Terraforming the Nile Valley: 
The Ancient Egyptians as the World’s First Great Environmental Engineers

Dr. Peter Piccione, University of Charleston

Sunday, February 9, 2020, 3 P.M.
20 Barrows Hall
University of California, Berkeley
Just a reminder: No photographing or recording of lectures without the express permission of the speakers.

Parking is available in U.C. lots after 5 p.m. on weekdays and all day on weekends for a fee. Ticket dispensing machines accept either $5 bills or $1 bills. Parking is available in Parking Structure B on Bancroft between Hearst Gym and Kroeber Hall and just across the street from the University Art Museum. Parking is also available on the circle drive in front of the Valley Life Sciences Building, which can be entered from Oxford Street or behind Dwinelle Hall, which can also be entered from Oxford Street at the Track and Field Stadium. A map of the campus is online at [http://www.berkeley.edu/map/](http://www.berkeley.edu/map/).

### About Sunday’s lecture:
This talk presents the work of the University of Charleston Online Geographical Information System for the Theban Necropolis, and the observations of the Satellite Survey of Theban Tombs Project, with a focus on the landscape of Western Thebes, and then Egypt beyond.

We argue that the Egyptians were the world’s earliest terraformers on a mega-scale, and demonstrate the ways in which they dramatically altered their landscapes. They were not the slaves of their environment, but were supreme exploiters, and were not averse to making dramatic changes to their landscapes to suit their needs. They were also confident adaptors of existing conditions, compensating for features and deformations in the terrain in their building projects and exploiting defects in the rock, e.g., by consciously seeking appropriate cracks and fissures and using them to facilitate construction, and even to guide their architectural planning. In another regard, they were able to reshape external landscapes on a massively large scale in ways that modern scholars often overlook, e.g. leveling large sections of uneven ground, removing thousands of tons of rock, quarrying away whole hillsides, reshaping large rock faces, even to the point of remaking the landscape of an entire valley, such as Deir el-Bahari.

These adaptations, and the will to implement them, give the impression that the Egyptians viewed their landscapes as something plastic or malleable that could be molded and shaped, sculpted and remade to meet their needs, given enough imagination, resources, labor and coordination.

### About Dr. Peter Piccione:

[Peter Piccione](#) is an Egyptologist and Near Eastern historian best known as a specialist in ancient Egyptian religion, culture, and language, particularly, Egyptian rituals and those daily-life activities that had specific religious meaning and connotation. Hence, he is an authority on Egyptian
Cartouche games, sporting and athletic activities, and aspects of medicine and medical practices. Since 1998, he has held a position on the faculty of History at the College of Charleston and its graduate unit, the University of Charleston, S.C. He earned his doctorate in Egyptology and Near Eastern Studies in 1990 at The Oriental Institute of The University of Chicago.

In recent years, he has begun adopting the methods and techniques of the earth sciences to understand how the Egyptians modified and adapted their environment, as well as the natural processes that shaped the Egyptian landscape and formed the archaeological sites. He works actively to apply geographical information systems and global positioning mapping to the methods of survey archaeology. Here his work has centered on the cemeteries of Western Thebes, where he co-directs the On-line Geographical Information System for the Theban Necropolis (OLGIS-TN), which is managed through the Santee-Cooper GIS Laboratory of the College of Charleston. The purposes of this project are to map the private cemeteries of Western Thebes through ultra-high resolution satellite imagery; to input Egyptological and geographical data on the tombs into a geographical information system (GIS) database; and to make the data available to scholars via the World Wide Web.

From the President:
First, an apology to you, the members, and all those who attended January’s meeting for the last-minute change of room and the lack of projection capability for speaker Dr. Jennifer Babcock’s wonderful talk on “Man Vs. Wild: Rethinking the Interpretation of Human and Animal Representation in Egyptian Art.”

In the crunch, several of us who brought laptops downloaded Dr. Babcock’s PowerPoint and advanced the images manually on our screens while the rest of us huddled around. It wasn’t ideal. We’re beyond grateful to Dr. Babcock for her graciousness and flexibility. And we’re taking steps to ensure IT capability and a reliable venue for all our future meetings, including those when Cal is not in session.

Next, appreciation once again to stalwart member Helen Pearlstein, whose latest gift of $1,000 will help us in our future endeavors. All gifts to the chapter, large and small, are most welcome.

Later this month, we’ll have available our 2020 member pins for the Order of the Sedge & Bee. Joining Sedge & Bee ($40 single/$65 couple) supports chapter programs and is tax-deductible. Eternal thanks to our talented members Gary Parks for concept design and Teri Kuhlmann for locking in pin layout for most of this decade. And be on the lookout for 2020 party news.

Finally, congratulations on this spring’s PhD conferral on our immediate past president Vicky Jensen, whose doctoral work at Berkeley examines non-elite burials from the 17th to 19th dynasties in the cemeteries at Deir el-Ballas.
Call for Applications: $1,000 ARCE-NC Student Grant

ARCE Northern California is offering its annual $1,000 Marie Buttery Memorial Student Grant to a qualified student. The deadline for submission is Sunday, March 15, 2020 with the grant to be awarded at our March 29 meeting at UC Berkeley.

To qualify, the applicant must be an undergraduate or graduate student enrolled at a Northern California college or university (Monterey to the Oregon border) or who has a home address in this area. They must be pursuing a degree that incorporates Egyptian anthropology, archaeology, art, history, museum studies or language, or Coptic or Arabic studies in any period. Proof of enrollment may be required.

Applicants are to submit 1) a brief summary (250-500 words) describing how they will use the grant and 2) a 1-2 page CV. The grant will be awarded by the Board based on merit. Possible uses include research, travel, or preparation of an exhibition. Proposals involving work with research materials should secure any permissions required for that work before the application is sent.

Students should apply by email (Word or PDF file) to ARCENorCal@gmail. If possible, the winner will be expected to attend the March 29 meeting to accept the grant in person.

The grant honors the late Marie Buttery, founding president of our chapter. It is subsidized in part this year by a generous gift from our longtime board member Glenn Meyer.

ARCE Northern California also offers a $1,500 student grant each fall in memory of its former member Professor Eugene Cruz-Uribe. Call for applications for this grant will go out later in 2020.

© 2020 The Board of Directors, The American Research Center in Egypt, Northern California Chapter. All rights reserved.

ARCE/NC Board of Directors

President: Barbara Wilcox  
Vice President: Sara Everitt  
Secretary: Vacant  
Treasurer: Doug Olsen  
Programs: Nancy Corbin, Joan Knudsen  
Membership: Gabrielle Essner  
Publicity: Glenn Meyer  
Director at Large: Kim Sanders  
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Carol Redmount

CARTOUCHE is published monthly except for June and July. Material for submission should be sent no later than the 25th of the month preceding publication. The Chapter’s email address is ARCENorCal@gmail.com.

UPCOMING EVENTS

All lectures below are Sunday at 3 p.m. in Room 20 Barrows Hall, UC Berkeley.

March 29, 2020  
The Life & Deeds of Luigi Vassalli: Painter, Patriot & Egyptologist  
Dr. Francesco Tiradritti
April 19, 2020  
Requiem for a Sanctuary: The El-Hibeh Temple  
Dr. Carol Redmount, UC Berkeley

May 3, 2020  
The Land of Gold and Nomads: History and Archaeology of the Atabi Desert in Sudan  
Dr. Julien Cooper, Yale University

August 9, 2020  
Dirty Pictures for a Dangerous Goddess  
Dr. Ann Macy Roth, New York University

September 13, 2020  
Ramesside Jaffa and the Decline of Egyptian Control in Canaan  
Dr. Aaron Burke, UCLA

October 11, 2020  
Tattooing in Ancient Egypt  
Dr. Anne Austin, Univ. of Missouri, St. Louis

November 15, 2020  
Dr. Debbie Vischak, Princeton University/Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, North Abydos Expedition

December 13, 2020  
The Power of Images in Ancient Egypt  
Dr. Rune Nord, Emory University