

# INSCRIPTIONS

*The Newsletter of the Friends of the Egypt Centre, Swansea*

## Issue 37

May 2014

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### *Cheque presentation*

Once again the Friends have been able to present a cheque for £1000 to the Egypt Centre to support its aims. Pictured below at the presentation (left to right) are Ken Griffin, Chairman of the Friends, Wendy Goodridge, Assistant Curator, and Carolyn Graves-Brown, Curator of the Egypt Centre.

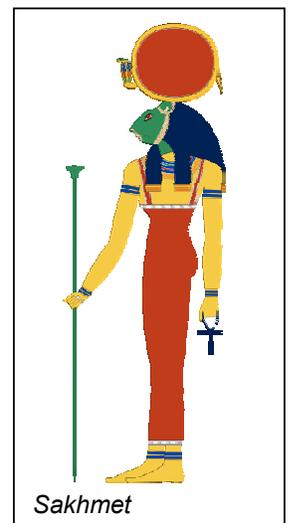


For more details of the Friends' finances see the Treasurer's Report, Page 2.

### *Sakhmet's Horde: Plague Demons*

At the end of every 360-day year in Ancient Egypt came the precarious five epagomenal days – the birthdays of the gods, and a time of great anxiety for most of the population. It was, after all, entirely possible that the cycle of the year might not start back up, and that the Nile would never flood again, plunging the Nile Valley into chaos.

The fear that surrounded these days wasn't entirely superstition, though. At this point in the year, mid-summer, the Nile was at its lowest, the Valley was at its driest, and food stores would be running low. It was the perfect time for disease to run rampant. Since diseases in Ancient Egypt were thought to have been caused by demons, spirits, and other invisible and malignant entities, we have a number of scrolls dealing with ways to rid oneself of the influence of these sickness-inducing beings.



Sakhmet

*/ ... continued overleaf*



## Sakhmet's horde: Plague Demons

(continued)

The epagomenal days in particular were disturbed by Sakhmet's "murderers": her servants that caused the "plague of the year", who terrorised the land spitting their illness-inducing arrows. Since the priests of Sakhmet were the ones who were best able to pacify the goddess (and therefore cure the illnesses caused by her wandering horde that ran rampant) they quickly became medical professionals.

One method of warding off these demons was to make offerings to the gods and to read a spell over a special amuletic piece of linen that could then be tied around the throat (the weak point of the body where the head was "tied to" the body). This would protect you from infection. Another was to read a spell as you made a circle around your house, therefore protecting your house from the dangerous influences of the ones who "bring slaughtering about, who create uproar, who hurry through the land, who shoot arrows from their mouth".

One thing is for certain, and that is that these demons and the illnesses they brought were to be feared. It is fortunate that Sakhmet's priests could be trusted to dispel them.

by Katherine Smith

### Further Reading:

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## Treasurer's Report 2012-2013

This year, although the accounts show a deficit of £522.21, we have a small operating surplus of £107.29 after we adjust for the donation to the Egypt Centre of £1,000 and the income from the Griffiths Memorial lecture of £370.50. Using the Fulton House lecture room (which, whilst not ideal, is at least free) and having local lecturers as much as possible has helped to reduce lecture costs over the previous year. But, donations were down and membership is down drastically. We still have a reasonable bank balance from previous years so, whilst keeping some in reserve in case we change venues, we have again given £1,000 to the Egypt Centre to support its aims.

The garden party in the summer was successful in spite of the weather and we raised nearly £500 in memory of our honorary auditor Hazel Rees who sadly died in April. This will show in next year's accounts. My thanks to all those who helped with the event and to Mal Pope for opening it and helping to hold the tent down.

Next September, the British Association of Friends of Museums is holding its annual conference in Swansea. We will be actively involved and I hope nearer the time to give you more details. (See page 4 –Ed.)

My thanks to the committee for their help and support, to the staff of the Egypt Centre, especially to Wendy for all her behind-the-scenes work and help with membership. We have now lost our long-serving committee member and membership secretary Jayne Holly Wait and wish her and her family all the best for the future. I would also like to thank Bev Rogers who stepped in to audit the books. Mike and Daphne Macdonagh have waived their usual presentation for editing *Inscriptions* as we had insufficient contributions, so if anyone would like to submit articles they would be welcome. Thanks to our chairperson Ken Griffin for arranging such an excellent programme. Thank you all for your continued support.

by Sheila Nowell

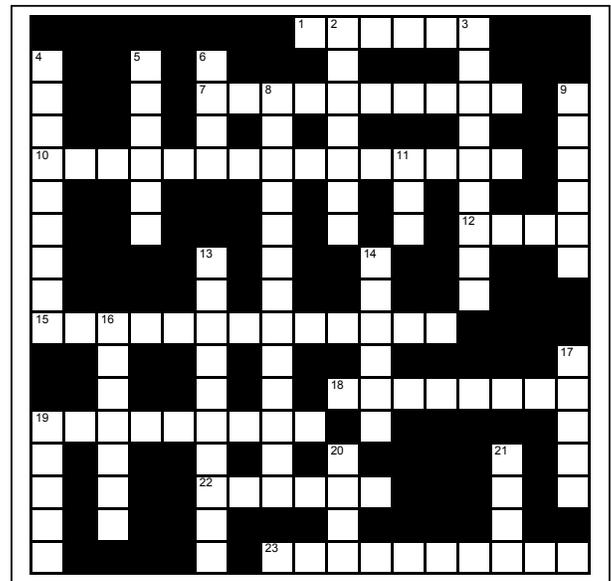
## Crossword

### Across

- 1 God of the underworld (6)
- 7 Female pharaoh whose tomb hasn't been found (10)
- 10 Two colossal statues near Luxor (7,2,6)
- 12 Transfigured spirits (4)
- 15 A name of Ammut (5,2,6)
- 18 Prickly animal sometimes depicted on the stern of boats (8)
- 19 His mortuary temple is beneath the Colossi of Memnon (9)
- 22 Depiction of Re's regenerative journey (6)
- 23 Victorian general whose museum is in Oxford (4,6)

### Down

- 2 Goddess whose servants cause trouble (7)
- 3 A liminal being that is part serpent, part leopard (9)
- 4 Ammut has the head of this animal (9)
- 5 University city, home to the Ashmolean museum (6)
- 6 Protects Osiris and Re from the unjustified dead (4)
- 8 Depiction of the deceased's journey to the afterlife (4,2,3,4)
- 9 One of many troubles brought on by Sakhmet's horde (6)
- 11 The damned (3)
- 13 Describing a spell to ward off evil (10)



- 14 His palette depicts two serpopards (6)
- 16 A goddess sometimes identified with Ammut (7)
- 17 Land through which the Nile flows (5)
- 19 Devouress of the dead (5)
- 20 The Egyptian principle of harmony and balance (4)
- 21 River that runs through Egypt (4)

*Flummoxed? All the answers to the crossword appear somewhere in this issue.*

by Daphne MacDonagh





# Egypt Centre Trip to Oxford

23<sup>rd</sup> March 2014

Oxford... lovely Oxford... city of the dreaming spires, of endless episodes of Morse, of Tolkien and C.S. Lewis, and the 'Oxford Comma.' Also the destination of the trip organised by the Egypt Centre to sample three of its museums (other more thirsty explorers also went to the pub). Forty-two hardy pioneers headed toward the 'Ford of the Ox' intent on visiting the Ashmolean, Natural History and Pitt Rivers Museums and, by gum, did we view them!

Firstly we landed at the Ashmolean. Our troops descended upon their excellent Egyptian gallery with its extensive collection of well displayed pre-Dynastic artefacts (with the museum professionals amongst our group waxing lyrical about the excellent lighting).

Following this, our collective fragmented with some going in search of other magical objects such as the death mask of Oliver Cromwell (not on display at present), Lawrence of Arabia's Headdress (not on display at present) and



Guy Fawkes' Lantern (hurrah it's there!). Several of us also met up with Jayne Holly Wait, former Education Officer at the Egypt Centre and member of the Friends of the Egypt Centre Committee).

Secondly food on the hoof via the café next door to the Eagle and Child pub, a regular haunt of Tolkien and Lewis (C.S. not the chap who hung around with Morse). We then advanced upon the Natural History Museum. It is the home of the 'Red Lady of Paviland', the 33,000 year old partial skeleton of a former resident of Gower. They also do a nice line in dinosaurs and possess the most complete example of a single dodo anywhere in the world.

Next we gravitated toward the Pitt Rivers Museum— a huge and ever growing version of a Victorian Cabinet of Curiosities. It's in the same building as the Natural History though separate from that collection as a result of Victorian demarcation between the creation of humankind and the creation of god. It is an astounding museum though those with a fondness for



order and no clutter may find it a bit overbearing :)

In conclusion, an excellent trip. And the forty-one —(we'd left Ken Griffin, Chair of the Friends behind. Don't panic, this had been prearranged and was not lax organisation on our part)— surviving members of that group of hardy pioneers who had set out from Swan Z at a quite frankly obscene time of the morning trundled back, content in the knowledge it had been a day well lived.

*by Syd Howells*





## Editorial

Welcome to Issue 37 of *Inscriptions*. This has been a good year for the Friends, with a series of fascinating lectures from both our home-grown talent and our distinguished guest speakers.

This time we have enough contributions to make a good-sized issue. We are particularly grateful to Dr Kasia Szpakowska who has rounded up a number of interesting articles from her students.

We hope to do another issue for around August time, so will be grateful for more contributions, whether chatty or scholarly! You can send it in hard copy or electronic form. Please address it to the Egypt Centre and mark it for my attention.

*Mike Mac Donagh*

## Book Review

We have been sent a copy of *Prehistoric Britain: The Stonehenge Enigma* by Robert John Langdon. I found the book raised some interesting topics which challenge the current views on the early history of these islands. However, such challenges need heavyweight academic backup which needs to be supported by very strong, indisputable evidence which is rigorously presented and argued. For example, it took a long time for the antiquity of Caral to be accepted. Anyone reading the work will have to make up their own minds on the questions raised.

*by Mike MacDonagh*

# British Association of Friends of Museums

## BAfM Annual Conference to be held at Swansea in September 2014

The Friends of Swansea Museum (The Royal Institution of South Wales), The Friends of the Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, the Friends of the Egypt Centre and the National Waterfront Museum are hosting the 2014 Annual General Meeting and Conference of the British Association of Friends of Museums from 26th to 28th September 2014.

The programme is summarised below. Any members of Friends' groups are welcome to attend and details of costs, excluding accommodation, for local attendees are given below.

### Friday 26th September 2014

13.00 to 18.30 Registration at the Conference Centre Marriott Hotel  
14.00 Excursions to sites of interest  
18.30 Reception and tour of Swansea Museum  
Welcome: Leader of City & County of Swansea,  
**Councillor David Philips**  
Tour of Swansea Museum: **Garethe El-Tawab**, Curator  
20.00 Dinner/Bufferet – Marriott Hotel

### Saturday 27th September

09.15 Registration at Marriott Hotel  
10.00 Welcome: Chair of BAfM, **Michael Fayle**  
10.10 Keynote speaker: **Professor Huw Bowen**  
11.15 Coffee  
11.45 Keynote Speaker: **Dr David Fleming**,  
Vice President Museums Association  
13.00 Buffet Lunch  
14.00 Discussions either in groups or whole conference led by:  
**Garethe El-Tawab** Keeping Maritime Heritage Afloat  
**Jenni Spencer-Davies** Engaging with the community during the refurbishment of the Art Gallery  
**Steph Mastoris** Beyond the Touch screen: The use of digital interpretation at the National Waterfront Museum  
**Syd Howells** Child Volunteers from different backgrounds  
15.45 AGM  
16.15 Presentation of Newsletter Awards  
16.30 Introduction to 2015 Conference  
16.45 Tea and biscuits  
18.00 Reception in Lord Mayor's Parlour, tour of Council Chamber and Brangwyn Panels if not booked for an event.  
20.00 Conference Gala Dinner: after dinner speaker,  
**Dr Alwyn Humphreys**

### Sunday 28th September

10.00 Optional excursions as Friday  
13.00 Optional Farewell lunch

Keep up-to-date with Conference by visiting [www.risw.org.uk](http://www.risw.org.uk) and [www.bafm.org.uk](http://www.bafm.org.uk)

If you need any further information about the Conference or any other matters please contact Malcolm Hill, email: [m.hill23@ntlworld.com](mailto:m.hill23@ntlworld.com) or phone 01639 794480 and he will respond accordingly.

### Fees for Non Residents

Conference only is £50 to include lunch and refreshments.  
Friday reception and evening buffet will cost £30.  
Saturday Civic reception and Gala Dinner will cost £50.





# The Significance of Hedgehogs in Ancient Egypt



Although today we see hedgehogs as cute little animals that scuffle around in our gardens and fit perfectly in teacups, the Ancient Egyptians had a very different view when looking at the creature. They admired the little prickly animals, for their survival instincts, being able to survive both the semi-desert conditions and venomous attacks, like those of snakes and scorpions. They were seen as a symbol of rebirth due to their hibernation and burrowing, emerging from the ground or their protective ball as if reborn into a new life.

There are two species of hedgehog that are found in Egypt, the long-eared desert hedgehog who lives in burrows, is nimble, nocturnal and solitary, and the desert hedgehog who is bigger than the former, often being depicted in Egyptian hunting scenes.

We have very little prehistoric evidence of hedgehogs; no portrayals of them have been found in the rock drawings that have been found throughout Egypt. However this could be for multiple reasons, from their lack of importance during the predynastic and early Egyptian periods, or just because of their secretive nature, so no one was really able to study them.

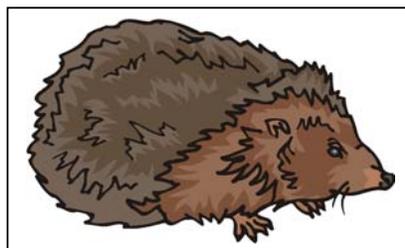
In later years their hibernation over winter and nocturnal nature began their association with rebirth and the sun god. During the Old Kingdom especially, hedgehogs were given as offerings to the gods and to the deceased. It is likely that its use was to eradicate insects and harmful creatures inside the tomb in order to protect the mummy, preserving it for

successful passage into the afterlife. We have various portrayals of this on tomb walls and in offering scenes, where the subjects of the image are carrying hedgehogs, along with other animals, in cages to the tomb or place of offering.

Another common depiction where hedgehogs can be found is in hunting scenes. It is unclear as to why, as there is no evidence that the Egyptian would have eaten them or even hunted them. The only reason to hunt such an animal would be to capture it to give as an offering.

Another significant use of hedgehog iconography is on the stems of sacred barges and other boats to indicate the direction of the wind, as it was believed that hedgehogs could do this. Depictions would be carved into the wood of the stern or models tied on. Originally it is said that live hedgehogs would have been used this way, tied on and clinging for dear life. Their use whilst tied to the stern was not just to tell wind direction, but it was sometimes believed that they could ward off the evil eye and protect the boat and its passengers from the sand banks, crocodiles and other dangers that they faced on the rivers.

Their other great value in Ancient Egypt was 'medico-magical': it was believed that every part of the hedgehog was useful in one or another spell for good health or healing. Its 'thorny skin' would be burnt and sniffed by those struck down with fever and cold, whereas the grease it expelled would be useful in curing earache. These potions held such significance among the Ancient Egyptian peoples that they have survived over 3000 years of dispelling and continue to modern day Egypt, as



today in Cairo it is still possible to buy the fever cure mentioned here.

Although today we see hedgehogs as little more than cute, prickly animals that forage in our gardens and teach us valuable lessons on how to cross the road it is clear that they were of much greater importance to the Egyptians. They not only represented their most significant religious principle, that of rebirth, with the association held with the sun, but in addition the hedgehog's protective qualities would have been of a high priority in this snake- and scorpion-filled world: the battle for protection against poisonous creatures would have been constant. The hope that the hedgehog seemed to give to the people of this time, both against poison, destruction of their mummy once dead and buried, and their medical capacity brightened the possibilities of their lives even if only slightly, showing that hedgehogs are not just useful for putting into teacups.

*by Felicity Chrome*

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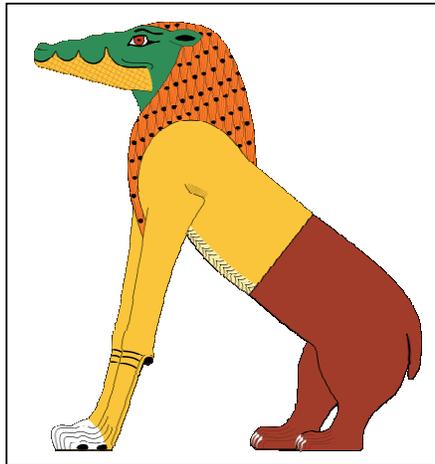


## Ammit/ Ammut

The Ancient Egyptians did not necessarily have a term for demons. There were deities that were known to be bad but they could also be considered good. Ammit or Ammut was one of them. Ammut (*m.t-mwt.w* or *amm.y.t*)\* is known by many names: ‘great of death’, ‘eater of hearts’, ‘swallower of the dead’, ‘female devourer of the dead’ and the most common ‘devouress of the dead’. She is an underworld deity. She represents divine retribution. Ammut's determinative is that of a deity even though she is primarily viewed as a demonic creature that needed to be avoided.

In Richard H. Wilkinson's *The Complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt*, Ammut is classified as a crocodile deity. Crocodiles were seen as very dangerous animals and this can be illustrated through Ammut's representation. Ammut is a combination of three treacherous animals. Her head is crocodile, while her middle section is of a lioness complete with a mane. Ammut's rear is that of a hippopotamus. Her middle section can also occasionally be depicted as a leopard. Many scholars have concluded that her multipart arrangement of water and land animals shows to onlookers that there is no escaping her wrath—there is an emphasis on *no escape*.†

There have been links from Ammut to Tawaret. These polymorphic deities share an appearance—both are part hippo, crocodile, and lioness—and both have the ability to fight evil. Both deities represent what the Egyptians feared. They also share the



responsibility of being a reminder to the citizens of Egypt to live by the principles of *Ma'at*.

Ammut is mentioned only in funerary texts. She can be found in the Ancient Egyptian Book of Dead. Most commonly, Ammut is known for her portrayal in Spell 125 - The Judgment. She is seen in the ‘Hall of Two Truths’. After the deceased has gone down the hall and has declared their innocence and complete the necessary rituals, their heart is measured against the feather of *Ma'at*. If the heart is deemed pure and true, then the deceased can go on and continue their journey through the Netherworld. If the heart is heavier than the feather, then Ammut gets to fulfill her duties.

She eats the heart of the ones who have lived wicked lives, causing them to die a second death. ‘Eater of Hearts’ can be seen as merciful. Some intellectuals have said that after Ammut has eaten the heart, she either eats the deceased whole or may take them “into the murky deeps, and slowly, taking her time drown [them] and then hang [them] on a rock deep in her murky domain. When [they] begin to rot, she will rip off pieces.”‡ Typically, Ammut goes hungry.

Ammut has no known cult. She was not worshipped in any formal sense. Even though she was not idolized in Ancient Egypt, she was well known throughout Egypt. Her presence and image was very well known. She was a deity that people wanted to avoid.

by Kyera Chevers

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Allen Thomas, translated, *The Book Of The Dead or Going Forth By Day: Ideas of the Ancient Egyptians Concerning the Hereafter as Expressed in Their own Terms*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974)

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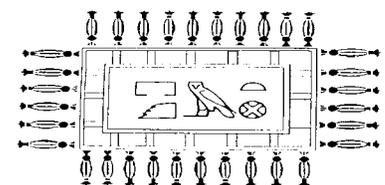
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\* Rita Luarelli, *Demons In The Book Of The Dead* <[https://www.academia.edu/384399/Demons\\_in\\_the\\_Book\\_of\\_the\\_Dead](https://www.academia.edu/384399/Demons_in_the_Book_of_the_Dead)> [accessed 4 March 2014] pg. 207

† Richard Wilkinson, *The Complete Gods and Goddess of Ancient Egypt*, (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 2003) pg. 218

‡ John A. Rush, *The Twelve Gates: A Spiritual Passage Through the Egyptian Book of The Dead*(California: Frog Ltd, 2007) pg.





# Liminal Being: Serpopard

A Serpopard is a liminal being (something that exists between the divine and human planes of existence). They can be commonly found in the middle of a procession of other liminal beings on protective birthing wands used to protect a mother and child during childbirth. Serpopards can also be found on ceremonial cosmetic palettes and, in one instance, on a drinking cup for a child.

Physically, a serpopard is a hybrid of two animals, a leopard (or other big cat) and a snake. More specifically a serpopard has a feline body, a long snake-like neck and either a feline or a serpentine head. All protective beings were intended to be menacing in order to protect the user and frighten away malevolent beings. Like other protective beings they are often found holding knives in their paws and/or snakes in their mouths. These items show the power of the possessor, as the being is able to control dangerous things which have the power to harm others.

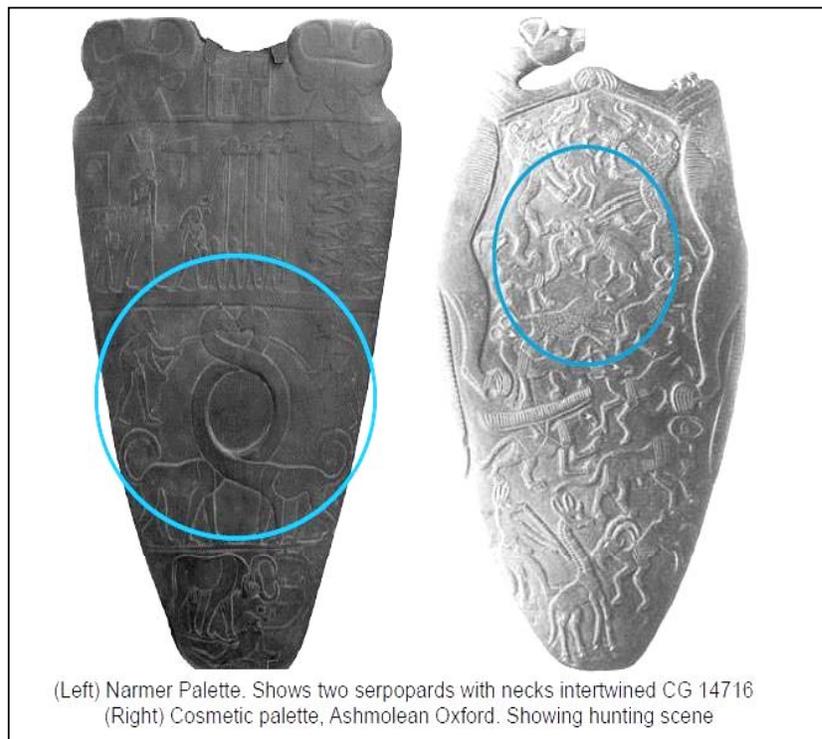
Serpopards can also be interpreted as representing order. The earliest depiction of serpopards is on Pre-dynastic cosmetic palettes. Ceremonial cosmetic palettes have a central theme, bringing control to settings that by their nature are not easily dominated.

On the Narmer Palette, it has been suggested that the two serpopards with bound necks are representations of the unification of Upper and Lower Egypt. The other cosmetic palette shows a hunting scene which in Egyptian iconography represents chaos. On this a serpopard is attacking a gazelle (a manifestation of chaos) thus bringing it to order. In these contexts they are not for protection but rather are the representation of chaotic elements brought to order.

*by Victoria Baker*



An apotropaic wand showing a serpopard with a snake in its mouth. BM 38192. Can be seen in the 'House of Death' at the Egypt Centre, Swansea.



(Left) Narmer Palette. Shows two serpopards with necks intertwined CG 14716  
(Right) Cosmetic palette, Ashmolean Oxford. Showing hunting scene

### Further Reading:

*For Serpopards:* Last, F. M. (2001) *Fantastic Animals*. In *Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*. Vol.1, 504- 507. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

*For Animals in Egyptian Art:* Roth, A. M. (2011) *Objects, animals, humans, and hybrids: the evolution of early Egyptian representations of the divine*. In D. Patch (ed.) *Dawn of Egyptian art*, 194-201. New York; New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press.

*For Magical Wands:* Steindorff, G. (1946) *The magical knives of Ancient Egypt*. *Journal of the Walters Art Gallery* , 9, 41-51.





# The Angry Dead: Angered Spirits in Pharaonic Egypt

It is commonly known that the Egyptians believed in a life after death. Tomb scenes show successful spirits relaxing in front of offerings, maintaining their youthful, human form. This may offer the impression that this afterlife was one free of worry and full of enjoyment in a heavenly state.

But it was not always so.

**“...may [the gods] save you from the rage of the dead who go head-downwards...”**

Frequently in protective spells two types of spirits are mentioned, both in their male and female forms: *Akh* and *Mut*. In these contexts, these are the spirits of the human dead who sought to cause harm and misfortune to the living; many spells aim to prevent this.

The *Akhu* (plural) were the spirits of individuals who had undergone the correct funerary rites to become ‘transfigured’ spirits, able to cross between the world of the gods and the world of the living and enjoy the benefits of a funerary cult. They could see all that the living did and could even interfere or help them.



*The Book of the Dead of Ramose, vignette of spell 72 showing Ramose as an Akh leaving his tomb.*

The *Mut* were less fortunate individuals, who died prematurely or transgressed against the gods. They were damned forever and unable to receive offering or enter the afterlife and faced inevitable annihilation. They shared this fate with other spirits known as *Djaju* and *Khefetyu*, believed to be enemies of the gods. All three are often known collectively as ‘the damned’.

Despite this clear divide between the blessed and the damned, both types of spirits could wreak havoc on the living when angered. The damned were always angry at being deprived of an afterlife, but the *Akhu* could also act aggressively towards the living. They could become angered when their

relatives failed to maintain their offering cult, or when the living acted against their wishes or approval.

The *Akhu* and the damned would often be blamed for illnesses, nightmares, hauntings, and many other misfortunes, including premature death! It was therefore necessary that the living protected themselves against the anger of the dead.

The *Akhu* could be pacified with offerings as shown on the Bentresh Stela where a Priest banishes an *Akh* possessing a princess:

**“Let the chief of Bekhten make a great offering before this spirit... Then the spirit departed in peace...”**

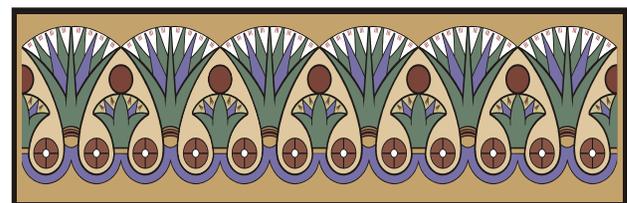
If this failed, letters could be written to the *Akhu*, or if the spirit was one of the damned, then spells could be performed, such as house protection spells for hauntings, or those to protect the deceased found in the Coffin Texts. Amuletic devices such as oracular decrees worn around the neck, or headrests carved with protective demons could protect the living in their sleep. Prayers to the gods and depictions of disarming the damned, pictured as below, were also methods of protection.



*Scene of the decapitated, upside-down damned from Ramesses VI's Book of Earth.*

It is clear that the Ancient Egyptians feared the spirits of the dead, in a somewhat similar way to how many people today still do. In addition to the fear of an unknown ‘ghost’, we may question how a deceased relative may feel if we acted in a certain way and so this concept bears a timeless relevance to us, despite different levels of conviction and alternative methods of protection or reassurance.

*by Olivia Kinsman*





## Recent discoveries in Egypt

Recent months have seen a number of interesting discoveries in Egypt:

- Archaeologists have found the tomb of a previously unknown pharaoh (Woseribre-Senebkay). He was yet another throne claimant who reigned before 1650B.C. during the Second Intermediate Period.
- The tomb of the 13th Dynasty Pharaoh Sobekhotep I has been identified. Among other items it contains the remains of a sarcophagus weighing 60 tonnes. *[We now need to find the tomb of Sobeknefru, a lady who had a full Pharaonic titulary and seems to have ruled as Pharaoh (unlike Hatshepsut) without claiming to be a man - Ed.]*
- The site of the mortuary temple of Amenhotep III—which has long been thought to have just the ‘Colossi of Memnon’ remaining—is now known to have major remains under the sand and is proving to be a very large archaeological site.
- News is just surfacing about the discovery of a well preserved Pre-Dynastic burial at the site of Hierakonpolis containing various items including an ivory bearded man and a mummy.

*by Mike Mac Donagh*

## Badeen Island Cultural Heritage project

Readers may also be interested to find out more about the Badeen Island Cultural Heritage project in northern Sudan, of which one of our members, Howard Middleton-Jones, is the Archaeology/Heritage Advisor.

Northern Sudan is a rich Archaeological area and the home of the Nubian civilisation, where the Nubian people still inhabit maintaining their language and traditions. However these traditions, which offer important historical indications on the cultural aspects of Nubia, are rapidly disappearing, mainly as the result of immigration, environmental changes (such as that of the Kajbar Dam construction project) and the effects on society of war and conflict.

With modernization comes lifestyle change, so it is vital to record and document these traditions and cultural heritage in order to maintain a record of the material culture. In addition, an important aspect of local heritage is the recording of 'handed down' history (aural) from the community elders and to analyse and compare that of the traditional written history.

The area under research is extremely rich in ancient archaeology. In addition many of the sites as yet are still unexplored, including many areas that have been covered by the harsh environmental conditions.

The proposed project involves the setting up of a cultural heritage centre and museum on Badeen Island, a Nile river island located in western Kerma, and one of the oldest islands in the area. The site contains many small pyramids and tombs in addition to ancient structures that are typical of those present throughout the Kerma region. Also and importantly, ancient agricultural equipment is still in use, such as the Sagia, Shadofe, and Gusiba, (crop containers). Unfortunately, with the onset of rapid modernisation there is the distinct possibility that many of these important relics of the past unless recorded and preserved, may be destroyed and lost forever.

Further details can be found at [www.ambilacuk.com/badeenheritageproject](http://www.ambilacuk.com/badeenheritageproject) from which the above text is taken.

## Diary dates

### Meetings of the Friends of the Egypt Centre:

**18 June 2014 at 7 p.m.**

**Tony Leahy**

**Birmingham University**

**'Brief lives in Ancient Egypt'**

A few Egyptians wrote summaries of some aspects of their lives. This talk examines a range of these 'autobiographical' texts from the Old Kingdom to the Ptolemaic period, looking at what they tell us and putting them into their social context.

**24 September 2014 at 6.30 p.m.**

**Annual General Meeting**

**Followed by (at 7 p.m.): Talk to be announced.**

### Egypt Centre events

Don't forget that there are always exciting things happening at the Egypt Centre. To mention a few:

**27th-30th May: Holiday Workshops - Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt**

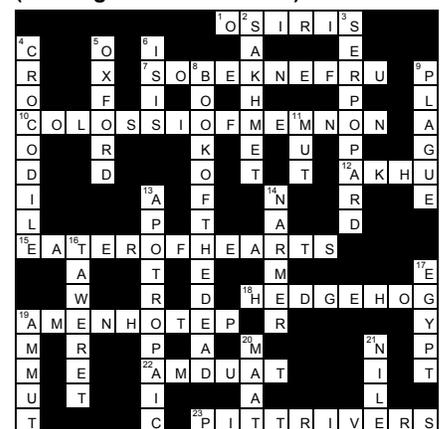
**14th June: Drop in and Discover**

**19th July: Drop in and Discover as part of the Festival Of Archaeology 2014**

Full details and an events brochure can be obtained from <http://www.egypt.swan.ac.uk/index.php/resent-and-forthcoming-events>

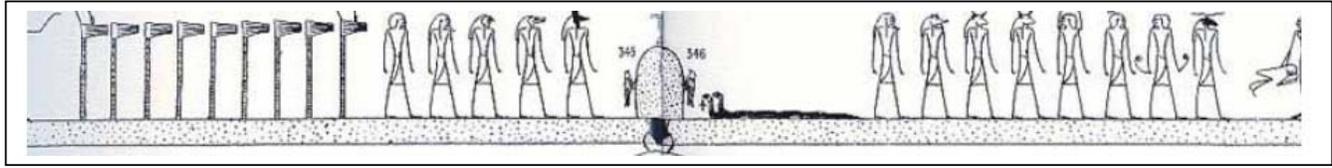
## Crossword Solution

(see Page 2 for crossword)





# Interpretations and Portrayals of the Destructrix



## Introduction

The concept of death and the afterlife was securely cemented in the minds of royal and normal Ancient Egyptians by the 18th dynasty. Being prepared for the afterlife was paramount to the Egyptians. They wrote spells and drew maps of the afterlife they could take in their tombs so they could have access to them for eternity. The Amduat depicted the sun-god Re on his regenerative journey through the twelve hours of the night, something that the Pharaoh was hoping to emulate. The Book of the Dead depicted the deceased's journey to the afterlife and offered spells to get past the guardian deities and demons. Many of the demons in these books guarded the gates that went through to the next part of the afterlife. According to the Amduat, if the deceased person failed to prove that they were worthy they would be damned and destroyed. The goddess who devoured the unjustified dead was the Destructrix. She appears in a couple of the books of the afterlife. In the Book of the Dead she is the Devourer, a monstrous fusion of animals that the Egyptians feared. The destination of the damned after they encounter the Destructrix is unclear until the Egyptians depicted their idea of hell, the place of annihilation, in the Book of Caverns in the 20th Dynasty.

## The Destructrix in the Amduat

The Destructrix appears in the Fifth Hour of the Amduat. At this point the sun-god Re is just about to reach the deepest part of the netherworld where dangers and demons lurk. The fifth hour begins by depicting deities who were associated with the primeval waters of creation. Re is shown with a number of guardians in his barque in the middle register but the Destructrix appears in the third register alongside eight other deities. These deities, the "butchers", carry out punishments on the unjustified dead before passing them onto her to execute and destroy their souls for eternity. For the most part they appear as the punishment that they enforce. The fourth deity, known as "the one who

engulfs shadows", has a shadow around his head. The seventh deity traps the deceased in his lasso and is called "the backward facing who catches with the lasso". Facing all of these deities is the Destructrix herself holding the corpse of the damned. Above her it states that "she lives from the blood of the damned, from what these gods provide her". She is described as the "hemit", or "female partner" of the gods and could therefore have been seen as a guardian to them. Isis also appeared as a destructress in the seventh hour to specifically protect Osiris and Re from the unjustified dead. This suggests that the Destructrix function was a widely coveted protective role by the gods in the netherworld.

## The Destructrix in the Book of the Dead

There were numerous spells in the Book of the Dead that the deceased could use when they came up against the guardian demons. The Book of the Dead had apotropaic demons who tested the dead's worthiness to reach Osiris. Like in the Amduat, these demons were only a threat to the deceased if they were not worthy to enter into the afterlife. One of these demons, Ammit, was known as the "Demolisher". Her function was as the devourer of blood and of the damned. She appears to have a very similar function to the Destructrix as her responsibility was to protect order and Osiris. The main similarities between the two are their goals, ensuring that their individual realms were free of the unjustified dead or anything that would harm order. A second similarity is that they were both dependent upon other deities to provide them with the damned to destroy. The difference was that Ammit cleansed the dead to prevent them from becoming unjustified again and is seemingly more benevolent than the Destructrix condemned their souls for eternity.

## Avoiding death by Destructrix

The Amduat is essentially a description of the perils that Re faces when journeying through the Netherworld. In many spells of the New Kingdom it stresses that the deceased know the

names of deities and demons. Above the Destructrix it says "he who knows her name passes by her in peace", in many cases the deceased could also tell the deity that they were a superior god and that they know their name.

## Bibliography

Warburton, D., Hornung, E. and Abt. T., (2007), *The Egyptian Amduat: The book of the Hidden Chamber*, Living Human Heritage Publications, Zurich.

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## Abstract

The Egyptians believed in many supernatural realms, in particular, the Netherworld which the sun-god Re had to travel through every night before his divine solar rebirth the next morning. On this journey he faced numerous perils that tried to befall him and therefore required the protection of other deities and demons. One of these demons was the Destructrix who appears in the fifth hour of the Amduat. Although she seems to be a grisly character, depicted holding her latest victim and apparently "lives off the blood of the damned", she can actually be seen as a protective deity. Her role was to dispose of any dangers that might befall Re or Osiris, such as the unjustified dead. Throughout Egyptian funerary mythology she is emulated. The well known "Devourer" from the Book of the Dead holds a very similar role, assessing the deceased as to whether they are worthy to pass through to the next stage of the afterlife and simply devouring them if not. Once again the Devourer can be seen as a benevolent demon whose ultimate task is to maintain peace and order in the supernatural realms.

*by Jessica Routledge-Jones*

