the history of their field (however defined), a burgeoning population in recent years. A number of the most prominent figures in the latter category, such as Stephanie Moser (University of Southampton), Donald Reid (Georgia State University), and Jason Thompson (Dakhleh Oasis Project)—all of whom were, happily, present—are not Egyptologists. Not least because, as Stephanie Moser commented during the conference, historians of Egyptology are now “moving beyond” a phase of writing about great men and great discoveries, it was hoped that productive multi-disciplinary discussions would take place. The basic objective was to promote reflection on what, exactly, “Egyptology” is, its form and purpose. In specific, where does that (in some opinions colonial) discipline stand in today’s post-colonial world, and what are the historical reasons for its position?

Discussions of the eight thematically arranged panels were honest, open and often forthright. Among the papers that would have been of special interest to HAN readers was that of Alice Stevenson (Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford), who discussed the divergence of Egyptology and anthropology from approximately the 1930s onwards, using developments at Oxford as her case in point. Francis Llewellyn Griffith, the first reader in Egyptology at Oxford, saw his work as contributing to the wider field of anthropology, and Henry Balfour, the first curator of the Pitt Rivers Museum, also had an extremely wide view of what anthropology should encompass, reporting on lithic technology in publications of the Egypt Exploration Fund and the British School of Archaeology in Egypt. Yet, when the functionalist anthropologist Radcliffe-Brown occupied the new Oxford chair of social anthropology in 1937, he reformed the teaching of the subject at the university in line with his own vision: a specialist degree was created solely for social anthropology, isolating Egyptology (earlier, Malinowski's impact on the teaching of anthropology at the London School of Economics had been similar; Malinowski repudiated the inclusive view of anthropology of his teacher and colleague at the School, C. G. Seligman, whose research interests extended to the archaeology of pre-dynastic Egypt). A paper by Juan Carlos Moreno Garcia (CNRS, France) presented the current corollary of this situation; he suggested that outside the Anglo-American sphere, Egyptology has been almost purposefully isolated from other disciplines, including anthropology. Responding to both of these papers in her capacity as discussant, Sue Hamilton, an anthropologically-engaged prehistorian from University College London, expressed surprise that Egyptologists have so often viewed themselves and their subject as particular.

Another important theme of conference papers was the objective of moving Egyptology beyond its problematic colonial roots (although, clearly, it would be naive to think that such an issue could be resolved in the space of a few days). The post-colonial potential of the discipline was, for example, highlighted by the discussions already noted suggesting that Egyptology has not always been so isolated from other worlds, as well as analyses of its direct implication in both modern Egypt (Caroline Simpson, Qurna History Project) and in mediaeval Arabic writings (Okasha el-Daly, University College London and the Qatar Museums Authority). Egyptology could redeem itself, if it were prepared to join its particular knowledge base with the post-colonial discourses of other disciplines.

Finally, the third day of the conference was a "Study Day," open to the public. This was both an attempt at outreach to the membership of the Egypt Exploration Society and an acknowledgement that Egyptology is among the most (if not the most) publicly visible of archaeological specialties. Speakers included both authors of highly regarded publications and authors of recently published books.