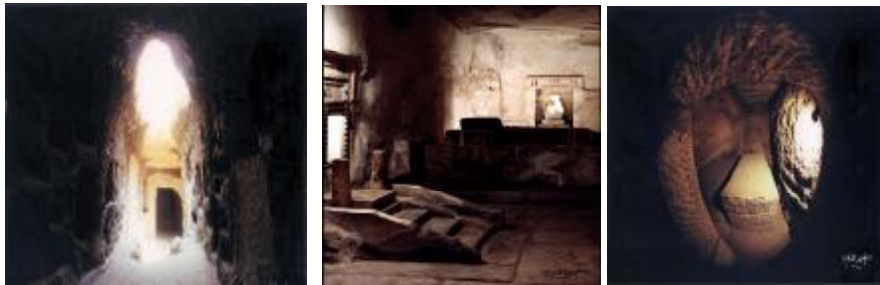


## TUNA-EL-GEBEL

Lying 7 K.M west of El-Ashmunein, beyond the Bahr Yussef (a lake), under the western desert plateau, is the necropolis of Tuna-El-Gebel, the burial place of Hermopolis, also called Hermopolis West. Here are a number of tombs, dating from the Ptolemaic Period, the most notable of which is the splendid monument of Petosiris, the high priest of god Thoth, which resembles a small temple. These tombs display a mixture of artistic styles, some being decorated entirely in the classical Greek manner, while others such as that of Petosiris , being in a mixture of Greek and traditional Egyptian styles. Thus some scenes, mostly of purely religious subjects, are treated in the conventional Egyptian manner, while those relating to daily life are classical Greek manner.



Catacombs of the ibis and baboons

a sarcophagus of a high priest

An observant visitor to the tomb of Petosiris, who is familiar with the decoration of the ancient Egyptian tombs, will recognize many old friends, clad in Greek garments. Here also are the burial grounds (catacombs) of the ibis, the bird sacred to the god Thoth. Thousands of the embalmed bodies of these birds were found here, some of them elaborately bandaged. Also found, were many statuettes of the ibis, in bronze, wood, and alabaster, baboon burials and Aramaic papyri dating from the time of Darius. At Tuna-El-Gebel also are two rock-cut stelae dating from the reign of Akhenaton (1375-1358 B.C.), marking the boundary of the territory controlled by that King for his new capital, Akhetaton. There is also a Roman waterwheel with a 37 m deep well.



A Roman waterwheel  
Akhenaton



A boundary stela from the age of

### The Tomb of Petosiris

The most important monument in the necropolis is the funerary Tomb of Petosiris, a leading citizen of Hermopolis and high priest in the temple of Thoth, who built this family mausoleum about 300 B.C. This splendid tomb was first discovered in 1919, and on account of its imposing appearance, it was at first thought to be a temple. Actually this is a family tomb and was the burial place, not only of Petosiris himself, but of his father, grandfather, and other members of the family. All the men of this family held offices in connection with the cult of god Thoth at Hermopolis, and also of other gods worshipped in that place.



Façade of the tomb of Petosiris



the birth of a calf

The tomb, surrounded by mounds of rubble, is approached by a paved road 4 m wide and 13 m long, on the left side of which is an alter, 2.40 m high, with four horn-like projections at the corners. The façade of the tomb has four columns with elaborate foliage capitals and a doorway in the middle. Between the columns are high stone screens, which, like the pilasters at the sides, are adorned with reliefs depicting Petosiris making offerings and

praying to the gods of his Nome. The reliefs on the back of the screens – the north wall of the vestibule – are on secular themes, depicted in a hybrid Greco-Egyptian style. To the right of the entrance: metal-workers are making a variety of articles; a man working on the centerpiece for a table; metal being weighed; the finished articles being backed for dispatch . To the left of the entrance; two lower rows, carpenter's work; two men are working with a lathe ( the earliest known representation); making of a four- poster bed.

East wall, in three rows (from the bottom row upwards): plowing, the flax harvest, corn harvest, the corn being threshed with sticks. South wall; to the left of the door, Petosiris's sons with their parents; at the foot of the wall, men carrying offerings; to the right of the door; Petosiris's daughters with their parents; at the foot of the wall, mourning women and an offering scene, in purely Greek style. On the side pilasters, above, the dead man is playing a board game. West wall; in the two upper rows cattle-herds in the fields, in the bottom row vintage scenes, a wine-press, delivery of the jars of wine.



Harvesting and husking of wheat  
& plowing the land



milking a cow

### **The chapel**

The roof of the chapel is supported by four rectangular pillars. Between the southern pair of pillars is a rectangular pit leading down to the subterranean burial chambers. The four pillars are covered with long inscriptions and reliefs showing the dead man at prayer – north wall right-hand, eastern side : the goddess Nut dispensing water from a tree to Petosiris's parents ; below, Petosiris in prayer before his father ; base of the wall cattle driven through a marsh . East wall: Petosiris's funeral procession, with men, women and gods (the four sons of Osiris), some with votive gifts, accompanying the coffin to the tomb; on the right the mummy in front of the tomb, with a priest pouring the water of consecration over it. On the lower part of the walls offering-bearers.



The tomb is supported on four columns      the goddess Nut is dispensing water  
to Petosiris's parents

The scenes on the western wall relate, Zedhuef-ankh, brother of Petosiris. The upper register is divided into five separate scenes, and in the first (from left to right) is shown the deceased adoring nine apes, who are the followers of Osiris. In the second scene, Zedhuef-ankh adores the spirits of the twelve hours "who accompany the Great God ". In the third register, he adores twelve cobras," who illuminate the darkness of the underworld". The fourth scene is damaged, but shows Zedhuef-ankh presenting offerings. The fifth scene shows the deceased led before Osiris, a god with head of an ape ( a form of Thoth) , and the goddess Maat , take him by the hands and conduct him to Osiris , who is seated upon a throne. The bottom register shows a procession of men and women bearing offerings.



The eastern wall is also divided into three registers. In the upper and middle ones of which we see the ceremonies performed at the tomb on the day of burial. At the right of the scene is the tomb, and its form, crowned by a small pyramid, resembles the Theban tombs of the Eighteenth – Twentieth Dynasties, rather than the actual tomb of Petosiris .In front of it stands the mummy of Seshu , father of Petosiris . The priest, clad in a leopard-skin, who is sprinkling the mummy with water, is Teos, the grand son of Seshu. Behind him are men performing the ceremony known as "Opening the Mouth". At the foot of the stairs leading to the tomb, an ox is slaughtered for sacrifice. Next comes the funeral procession, headed by a group of

priests. Three priests are pulling the funerary carriage, before which another priest burns, incense. The coffin containing the mummy is in the decorated chest, which rests, in traditional Egyptian style, in a boat, with statues of the goddesses Isis and Nephtys placed before and aft. But whereas in the earlier scenes of the New Kingdom (and before) the boat rested upon a sledge, here it is placed upon a low wheeled carriage. At the extreme left-hand end of the scene, stands Petosiris, watching the procession as it passes by. The bottom register shows men and women carrying offerings and leading sacrificial animals and birds.



The funeral procession of Seshu  
Father of Petosiris



an inner view of the tomb of Petosiris

The southern wall is divided into three parts by stucco projections, in the upper one Seshu, Petosiris's father, stands in adoration before nine spirits, who are called "the followers of Ra". The first three are in human form, the second trio has the heads of Jackal, and the remaining three have the heads of crocodiles. In the middle register, Zedhuef-ankh, the eldest son of Seshu, pays homage to his deceased father. The scene in the bottom register shows a herdsman driving cattle through the marshes. In the center of the southern wall is a double scene in which Seshu adores Osiris and Isis, while Zedhuef-ankh adores Osiris and Nephtys. In the second register, a scarab is adored by the goddesses Buto and Nekhbet, followed by a figure of the goddess Isis.



a scarab is adored by  
the goddesses Buto and Nekhbet.



a scene in the southern wall  
of the tomb

The shaft in the middle of the chapel leads down to the tomb chamber, in which Petosiris, his wife, Renpetnefert, and one of his sons were buried. His coffin is now in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo.

### **The funerary house of Isidora**

To the south of Petosiris's tomb is a necropolis of the Greco-Roman period, with a number of two story tombs in Greco-Egyptian style. The finest is the tomb of Isidora, who was drowned about 120 B.C. Like most of the funerary houses, that of Isidora consists of two chambers, built upon a raised platform. It is approached from the street by a flight of steps leading to a terrace, or balcony, upon which stands an altar. The whole structure is built of bricks, coated with stucco, and painted.



A funerary house



the steps leading to the tomb of Isidora

A door opposite to the main entrance gives access to the inner chamber. To the right and left of this doorway are written two poems in Greek, both of which lament the untimely death of Isidora. Two niches occur in the left-hand wall of the second chamber, and against its end wall is an elaborate funeral bed, where the mummy of the dead girl lay before being taken to the burial chamber. The bed is a platform of bricks, flanked by two columns, and surmounted by a molded plaster shell.



The funeral bed of the mummy of Isidora