

HOTEP

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

Review of February Meeting

Irving Finkel made a popular return visit with a talk on '*The Amarna Tablets*'. He started by giving us a brief history of the discovery of the royal archive at Amarna, explaining how the significance of the baked clay tablets and their content has been slowly revealed over years of scholarship. Initial translations have been reviewed and revised as more information became available from other sources, such as excavations in Egypt, Mesopotamia and

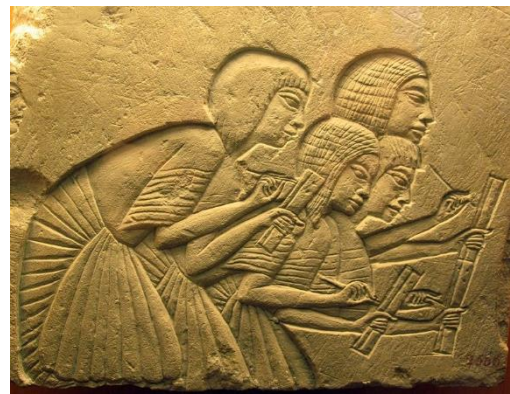
scribe could produce a cuneiform text. Provocative as ever, Irving stated that it would have taken 12 years to learn the cuneiform script, especially as it was used to write several different languages, while Egyptian hieroglyphs could be mastered in six months! However, he did admit that he had to rely on scholars of the Egyptian language, in particular when trying to decipher the hieratic docketts which were added, in ink, to cuneiform tablets by Egyptian filing clerks.



Artist's impression of central Amarna, including the Records Office (circled)
<https://the-ancient-pharaohs.blogspot.com/2017/07/el-amarna-public-buildings-penehsy.html>

the Levant, as well as intensive studies of the tablets held in various museum collections.

Irving then discussed how the texts, particularly the letters sent between kings and local officials, were composed and written, and described the remarkable level of skill required to write, and possibly to simultaneously translate a text into a language which was not the scribe's native tongue. He suggested that a letter represented the 'final draft' created from dictated notes and, responding to questions, Irving gave us an impromptu demonstration of how quickly a competent



Egyptian scribes, Saqqara tomb of Horemheb. Florence

He compared examples of letters from foreign royalty, such as the Mitannian court, and Egyptian vassals, like Aziru of Amurru and Labayu of Shechem. Aziru addressed Amenhotep III as 'My God! My Sun!', thought to indicate that Akhenaten's enhanced solar cult had its origins in his father's reign. He showed how the introductory greetings varied from the

Amarna letter EA252 from Labayu, Mayor of Shechem



standard Egyptian letter format, as demonstrated in student teaching aids. He also pointed out that foreign royal women seem to have had a more active role in diplomacy, or at least

diplomatic correspondence, than their Egyptian counterparts.

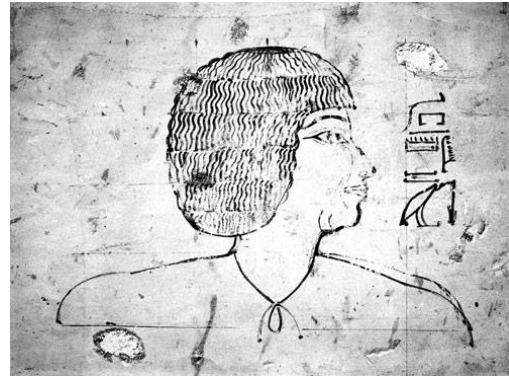
Irving shared with us his excitement at being the first to read a significant tablet from the excavation of Tell Brak, Syria. This turned out to be confirmation of the existence of a Mitannian King Artashumara, whose murder led to the ascension to the throne of his brother, Tushratta. Irving's own recent analysis of the lists of gifts sent between the courts of Amenhotep III and his foreign contemporaries, including the dowries of Tushratta's sister, Gilukhepa, and his daughter, Tadukhepa, has revealed a royal penchant for board games. He identified mention of astragals or knucklebones and playing pieces in the shape of 'dogs' or 'hounds', all made of gold and silver, and a board for a game called '*On the brink*'.

This talk was presented in the inimitably entertaining style, which has made Irving Finkel such a popular speaker. In this eagerly-anticipated return, he certainly lived up to expectations.

Hilary Wilson

Review of March Zoom meeting
Dr Campbell Price, Curator of Egypt and Sudan at the Manchester Museum introduced us to the subject of his forthcoming book, in a talk titled:

'An Ancient Egyptian Michaelangelo? Senenmut and his times'



Campbell has spoken to the society before, both in person and via Zoom, and his enthusiasm for his subject always comes across. There were times during this talk that I thought he was going to head butt his web cam!

Senenmut is a well-known figure from the early 18th Dynasty, specifically from the reign of the female pharaoh Hatshepsut. Campbell began by putting what is known of Senenmut into context, describing texts found at Armant, south of Luxor, which would appear to be Senenmut's family home and the place where it is thought his father, Ramose, was first buried. Since Ramose died before his son's rise to prominence, Senenmut seems to have taken responsibility for bringing his father's body to Thebes to be buried, along with his mother, Hatnefer. The intact burial of both his parents was found near to Senenmut's tomb TT71 close to the causeway of Hatshepsut's Deir el-Bahri Temple. The quality of their burial goods is in keeping with their son's position as he had risen from his humble origins to become a powerful courtier.

Senenmut is today known as an architect because his name is associated with Hatshepsut's mortuary or, as Campbell prefers, memorial temple at Deir el-Bahri. However, the long list of Senenmut's most



Burial goods including large quantities of linen, from the tomb of Ramose & Hatnefer, New York

important titles does not include architect, and neither does Senenmut claim to be Vizier or High Priest of Amun. He did hold some influential titles associated with the cult of Amun, such as overseer of the works of Amun and overseer of the granary of Amun. His connection with building is shown by his title of overseer of all royal works.

Senenmut's closeness to Hatshepsut is demonstrated by his appointment as tutor to her daughter Neferure. It is this closeness that, Campbell pointed out, has given rise to all kinds of speculation as to the nature of the relationship between Senenmut and



Block statue of Senenmut with Princess Neferure, Berlin

Hatshepsut, for which there is no evidence either way.

Campbell considers Senenmut to have been an innovator in that the statues that have survived are in various forms, some new and some reviving Middle Kingdom types, such as the block statue. One of the inscriptions that Campbell quoted from Senenmut says 'Images which I have made from the devising of my own heart and from my own labour; they have not been found in writing of the ancestors.'

Senenmut's images and name were attacked after his death although there is no indication of why this was so. Campbell's talk gave a good overview of the career of Senenmut, and I shall look forward to reading the book that he is currently writing for the American University of Cairo Press on this fascinating ancient Egyptian personality.

Glenn Worthington

February Quiz Answers



The metalworker sitting on his 3-legged stool is from Rekhmire's Tomb, TT100

The man seated on the folding X-frame stool is Sennefer, Mayor of Thebes, TT96.



The bi-cove square stool with the gilded *sem-tawy* frieze between the legs is, of course, from Tutankhamun's tomb, KV62.



Review of March in-person Meeting

On Saturday 25 March the Society held its first in-person afternoon meeting since February 2020. This was given by our very own Chairperson, **Hilary Wilson**, who chose the title '**The Life and Afterlife of Egyptian Furniture.**'

In the first half Hilary looked at the beginnings of Egyptological collections and museum displays which provided inspiration for artists and craftsmen in all media from the start of the Nineteenth Century. In particular, she focused on a group of ancient Egyptian stools, part of the British Museum's acquisition of 1835, from the sale of Sir Henry Salt's collection. Pointing out the appearance of four styles of stool in scenes on tomb walls, Hilary showed that stools were a staple of home furnishing along the Nile. Sets of the same four types were found in the intact burials of Kha and Merit, now in Turin, and, of course, Tutankhamun.

Furniture carried to Neferabu's tomb, includes a square stool with cushion & a folding stool, BM



The stools were of fairly simple designs with either four or three legs made of wood with a curved seat. The three-legged variety was a basic workman's seat while the X-frame folding stool, not unlike today's camping stools, was used exclusively by men and seems to have signified status or authority. Although no examples have been found, the tomb scenes show that cushions were often placed on the stools' seats to make them more comfortable. The more elaborate four-legged stools were made from ebony and ivory with a seat of leather, woven reeds or linen cords. The common 'lattice' stool, with diagonal reinforcing struts to keep the rigidity of the structure, was commonly



3-legged stool, tomb of Kha & Merit, Turin

made of local wood and coated with white gesso.

In the second half, Hilary looked at how these simple pieces of furniture have been used in paintings and as models for furniture designers. From Thomas Hope, a Grand Tourist who opened his Egyptian Room to the public in 1804, through the Pre-Raphaelites Holman-Hunt and Madox Brown, to Leonard Wyburd, Liberty's chief designer, furnituremakers were inspired to reproduce their own interpretations of the classic Egyptian designs.

The Nineteenth Century saw a great interest in ancient Egypt and popular artists painted quite fanciful interpretations of ancient Egyptian subjects. They did attempt to correctly portray genuine ancient Egyptian objects, which they were able to see and sketch for themselves in publicly accessible museums and in exhibits such as the Egyptian Hall from the Great Exhibition. The stools that Hilary had singled out appeared in several works by artists such as Edwin Long and Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema.



Liberty 'Thebes Stool', V&A

The 'Thebes' stool, patented by Liberty & Co in the 1870s, was produced in various designs which were sold well into the 1920s. The discovery of the tomb of

Tutankhamun in 1922 revived interest in the humble stool, with Swedish maker Svenskt Tenn marketing the 'Tutankhamun Stool', a form of the ancient lattice stool. Danish furniture designers, Olë Wanscher and Finn Juhl continued the tradition of producing modern, elegant furniture based on Egyptian originals. Fellow Dane, Dan Svarth, made 1:5 scale replicas of furniture from Tutankhamun's tomb which featured in the *First Movers* Exhibition at the Cairo Museum in 2019. This occupied some of the space which had been vacated by the real thing when it was packed up for removal to the GEM.

This was an interesting talk and well received by those who were there.

Glenn Worthington

Forthcoming Zoom Meeting Saturday 15 April 2023

(13.30 for 14.00)

Preparing for the afterlife in Deir el-Medina: "If there is no ox, have the bed and the coffin returned!"



by Claudia Näser

This lecture will focus on how the community of Deir el-Medina approached death and the preparation for the

afterlife; how they set about buying a coffin, how much they had to pay for it and how they managed to assemble the required resources. The sub-title of the talk comes from a letter of instruction for the purchase of funerary equipment. Starting with Sennedjem, a well-known workman in the time of Seti I and the owner of tomb TT1, we will move through seven generations of his family exploring how the provisioning for death changed through time.

Register in advance for this meeting, using the link below:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81111111111?pwd=ZkBe6yFUXiYJa0lter/tZcscu-qpz8jGNXcl4G3->

Registration will be confirmed on receipt of the appropriate fee

SAVE THE DATE!



We are excited to announce that plans for this season's **Zoom Study Days** are almost set. On **Saturday 15 & Sunday 16 July** we will be hosting a fund-raising event for the newly launched **Friends of Silsila**.

Project leaders **John Ward** and **Maria Nilsson** have lined

up 12 speakers in total - 6 on each day - covering various areas of expertise from pottery to osteology, quarrying and building to burial customs. The two days will run 1-5pm UK time, with each speaker giving a 25-minute presentation plus 5-10 mins for questions.

This event will be publicised by the Friends of Silsila & is likely to be popular.

Registration will be essential.

The whole fee, which will cover both days, will be a donation to the **Friends of Silsila**. You may choose to make an additional personal donation. We hope that the Membership will approve of us making a further donation, per SAES participant, from funds. Details of registration and fees will be published shortly.

For details of any SAES event, please contact the Secretary:

saesinfo55@gmail.com

or see the website

www.SouthamptonAncientEgyptSociety.co.uk

In the News



2000+ mummified rams' heads found at Abydos

The New York University archaeological mission has discovered more than 2,000 mummified rams' heads in the area of Ramses II's temple at Abydos. In addition to the rams' heads, dating to the Ptolemaic era, the mission also uncovered mummified examples of other animals, including ewes, dogs, wild goats, cows, deer, and even mongooses.



Mummified rams' heads found at Abydos



Dr. Mostafa Waziri, Secretary General of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, stressed the importance of this discovery, which reveals new aspects of the continued ritual use of the area of the 19th Dynasty Temple. The animal remains were found in one of the newly discovered storage rooms inside the northern precinct of the temple.

Mission leader, Dr. Sameh Iskander, suggested that these quantities of mummified rams possibly represent votive offerings as part of a ram-cult which developed in the Ptolemaic era. The discovery indicates that Ramesses II was revered in Abydos a thousand years after his death.

Another surprising discovery is a massive structure dating to the 6th Dynasty, a building characterized by a different and unique architectural design (below). The distinguishing feature is the huge mudbrick walls, about 5 metres thick, reminiscent of



the Old Kingdom fortress buildings in Nubia. It is thought that this building will contribute strongly to the reconsideration of Old Kingdom activities and architecture in Abydos. The new excavation adds substantially to the understanding of the the form of the site and the nature of its ritual use a millennium before the establishment of the Ramesside temples.

Professor Mohamed Abdel-Badei, head of the Central Department of Upper Egypt Antiquities at the Supreme Council of Antiquities, also revealed that the American mission had uncovered parts of the temple's northern enclosure wall and associated buildings. These discoveries have clarified the limit of the temple's domain and will result in a reassessment of the site's plan, the first significant re-evaluation since the initial research into the site 150 years ago.

<https://www.archaeology.wiki/blog/2023/03/27/thousands-of-mummified-rams-heads-found-at-abydos/>

April Quiz

Following up on the news item above, can you name any Egyptian gods who were worshipped in the form of a ram?

Answers in the next Hotep

