



THE GATE OF THE PRIESTS

BAB EL-GASUS PROJECT

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“Bab el-Gasus” (Gate of the Priests) is the modern name given to the collective tomb of the priests and priestesses of Amun located in the Theban necropolis dating to the 21st Dynasty (ca. 1069-945 BC), discovered in 1891 beneath the first courtyard of the temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari. It yielded 153 burials equipped with more than two hundred coffins, nearly a hundred papyri, 110 boxes containing shabtis, 80 statuettes, and stelae, among many other artefacts. This huge documental corpus makes it an invaluable resource for the study of Egyptian funerary culture shedding light on one of the most obscure periods of Egyptian history makes. Yet, Bab el-Gasus remains a lost opportunity in Egyptian archaeology.

In fact, these materials were transferred to the Giza Museum in 1891 and Egyptian authorities decided to offer various objects to nations with diplomatic representation in Egypt.

In 2014, the University of Coimbra launched the project *Gate of the Priests: Bab el-Gasus Project* aiming to reconstruct the original integrity of the archaeological find of Bab el-Gasus. This Project involves an international consortium of universities and museums, such as the Leiden University, the University of California – Los Angeles, the Vatican Museums; the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden, the Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna, the Florence Egyptian Museum, the Royal Museums of Art and History in Brussels and the Turin Egyptian Museum. The Project is currently undergoing the inventory and study of the collections that have been dispersed all over the world aiming to understand the ritual and socioeconomic meaning of the funerary objects included in the burials of Bab el-Gasus.

In 2016, 125 years after the discovery of Bab el-Gasus, the Project will launch the International Colloquium “Art for Eternity: Funerary Pragmatics in the Twilight of Egypt”, under the auspices of Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, the University of Coimbra and the University of Lisbon.