

# HOTEP

Issue 57: Jan-Feb 2021

## Review of January meeting

We were very glad to welcome back **John Billman**, Chairman of our neighbour the Thames Valley Ancient Egypt Society, to speak on *Art in Old Kingdom Egypt*. This was only made possible by the Zoom technology as John went to Egypt last November for the latest season of work with the South Assasif Project and has had to extend his stay due to travel and Covid restrictions. The internet link was, however, very successful and we were even entertained by the megaphone calls of a local vegetable seller in the street outside John's house.

As usual, John's talk provided an accessible and interesting overview of his topic, discussing themes in the decoration of private tombs from Dynasty 3 onwards. He first related these themes to some of the motifs recognisable from Predynastic and early Dynastic art, such as the so-called Painted Tomb of Hierakonpolis and various ceremonial palettes. He pointed out certain standard inclusions in what have been called scenes of everyday life and the order in which they were displayed on tomb walls. For instance, he showed how well-known images, like the frieze of geese from Itet's tomb at Maidum, were regular

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inclusions in representations of the three agricultural seasons.

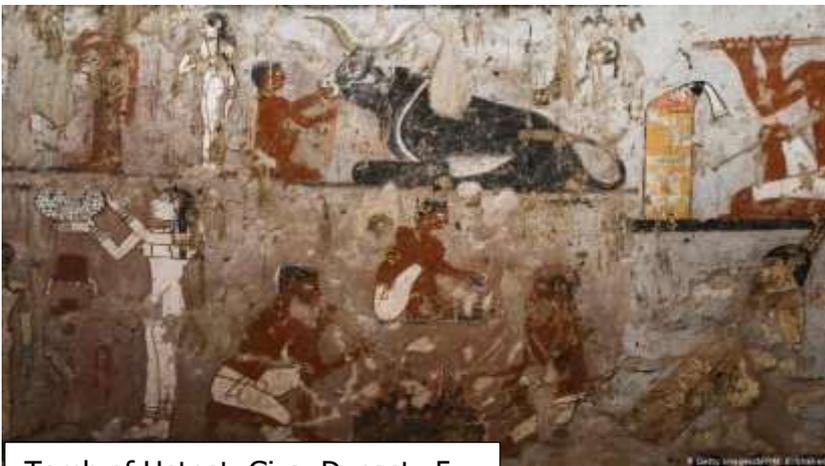
John explained the typical features of scenes of hunting, butchery and bread-making and the conventions governing the depiction of the seated tomb owner surrounded by symbolic offerings and lists of requirements for the afterlife.



Khuwy sitting at his offering table, Saqqara,

John's examples ranged from Rahotep's tomb at Maidum and Hesyre's mastaba in the shadow of the Step Pyramid, to the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Dynasty tombs at Giza and Saqqara, such as those of Hetpet and Khuwy, which have only recently (2018) been opened to the public. This was followed by some lively discussion in question time and a general expression of appreciation for John's talk. We hope he gets back home safely and that we will enjoy more talks from him in the future.

**Hilary Wilson**



Tomb of Hetpet, Giza, Dynasty 5

## Review of January's Evening Talk

For the second in our occasional series of evening talks, on Wednesday 27 January, we had the pleasure of welcoming (via Zoom!) **Maria Nilsson and John Ward** who are the directors of the **Gebel el-Silsila Project**. Their talk entitled '**Life and Death in ancient Kheny**', was based on new discoveries at Gebel el-Silsila, a site famous for its quarries which were exploited over many centuries. The talk started with Maria and John introducing the people which make up their team on the project in



Egypt, followed by a short introduction to the site – its location and early history. The focus of the talk was discoveries from the New Kingdom but we were given a brief overview of time leading up to this point with examples of Predynastic art including those visible near the Middle Kingdom Montuhotep panel, and from the site being identified as a Fortress from the Old Kingdom.

The golden age of Kheny was in the New Kingdom, represented by prominent features from the Thutmosid period prior to the reign of Amenhotep III. After the New Kingdom there is little evidence from the Late Periods before a revival of the town in the Roman Period but then due to an event (possible natural catastrophe) the site was finally abandoned in 50 AD.

Some new discoveries from the project dating from the New Kingdom at the site include evidence of a Temple of Sobek, from the necropolis a number of rock cut tombs of which 58 have been partially or fully excavated, shaft tombs, chamber tombs, exterior crypts and plinth or floor burials. Alongside a range of funerary

objects such as amulets, jewellery and pottery.



A major discovery was the tomb ST42, also known as the waterlogged tomb. The tomb shaft was found to have been entered by illegal treasure-hunters, who used a mechanical digger to remove sand and debris, in the process damaging the entrance to the subterranean chambers and letting out some of the accumulated water which gives the tomb its nickname. Finds included numerous human and animal skeletal remains, stone sarcophagi, inscribed scarabs and seals, shabtis and amulets among other artefacts. Maria and John also showed us examples of funerary epigraphy at the site in form of inscribed outlines of feet and sandals, with high concentrations of these motifs in certain areas which could be a form of identification



of the tombs or, due to some footsteps facing away from the tomb entrance, be a spiritual link to the afterlife.

The talk finished up with Maria and John giving a summary of their plans for the site which we look forward to hearing all about in the future!

**Emily Hale**

## In the News

### Golden-tongued mummy discovered near Alexandria



Gold tongue amulet in the mouth of a mummy from Taposiris Magna

A joint team of Egyptian and Dominican Republic archaeologists have announced the discovery of a group of Graeco-Roman burials in rock-cut tombs at Taposiris Magna, to the west of Alexandria. Though even the most significant of the bodies is badly preserved, a most surprising find was the tongue-shaped amulet of gold placed in the mouth. This is thought to be related to the Opening of the Mouth ritual which was supposed to enable the deceased to speak for himself in the Hall of Judgement before Osiris. Other finds include fragments of papyri and gilded cartonnage, and several marble or alabaster funerary masks. The Taposiris Magna Temple was built in the reign of Ptolemy IV, (221-204 BC), and has been suggested as a possible site for the tomb of Cleopatra VII.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/ancient-mummies-golden-tongues-egypt-b1796430.html>



Cartonnage burial mask of a young woman, Taposiris Magna

## December Quiz Answers



The parcel with the gold ribbon wrapped in paper decorated with trees contains an image of the **goddess Hathor**. Her nickname was Gold, Nub, and one of her emblems was the tree, nehet.

The pink-purple box, the colour of porphyry, with the green ribbon contains a **papyrus stem amulet**. This was the hieroglyph for 'young, new, green'.

The red box with the green ribbon contains and image of the **god Seth** whose followers were identified as red of face and hair.

## Next Meeting

**Saturday 20 February 2021:**

1:30 for 2:00 PM start

### **The Symbiosis of King & Cult – Abydos in the Old Kingdom**

by **Paul Whelan**

This lecture will look at the ancient cult centre of Abydos during the Old Kingdom, which was one of the most formative periods in its history. Looking primarily from a royal perspective, the available evidence reveals the evolving physical and spiritual landscape at Abydos from the 4th - 6th Dynasties and how the royal presence there changed over this time.



Paul studied Egyptology and Ancient Near Eastern History at UCL and Egyptian Archaeology at the Institute of Archaeology. He has taught as a sessional lecturer for both the University of Reading and the University of Oxford.

His main area of research is concerned with aspects of the funerary culture of Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period Egypt.

### **Zoom Meeting Joining Instructions**

You will need to register in advance for the meeting using this link:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZYvfumvpzktGtb2HgV\\_vd8k0FwkcbNXBvI4](https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZYvfumvpzktGtb2HgV_vd8k0FwkcbNXBvI4)

Registration will be open to SAES members only from 1-8 February. **Places will be confirmed by payment of the meeting fee** (£3 for Members; £4 for Overseas Members; £6 for guests). Payments may be made by cheque, bank transfer or PayPal, see the website for details. Contact the Secretary on [saesinfo55@gmail.com](mailto:saesinfo55@gmail.com) to check your payment status.

**In the week before the meeting**, you will receive a confirmation email containing

information about joining. The confirmation message will be repeated on Friday 19 February.

**The waiting room will be open from 13:30 (GMT)**

**Participants will be admitted to the meeting from 13:45 (GMT)**

**The meeting will start at 14:00 (GMT)**

### **February Quiz**

A	P	R	S	I	H	P	M	E	M
V	Z	A	K	A	N	T	R	O	N
J	S	I	L	S	I	L	A	U	U
A	X	T	G	W	Y	S	B	F	R
U	M	V	E	D	L	I	Y	D	R
T	N	A	M	R	A	S	D	E	I
B	A	L	R	E	S	W	O	T	H
E	S	N	A	N	R	P	S	Q	U
L	R	P	I	T	A	O	G	L	D
W	I	F	O	S	E	B	E	H	T

Hidden in the grid are 14 **place names** corresponding to the clues below. Words can read horizontally, vertically, diagonally, L to R, R to L, top to bottom or bottom to top.

#### **Clues:**

Kushite pyramid site  
Cult centre of Horus of Behdet  
City of Amun-Ra  
Cult centre of Osiris  
Khufu was buried here  
Region south of the First Cataract  
Cult centre of Montju  
Ancient Kheny  
Capital founded by Narmer  
Modern name of Akhetaten  
Centre of ancient Sudanese kingdom  
Site of a Ptolemaic temple to Khnum  
Tombs of 21<sup>st</sup> Dynasty kings here  
Ancient Delta capital

Answers in the next edition of Hotep

