Une apparition excessivement curieuse est celle des images de joutes sur l’eau. Curieuse avant tout pour cette raison que ce jeu a été repris en Égypte à diverses époques, puis à partir du Moyen-Âge fut pratiqué par périodes en Allemagne. Nous connaissions un tel tournoi sur la Pegnitz près de Nuremberg (grav. 62), nous savions qu’il était en usage à Strasbourg, sur la Sprée auprès de Berlin, et voici que les images nous révèlent ce joyeux exercice au temps des Pharaons, à l’époque du haut, moyen, et bas-empire. Les pêcheurs, pares de fleurs de lotus, se tiennent nus à l’avant de leur élégant canot que dirigent leurs camarades, ils se poussent avec les longues rames du bateau terminées en forme de fourche, et essaient d’escalader le bateau ennemi, ce qui ne va pas sans lutte violente, tandis que les rameurs secondent de toute leur habileté le lutteur dressé à l’avant (grav. 63).

C’est ainsi que se révèle un parfait accord du sport sur la terre et sur l’eau. Les formes sveltes et nobles que l’art égyptien a éternisées pour nous ont connu une éducation méthodique du corps. Sans doute ne connaissions-nous que ce que nous sommes capables de deviner des images murales, mais le sol inépuisable de l’Égypte ne cesse de nous offrir de nouveaux trésors, si bien que nous sommes en droit d’espérer que nous apprendrons encore des révélations sur cet aspect de la vie antique. Dès aujourd’hui pour nous la preuve est faite, comme elle était faite aussi pour l’Égypte, que c’était un être harmonieux qui témoignait des plus hauts résultats de cette culture.

Physical Culture in Ancient Egypt

By Carl Diem

The numerous drawings and paintings on the walls of the burial chambers afford us an idea of the daily life of the Egyptians; how they lived and worked, wove their cloth and moulded their pottery, how they tended and butchered their live stock, how they cultivated their land, and how they ate and slept. The more one studies these rich illustrations, the more one becomes aware of the fact that the people of Egypt must also have fostered a definite system of physical culture throughout the millennia. We have no proof, however, that physical culture played such a decided role in the lives of the Egyptians as it did later among the Hellenic peoples. It is not mentioned in the literature, and there was no Pindar to sing its praises. It is not present to any extent in the great works of art, nor was there a Polycleitus to elevate the athletes developed in the Egyptian school of physical culture to canons of perpetual beauty. No festival dedicated to the gods in the manner of that at Olympia dominated the national life. Nevertheless one cannot underestimate the importance of Egyptian physical culture, such as it is revealed in numerous wall paintings. Much that was important in the lives of the Egyptians failed to find an echo in the literature of the time because this was confined principally to accounts of the life and activities of the kings or high personages in the burial chambers.

We are thus compelled to gain our impressions from the pictures adorning the walls of the burial chambers, the evidence in this case spanning more than fifteen hundred years, or about the same period of time that Greek physical culture dominated Greek art, excluding of course the finds in Crete and Mycenae. Furthermore, the Egyptian illustrations reveal two phases of physical culture, sport and dancing, exhibiting the wide variety in which each was carried on. The paintings and sketches from the sporting life of the times depict what we today know as gymnastic exercises, as well as games, track and field sports, weight-lifting, competitive sports such as fencing, wrestling and boxing, swimming, rowing and “fisher jousting”. Particularly numerous are the scenes representing gymnastics, which incidentally were decidedly more comprehensive than our present conception of this field, as based on the Greek term. In these pictures one perceives an entire system of physical culture. Various illustrations allow of different explanations, while in others the action portrayed is clearly defined in the appended hieroglyphs. In other cases the hieroglyphs have an entirely general meaning or are incomprehensible, and some of the pictures lack any explanation whatsoever. The material is sufficient, however, to prove beyond all doubt that a methodically developed system of physical education existed. It began in the venerable old, but fortu-
nately forsaken, style of raising the arms and legs in a forward position, twisting the body with raised arms (Picture No. 1) and spreading the legs far apart with arms raised (Picture No. 2). In addition to these, there was a series of stretching exercises. Two similar illustrations in the “Mastaba” of Ptahhotep and in the burial vault of Mereru-ka in Sakkâra reveal men in a sitting position with arms and legs extended (Picture No. 3). I at first regarded this as a stretching exercise in which the thigh muscles were stretched through the lifting of the leg and pointing of the toes. A similar exercise is included in the system of Niels Bukh today (Picture No. 4). Recently, however, the American archaeologist, E. S. Eaton, published a different explanation in the “Bulletin of the Museum of Pine Arts”, Boston. He describes a form of exercise he observed among the Arabs in which two youths sat on the ground facing each other and extending the arms and legs until they touched. This formed a type of human hurdle over which a third youth jumped (Picture No. 5). The Egyptian illustrations reveal in each case a crowd of men, one of whom is always in the act of running. It is thus obviously clear that these sketches may be regarded as illustrations of jumping exercises. In studying such wall drawings, the modern observer is constantly confronted with the difficulty of overlooking the lack of perspective in Egyptian art, since they, in common with all the peoples before the Greeks, represented objects and scenes as pure sketches without contours or depth. They resorted to a method similar to that employed at the modern time for architectural designing in which the object is shown from different planes. The Egyptians always chose the plane of view in which the object could be represented in the most accurate and clear manner. In portraying standing persons, for example, the head and legs were drawn in profile while the body was represented from the front or vertical plane. In the case of animals, such as cows or geese, the side view was selected as most characteristic of the animal. It is also possible to envisage figures placed one above the other as having in reality existed side by side.

Granting that some doubt has been cast upon the sitting exercise as a form of stretching exercise, there are other illustrations depicting beyond the shadow of a doubt a stretching exercise for the muscles and ligaments of the legs, the general position being that of the cross-legged tailor (Picture No. 6) such we know it from Indian gymnastics. This is the “Padma-Asana” from the “Asanas” exercises, and is there described as follows: “Sit erect, draw the left leg towards the body, place the left foot over the right ankle so that the shanks cross.” (Picture No. 7). The same exercise was performed during prehistoric millennia by the peoples along the Nile, who in common with the Hindus, worshipped the Sun. I find it difficult to dispense with the supposition that there must have been some connection between the ancient Indian and Egyptian physical culture.

The wall drawings reveal clearly that in the early Egyptian civilization as at the present day, torso gymnastics occupied a place of outstanding importance. We have already spoken of movements from the waist. One sketch apparently is intended to illustrate a backward bend from a reclining position with the help of a partner (Picture No. 8), while a second view shows this same exercise in an extremely effective presentation without assistance (Picture No. 9). The Egyptians evidently placed more than ordinary value on torso exercises because there are complete series of sketches showing back-bending exercises which even include bridges from headstands and handstands (Pictures No. 10, 11, 12). These are illustrated in every possible form and repeated in all of their various phases. The Berlin Museum possesses a small statue from the period of the Middle Empire which demonstrates such an exercise. The bridge is represented in a wall sketch from a grave in Beni Hassan and by a second one in the famous Turin collection. A painted fragment in Turin also contains an exceptional drawing of a slender body bent so that the hands are about to touch the ground. It dates from the Twentieth Dynasty, i. e. 1200—1000 B. C. (Picture No. 13).

According to all available evidence, the Egyptians placed considerable emphasis on the flexibility of the spinal column, an aim which is also stressed in modern gymnastics. The desire was evidently to develop a flexible but not loose spinal column. Importance was also placed upon the strengthening of the torso muscles. Among the wall sketches of Beni Hassan (Grave of Beket No. 15) is one which reveals youths holding the stiffened bodies of two young girls in a diagonal position (Picture No. 14). The girls are bracing the soles of their feet against each other and hanging backwards in the arms of
the boys with stiffened bodies. This exercise must have been quite common because similar illustrations occur at other places 1000 years earlier, namely in limestone reliefs from Sakkâra during the time of the Fifth and Sixth Dynasties or between 2650 and 2400 B. C. The same exercise is again exhibited in the “Mastaba” of Ptahhotep and in the grave of Mereru-ka, except that in the first case boys alone are shown (Pictures No. 15, 16). It is possible that this was a type of whirling game such as that known today as “carousel”.

The hopping exercises are also revealed in a most instructive manner. First, a form of preliminary exercise is shown which we are also familiar from Greek literature, where it is known as “Bibasis” or “heel-raising”. Aristophanes, among others, presents in his comedy “Lysistrata” a muscular Spartan maid who performs this exercise (Picture No. 17). Hopping without changing the position developed from “heel-raising”, this being aptly illustrated in an attractive sketch in Beni Hassan (Grave of Chati No. 17) (Picture No. 18). One may logically conclude that these exercises were practised in connection with a dancing course. In fact, a complete system of dancing gymnastics is revealed in the different illustrations, and all of the forms of interpretative, gymnastic, imitative, pair and group, war, dramatic, lyric, grotesque, macabre and religious dancing are represented. Irena Lexova has published a book on this subject (“Ancient Egyptian Dances”, Prague 1935, Oriental Institute).

From the free exercises developed tumbling, pair exercises and free gymnastics. Among the pair exercises is one based upon resistance of the arms, which is illustrated in Beni Hassan (Grave No. 17) (Picture No. 19). The two partners place the palms of their hands together and one endeavours to push the other, the arms being held rigid. It is the so-called exercise of “rebounding” illustrated as exercise number 135 in Forstreuter’s “Gymnastik” (Picture No. 26). The hieroglyphs appended to this sketch unfortunately shed no light upon the nature of the exercise. Grave No. 2 in Beni Hassan also contains an illustration of a balancing exercise, one person standing on the back of another (Picture No. 21). Surrounding this sketch are others which give the general impression of a carefree gymnastic class. A second exercise might be described as the “flying fish” (Picture No. 22), while a third shows youths endeavouring to rise from a sitting position while keeping their backs together (Picture No. 23). Another exercise which is not so common is the “somersault bridge”. This somewhat complicated performance appears again and again in the history of gymnastics. It is shown, for example, in Krüenitz’s “Oekonomischer Enzyklopaedie” published in 1797 and was accepted into the German system of free gymnastics 120 years later (Picture No. 24). The Egyptian sketches show this exercise with instructive exactness in three phases (Picture No. 25). The partners grasp each other with an under-grip while standing so that the front of one is against the back of the other, the legs pointing in opposite directions. The head of one gymnast is down, his feet up. The other performer then throws his partner, over his head so that his feet land on the floor, himself going into a bridge. The partner then takes the lead and the exercise is continued. Finally, there is also evidence of a pure head-stand (Picture No. 26) apparently without the aid of the hands, this also appearing in the Indian system (Picture No. 27).

Among the “tumbling exercises”, as we know them today, the tug-of-war may be mentioned, this being illustrated by sketches in the grave of Mereru-ka in Sakkâra. Two teams of three youths face one another, the two leaders bracing their feet against each other and holding hands. The others clasp their comrades around the waist and pull with all their might. This exercise is explained in the inscriptions. Over the team on the left side stands the words, “Your arm is stronger than his. Do not give in”, while the inscription, “My group is stronger than yours. Hold tight, comrades”, appears over the right hand team (Picture No. 28).

The sketches illustrating various kinds of ball games are particularly attractive. Due to the dry air of Egypt, several of these playing balls have been preserved and can be seen today in the museums of Cairo, London and Berlin. Colourful leather balls seven and one half centimetres in diameter and sewed with cross-stitching have been found filled with clay, corn husks and straw, while balls of woven palm leaves have also been preserved (Picture No. 29). Small balls of clay or faience painted in variegated light and dark blue colours were used for certain games. Sketches reveal juggling tossing a ball from the lap to the back of another, catching while jumping, and other exercises (Picture No. 39).
Games with staves may also be mentioned, and there seems to have been a type of sport which consisted of throwing knives at wooden blocks (Picture No. 31).

Some of these sketches are from the “Mastaba” of Ptahhotep, which was excavated in Sakkâra. We thus have proof that this outstanding scholar, the Vizier of King Isesi and author of the oldest book of wisdom, placed importance on physical education in its more carefree form, and can recall with pleasure that the famous Greek philosophers did the same. According to historical evidence, Pythagoras founded a school of higher learning in Kroton which was also a centre for physical culture. The words of Socrates and Plato need scarcely to be mentioned in his connection.

Several sketches also throw light upon the Egyptian hoop games with large and small hoops. The illustrations depicting the game with small hoops might represent a type of hockey (Picture No. 32) similar to that found on a relief from the fourth century B. C. in Athens (Picture No. 33). In this case, however, as in Egypt, there is no further pictorial evidence of this form of sport, and it is not mentioned in contemporary literature.

In direct contrast to the numerous representations of gymnastic games is the sparsity of evidence that track and field athletics were engaged in, these having formed the main part of the programme in the ancient Olympic Festivals. I know of but a single picture dealing with athletics (Picture No. 34), but this sketch, which was found in Amarna (Atomb of Mahu), shows runners escorting the chariot of the Pharaoh and is remarkably similar to the illustrations of long distance runners on Greek vases (Picture No. 35). We know, however, from Diodorus, the Roman historian, that the princes and their companions at the court of King Sethos about 1300 years B. C. underwent a rigid system of physical training. They practised running daily and were permitted to partake of a meal only after they had covered a definite number of stadia.

A stele belonging to King Amenhotep II discovered last year speaks for the fact that this monarch, who ascended the throne in 1450 B. C. at the age of 18, was in addition to his other accomplishments a famous ruler who could be overtaken by no one. Although we have no evidence that competitions in running were held, we know that several running games existed.

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One illustration indicates that a type of fencing with staves was engaged in, the competitors wearing a shield on the left arm (Picture No. 36).

Boxing was also known in ancient Egypt. Whereas this sport belongs to the oldest form of exercise among the peoples along the Mediterranean and is portrayed in the earliest Greek sporting representations from Crete and Mycenae, boxing sketches are found in Egypt only back as far as the “Amarna” period, i. e. fourteenth century B. C. Our interest is thus drawn to this remarkable period in the Egyptian civilization, when under Amenophis IV an attempt was made to introduce the monotheistical belief in a Sun God, with the resulting highly vivid, natural, truth-seeking period of artistic development which stands alone in history. Sketches found in the grave of Meryra II represent, in spite of their primitiveness and rough outlines, an extremely lively encounter. These are no stereotyped figures used to demonstrate grips but momentary scenes meant to depict enthusiasm, combat and joy in sport. The entire sketch portrays a pageant of homage to King Akhenaten and his Queen.

Among a number of Syrian and Ethiopian prisoners who are led forward are a row of sportsmen. First we see four pairs of wrestlers, of whom two have already vanquished their opponents, who are already lying prone. In the case of another pair the victory is practically decided as one is about to be thrown over the shoulder by means of a head hold. The fourth pair is till standing but closely entwined. Then follows two stave fencers without shields, one indicating by his pained gesture that he has already received a blow on the head. Finally there are three pairs of boxers, of whom one pair is fighting while the others announce their victory with a great show of enthusiasm (Picture No. 37).

Since the foregoing forms of sport are those requiring demonstrations of strength, it may be mentioned at this point that the ancient Egyptians evidently engaged in a type of weight-lifting, a sport incidentally which today occupies a prominent place in Egyptian physical education. The weights used in ancient times were pear-shaped objects, evidently bags filled with sand, which were raised above the head with one arm. (Beni Hassan, Grave of Beket No. 15.) (Picture No. 38.)
The greatest number of the sketches, however, deal with wrestling, and those who from the foregoing descriptions may have been led to wonder whether the combative spirit was pronounced in Egyptian civilization will have all doubts removed upon studying the representations of wrestling matches. The oldest of these sketches that I have discovered dates back to the Fifth Dynasty, or in other words, to 2650 B.C. A limestone relief was found in the grave of Ptahhotep near Sakkâra which reveals youths engaged in a catch-as-catch-can wrestling match (Picture No. 39). The scene is unusually full of life and action, and one can well imagine that the artist has made an attempt to capture the enthusiasm of combat. On the other hand, the usual stiff dignity which characterizes Egyptian reliefs is present. No less striking is a drawing on a limestone fragment from the Twentieth Dynasty 1500 years later. It represents the beginning of a match with a neck hold and hand grip (Picture No. 40).

The Munich Museum possesses a plastic group representing two wrestlers. The execution is somewhat primitive, but in respect of trueness to nature it is not inferior to the numerous sketches found in the graves of Beni Hassan. These outstanding wall paintings are from the period of the Middle Kingdom and are the most complete representations of the ancient technique of wrestling that we possess. The cemetery of Beni Hassan was established about 1900 B.C. during the Twelfth Dynasty. This was a period fraught with wars and combat so that it is perhaps due to the belligerent spirit which undoubtedly prevailed that such a complete system of wrestling developed. The four graves with which we are directly concerned contain over 400 representations of various phases of wrestling (Picture No. 41). These are in rows after the manner of instructive series. In each case there are two wrestlers, one with dark skin and one light red so that the positions will always be clearly visible even when the bodies are entwined. In this manner a school or system of wrestling developed which we today should describe as catch-as-catch-can, since every grip was allowed. Restrictions, as in our present Greco-Roman style, where grips are confined to the body, neck and arms are not evident. Every phase of wrestling is carefully portrayed from the moment the wrestlers prepare themselves and take their positions opposite each other, seeking grips. We see the grasping of the wrists and neck with which the match begins (Picture No. 42). Different attempts are made to throw the opponent off his balance by pushing aside his supporting leg (Picture No. 43). Attempts to grasp the leg and to obtain leg holds are in fact very numerous (Picture No. 44). We see endeavours to obtain a low grip from the rear and attempts to lift an opponent (Picture No. 45), a normal low hold, which incidentally represents the counterpart of the view on a Greek vase (Amphore of Andokides, Berlin) (Picture No. 46), a shoulder swing (Picture No. 47), and to compare a picture of today (Altrock: "Ringkampf") (Picture No. 48), hip swing with head hold (Picture No. 49), and hip swing with leg hook (Grave of Ameniem-het No. 2) (Picture No. 50) are portrayed. We see a neck and thigh hold (Picture No. 51), defence against a leg hold and scissors around the upper body (Picture No. 52), struggling on the mat, an under-grip from behind (Picture No. 53), and attempts to pull away from the side (Picture No. 54) and to turn the body of an opponent (Picture No. 55). Every phase is portrayed in a most lively manner, and it is certainly worth while to study and compare the different positions. A technically exact representation of this nature would never have been possible without an exact system and a thorough knowledge of the different holds, or in other words, a highly developed art of wrestling.

I may perhaps be permitted to describe one hold in greater detail since this plays an important role in the modern jiu jitsu wrestling. The opponent is grasped on the upper arm and jerked backwards to the floor. At the same time the leg is drawn up and the foot placed against the descending body so that it is possible through exerting the leg and thigh muscles to throw the opponent backwards over the head.

One of the illustrations is herewith reproduced in its original size. We see how the dark wrestler seeks to dislodge his opponent through a low hold and scissors, intending evidently to roll him to the left side. The light-coloured wrestler attempts to defend himself by holding firmly to the thigh of his opponent (Picture No. 58).

Still another type of competitive sport was the bull fight, several wall paintings and sketches indicating that such a sport existed in Egypt. We know from discoveries in Crete that bull fighting.
played a prominent role in the activities of that civilization, but then disappeared in the Mediterranean region, finally to reappear in Spain. One of the Egyptian sketches, which according to Wilkinson represents a type of bull fight, is similar to a wall painting from Knossos in Crete (Pictures No. 59, 60). A few words should also be devoted to water sports. It is natural that the Egyptians, as inhabitants of the Nile Valley, should have been swimmers, and we possess a good example of the side stroke in the hieroglyph for swimming. The Old Museum in Berlin possesses a tombstone of a granary overseer named Setu from the end of the Sixth Dynasty (2469 B. C.). The name of one of the servants listed thereon is “Nebu” and indicated by the hieroglyph for swimming. “Neb” signified “swimming”, and the use of this hieroglyph is repeated several times in the period of the Old Kingdom, reappears in the Middle Kingdom, but then disappears. It is possible that these are simple representations which do not reveal a definite style, but in these and in other cases, there is no possibility of mistaking the crawl stroke (Picture No. 61).

The Egyptians were also able oarsmen and the slender form of the boats indicates that competition was held in this field. The aforementioned stele of King Amenhotep II, which Professor Selim Hassan discovered in a depression to the northwest of the Sphinx, reveals in exact detail the remarkable physical development of the young king. He is characterized as an outstanding horseman and a great archer who shot at a copper target from his war chariot. In fact, his bow was found beside his mummified corpse. Finally he was a strong rower whose arms never felt fatigue, and even after his men has spent their final reserve of strength he could still row mile after mile upstream.

The illustrations of “fisher jousting” are highly interesting, principally because this sport was popular in Egypt, but also because at various times from the Middle Ages onward it has been carried on in Germany. We have records of such a tournament on the Pegnitz near Nuremberg (Picture No. 62), and it is known that similar events were held in Strasbourg and on the Spree near Berlin. From paintings executed during the age of the Pharaohs, i.e. during the Old, Middle and New Kingdom, it is evident that this same exciting sport was engaged in during that time. The fishers, adorned with lotus flowers, stand naked at the prow of their graceful boats, and, armed with long, forked poles, endeavour to dislodge the opponents in the other boat or to leap into it, a feat which naturally implies a violent struggle. The rowers through skillful manipulation of the boat assist their comrades in the prow (Picture No. 63).

It will thus be seen that land and water sports were in full accord. The slender, nobly formed figures, which have been perpetuated through the Egyptian art, were trained through a regular system of physical education. At the present time we have only the knowledge gained from studying the wall paintings, but the soil of Egypt has been bountiful in yielding treasures, and we may hope in the course of time to learn more about this phase of the ancient civilization. We possess adequate proof, however, that in Egypt as in the other great civilizations of the past, it was the harmoniously developed race which played the leading cultural role.  

(abbreviated)

Die Radwettbewerbe 1940

Die „Union Cycliste Internationale” hat bei ihrer Sitzung in Paris beschlossen, die Radwettkämpfe in drei Veranstaltungen auf der Bahn und der Veranstaltung auf der Straße durchzuführen; die letztere soll den Zeitraum von 2 Tagen von dem Schlußrennen auf der Bahn getrennt sein.

L’Union Cycliste Internationale a décidé d’agir auprès des organisateurs des Jeux Olympiques de Tokio de 1940, pour que les dates réservées aux épreuves de cyclisme soient réparties en trois réunions sur piste et une réunion sur route, cette dernière devant être séparée par un intervalle de deux jours de la dernière réunion sur piste.

The “Union Cycliste Internationale” decided, at their last meeting in Paris, to propose to the Organizing Committee for the XIIth Olympic Games, Tokyo, 1940 an alteration of the time-table, so that the cycling competitions would comprise three track events and one road event, the latter being separated from the final rate on the track by a two days’ interval.

26
Aegyptische Ballspiele

Aus Percy E. Newberry, London „Beni Hassan“ Band 11, Grab Nr. 15, Platte 8
Titelbild der Revue Olympique, die von Baron Pierre de Coubertin in den Jahren 1906 — 1914 herausgegeben wurde und die wir nun wieder fortsetzen
Das Panathenäische Stadion vor dem Ausbau. Bild aus dem Olympischen Museum in Lausanne mit handschriftlicher Bezeichnung durch Coubertin. Aufnahme November 1894

Olympisches Stadion In Athen während einer Feier zur 40. Wiederkehr der Begründung der Olympischen Spiele im Beisein des Internationalen Olympischen Komitees Athen 1934
Vorderansicht

Ausgrabungen in Olympia / Kleine Statuette des Läufers am Start / Seitenansicht

Steinerne Haltere aus Sparta
Stadionbau in Helsinki / Das Stadion von Süden aus gesehen

Hauptschaukel mit Terrasse

Bau und Geländemodell
mit Messehalle (7000 Zuschauer) mit Hauptkampfbahn, Schwimmstadion, Tennisstadion und großer Festwiese
Ein Teil der Ringerbilder aus dem Grab 2 in Beni Hassan.
Ringergruppe