



Are proud to present a live & ZOOM Lecture on The Power to Transform: Heka and the Art of Protection in Ancient Egypt

- Date: Saturday, 6th December 1.30 pm
The lecture lasts approximately 2 hours including a break.
- Speaker: Dr Christina Geisen, Curator Egyptian Written Culture
- Location: **** IMPORTANT: This lecture is ZOOM ONLY ****
- Admission: Free to Members.

The first part of this presentation introduces the ancient Egyptian concept of Heka—a term often translated, somewhat imperfectly, as “magic.” In Egyptian thought, Heka was not a marginal or mysterious practice but a fundamental force woven into the creation and ongoing functioning of the world. For modern readers, this powerful concept becomes most visible in magical and magico-medical spells, where Heka plays a vital role in transforming dangerous situations, from curing illness to protecting individuals from venomous creatures. Central to its effectiveness is the dynamic interaction between spoken incantations, the physical objects used in the ritual, and the sacred setting in which these rites took place.

The second part of the talk introduces a previously unpublished Horus-on-the-Crocodiles stela from the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology at the University of Cambridge. This remarkable object stands out for its distinctive combination of imagery and inscriptions, including protective deities and spells associated with magic and natural threats. The presentation highlights the agency of the artefact itself: how its images, texts, and material presence work together to create a protective sphere for its owner. By drawing on approaches that explore agency, materiality, and the role of imagery, we can better

understand how ancient Egyptians experienced—and attempted to influence—their world. In this case, the stela illuminates the strategies they used to confront the perils of the Nile and other waterways, and the ritual measures employed to keep such dangers at bay.

Christina Geisen received her PhD in Egyptology from the University of Toronto in 2012. Following a postdoctoral fellowship from Canada's Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), she held academic positions at Yale, Oxford, and Cambridge before joining the British Museum as Curator of Egyptian Written Culture. Her research focuses on funerary, ritual, and magical texts, as well as human-environment interactions in ancient Egypt. She applies approaches from materiality studies and cognitive linguistics and has developed a growing interest in digital humanities and the application of technological methods to Egyptological research.

This Lecture can ONLY be viewed live on ZOOM

Please see our website www.egyptology-ssae.org for further details.

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