

HOTEP

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**Review of Meeting
Saturday 30 November 2024**

by Bernadette Brady

'Celestial Evolution: Shifting Egyptian Perspectives on the Heavens from the Old Kingdom to the Ptolemaic period. by Dr Bernadette Brady'

Evidence for links between the Sun and the Egyptian kingship comes from the Second Dynasty pharaoh Raneb (*Ra is my Lord*), also known as Nebra (*The Lord of Ra*). Bernadette made clear that the alternative translations of the same name suggest the king is either subservient to, or superior to, Ra, two very different understandings of the relationship between Pharaoh and Sun-God. This thought-provoking example started her analysis of the shifting perspectives between the king and the key celestial bodies, namely the Sun, the Moon and the Stars, across Egyptian history. Hers was a story of changing theology and royal power, writ large across sacred landscapes and stone monuments. Bernadette proceeded to give many examples from cultural history of the Egyptians' relationships with their heavens, which she illustrated with some wonderful colour images of places, objects and texts.

Until Dynasty 3, Pharaoh was associated with Horus, originally a stellar deity, and occasionally Seth, but not Ra. The stars were clearly very important in Old Kingdom theology being the place of the King's cosmic soul.

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

In Djoser's Step Pyramid the serdab contained a statue aligned with the celestial north pole so that, in death, Djoser could ascend to become a star. There he would illuminate the sky alongside the 'gods of the lower sky, the imperishable stars', which occupied the cosmic centre. The myth relating to the ascension of the king's soul to this sacred area among the stars, was included in the Pyramid Texts written on the walls of the burial chambers of Fifth Dynasty pyramids, like that of Unas, where the king's sarcophagus stood beneath a ceiling of stars. Bernadette explained this is the earliest known writing concerning the soul's journey to the stars (heaven). By the FIP/Middle Kingdom, however, stars came to be viewed differently, partly because of changing theologies associated with the other celestial bodies, the sun and moon. Egyptian astronomers noticed that some stars disappeared for periods of time from the night sky. Observations of the reappearance of these stars, now known as the decans, were used to create time-keeping star tables.



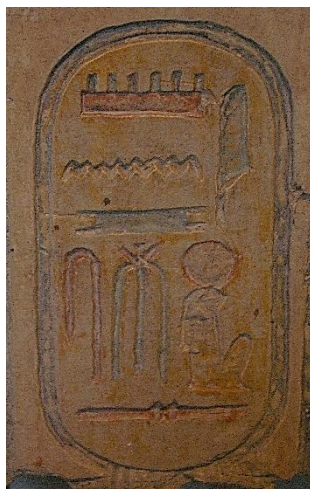
Star table on Middle Kingdom coffin, Turin



Beneath the *akhet* symbol of 'horizon', Ra-Horakhty traverses the sky in his solar barque. Turin

By identifying which stars were present just before dawn when Ra-Horakhty is about to rise, knowledge vital in negotiating the hours of the night and the journey of Ra and Osiris through the netherworld, they guided the deceased in their journey through the afterlife. Later Ramesside star clocks, set out in the tombs of Ramesses IV, VI and IX, tell the time at night using observations of these mysterious celestial being, divine guardians of Pharaoh's cosmic soul. The rise and fall of constellations were marked out on a sky based on the human figure.

Bernadette pointed out the shift in the king's association with the stars as the king's name became enclosed in an elongated *shen* ring, representing the encircling path of the sun. The now familiar cartouche, introduced by Sneferu in Dynasty 4, depicts the king's power as both contained by and merged with the sun and the relationship was formalized when the king being known as *sA rA*, the Son of Ra. The pyramid was a representation of the primordial mound supporting the cosmic egg from which the sun's light burst forth at the moment of creation. This made a pyramid a suitable burial place for a



Son of Ra cartouche of Ramesses II, 'Born of Ra' & 'Beloved of Amun', BM

king, since the concept of a shaft of light linking the earth and sky was a clear link between the king and the sun, as well as being visible for miles as part of a wider solar sacred landscape. By Dynasty 5, in addition to mortuary temples and offering chapels on the eastern side, facing the sunrise, pyramid complexes also included solar temples on the southern side, facing the sun on its journey across the sky. The Fifth Dynasty kings built five independent solar temples at Abu Ghurob.

By the Middle Kingdom, the regenerative power of the sun is recognised in the architecture of sacred spaces. The Karnak temple at Thebes captures this relationship in its alignment. As the sun rises and sets at the solstices, it appears between the gateways of the pylons like the sun's disc in the *akhet* (horizon) hieroglyph, theology captured in architecture. On the walls texts describe the King 'giving life like Ra every day', and by the New Kingdom, Amun (the hidden one) the god of Karnak, is syncretized with Ra, paralleling the rise in power of its Theban rulers. The sun-god Amun-Ra was elevated to the heights of religious and political power. This power extended to the afterlife, as is evident from

the various underworld texts. For the Egyptian world order to work, Ra must be reborn every dawn. This is made possible with his syncretization with Osiris, and Bernadette explained how Ra was seen as going through an Osirieon journey, whilst still acting as a definer of Pharaonic power.

For me, however, the most interesting part of this lecture, which was crammed with insights and information, was Bernadette's discussion of the

arguably more important role of the Moon, whose journey is first encountered in the Pyramid Texts. The first appearance of the crescent moon is linked to a knife that cuts a path and removes any opposition to the king's rebirth. The violent nature of this celestial being is linked to Shezmu, the destroyer who crushes the enemies of the king in a wine press. Unlike the reliable disc of the sun, the moon is full of tricky variation; it waxes and wanes, it is irregular, it is not linked to the seasons, the length of its monthly cycle can vary, as can its height in the sky, and the time and place where it rises or sets. No wonder it needed to be studied closely to 'understand its *ba*'. Though the moon's phases were used to set the religious calendar, independent of the seasons, it was not understood. The need to keep close records of its variability created the foundation of numbers, calculations, weights and measures, hence its association with Thoth, the god of writing and knowledge. As Bernadette said, 18th Dynasty rulers recognized the moon's power in the adoption of names like Ahmose, 'The Moon (iAh) is Born', or 'Born of the Moon', and at Soleb Amenhotep III was depicted with a lunar disc and crescent on his head.

The period post-Amarna saw the rise of Khonsu at Karnak as a lunar God who gives power and jubilees to the king, a role that a lunar form of Osiris fulfils in the later 26th Dynasty. The relationship between the moon and Osiris is evident in the decoration of the grand Ptolemaic temples. For example, the marvelous astronomical ceiling at Dendera depicts the lunar staircase of the 14 Horizon Gods (the 14

days of a waxing moon) next to Osiris in his barque.

In this inspiring lecture Bernadette brilliantly mapped the shifts in the powers associated with these different celestial bodies across time, and showed how the Egyptians' understanding of their skies were revealed in their architecture and sacred landscapes.

Pippa Dell

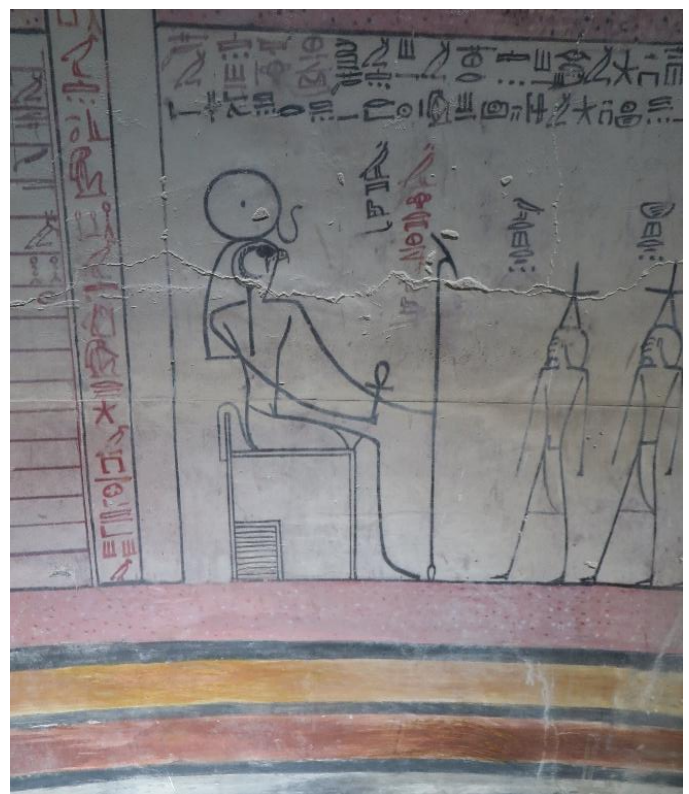
We are always happy to receive your items of interest for inclusion in Hotep. If you could provide a review of a talk, book or article, or even a picture or puzzle which you think might entertain our readers, please contact us through the usual channels.

Puzzle

Where is this replica image of Ra Harakhte now and where is the original?



Khonsu as lunar god, Boston



**Our next Zoom meeting is on
Saturday 15 February**

**Please note the later-than-usual
start time**

15.30 for a start at 16.00 (GMT)
(Admission from waiting room from 15.45)

**'Amenhotep III's Mansion of
Millions of Years in Thebes'
by Angus Graham**



The location of Amenhotep III's Mansion of Millions of Years is exceptional. Situated in the present-day Nile floodplain while all other Mansions of Millions of Years were built on the lower desert edge, the temple's position has puzzled Egyptologists and contrasting hypotheses have suggested possible architectural considerations behind the choice of this site. This talk will present the geoarchaeological survey that took place in and around the temple with the aim of understanding the rationale behind its location. The talk will also place his Mansion of Millions of Years within its wider context of Amenhotep III's huge programme of building in the Theban region in honour of 'his father' Amun-Re.



Angus Graham is a Senior Lecturer/Associate Professor in Department of Archaeology and Ancient History at Uppsala University, Sweden. Starting as co-director of the *Karnak Land- and Waterscapes Survey* (2002-2009) with Dr Judith Bunbury (University of Cambridge), since 2011 he has been the director of the on-going EES/Uppsala

University *Theban Harbours and Waterscapes Survey* (THaWS), working on the East and West Bank floodplains of the area of modern day Luxor.

Register in advance for this meeting
using the link below

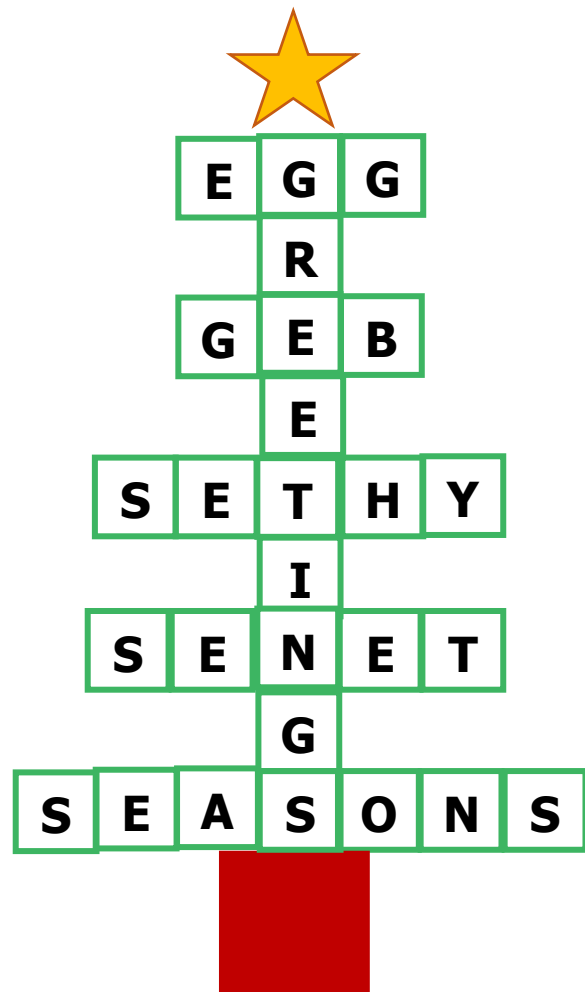
https://us02web.zoom.us/join/register/tZEpc6srz8pGdPsnbfvWpp4xQhgOR_R7hPU

Registration will be approved and the joining link sent on confirmation of payment of the meeting fee: SAES Member £3, Overseas Member £4, Guest £6

For payment details or to cheque your payment status, please contact the Secretary saesinfo55@gmail.com

Holiday Quiz Solution

Christmas Tree Crossword



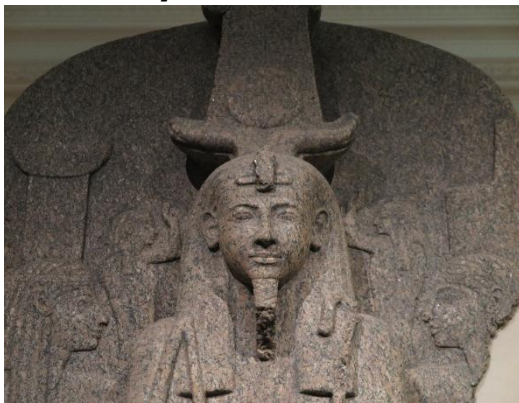
**Our next Local Meeting
(face-to-face)
will be on**

**Saturday 1 March (13.30 for a start
at 14.00 GMT)**

**at Itchen College, Bitterne,
Southampton**

'*Ramesses III, King of Egypt*'

by Aidan Dodson



Ramesses III—often dubbed the “last great pharaoh”—lived and ruled during the first half of the twelfth century BC, a tumultuous time that saw the almost complete overthrow of established order in the eastern Mediterranean. Among Ramesses’s achievements was the preservation of Egypt as a nation-state in the face of external assault. However, his reign also saw economic challenges and increasing dissatisfaction, which culminated in the king’s own assassination.



Aidan Dodson is honorary Professor of Egyptology at the University of Bristol, where he has taught since 1996. A graduate of Liverpool and Cambridge Universities, he was awarded his PhD in 1995 and was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London in 2003. He was Chairman of the Egypt Exploration Society from 2011 to 2016, and is the author of some thirty books, including *Rameses III, King of Egypt: his life and afterlife*, published by the American University in Cairo Press in 2019.

Places at Itchen College are limited so pre-booking is essential.

Places may be reserved by contacting the Secretary saesinfo55@gmail.com and will be confirmed by receipt of payment of the £5 fee, which includes interval refreshments.

Please note: building work at Itchen College is ongoing and the Nursery carpark will not be available. Please use either of the main or overflow carparks accessed from Middle Road. We are advised that pedestrian access from Whites Road might also be impossible. We will confirm and/or update this information closer to the date of the meeting.

On the small screen

Monday 20 January, BBC 4 19.00

Start of a season of **Egypt Night** described in the Radio Times as ‘a veritable feast to begin a season on ancient Egypt, and no naff dramatized reconstructions in sight.’ Includes the first two episodes of **Dan Cruikshank’s ‘*Egyptian Journeys*’** (2005), the first episode of **Alasdair Sooke’s ‘*Treasures of Ancient Egypt*’** (2014), dealing with ‘*The Birth of Art*’, **Margaret Moutford’s** 2017 study of photographer Harry Burton, ‘*The Man Who Shot Tutankhamun*’, and the Cairo episode of **Michael Scott’s ‘*Ancient Invisible Cities*’**. This evening finishes with the first three of the 13-part series ‘*Tutankhamun’s Egypt*’ by **Cyril Aldred**, first shown in 1972 to coincide with the BM’s Tutankhamun exhibition. Should be available on catch-up on **BBC i-PLAYER**.

2024 Christmas Card

The three Kings of Orient are:



Caspar: Sir John Gardiner Wilkinson, author of *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians*. Portrait by Henry Wyndham Phillips, in Calke Abbey, Derbyshire (National Trust).

Melchior: David Roberts, artist. Portrait by Robert Scott Lauder, in the National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh.

Balthazar: Giovanni Battista Belzoni. *The Great Belzoni*, portrait by Jan Adam Kruseman, in the Fitzwilliam Museum & Art Gallery, Cambridge.

