



HOTEP

Issue 82:
January-March 2024

Hotep matters

You will see that this is the 82nd edition of Hotep, our electronic newsletter which, since September 2015, has appeared almost every month. The prime aims of Hotep are to publicise SAES events, to provide reviews of meetings for those unable to attend and to share snippets of Egyptological news with the Membership. We now receive too few contributions from Members to warrant the time spent on producing a monthly issue and we are concerned that, without input from Members, the content of Hotep has become stale and predictable. We are therefore reducing the frequency of Hotep to quarterly. We would be grateful to receive items such as reviews of a meeting, book, magazine article or TV documentary which you think would interest your fellow SAES Members – even a paragraph or two mentioning your personal highlights would do. Hotep has been and still could be a very useful means of communication, but unless someone is prepared to take on the job of Editor it may be necessary to cut still further. If you think you could help save and revive our publication, please contact us. Thank you.

Hilary Wilson

Reviews of Latest Meetings

Since the last issue of Hotep we have had three Saturday afternoon meetings and one Wednesday evening meeting, all by Zoom, and one face-to-face Local meeting. The following are brief outlines of what we enjoyed.

The newsletter of
The
**Southampton
Ancient Egypt
Society**

Saturday 16 December 2023 (Zoom)
***'Walking the desert - ancient
visitors to the pyramids'***

by Hana Navratilova

Visitors of all sorts left their mark on the 12th Dynasty temples and pyramids of Dashur. The pyramid fields were closely connected with the ancient capital, Memphis, of which the desert necropolis formed something of a special 'suburb'. As the entry to the Underworld, Rosetau, the realm of the god Sokar, was also the working environment of the living – funerary and mortuary priests tending the cults of the dead, administrators and craftsmen involved in building projects, tourists admiring their cultural heritage, demolition crews plundering the ancient monuments for ready-dressed stone – and many visitors left graffiti in the form of texts and drawings.

In the north chapel of Senwosret III, an educated scribbler left his name and title, identifying himself with images of offering bearers to establish a degree of immortality by association. The positioning of such graffiti, high up on temple walls, reduced the chances of further erasure. Other scribes left extracts from the Book of Kemi, a scribal training manual, demonstrating their ability to read and understand the sacred texts.

The Middle Kingdom pyramid fields became sites of procurement, where the royal butlers, charged with acquiring stone for the buildings of Ramesses II, left their calling cards and the crews who quarried the stone left their own figurative graffiti, including





caricatures ↑. Ancient sightseers left descriptions of what they saw, sometimes bewailing the state of the monuments and the loss of their history, while also recording the creation of new meanings by the reuse of materials and the repurposing of buildings. The inscriptions of Ramesses II's son, Khaemwaset, are valuable both as historical documents and personal commemoration.

Hana's talk gave us a little insight into the minds and motives of ancient Egyptians who lived and worked alongside the gods and the dead and who left their own mark on posterity.

Saturday 20 January 2024 (Zoom)

'Living at Sesebi: an Egyptian colonial town in Nubia in the Second Millennium BC'
by Kate Spence



The New Kingdom Egyptian colonial settlement of Sesebi was between the 2nd and 3rd cataracts, north of Tombos and south of Sedeinga, on the Nile's west bank, opposite the modern town of Delgo. Like major

Nubian temples and fortresses founded by Tuthmose I, Hatshepsut and Tuthmose III, Sesebi was part of the establishment of control over Nubia in the 18th Dynasty. The town was founded as a small walled enclosure for administrative rather than military use, centred on a temple, probably started by Amenhotep III. By the reign of Akhenaten the temple occupied about a third of the enclosed area.

After excavation by Blackman and Fairman 1938-9, the site was left exposed to the elements resulting in considerable loss to wind erosion and rain damage. Hana uses archive records from excavations of housing at the site to consider the lives of those who lived and worked in the town in antiquity. Fewer than thirty houses have been identified in the residential area, built on a plan which is very similar to that of the Workmen's Village at Amarna, which Sesebi predates by perhaps ten years. The temple-town was occupied for around 120 years, until the latter part of the reign of Ramesses II, and during that time supported a population estimated to have been 400-800. There seems to have been a substantial dip in the population after Akhenaten's death when the temple ↓ suffered severe damage,



but the town's importance as a focus for local gold-mining activities, led to regrowth and the internal arrangements of the dwellings underwent significant adaptations over five or six generations of occupation. Kate explained how the site was probably constructed as an administrative centre with the temple controlling the products of the gold fields. Extensive processing areas have been identified within the enclosure and on the hills to the north of the town.

Finds of both imported Egyptian and locally-made pottery, indicate that Sesebi supported a Nubian workforce, brought in to process the gold and to service the needs of the town's ex-pat community. By the time the site was abandoned, probably when the gold fields were no longer profitable, the population of Sesebi had become a fully-integrated community of mixed-extraction.

Saturday 17 February (Zoom)
'Ex-pats and vassal princes: some curious international messengers in the late 13th century BC'

by Roland Enmarch



Roland used his prodigious linguistic skills to take us back into the fascinating world of international diplomacy in the Late Bronze Age Near East. His talk considered the role played by some of Egypt's Levantine vassals in communication between the great powers of the region, notably the Hittites, during the New Kingdom. Referring to a variety of cuneiform sources, mostly written in the Akkadian language, the ancient lingua franca, Roland showed how foreign diplomats, local officials and traders became involved in sensitive negotiations and political intrigue.

The archive of the Hittite capital Hattusa, modern Boğazköy in Turkey, contained correspondence between the Hittite king and his vassals. One particularly interesting series of letters shows that the declaration of independence by the troublesome principedom of Amurru ultimately led to the Battle of Kadesh. The consequences of this conflict, which Roland described as, at best, a stalemate, are played out in later letters exchanged between the Egyptian and Hittite courts. The resulting Peace Treaty contained clauses and agreements dealing with such things as the extradition of criminals or rebels, the protection of official envoys and the freedom of trade, which were drawn up in terms which would be recognised by modern diplomats.

The messages sent by vassals to their kings were introduced by expressions of cringing flattery and banality, and the greetings in letters between rulers were hardly any different. However, through his knowledge of the language, Roland showed us that the diplomatic language of the age was full of platitudes, obfuscation, ambiguity, hidden meanings and veiled threats. As with the better-known Amarna Letters, most of these lines of correspondence are incomplete and one-sided so their outcomes are unknown. The frustration of having so many unfinished stories is only enhanced by the fact that the Hattusa archive has not been fully published in an accessible format.

Roland revealed the close integration of West Semitic language speakers into the Egyptian Levantine communication network. The Hittite letters include the names, some non-Egyptian, of the Egyptian messengers who conducted the



negotiations with Queen Pudukhepa ↑ in Hattusa. Though these envoys cannot be traced in the Egyptian archaeological or documentary records, it is clear that they were among the many couriers with Semitic names or of Semitic descent who travelled from Egypt with messages and gifts for Egyptian vassal rulers and garrison commanders.

Roland's talk on the under-appreciated subject of international communication and cooperation in ancient times, brought to life some intriguing characters, allowing them to be heard in their own words.

**Wednesday 28 February evening
(Zoom)**

***'Statues in the sacred space:
monuments from the Karnak
Cachette'* by Jen Turner**



In 1903, while excavating the court in front of the Seventh Pylon at Karnak, French Egyptologist, Georges Legrain, discovered a hoard of at least 800 Egyptian statues and stelae. Probably buried by Ptolemaic priests in a clearance of outdated or unwanted monuments, the collection is now known as the Karnak Cachette. The monuments, dating from the Middle Kingdom to the Late Period, included many of the form known as the block statue which provides ample space for extensive inscriptions.

Jen Turner has made a particular study of this amazing collection, and her analysis of the inscriptions allowed us to understand why private individuals were permitted to set up personal memorials within the sacred precincts of the temple. She pointed out the significance of the location of the cache, at the intersection of two important processional routes, but also stressed how

little is known about the original positioning of the statues of favoured courtiers and officials, such as staff of the God's Wives of Amun. Our ignorance is compounded by the loss of Legrain's dig diaries and the custom of his day of giving away or selling objects, so that artefacts from the excavation are now spread throughout the world, many unrecognised.

Choosing extracts from texts, Jen showed how much can be inferred from the scribes' playful application of language, with the typical Egyptian use of double meanings and euphemisms. The principal purpose of these sculptures seems to have been the post-mortem memorialisation of the non-royal individual, made more certain by their being established in the presence of the gods and sharing in the divine rituals – breathing in the revivifying scent of myrrh. Some were commissioned by relatives of the subject, often a son or, in the case of a woman, her husband, and the inscriptions give biographical details which have made possible links with other archaeological finds or documents. Jen's final slide is given below with a recommendation that the Karnak Cachette database is well worth a visit. www.ifao.egnet.net/bases/cachette/

RECOMMENDED SOURCES AND FURTHER READING

- Azim, M., Réveillac, G. 2004. *Karnak dans l'objectif de Georges Legrain: catalogue raisonné des archives photographiques du premier directeur des travaux de Karnak de 1895 à 1917 Vol. 1-2. CRA monographies Hors série. Paris.*
- Blyth, E. 2006. *Karnak: Evolution of a Temple* London.
- Coulon, L. (2016) *La Cachette de Karnak. Nouvelles perspectives sur les découvertes de G. Legrain. Bibliothèque d'Étude 161. Cairo.*
- Goyon, J.C. and Cardin, C. 2004. *Trésors d'Égypte : la "cachette" de Karnak, 1904-2004. Grenoble.*
- Jambon, E. 2009. 'Les fouilles de Georges Legrain dans la Cachette de Karnak (1903-1907): Nouvelles données sur la chronologie des découvertes et le destin des objets', *Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale* 109, 239-79.

Explore the IFAO's Karnak Cachette Database at:
<https://www.ifao.egnet.net/bases/cachette/>



Many South Asasif tombs were usurped or reused in later periods, like that of Karabasken, the Mayor of Thebes in Dynasty 25, which was reused and decoration added for Padibastet, (below) a previously unknown High Steward of the God's Wife of Amun in Dynasty 26.

**Saturday 2 March 2024
(Face-to-face)**

'Latest News from Excavations and Conservation at the South Asasif'

by John Billman

We were pleased to welcome John Billman, from our neighbouring Thames Valley Ancient Egypt Society, for the latest in our occasional Local meetings. Having worked as a volunteer with the South Asasif Conservation Project, (Director Elena Pischikova), for more than twelve years, John is in a great position to give us news about ongoing archaeological and conservation activities in the necropolis which is situated to the south of Deir el-Bahri.

On this occasion, John's focus was the tombs of the 25th-26th Dynasties, principally those of the Kushite Period. He explained the general situation of the cemetery and its tombs, showing how they relate to other monuments of Western Thebes, such as the Ramesseum and Deir el-Medina. He gave a summary of previous work in the region before detailing the architectural style and construction of what are called 'temple tombs'. The superstructures of such monuments comprise a pylon entrance with a forecourt and a pillared hall leading to a chapel or sanctuary area, similar to the layout of a cult temple.

The decoration of these tombs includes associations with the Osirian ritual and funerary texts, and stylistic references to the tomb decoration of the Old Kingdom as seen at Saqqara.



John's account of crawling into narrow clefts or the low gaps between ancient ceilings and accumulations of flood debris were quite inspiring. His description of the results of such labours left us with a mixture of admiration and astonishment, and not a little frustration, especially at the restrictions imposed on the use of modern technology. The painstaking piecing together of fragments of relief inscriptions and the reconstruction of sections of a painted ceiling illustrate the patience and attention to detail required of the volunteer archaeologists.

John finished with a little glimpse of the latest finds from the site which have not yet been officially announced, so we can tell you no more! This sort of revelation is one of the privileges of hearing from the horse's mouth at an in-person meeting. Another, and possibly the most important aspect of our Local meetings is the chance to meet and discuss our common interests with friends we have not seen for ages. Thanks to John Billman for giving us this opportunity.

Our next Zoom meeting is on

Saturday 16 March 2024

'Silver and the Egyptian economy'

by Juan Carlos Moreno García



The use of metals in economic transactions was common in ancient Egypt, particularly copper during the third millennium BC, and only gradually silver from the beginning of the second millennium BC. In fact, the increasing integration of Egypt in the exchange networks of the ancient Mediterranean and Near East favoured the diffusion of silver as a means of payment, together with a weight system compatible with those in use in these areas. Scattered references to the use of silver for paying taxes, acquiring goods and storing valuable commodities suggests that part of the wealth produced in Egypt was commercialized and exchanged in markets or otherwise, a practice that induced changes in the productive activities of ancient Egypt, particularly from the Late Bronze Age on.

Juan Carlos Moreno García is Director of Research at the French National Centre for Scientific Research

(CNRS) at the University of the Sorbonne.

He specialises in landscape and environmental archaeology, with a particular interest in the social, economic and political aspects of land use and the distribution of wealth in ancient Egypt. He advocates a multi-disciplinary approach to the study of ancient cultures, with emphasis on socio-economic history and has published widely on these themes.

Register in advance for this meeting using the link below:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAlf--gpjsiH9Xes1Iv-Tf8EFnwg1celktu>

Registration will be confirmed on receipt of the appropriate fee

Meeting fees: Member £3; Overseas Member £4; Guest £6

Contact the Secretary: saesinfo55@gmail.com for further details or to check your payment status.

Notice of Change of Programme

June 2024

Due to circumstances unforeseen at the time of booking, the speaker for our **Zoom** meeting on **Saturday 8 June** will now be **Hilary Wilson** who will be giving her talk on the **'Life & Afterlife of Egyptian Furniture'** (previously presented at a Local Meeting at Itchen College in March 2023).

We have also booked another of our occasional **evening** (18:30 for 19:00) **Zoom** meetings for **Wednesday 19 June** when **Aleksandra Hallmann** will be talking about Egyptian clothing in **'Sartorial Habits in Late Kingdom Egypt'**.

Details of registration for both these meetings will be circulated nearer the time.

