



BIRMINGHAM  
EGYPTOLOGY

20  
24

Welcome to the 11th Annual

# BIRMINGHAM EGYPTOLOGY SYMPOSIUM

Works in Progress in Egyptology

UNIVERSITY OF  
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# Programme

**9:00**      Registration

**9:30**      Opening Remarks

**9:40**      Is it a Match? Proposing Profiles for Ancient Egyptian Wooden  
Funerary Figures by Sam Powell (in-person)

**10:10**      Ptolemaic Statuary and Greco-Egyptian Traditions: Contributions  
to the Study of Creativity and Creation Processes during the  
Hellenistic Period by Catarina Miranda (Zoom)

**10:40**      Petrie's Hoof-prints: Charting the influence of Flinders Petrie on  
the Interpretation of Predynastic Bovine Iconography by Olivia  
Kirk (in-person)

**11:10**      Break

**11:30**      Local & General': Nineteenth-Century New Zealand Reception of  
Ancient Egypt amongst the Public by Reuben Hutchinson-Wong  
(in-person)

**12:00**      Out of the Temple: The Appearance of Divine Nursing on New  
Kingdom Stelae by Cannon Fairbairn (in-person)



# Programme

- 12:30**      **She Smites the Enemy: Political Motives for the Depiction of Queens in Scenes of the Ceremonial Execution of Prisoners during the New Kingdom by Olha Zapletniuk (in-person)**
- 13:00**      **Lunch**
- 14:00**      **‘Dust to Dust’: New Kingdom Mourners and the Ritual of Pouring Dirt over the Head by Valentina Santini (Zoom)**
- 14:30**      **Lost in Translation. Managing New Kingdom Vizierial Titles Today by Bente Bladsgaard Jensen (in-person)**
- 15:00**      **Break**
- 15:20**      **“Where it is called ‘sacal’”: The Use and Transportation of Amber in Egypt’s New Kingdom by Emma Stone (Zoom)**
- 15:50**      **Orbital treatment in Ancient Egyptian Anthropogenic Mummification: Are there Geographic Patterns? By Lucilla Butler (in-person)**
- 16:20**      **Poster Session Questions**
- 16:40**      **Closing Remarks**



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# Housekeeping

There will be two twenty minutes breaks, and a hour long break for lunch.

Tea, coffee, and a light lunch will be provided for those attending in person.

Each of the sessions is twenty minutes long, with ten minutes for questions (thirty minutes in total).

The chair will endeavour to keep speakers to time, but please do be patient if we experience any technical difficulties.

A gentle reminder to be kind and considerate to organisers, speakers, and other attendees, both online and in person.



Birmingham Egyptology brings together current students, alumni, and academics associated with the University of Birmingham who have an interested in ancient Egypt.



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# **Sam Powell**

## **Is it a Match? Proposing Profiles for Ancient Egyptian Wooden Funerary Figures**

Sam is a PhD candidate at the University of Birmingham working to create a stylistic typology of ancient Egyptian wooden funerary figures held in UK institutions. She has worked closely with the Egypt Centre, Swansea for many years volunteering in numerous roles, as well as creating their online catalogue. She is director of Abaset Collections Ltd, creating bespoke online collection catalogues for museums and researchers. She holds MA qualifications in both Archaeology (UCL), and Ancient Egyptian Material Culture (Swansea University). As well as wooden funerary figures, Sam's research interests include the digitisation of museum collections, and object-centred public engagement and outreach projects.

This presentation discusses my preliminary findings from my ongoing PhD research examining ancient Egyptian wooden funerary figures, small figures often originating from funerary models, in a range of activities. My corpus of over 1,800 objects includes a mixture of provenanced and unprovenanced items held in UK institutions. These figures frequently become detached and isolated from their original models, and due to their light weight and portable size, were widely dispersed post excavation. As a result, context, and information regarding provenance is in many cases lost.



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The “Profile Proposer” is a bespoke software solution designed by Abaset Collections, which collates and analyses the entire corpus of recorded stylistic traits and proportional measurements of each object to find commonalities, as well as identifying ‘matches’ to a set of pre-existing ‘profiles’ with a percentage accuracy. In many cases, these profiles can be also associated with a geographic provenance or time period. Although such conclusions cannot be taken as fact, they provide a good starting point to narrow down research and helping to restore context to these oft overlooked artefacts.

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# **Catarina Miranda**

## **Ptolemaic Statuary and Greco-Egyptian Traditions: Contributions to the Study of Creativity and Creation Processes during the Hellenistic Period**

Catarina Miranda graduated in History and has a Master degree in Egyptology. She is currently a PhD candidate at the School of Social Sciences and Humanities (FCSH) of NOVA University of Lisbon (Portugal) under the supervision of Professor Dr. Maria Helena Trindade Lopes, with a state-funded PhD scholarship from Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia (FCT). As part of her PhD research, she spent a year in the UK as a recognised student at the School of Archaeology of the University of Oxford, under the supervision of Professor Dr. Roland Smith. Catarina is also a researcher at CHAM - Centre for the Humanities (NOVA University).

This paper seeks to present an ongoing PhD project dedicated to the study of the idea(s) of creativity and the processes of invention underlying artistic practices of the Hellenistic Mediterranean. An exhaustive collection of statues from Ptolemaic Egypt was convened over the years in an online database (to be made public), in order to visualise and reflect on the concept and phenomenon of creativity in this period and in this space in particular. Although taking into consideration two communities in the eastern Mediterranean – the Greek and the Egyptian community –, it is expected to frame them in larger contexts, both temporal and geographic. To this end, artistic production from other Hellenistic kingdoms or city-states will be analysed, as well as from other dynasties of Pharaonic Egypt, in order to understand variations, continuities or coincidences.





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The communication will present the main lines of the research, while questioning the frequent opposition between tradition and creativity, and also the disciplinary duality in the approaches to Ptolemaic art. Creativity and tradition will be presented as articulated aspects of artistic practice, following recent discussions on studies in art theory, while theoretical and conceptual structures applied by studies on culture contact in material culture will be used with the aim of developing a less disciplinary interpretation of Ptolemaic art.

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**Olivia Kirk**

**Petrie's Hoof-prints: Charting the influence of Flinders  
Petrie on the interpretation of Predynastic Bovine  
Iconography**

Olivia began her academic journey at Birmingham in 2016, graduating in 2019 with a First-Class degree in Ancient History. She decided to continue her educational development at Birmingham and completed a MA in Antiquity: Classics and Ancient History achieving a Distinction. She is a current Doctoral Researcher at Birmingham.

Biographies of individuals dominate the study of Egyptology. Men such as Howard Carter, Giovanni Belzoni and more recently Zahi Hawass dictate the discourse of Egyptology and the extent to which this individuality has affected wider interpretation is a fertile ground of scholarship. William Matthew Flinders Petrie has one of the most profound impacts on the development of Egyptology. Praise for Petrie and his 'scientific method' of seriation remains a common theme in the literature from the obituaries published following his death to modern archaeology textbooks. Focusing on Petrie, my study investigates the influence of individuals on modern understanding of Ancient Egyptian material culture. By looking at bovine iconography, this paper seeks to demonstrate the Petrie's influence on the understanding and interpretation of a specific set of material culture. The bovine is chosen to explore this avenue of research closely in part due to its position as economic resource, spiritual depository and symbolic icon. The study of cattle iconography has remained a rich repository for Egyptologists, providing a wealth of evidence and interpretation over the past 150 years.



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My research aligns with recent scholarship on the impacts that 19th and 20th-century worldviews on Egyptology, where I consider colonial legacies and Petrie's own racial ideologies, such as his close relationship with Francis Galton, the father of Eugenics. Where my research diverges from existing discourse is the study's concentration on bovine material culture. I propose a multidisciplinary approach, integrating Museum Studies, Histography, Archaeology, Art History, and Egyptology to fully explore the concept of individuality in Egyptology. I also use UK-based museum collections, especially those associated with Petrie, to reevaluate and update interpretations of bovine material through rigorous analysis, recontextualization, and cross-checking.

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# **Reuben Hutchinson-Wong**

## **‘Local & General’: Nineteenth-Century New Zealand Reception of Ancient Egypt amongst the public**

Reuben is a first year doctoral researcher at the University of Birmingham. Before joining the University, they completed their Master's at Waipapa Taumata Rau, University of Auckland in New Zealand. They have a keen interest in nineteenth-century New Zealand reception of ancient Egypt and practices of ancient Egyptian tomb reuse as sites of burial - the latter of which is the subject of their doctoral research.

When I say New Zealand, you would not necessarily think about ancient Egypt. However, ancient Egypt arrived early in the colonial period with early migrants and captivated generations of New Zealanders. My paper explores the public's reception of ancient Egypt in nineteenth-century New Zealand (1840-1899) using contemporary newspapers. From these records, I identify six types of articles that journalists and editing teams created about ancient Egypt: (1) general pieces on ancient Egyptian society and culture; (2) reports on excavations and artefacts; (3) excerpts from published books and travel writings; (4) advertising, notices, and advertisements/summaries of public lectures; (5) printed letters-to-editors and personal correspondence; and (6) reports on museum acquisitions.

Through a close reading of these newspaper clippings, I develop some preliminary points that highlight the intersected role of Christianity and the colonial experience of Pākehā, New Zealand Europeans, and Māori, New Zealand's Indigenous peoples, in how ancient Egypt was received;



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nineteenth-century colonial newspaper practices; and New Zealand's general lack of Egyptomania, despite peoples' overall interest in ancient Egypt.

This paper suggests that people became interested in the wonders of Egypt from afar, but this interest did not take root the same way it did elsewhere in the world, like Britain, the United States, and Australia, possibly the result of New Zealand's late entry into the British Empire and the colonial administrator's decision to create a 'Britain of the South Seas.'





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# **Cannon Fairbairn**

## **Out of the Temple: The Appearance of Divine Nursing on New Kingdom Stelae**

Cannon is currently a third-year postgraduate researcher at the University of Birmingham. She received her MA in Art History - Egyptian Art and Archaeology from the University of Memphis.

During the Old to Middle Kingdom, images of the king being nursed by a goddess were largely limited to temple spaces (with only a few exceptions). While divine nursing scenes continued to be most frequently located in these temple spaces in the New Kingdom, scenes of divine nursing begin to also appear outside temple walls in more “public” spaces. They are incorporated into some tombs, such as in the tombs of Thutmose III and Paser. While these tombs may have had a select and generally smaller audience (similar to temples) scenes of divine nursing also begin to appear on stelae, objects meant for public display. Six stelae survive from the New Kingdom, all from the Theban region, with some variation of this motif. Three share imagery with other types of votive offerings, while two others appear to resemble the divine nursing scenes of temples. However, one represents a variation of the divine nursing motif unknown in any other context. This collection of stelae provides a great opportunity to examine the adaption of a once largely temple and royal motif into a more public sphere as well as a chance to engage with the more popular understanding of divine nursing. This presentation will present my preliminary conclusions regarding these inquiries as I examine the archaeological contexts, decorative elements, and functions of these stelae as well as how they compare to similar stelae and similar divine nursing scenes.



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# **Olha Zapletniuk**

## **She Smites the Enemy: Political Motives for the Depiction of Queens in Scenes of the Ceremonial Execution of Prisoners during the New Kingdom**

Olha is a Ph.D candidate in Egyptology, School of Culture and Communication Department of History, Heritage, and Classics at Swansea University.

The image of the pharaoh's victorious dominance over his enemies had always been one of the most important themes in royal art, referring to a real historical event associated with war and conquest, or to a symbolic interpretation of defeating the chaos. Even though female goddesses occasionally appeared in these violent scenes as protective deities, queens were completely excluded from the public association with cruelty and dominance. However, it is known that at least six queens of the New Kingdom were depicted in smiting scenes along with their husbands or were even represented as vanquishers themselves: Iaret, Hatshepsut, Tiye, Nefertiti, Ankhesenamun and Nefertari.

The main issues with these types of scenes are their uniqueness and the lack of attention to their political importance in modern historiography. Instances of queens participating in smiting scenes occurred during a relatively short period of ancient Egyptian history and influenced hegemonic gender relations based on the symbolic construction of political power, physical strength and belligerence as the traits that differentiated men from women.



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All cases concerned the exceptional political significance of queens in a particular period and under unique circumstances. Some of these queens were later considered co-rulers, regents, or rulers of the state, like Hatshepsut, Nefertiti and Ankhesenamun, others played an important role in the deification of the ruling pharaoh like Tiye and Nefertari.

The paper is devoted to the study of the main features, compositional similarities and distinctions of smiting scenes with the queens. The study examines a wide range of archaeological and visual sources, such as the Konosso Stela, reliefs from the Temple of Medinet Habu, Deir-el-Bahari, Luxor Temple, the Tomb of Kheruef, scarabs, seals, and furniture, in order to determine the connection between the political significance of the queen and her possession of strictly male attributes of military power in iconography.

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# **Valentina Santini**

## **‘Dust to Dust’: New Kingdom Mourners and the Ritual of Pouring Dirt over the Head**

Valentina is currently conducting her PhD in Egyptology at the University of Birmingham, with a research project focused on the analysis of New Kingdom bereavement scenes, from the standpoint of modern Psychology and Anthropology. She worked at the Museo Egizio, in Turin (Italy), whereas now she is currently working at CAMNES, a centre for archaeological studies based in Florence (Italy), where – inter alia – she is dealing with the dissemination of scientific and academic data to the wider public. She is one of the collaborators of the Egypopcult Project, has written various scientific papers and published books for the general audience.

According to tomb wall decorations, ancient Egyptians performed a series of ritual actions on the occasion of bereavement circumstances. Covering faces with their hands, holding each other, pulling out their own hair are just some of the most emblematic poses assumed by mourners in these so-called funerary representations. Those gestures had crucial symbolic meanings but, at the same time, can be read by modern Psychology and Anthropology studies as body expressions demanded by unconscious pulses. Among those poses, a very peculiar one will be analysed in this presentation: smearing one’s head with dust or dirt, a ritual action common to numerous ancient and contemporary cultures. This in-progress research aims to seek possible connections among these societies, and the psychological and metaphorical reasons behind this central gesture in ancient Egyptian bereavement culture. In order to do so, case-studies from New Kingdom tombs will be taken into account.



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# **Bente Bladsgaard Jensen**

**Lost in Translation : Managing New Kingdom  
Vizierial Titles Today**

Bente is a BA and MA graduate in Egyptology from the University of Copenhagen, with a background working at the National Museum of Denmark and the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, in addition to teaching undergraduate Middle Egyptian and ancient Egyptian history at UoC. Currently third-year PhD fellow at Sapienza University of Rome, Department of Classics.

The viziers of the early Ramesside Period yielded a long range of titles, some of which remain obscure in meaning today and many, which have traditionally been translated to modern terms. Research on these individuals have revealed more information about the actual functions of the vizier through their monuments and title use, as well as their architectural and geographical context. Especially the southern vizier Paser, active under Seti I and Ramesses II, along with his northern contemporary colleague (Pa-)Rahotep, have provided much information through these sources.

Through my current dissertation project, many issues have presented themselves when dealing with this large data set. This talk will present the evidence of title use of the early Ramesside viziers, with historical and architectural elements as context. New Kingdom titles were also the subject of a workshop organized by a colleague and me at the University of Copenhagen in early March 2024. Some of the topics and problems discussed during these two days and how they can be implemented in the current research project will be discussed.



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# Emma Stone

## **"Where it is called 'sacal'": The Use and Transportation of Amber in Egypt's New Kingdom**

Emma is a Canadian international first year PhD student at the University of Glasgow. They earned an MSc in Ancient Cultures also at Glasgow and has an Honours BA in Medieval Studies from the University of Ottawa.

The Bronze Age saw interactions between Mediterranean cultures through royal trade, diplomatic voyages, and military campaigns – each offering a chance for materials to be shared on different social levels. A vital yet scarcely explored material used is amber. Amber formed part of a complex economic trading system in resinous materials, but also part of a dynamic value system, taking on alternative social roles and meanings as it moved and was embedded in different practices and performances. It was primarily responsible for the economic expansion of Mycenaean Greece. It was also a popular material to be buried with, as documented in Scandinavia, central European regions, and Mycenaean Greece. Amber is the type of material that Egyptians could have had many uses for, from funerary adornments to incense, and yet there is no concrete evidence that it existed there until the start of the Roman period.

This project will focus on investigating the archaeological and textual contexts amber occurs in and what these contexts say about amber procurement and use in Egypt. It will also investigate how these contexts differ from or align with patterns identified across the wider Mediterranean region and what these similarities or differences say about the Egyptian perception of not just amber, but its cultural relationship with its neighbours.



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It will delve more into the role of international trade, less as a system of profit and loss, and more as an avenue for negotiating social and cultural meaning and expressing forms of identity at different scales.

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# **Lucilla Butler**

## **Orbital treatment in Ancient Egyptian Anthropogenic Mummification: are there Geographic Patterns?**

This presentation comes from Lucilla's dissertation for their M.Sc. in Biomedical Egyptology at the University of Manchester (2023). Their interest in the orbit stems from their career as an Ophthalmologist. They trained in Oxford and London and did their Higher Specialist Surgical Training in the West Midlands.

Existing descriptions of mummification usually focus on how the viscera were treated and patterns of wrapping and amulet inclusion. There is little or no mention the orbital treatment other than the use of eye plates. In an unwrapped mummy it may be difficult to see much detail especially if the eyelids are present. Early X-rays and CT scans were of limited resolution and did not provide much additional information. Recent CT machines are able to generate scans of much greater resolution. The aim of this study was to establish how much variation could be identified in how the orbital contents had been treated during mummification, and if any patterns could be identified using recent CT images. The CT scans of 32 ancient Egyptian mummies, held in various collections worldwide, were reviewed. The study population included mummies from the New Kingdom to the Roman Period and geographically from Thebes to Hawara. There was an almost equal number of male and female mummies.



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# **Rebecca Lyell**

## **Feather of Truth: The Development of Ma'at from a Moral Concept to a Worshipped Deity, from Old Kingdom Origins to New Kingdom Heights?**

Rebecca is a first year PhD student at the University of Edinburgh. They have also achieved their MA and MScR in archaeology from the University of Edinburgh with their MScR in particular focussing on Egyptian archaeology. They are mostly interested in the Early Dynastic and Old Kingdom periods but their current research spans as far as the New Kingdom.

Ma'at, the ancient Egyptian deity of truth and justice, was not always a God. Ma'at originated as the moral concept of order, which acted as a central aspect of the Egyptian society from the Early Dynastic period. Analysis of the evolution of Ma'at shows past literature discussing Ma'at as either a genderless concept of morality or as a deity with no mention of their disembodied origin, with few factoring in both aspects. This thesis will address this gap by investigating the relationship between the two different aspects and the implications of different characteristics of the concept being integrated into the mythos of the God Ma'at. Old to New Kingdom Egypt (~2650-1069 BCE) will serve as the period of study as these dates encompass the origin of the Ma'at cult to the height of their worship.



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As the concept of Ma'at was so central to the ancient Egyptian civilisation, studying the deification of this concept can show how society and religion evolved symbiotically. Investigations into aspects such as the social standing of women by their relation to the deity and about different class perspectives of truth and justice can be carried out. By employing an analysis of modern and contemporary literature alongside a statistical analysis of a corpus of textual and iconographic depictions of Ma'at, I mean to investigate the evolution of Ma'at and its possible reflections on society.

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# **Marion Devigne**

**Whose coffins? Mummy photography, performance and appropriation in the late 19th – early 20th century.**

Marion Devigne is currently an MA student in Egyptology at the University of Cambridge. She previously completed her undergraduate studies in Archaeology and History at the University of Aberdeen in Scotland. She is interested in Late Period funerary practices as well as provenance research and the History of Egyptology. This research is part of several postgraduate research projects focusing on the link between the body and ancient Egypt.

This study aims to analyse a little-known souvenir phenomenon that emerged during the era of Egyptomania. Known as “mummy photography”, this practice allowed tourists visiting Egypt to be placed and photographed inside a supposedly authentic ancient Egyptian coffin. While current research on mummymania has mainly focused on the purchase, collection and display of mummified bodies as souvenirs, this paper focuses on the coffin itself, questioning the tourists’ attraction to be placed within this artefact and portrayed as an ancient Egyptian body.

Unattainable within a conventional museum setting, this trend is believed to have originated in Egypt and was offered by several commercial photographers in Cairo. Based on archival research in Britain and France, the paper will present the history of this trend, highlighting its subsequent spread to Western capitals, such as Paris and New York. Adopting a material approach, these photographs will be presented as objects of study, using contemporary newspapers and Victorian illustrations as historical sources.





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Archival research resulted in identifying who was being photographed, demonstrating that male and female tourists from the middle and upper classes, as well as leading political figures, participated in this photographic phenomenon. Originating during the heyday of British occupation in Egypt, mummy photography provides a yet overlooked photographic evidence of Western popular perceptions of ancient Egypt. It highlights the Victorian fascination with human remains but also the appropriation of ancient Egyptian funerary culture within the context of imperialism and colonial authority.

In recent years, scholars have increasingly emphasised the need to address the problematic history of Egyptology, advocating for decolonisation efforts in the field, museums, and archives. This poster aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on the decolonisation of Egyptology by emphasising the significance of using photographic collections as valuable research materials.





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# **Nermine Ahmed**

## **Libation for Osiris: A Custom of Veneration in Funerary Spaces of Ancient Alexandria.**

Nermine Ahmed is an archaeologist in the Ministry of Tourism & Antiquities- Egypt (since 2011). They hold a B.A. in Archaeology from the Department of Graeco-Roman Archaeology and Classical Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Alexandria, Egypt. In 2021, They obtained their Master's degree in Hellenistic Studies at Alexandria Center for Hellenistic Studies, University of Alexandria, specializing in Arts, Archaeology, and Architecture, and the Thesis Title: The Water Supply and Resources in Ptolemaic Alexandria (Historical, Cultural, and Archaeological Study). They have been working as an attached inspector with several archaeological missions working in Alexandria for photography & documentation works (ex. El Abd Necropolis site, Kom El Nadura site, Roman theater site in Alexandria, and the archive of the Alexandria Antiquities Dept.). In addition, They have participated in a number of conferences and online seminars held at Universities in Egypt, Italy, and USA, covering Graeco-Roman Archaeology.

Deities were commonly associated with water; therefore several cults were performed by using water in the ritual performance such as purification rites. Water installations system was often built in temples and funerary spaces to honor particular gods in the ancient world, frequently both mundane and cult practices developed in response to regional engagements with particular environments. Osiris was an Egyptian god associated with water (particularly inundation of the Nile, water, fertility, and agriculture).



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The God has been venerated by both Egyptians and newcomers of Greeks, and gained great prominence during the Ptolemaic period. In ancient Alexandria, a purification ritual was held in the city's funeral spaces to commemorate the deceased. The discovery of altars in tombs indicates that sacrifices and libations were also performed in their honor. The act of libation was performed by pouring water during purification rituals for the deceased as part of preparation to reach the kingdom of the dead and stand before Osiris. The act of libation was performed by pouring water during purification rituals for the deceased as part of preparation to reach the kingdom of the dead and stand before Osiris.

Several depictions of water libation (paintings, architectural elements, funerary objects, etc.) will be highlighted in this study along displaying the formulas of fresh water mentioned in epitaphs from Alexandrian tombs that bear the name of the ancient Egyptian god Osiris. The origin of these formulas can be traced back to the Pyramid text (436) and the Book of the Dead. The purpose of the study is to examine the ways in which different social classes in Egyptian and Greek cultures developed methods of commemoration and veneration. This will be done through an analysis of the standing examples of Alexandria's Tombs, and the possible similarities with the Ancient Egyptian tombs in Assassif, (Deir el-Bahri).