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The Egyptological afterlife of Colin Campbell

Colin Campbell made his name with early publications of celebrated Theban tombs, but his facsimile paintings from some of them are largely unknown. **Angela McDonald** and **Sally-Anne Coupar** have been working to conserve the paintings and to uncover the history behind them.

Three years ago, while foraging through the collection of Glasgow University's Hunterian Museum to identify items that might inspire students, we came across a series of thirteen facsimile paintings that had been quietly gathering dust in storage. The name of the artist – the Reverend Colin Campbell – was immediately familiar as the author of several important studies including a critical re-appraisal of a contemporary publication of the tomb of Nefertari (1909), the first – and until recently, only – detailed description of the scenes and texts in Menna's tomb (1910), and a pioneering photographic publication of the complex divine birth scenes in Luxor Temple (1912). However, so far as we knew, his collection of paintings was relatively unknown.

Attracted by the paintings' vivacity, we decided to make them the focus of a summer lecture in Glasgow in 2009. The lecture, which culminated in a dramatic unrolling of three of the paintings, excited a lot of interest, not only in the Theban tomb scenes, captured life-size and in colour on the canvases, but also in the artist himself. We were asked about how Campbell had managed to make his paintings, what materials he had used, whether he had worked in the tombs themselves, where he had studied Egyptology (never an easy task in Scotland!), and so on. Since the paintings were in a rather fragile state, we decided that conservation should be a priority, but we also wanted a better understanding of the man behind them who, after an illustrious ecclesiastical career, had re-fashioned himself into an Egyptologist.

Born in Campbeltown, Argyllshire, in 1848, Colin Campbell was the son of a local tailor. He quickly distinguished himself as a student at Glasgow University, winning some 35 academic prizes for compositions, oral readings from Latin and Greek, and performance

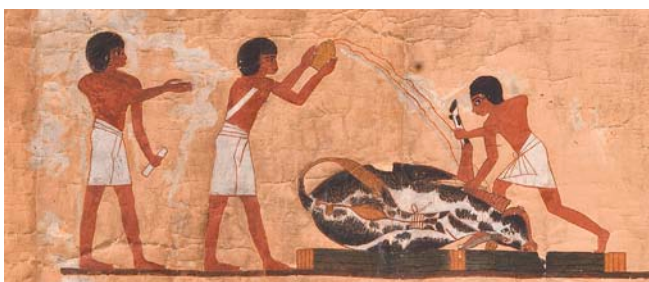


Colin Campbell in 1889. Courtesy of the Local History Centre, Dundee Central Library

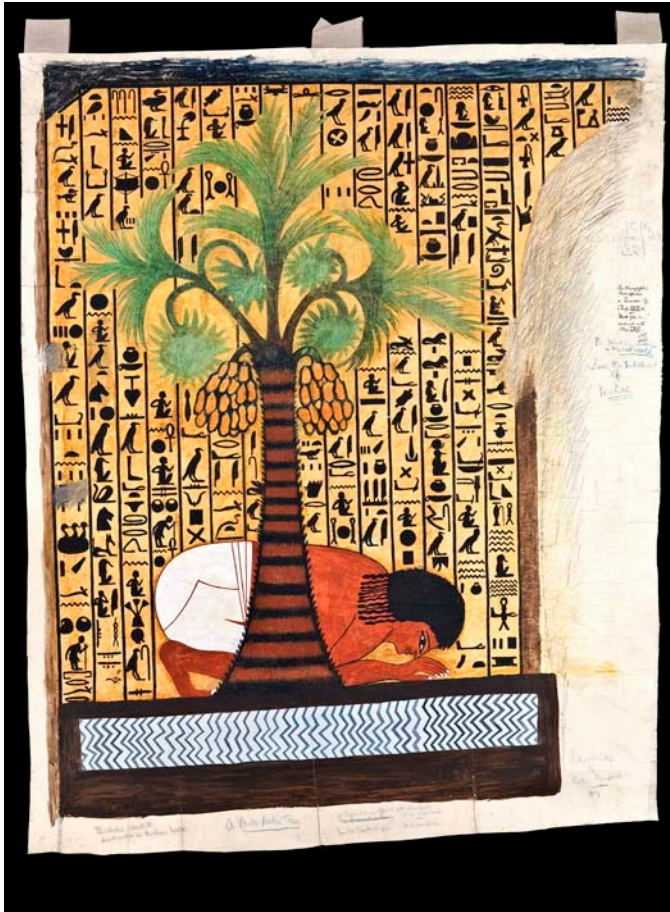
in examinations. After completing his Masters degree in 1874, he went on to obtain a Bachelor's degree in divinity, and at the age of 30, he took up his first position as minister of St. Mary's church in Partick, Glasgow. Four years later, he moved north to another St. Mary's, in Dundee, where he spent the remainder of his ecclesiastical career, occasionally moonlighting to preach at Crathie Parish Church on the Balmoral estate where his sermons were greatly enjoyed by Queen Victoria. Ill health forced his retirement in 1904. Although this was the end of one chapter of his life, it was also the beginning of another.

It was as an undergraduate at Glasgow University that Campbell was first introduced to ancient Egypt by Edmund Law Lushington, a Professor of Greek who later became the University's Rector and gave his inaugural address on the wars of Ramesses II. But it was an interest in Egyptian religion in particular that he instilled in Campbell. This was an interest Campbell began to indulge fully one year after his retirement when he made his first trip to Egypt. Coming across a loose block in the Temple of Luxor inscribed with the distinctive, distorted face of the heretic king Akhenaten, he immediately recognised the significance of his find, and published it in *The Proceedings for the Society of Biblical Archaeology* the following year. Thus began his passion not only to discover Egypt for himself, but to share his findings.

He returned to Luxor for eight successive winters, initially probably for his health but latterly to soak up the art and atmosphere of the past. Steadily, Campbell published descriptions of six Theban tombs that particularly appealed to him. From the time of his first visit, perhaps for his own pleasure, he had been making facsimiles of his favourite scenes, starting with an amalgamation of images from the tomb of Ramesses III's young son Amenherkhepeshef that showed the



Campbell's facsimile (D.1925.42/??) of a scene in the tomb of Menna



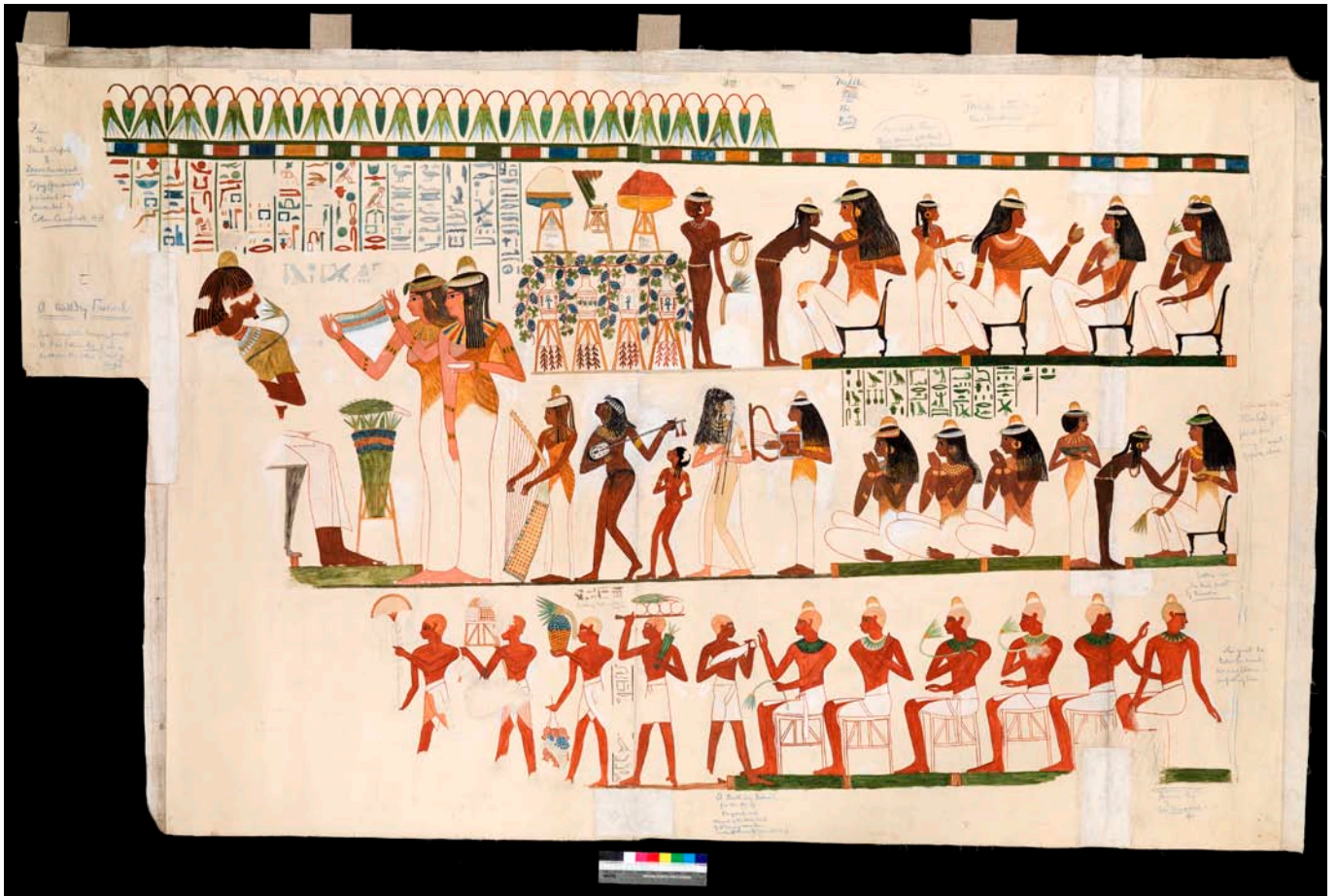
After conservation: the scene from Pashedu's tomb which Campbell annotated (D.1925.42/10). It is dated to 1909



D.1925.42/2 (detail). Gods in shrines from the tomb of Menna, showing damage to the facsimile



A man pouring a libation from the tomb of Menna. His image has been pasted on to the background. Detail of D.1925.42/2



Campbell's copy (D.1925.42/??) of a wall scene from the tomb of Djoserkaresoneb



A scene from Menna's tomb (D.1925.42/1) before conservation and cleaning, unrolled to its full extent of 4.25m x 1.72m



D.1925.42/13. Menna and his wife adoring the god Osiris. Note Campbell's distinctive signature in the bottom right-hand corner

boy's introduction to the god Imsety. From the tomb of the prince's brother, Khaemwaset, he painted a similar scene and an image of the god Osiris. His eye was also caught by a scene from the tomb of the Deir el-Medina artisan Pashedu which shows the tomb owner bending down to take a sip of water in the shade of a luscious palm tree against a backdrop of crisp black hieroglyphs. He also made a copy of the famous scene of a priest with an Anubis mask leaning over the mummified body of Sennedjem, another inhabitant of Deir el-Medina. From the tomb of Djoserkaresoneb, he painted three scenes variously depicting the official's duties as well as his preparations for the life to come.

Campbell's imagination seems to have been especially captured by the tomb of Menna, from which he painted five complete scenes, three of which represent the entirety of the inner chapel – the facsimiles of its long walls are each over 6m in length. Perhaps he sympathised with the damage inflicted on Menna's eyes by some ancient vandal, rendering him unable to see the splendours of his own walls – in his publication of the tomb, Campbell noted the pain of *'watching without being able to see'*.

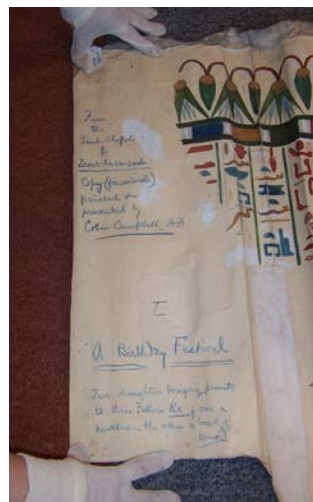
Campbell made no notes that have so far come to light on his techniques. However, clues are present in the paintings themselves. Working on thick paper, Campbell seems to have first drafted in pencil, and then applied paint on top of his sketched outlines. The very large paintings were managed by patchworking cut-out paper panels onto a cotton fabric background. Some of his notes on colours and textures survive on the fronts and backs of the paintings and all are marked with his distinctive signature. From the high degree of accuracy, it seems likely that he spent a great deal of time working in the tombs themselves.

The First World War may have put an end to Campbell's trips to Egypt, but he did not give up his passion for Egyptology. Between 1916 and 1922, as Gunning Lecturer for two consecutive terms, he gave a series of well-received talks on Egyptological subjects at Edinburgh University. The final lectures in the series were devoted to the Egyptian afterlife.



Detail from one of the scenes from the tomb of Khaemwaset (D.1925.42/7), showing the superimposition of two smaller sheets of paper on to a larger linen background

Campbell's notes on the side of his facsimile (D.1925.42/??) of a scene from the tomb of Djoserkaresoneb



In 1925, Campbell wrote to Glasgow University to offer the museum part of his antiquities collection (comprising, he said, of several ostraca, fragments of the Book of the Dead, and 'a few genuine antikas'). Almost as an afterthought, he added *'I venture also to offer some facsimile reproductions in colours of scenes from Tomb Chapels which I was permitted to make by the kindness of the late Sir Gaston Maspero, Chief of the Service des Antiquités of Egypt'*.

University records note that his gift was accepted with *'high appreciation'*, and a temporary exhibition of them was mounted in the Hunterian. For a time, two or three of the paintings remained on display pinned to a board. Gradually, however, as space became more limited, the paintings on display were rolled up and joined their fellows in the museum's storerooms.

Their time on display wreaked some havoc and between July 2009 and December 2010, an extensive programme, thanks to funding from Museums Galleries Scotland, was undertaken in three phases to clean away accumulated grime and to reverse some of the damage done to them. As part of the conservation process, the paintings were relaxed with humidity then tension-dried to remove creasing and wrinkles. Repairs were made to tears and weaknesses using Japanese paper and wheat starch paste. This process helped to heal old holes made when the paintings were pinned up.

Now that the paintings are conserved, various uses, including new displays, are possible, and we anticipate increased use for teaching and research in the future. The paintings are more than a teaching tool, however, although they perform that task marvellously. They are a reminder of what passion and determination can accomplish – and not just in the energetic blush of youth. One of the ostraca that Campbell donated to the Hunterian contains a little hymn in praise of ancient Thebes, in which the author exclaims: *'I will make for myself a productive stay on earth until the last days of my lifetime!'* It is not certain that Campbell could read hieratic himself – he entrusted the first translations of his ostraca to the redoubtable Alan Gardiner, working with Jaroslav Černý. But it is certain that he would have appreciated the sentiment – it was the story of his later life.

□ Angela McDonald teaches Egyptology to adult learners at the University of Glasgow and Sally-Anne Coupar is the Curator of Archaeology at the Hunterian Museum. Photographs courtesy of the Hunterian Museum, Glasgow University.