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

Dr. Peter Piccione, College of Charleston

Sponsored by Lauralee Barton.

Lecture: Saturday February 8, 2020 1:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Free for ARCE and Bowers Members.
$12 for Non-ARCE and Non-Bowers Members.

Bowers Museum, Santa Ana - Norma Kershaw Auditorium

Parking is $6, refundable with validation from Tangata Restaurant.

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Terraforming is a term you may not be familiar with. It refers to the altering of a landscape, and as in many other things, the ancient Egyptians were possibly the best of the world's earliest terraformers on a mega-scale.

Dr. Peter A. Piccione, of the Online Geographical Information System for the Theban Necropolis (OLGIS-TN) & Satellite Survey of Western Thebes, will offer a presentation showing that early Egyptians were not the slaves of their environment, but were supreme exploiters, and they were not averse to making dramatic changes to their landscapes to suit their needs. They were also confident adapters of existing conditions, compensating for features and deformations in the terrain in their building projects and exploiting defects in the rock, 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, like leveling large sections of uneven ground, removing thousands of tons of rock, quarrying away whole hillsides, reshaping large rock faces, and 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.

Dr. Piccione is affiliated with the College of Charleston, University of Charleston, S.C. He received his Ph.D. from The Oriental Institute of The University of Chicago in 1990. He has performed epigraphical and archaeological research in Egypt. He also directs the Theban Tombs Publication Project and the Satellite Survey of Theban Tombs Project, West Bank, Luxor in Egypt. His numerous articles and papers pertain to the history of Egyptian religion, medicine, athletics, social history, as well as geoarchaeology and landscape archaeology.

Currently he is serving on the editorial board of the Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt.