

HOTEP

Issue 61: September 2021

Review of Study Day

In Part 1 of *'Royal Ladies of the New Kingdom'* by **Dylan Bickerstaffe**, we were treated to three intriguing lectures dealing with queens and consorts of Dynasty 18.

Coffins extracted from the royal cache, 1871



Starting with the indomitable ladies who supported and occasionally deputised for the Theban kings of Dynasty 17 and their successors who ended the Hyskos occupation, Dylan introduced us to Queens Tetisheri, Ahhotep and Meritamen, as well

Coffin of Ahmose-Meritamen



as Ahmose-Nefertari, the mother of Amenhotep I, who was divine patron of Thebes for hundreds of years. We were shown into the tomb of the royal cache where many bodies had been relocated, probably after their original tombs had been desecrated. He also discussed the controversial attempts at identification of these bodies by scientific and statistical analysis, showing how fraught with difficulties such identification can be.

The newsletter of The Southampton Ancient Egypt Society

Similar controversy surrounds the identification of female bodies from the tomb ascribed to Hatshepsut, the subject of the second lecture. Dylan discussed the events of her reign and her reasons for making herself king, bringing some clarity to a politically complex period of Egypt's history.



Hatshepsut coronation 'baptism', Karnak



Amarna Princess and daughter

Even more complex was the royal family of the latter part of the Dynasty, with the Great Royal Wives Tiye and Nefertiti taking centre stage, but

supported by lesser royal females like Meritaten and Kiya. Dylan's explanation of the complicated family relationships and the royal succession, took us to the reigns of Tutankhamun and Ay by way of the ephemeral Smenkhkare and the possible independent reign of Nefertiti. This built up our anticipation of Part 2.

After a wait of a month, we rejoined the royal ladies of Dynasty 18 to find out how they were related to their successors of Dynasty 19. The study of Nefertari, Great Royal Wife of Ramesses II, included a review of the little-known finds from her tomb, some of which, like the faience box fitting (right), suggest a relationship with Pharaoh Ay.



Review of Study Day, Part 2, continued

Dylan also discussed some more of Ramesses II's wives, particularly Nefertari's co-queen, Isetnofret, and his daughter-wives, Meritamen, Bintanath, Nebettawy etc. He identified the women and children shown beside the colossi at Abu Simbel and in the parades of sons and daughters shown in temples like the Ramesseum and Abydos, and suggested candidates for the ownership of some tombs in the Valley of Queens.



Queen Meritamen, Akhmin

Dylan's next offering was a fascinating review of the interpretations of the concept of the 'harem'.

Comparisons drawn long ago between the ancient Egyptian 'private quarters' or 'secluded place' and the harem of Ottoman times conjure images which are difficult to shed. He made distinctions between palaces, where the principal queens and their children lived, and other complexes housing lesser concubines and particularly the foreign wives and their entourages. He explained his identification of the Medinet Gurob palace town in the Fayum as a 'retirement home' for royal widows or wives/concubines past child-bearing.

Dylan reviewed the evidence for intrigues that were almost

inevitable in the waspish harem environment, with particular emphasis on the Harem Conspiracy which led to the murder of Ramesses III.

The description of the sentences meted out to the conspirators showed how rank had its disadvantages as well as its privileges.

In the final lecture of the day, the subject was the end of the New Kingdom, Dynasties 20-21, and the rise to prominence of the God's



Lady Nedjmet, Dyn 21

Wives of Amen. As the rulers of Thebes lost their influence to the rising dynasties of the Delta, these celibate priestesses of royal birth, often a king's sister or daughter, gained considerable influence in both the religious and political spheres. The analysis of some of their bodies from the royal cache tomb and the manner in which they were reinterred, shows how the memory of these ladies was respected long after their death.

Dylan dealt with many questions and was good enough to send us a book list for further information. This was circulated to all participants in the two Study Day.

We had some hairy moments at the start of each part when Dylan had problems engaging with the technology but, eventually, we started pretty much on time in both cases, although in Part 2 he was unable to get his camera to work so we could not see him. But the lectures were delivered successfully providing us with two extended afternoons of enjoyable and informative entertainment.

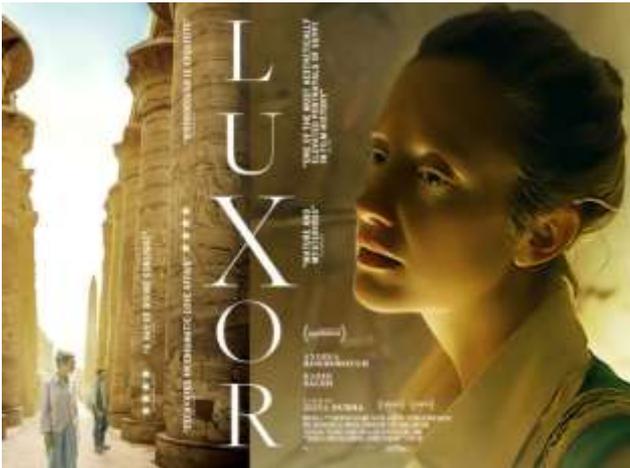
Hilary Wilson

Ring from tomb of Tausert, last Queen of Dyn 19



Lady Tutu, Gurob

Recently on Film



The 2020 British-Egyptian film release, **Luxor**, had been included in my collection of 'films recorded to be watched later' simply because of the title. Now I have finally got round to watching it I am still not sure how to classify it. Described as a drama-romance, it is very gently romantic and has little dramatic action. But visually it is stunning. Aid worker Hana is taking a holiday in Egypt as respite from her harrowing work in Syria. Staying at the Winter Palace in Luxor, she is reunited with an old flame, archaeologist Sultan.



Hana revisits some favourite haunts in Luxor including the Karnak and Luxor temples and the Tomb of Seti I, with remarkably few tourists present to spoil the view. The only drama in these beautifully shot scenes is when Hana comes to the rescue of an American tourist, who faints when overcome with the spirituality of Medinet Habu. In gratitude, the tour guide offers to include Hana on their trip to

Abydos, the principal site of pilgrimage for ancient Egyptians. Hana declines the offer.

Sultan takes Hana to his current dig, in the Tomb of Amenmesse, where he introduces her to his boss. Here is where, for me at least, the film came alive, because the Director of the dig is played by Salima Ikram – brilliant type-casting. Salima's Egyptological discussion and her telling of the story of Dorothy Eady, better known as Umm Sety, self-appointed guardian of the Seti I temple at Abydos, were possibly the most authentic sections of dialogue in the film. Perhaps I am a little partisan but I thought Salima acted the socks off the lead actors.



Literary, historical and religious references provide the subtitles which are used to divide the film into chapters. Hana finds catharsis when the tour guide introduces her to a wise woman who induces a dream state in which she sees herself at Abydos. This convinces her that Abydos is where she has to go and she asks Sultan to go with her. And there the film ends, the pilgrimage suggested but not achieved. This was, perhaps, the most frustrating part of the film as the evocative quality of the film's camerawork could have made Abydos a real feast for the Egyptophile's eye.

Not an action film, by any stretch of the imagination, but if you want to wallow in nostalgia of previous visits to Luxor you could watch this as a travelogue and ignore the rest of the dialogue.

Hilary Wilson

Saturday 15 January 2022:

13:30 for 14:00

Ptolemaic Girl Power: Arsinoë II, Berenice II and Cleopatra VII

by **Sarah Griffiths**

Wednesday 16 February 2022:

evening meeting 18:30 for 19:00

Discoveries in the Desert: The North Kharga Oasis Darb Ain Amur Survey

by **Salima Ikram**

Saturday 19 February 2022:

13:30 for 14:00

The lady that led to Tutankhamun: The life and legacy of Amelia Edwards

by **Carl Graves**

Saturday 19 March 2022:

13:30 for 14:00

Excavating the City of the Snake Goddess: Flinders Petrie at Tell Nabasha

by **Nicky Nielsen**

Saturday 16 April 2022:

13:30 for 14:00

"A real Egyptian temple"? – the Iseum at Pompeii

by **Mark Walker**

Thursday 5 May 2022:

evening meeting 18:30 for 19:00

Recent work at Deir el-Medina

by **Cédric Gobeil**

Saturday 21 May 2022:

13:30 for 14:00

Provisions for the dead, ritual implements, luxury objects? Conceptualising grave goods in New Kingdom elite contexts

by **Claudia Naser**

Saturday 18 June 2022:

13:30 for 14:00

BLUE: Ancient Egyptian Glass and Glazes.

by **Andrew Shortland**

Saturday 16 July 2022:

Study Day

'Small Creatures – The less familiar wildlife of Ancient Egypt'

by **John Wyatt & Hilary Wilson**
(timings to be published later).

August Quiz Answers

The speakers portrayed were:

1: Nicky Van de Beek (20 Nov 2021)

2: Nicky Neilsen (19 Mar 2022)

3: Carl Graves (19 Feb 2022)

4: Claudia Naser (21 May 2022)

5: Salima Ikram (16 Feb 2022 eve)

6: Bernadette Brady (16 Oct 2021)

7: Cédric Gobeil (5 May 2022 eve)

8: Sarah Griffiths (15 Jan 2022)

September Quiz

Can you identify, from their initials, the principal male and female actors in the following films, all set in Ancient Egypt (some more loosely than others!).

The Awakening (1980) **C_H_ , S_Y_**

Valley of the Kings (1954) **R_T_ , E_P_**

The Scorpion King (2002) **D_J_ , K_H_**

The Egyptian (1954) **E_P_ , J_S_**

Gods of Egypt (2016) **G_B_ , E_Y_**

Land of the Pharaohs (1955)
J_H_ , J_C_

Answers in the next edition of **Hotep**

