

Graeco-Roman papyrus memoirs reveal ancient Egyptian treatment for hangover

April 24 2015, by Bob Yirka

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(Phys.org)—Researchers working on the Egypt Exploration Project, part of which is a task that involves translating thousands of documents nearly two thousand years old, written on sheets of papyrus, in Greek, into other languages, have published another manuscript, the 80th so far—this one centered on ancient medicinal treatments, one of which involves a "drunken headache cure."

The documents (now kept at Oxford's Sackler Library) were found in a sand covered ancient trash heap outside the ancient town of Oxyrhynchus in Egypt back in 1898—researchers have been working ever since on translating them, periodically publishing a manuscript. The latest group offers historians a glimpse of how physicians attempted to aid the afflicted. Stringing together twigs from a shrub called Alexandrian laurel and then wearing it around the neck, for example, was prescribed for those that were feeling the pain of a night of bacchanalia. Thus far, it has not been determined if the treatment actually worked, but no doubt after the announcement of a cure, many who live where such a shrub grows will be testing its efficacy very soon. The Greeks and Romans used the plant to make head wreaths for athletes or others to mark them as important.

Oxyrhynchus is approximately 100 miles south of Cairo, and was important in ancient times—it grew in size after Alexander the Great conquered the region, and maintained some degree of prominence during Roman and Byzantine times. After that, the population dwindled and the town fell into decline. The documents, collectively known as the Oxyrhynchus Papyri were discovered by Arthur Hunt and Bernard Grenfell, archeologists at Oxford—they were among other items that were part of a massive dumping ground—a sand covering helped to

preserve the delicate [papyrus](#) sheets. Texts from the site span approximately five hundred years, from the first century AD to the sixth century.

Other remedies listed on the 30 translated sheets included treatments for a toothache, hemorrhoids, and several that were aimed at relieving problems associated with various eye conditions—one excerpt even described a minor surgical procedure to repair a condition where an eyelid began to grow inside out.

More information: Graeco-Roman Memoirs 101 : [www.ees-shop.com/index.php?mai ... e63iettet1kgr770gnj3](http://www.ees-shop.com/index.php?mai...e63iettet1kgr770gnj3)

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