

# Current Research in Egyptology 2022

Proceedings of the Twenty-Second Annual Symposium,  
Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3, 26-30 September 2022

Edited by

A. Bouhafs, L. Chapon, M. Claude, M. Danilova,  
L. Dautais, N. Fathy, A.I. Fernández Pichel,  
M. Guigner, M. Pinon, M. Valerio

l'étne dont ils reproduisaient l'image). C'est dans le sy-  
sème des petits les grands hiéroglyphes représentant :

1° Des quadrupèdes tels que : le lion, le Taureau, le



2° Des Oiseaux : tels que la Chouette ou Nyctycorax  
1° 7bis : 20.



3° Des Poissons : tels que le Latus, l'Oxyrynchus &



CEN M 36

Cahiers « Égypte Nilotique et Méditerranéenne »  
Montpellier 2023

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## Introduction

The Egyptology team of the Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3 - CNRS was honoured by the decision of the participants of the CRE 2021 Rhodes to assign the hosting of the 2022 congress to Montpellier. The twenty-second Current Research in Egyptology conference was held on 26th–30th September 2022 and featured around 250 attendees in presence and online. Among them, young scholars in Egyptology from different institutions worldwide presented ninety-three papers and twenty-four posters. CRE 2022 Montpellier marked the first time that the event was held in France – a fitting opportunity to celebrate the bicentenary of Champollion’s eventful discovery.

September 1822 indeed witnessed a milestone event that marked the birth of scientific Egyptology: the young Jean-François Champollion from Figeac outlined the principles of Egyptian hieroglyphic writing in his famous *Lettre à M. Dacier*. 2022 also marked the centenary of another important milestone in Egyptology: the discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamun in November 1922. For these reasons, we have decided to celebrate the history of Egyptology and associated research by dedicating specific sessions to these topics and making them a focal point of the congress.

The Egyptology team “Égypte Nilotique et Méditerranéenne” (ENiM), part of the UMR 5140 Archéologie des Sociétés Méditerranéennes of the Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3 and the CNRS, also celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2022. ENiM has contributed to developing and promoting Egyptology at the European level. Consisting of many specialists in different fields of Egyptology, including history, epigraphy, lexicography, and archaeology, the team is involved in several excavations in Egypt, such as Saqqara, Karnak, the west bank of Thebes, and the site of Armant, but also develops various digital projects, such as the Karnak Project and the VEGA dictionary, which is available in French, Arabic, English, and German. Teaching and research programmes provide training for students from all over the world at different educational levels. It also has an extensive library of more than 35,000 volumes and various scientific archives with documentary material compiled by some of the members of this institution over decades.

For the last 15 years, the ENiM team has been publishing an online journal named ENiM - Égypte Nilotique et Méditerranéenne and two collections, CENiM - Les Cahiers Égypte Nilotique et Méditerranéenne, to which this volume also belongs, and TDENiM - Textes et documents de l’ENiM. For all the students and staff of the ENiM team, welcoming the CRE in Montpellier has been an excellent opportunity to meet young researchers in Egyptology from all over the world, creating links between different generations of scholars.

Since its first edition in Oxford in 2000, the core goal of CREs has been to bring together young researchers in Egyptology from all over the world. Each session of the CRE 2022 Montpellier saw the presence of a majority of post-graduate students and young post-doctoral researchers. The Organising Committee of CRE 2022 Montpellier would like to express its gratitude to all participants and attendees of the conference for their inspiring contributions and the positive and friendly atmosphere created during the days of the conference. We hope attendees found in the CRE the ideal framework for presenting their research in progress, whether doctoral theses or broader research projects, and that this experience will remain a pleasant memory for everyone.

CRE 2022 Montpellier would not have been possible without the support of many scientific and institutional partners. Special thanks go to Sébastien Biston-Moulin for his support and invaluable help during all stages of the conference organisation, as well as to Jérôme Gonzalez, Marie-Laure Chênebeau,



and Sandra Reboullet for their guidance with all the administrative subtleties and their unwavering support for this event. We would also like to thank the researchers representing various French institutions who kindly agreed to participate in our conference by giving a keynote lecture: Sylvie Donnat, Marc Gabolde, Jérôme Gonzalez, Sandra Lippert, Frédéric Mougenot, Bérangère Redon, Isabelle Régen, Pascal Vernus as well as the thirty-one members of the symposium's scientific committee, who are recognised researchers from various French and foreign institutions.

The authorities of the Université Paul Valéry-Montpellier 3 supported each and every step of our project, providing us with the conference locations, funding, and technical facilities for the CRE. We would like to thank first and foremost its president, Anne Fraïsse, and the two vice presidents of the university's Scientific Advisory Board, Sarah Hatchuel and Nathalie Vienne-Guerrin, as well as all the staff and departments who helped to organise this event.

We are honoured to thank the region Occitanie through its president, Carole Delga, represented at this event by Fadilha Benammar Koly, president of the international relations commission of the Occitanie region, the Montpellier City Council and Montpellier Métropole, through Michaël Delafosse, Mayor and President of Montpellier Méditerranée Métropole, and his representative at the event, Clare Hart, Vice-President in charge of International Affairs and European Cooperation.

We shall also mention the LabEx ARCHIMEDE and the Hierolexique foundation through their director, Frédéric Servajean, and their project director, Sandra Reboullet, as well as the National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) for having contributed to the realisation of the conference. The events that took place alongside the congress were made possible by the Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilizations (MUCEM) in Marseille and the Montpellier Tourist Office.

Last but not least, we would like to thank all our colleagues and students who helped us during the whole process.

The present volume includes thirty-two articles on various topics from the history of Egyptology to archaeology and material culture, from the Predynastic to the Roman period, through history and epigraphy, as well as new technologies. All of them were reviewed by the members of the scientific committee, recognised scholars who contributed significantly to the quality of these proceedings through their constructive comments and advice. A special thanks goes to them for helping us in the peer review process of both the abstracts and the subsequent papers.

We are grateful to all the contributors for sending their papers and keeping with the tight schedule that led to the swift publication of these proceedings, as well as to Mike Schurer and Gerald Brisch from Archaeopress for their efficiency.

As we present the volume a year after CRE 2022 Montpellier took place, we would like to extend our warmest congratulations and best wishes to the Basel Egyptology team and all the participants in the CRE 2023 edition: may you have a successful and enriching congress!

The Editors



*Group photo taken on September 27th 2022 in the Cour des Marronniers, Saint Charles, Université Paul Valéry-Montpellier 3.  
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# The Registration, Collections Management, and Documentation at the Egyptian Museum, Cairo: The Researchers and the Publication

Marwa Abdel Razek

## Abstract

The Egyptian Museum in Cairo has the largest collections dating from the Predynastic to Greco-Roman Periods. From 1858 to 1989, all the artefacts were recorded only in the register books. By 1990, the Council of Ministers applied a digital system that included all the hand-written recorded objects. Unfortunately, after some ten years this system stopped. About six years later, the Supreme Council of Antiquities started a cooperation project with the American Research Centre in Egypt to establish a digital collection management system for the Egyptian Museum, the aim of which was to develop a clear protocol that could be used in the future to help all archaeologists around the world. Before 2007, no written handbook existed that explained how the documentation system runs within the museum. This contribution will discuss the history of the department, and its current role in the Museum, especially its policies for scholar requests and the software used in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo before the setting up of the Registration, Collections Management, and Documentation Department (RCMDD) and now. Also, this article will provide an overview of some of the registration systems, including the backups, in relation to department protocol.

## Keywords

Egyptian, Museum, Documentation, Numbers, Database, Request, Policy

## Introduction

Up until the 1990s, most of the registering system for antiquities at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo (EMC) was manual. In 2006, the idea for a digitised Registration, Collections Management, and Documentation Department (RCMDD) at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo was proposed, and it was formed in January 2007 as a training project for Egyptian staff by the American Research Centre in Egypt (ARCE), with a grant from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The project started with three trainers and four trainees, and currently has eight registrars. The RCMDD is considered the first centralised system for the care, maintenance, and documentation of the collections of a museum in Egypt. It is responsible for overseeing all the collections of the EMC, manually and digitally. One of its aims was to develop a clear protocol that could be used in the future by scholars and museum staff.

## **Primary Responsibilities of the Registration, Collections Management, and Documentation Department (RCMDD)**

The RCMDD has two primary areas of responsibility:

### **(A) General**

- Assisting the section heads with the accessioning of new objects, including registering objects in the *Journal d'entrée* (JE) and completing database records for new objects, or those unregistered previously
- Tracking all object movements, and updating the museum's centralised records, both manually and digitally
- Carrying out object inventories and maintaining accurate centralised location records for all museum objects
- Coordinating and managing various aspects of outgoing loans, in-house exhibitions, and recording all loans and exhibitions, both manually and digitally
- Receiving research requests, whether personally or via email, working on them, co-ordinating with the museum section heads on photographic requests of objects, and sending them to the researchers
- Managing and maintaining labels and panels for museum objects and galleries
- Keeping all centralised object records up to date and accurate, both manually and on the museum database

(B) From 2007, certain EMC curators and registrars have specific responsibilities (*Registration, Collections Management, and Documentation Protocol Manual 2011*)

- The associate registrar for the permanent collection is responsible for organising and maintaining permanent collection documents, both manually and digitally
- The associate registrar for object movements assists with all object handlings within the museum, and works with the associate registrars for the Permanent Collections, Loans, and Exhibitions Department (PCLED) to make sure all movements are supervised and entered onto the database. This individual liaises with the Curatorial Coordinator to make sure activities involving museum committees are approved and scheduled
- The associate registrar responsible for loans manages and coordinates those objects requested and approved for out-going loans
- The associate registrar for exhibitions is responsible for managing and coordinating the objects requested and approved for in-house exhibitions
- The associate registrar for information technology (IT) is responsible for overseeing the IT needs of the RCMDD
- The associate registrar for office management is responsible for ensuring that the office is organised. This includes, but is not limited to, overseeing the physical plan, making sure all aspects of the manual system are in place, and making sure the necessary supplies are available

### **The Egyptian Museum Cairo (EMC) numbering system**

The Egyptian Museum in Cairo has four official numbering systems currently in use (numbers recorded in an official museum book), i.e. three separate registers and a published series: the *Journal d'entrée* (JE),

the *Catalogue Général* (CG), the Temporary Register (TR), and the Special Register (SR). Some objects have been assigned a number from only one of these systems, while other objects have all four number categories. An object may also have more than one number in one of these systems, having been registered in the same series more than once, and sometimes because it was included with multiple, previously registered objects (Kamrin 2012).

Several additional numbering systems are in common use by curators and scholars, and thus have become semi-official numbers. This is compounded by the fact that the museum is part of a larger government organisation, the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA), whose name has changed over time. The RCMDD has now developed several additional types of numbers to identify objects that would not otherwise be able to be tracked within the database (Kamrin 2007b; Bothmer 1974).

The RCMDD has divided the numbering systems into (1) Unique and (2) Non-Unique numbers. Unique numbers may be Permanent (EMC Numbers: *Journal d'entrée* (JE), *Catalogue Général* (CG), Temporary registers (TR), Special Register (SR), Educational (EDU), Carter; Legrain, other SCA museums, and SCA Magazines), or Temporary (Provisional, Exhibition 'E'). Non-Unique numbers refer to those related to excavations, specific magazines, and guidebooks. These different systems will be explained in detail below.

### Unique Permanent Numbers

#### *Journal d'entrée* (JE)

This numbering system began in the 19th century. The earliest excavation date recorded is 1858, and the earliest recorded registration occurs in the same year. The numbers are sequential (with occasional gaps) and ranged from 1 to 101174, dated to 5 January 2023. JE numbers are recorded in a series of 26 handwritten register books, of which the latest (JE XXVI) was begun on 22 May 2022. JE numbers are written usually on the objects in black ink. It should be noted that they appear in several ways in

JE XXV Page 1


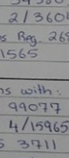

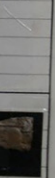

JE NUMBER	ORIGINAL POSITION	TITLE/DESCRIPTION	DATING	MATERIALS	DIMENSIONS (IN MAX CM)	PROVENANCE	SOURCE	REMARKS (OTHER ID, BIB)	PHOTOGRAPH
99595	P 52	Mummy of unknown woman A (Hatchepsut?) Obese woman, in good condition with most bandages gone. Age estimated at 45-60	Dyn. 18 reign of Hatchepsut	Mummy, linen	H 159 cm	Valley of the Kings, KV 60	Excavated by Howard Carter in 1903 for T. Davis	SR 1/15143	
99596a 99596b		Two fragments of a label of Den. a- representation of a King holding a rope b- representation of a wall part	Dyn. 1 reign of Den	Ivory	a- W 2.5 cm H 2 cm b- W 1 cm H 0.8 cm	Abydos, Tomb of Den	Excavated by G. Dreyer for the German Institute, a- 3/11/1946 b- 16/3/1949	Joins to: JE 34909 SR 2/ Reg. 563 a, b	
99597		Lower part of Gaa gaming rod (the upper part depicts a board Asian)	Dyn. 1, reign of Gaa	Ivory	L 4.7 cm W 2 cm D 0.5 cm Tbtl (reconstituted) L 24.7 cm	Abydos, Umm El Qaab, Tomb of Gaa	Excavated by G. Dreyer for the German Institute	Joins with: JE 34386 SR 2/3604 Abydos Reg. 268 K. 1565	
99598		Fragment of a relief from tomb chapel of Ramsesankh, depicting him raising hands in prayer. Part of a bouquet and the lot of an offering jar can be seen in front of him.	Dyn. 20 reign of Ramses VI	Sandstone	H 41 cm W 38 cm D 21 cm	Dea Abu el-Naga	Excavated by D. Paltz for the German Institute of Archaeology in 1948	Joins with: JE 99079 SR 4/15965 KS 3711 Reg. 81	
99599A		Single gold pendant ring in 2 parts: round disc shape with triangular pendant in the shape of grapes.	Roman period, 2nd century A.D.	Gold	Wt 1.96 gr	Sinai, Qasrawet, Tomb T-2	Excavated by E. Oren for Ben Gurion University in 1974	SR 1/15144	

Figure 1. JE - *Journal d'entrée* (© Egyptian Museum, Cairo).

academic sources, i.e. 'Journal d'entrée du Musée', 'Museum Journal', 'JE', 'JdE', 'Ent. No.', 'Cairo J.', or 'J.' (Kamrin 2007a; RCMD Protocol 2011) (Figure 1).

### Catalogue Général (CG)

The CG are scholarly publications, in which objects are grouped by category (e.g. Stelae, Statues, Coffins) and are given a sequential number within a series. The total number of volumes varies according to the publication, but as of 2022 there were approximately 92 books. There are also a number of unpublished manuscripts in the possession of the museum, several of which have not yet been traced by the RCMD (as of March 2011). CG numbers given in the unpublished manuscripts are also considered official museum ID numbers. These catalogues continue to be published, a recent example being the work of Andrzej Niwinski on wooden coffins since 2016, and the Potteries Project of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities since 2019 (Figure 2).

Some of the museum antiquities can have CG numbers only, without a Temporary Register (TR) or JE reference. They are written on the objects in red, and they are also cross-referenced within the other registers (i.e. JE, TR, and Special [SR]) in the same colour. Again, this numbering is referenced in several ways in academic publications, i.e. 'Cat. No', 'Cat.', 'Catalogue Général', 'Cairo Catalogue', 'Museum Catalogue', 'CG', 'CGC' (Figure 2).


## CATALOGUE GÉNÉRAL DES ANTIQUITÉS ÉGYPTIENNES DU MUSÉE DU CAIRE.

Nr. 1—380.

### STATUEN UND STATUETTEN VON KÖNIGEN UND PRIVATLEUTEN.



TEIL 1.

Begonnen am 2. Dezember 1896.

1. Statue des  (?), kniend. — Rotbunter Hornblendegranit von besonders dunkler Färbung. — Höhe: 0,39 m. — 1888 in Mitrahinne gefunden. Dyn. 3<sup>1)</sup>

φ = 32-1/7

**HALTUNG.** Geradeausblickend. Beide Unterschenkel untergeschlagen. Die Füße berühren den Boden mit der Unterseite der Zehen. Die geöffneten Hände liegen mit den Handflächen auf den Oberschenkeln. — Fußbrett viereckig, flach.

**TRACHT.** Kleine, die Ohren ganz verdeckende Lockenperücke, ohne genauere Detaillierung der einzelnen Löckchen, die in konzentrischen Kreisen um den Wirbel stehen:  Kurzer, bis zu den Knien reichender glatter Schurz mit Andeutung  des Gürtels oder Umschlages auf der Rückseite.

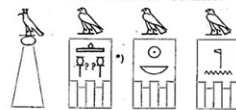
**FARBEN.** Keine Spuren.

**INSCHRIFTEN.** Auf dem Fußbrett in erhabenen, altertümlichen Hieroglyphen<sup>2)</sup>: →



Hinten auf der r. Schulter in vertieften Linien und in besserer Schrift: →

<sup>\*)</sup> Lies  ↓ ↓.



<sup>1)</sup> Datierungen, welche nach Inschriften, Fundumständen oder aus ähnlichen Gründen als gesichert zu betrachten sind, sind fett gedruckt. Die übrigen beruhen auf Schätzungen auf meist stilistischer Grundlage.

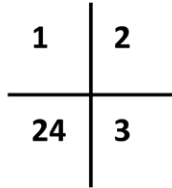
<sup>2)</sup> Die Pfeile bei Inschriften zeigen die Richtung an, nach der im Original die Hieroglyphen sehen.

Figure 2. CG - Catalogue Général (© Egyptian Museum, Cairo).



NUMBER	POSITION	DESCRIPTION	MATERIAL	DIMENSIONS	PROVENANCE	REMARKS	PHOTOGRAPH
142 14.6 14.12		Amulet with the royal name of Sen-Raay-Ra	steatite	1.17 x 0.8 x 0.12	Giza's Saqqara	File: 12/16/11	
14.6 14.12		id.	id.	1.07 x 0.81	id.	id.	
14.6 14.12	Neubrunn Cairo	Coin (austrian) : Gato middle age inscribed: AUSTRIEN 1791				id.	
14.6 14.12	Pa... 14.12	Heart amulet with Hathor head on relief attached by wire to a large thick of the lotus	Red Jasper Gold	Heart H. 05 1.07 x 0.105	Tanis Mondak 1933	From female mummy in Room II "Shahangy amulet"	
14.6 14.12		Elongated amulet (beetle plate)	Gold plate	VI. 230			
14.6 14.12		Heart amulet	Yellow gold	H. 025			
14.6 14.12		Amulet	Gold plate	H. 025			
14.6 14.12		Thoth amulet	id.	H. 025			
14.6 14.12		Small ring and its shell	Gold foil	max. 0.7 min. 0.05			
14.6 14.12		String of conical waded beads	Gold	L. 70			
14.6 14.12	Recept of Amulet	Rosea Coin 411 in number of which 179 are assigned in our museum - 23 in the possession of the Museum - the rest are kept for other museums.	Alloy		Alexandria	File: 6. 10/1107	
14.6 14.12	Recept of Amulet	Molds for Alexandrian Coins in Cairo	Time-Clay		id.	id.	
14.6 14.12	For G... M... 14.6 14.12	Pocket containing fragments of G... papyrus, parchment and paper	Papyrus parchment paper			Found by Mrs. Sakhad in the Magazine of the Rasps' office File	
14.6 14.12	14.6 14.12	Amulet of... Dionysos & Pantheon of Dionysos	Time-Clay	0.9 x 0.9	Idia (alab.)	Found under an lot. 1689 - 1704. Dates 4-12/11. Compare with lot. 1689 - 1704. Dates 4-12/11. (Compare with lot. 1689 - 1704. Dates 4-12/11.)	
14.6 14.12	14.6 14.12	Amulet of... Dionysos & Pantheon of Dionysos	id.	0.9 x 0.9	Idia		

Figure 3 (a-b). TR - Temporary Register (© Egyptian Museum, Cairo).



**Temporary Registers (TR)**

These numbers were allocated in the past by curators if they were unsure whether an object already had a JE or CG number assigned to it, or if they were uncertain whether an object would be officially accessioned. They were also often used for organic items. The series began in 1914, and there are 12 handwritten TR. The system was discontinued in August 2007, and no TR numbers have been given to objects from this time.

TR numbers on objects are written in a cross pattern: day upper left, month upper right, year lower left, and a sequential number for that day in the lower right (Figure 3a). TR numbers are often deleted in the TR record once a JE or CG number has been assigned to it, but the original TR is often still used as reference. This should always be included in database records as an official ID number. In the academic sources, this numbering is mentioned as: 'Temporary Number', 'Temp. No.', 'TR 5/12/25/1', 'TR 5.12.25.1', 'Yard Number' (RCMDD Protocol 2011; Rashaed and Bdr El Din 2018) (Figure 3b).

**Special Registers (SR)**

In the 1960s, the museum was divided into seven Sections, corresponding roughly to chronological divisions or object categories, and/or to galleries in the museum, although there are exceptions to both systems. In July 2022 the General Director of the EMC, Ms. Sabah Abdel Razeq, decided to register in the *Journal d'entrée* all the EMC Basement collections not previously registered in the Basement Book (Section 8). The Sections are:

- Section 1: Jewellery, the King Psusennes I and II collections, and the Tanis collection. Section 1 was responsible for Tutankhamun and the royal mummies until 2022, before most of the Tutankhamun collection moved to Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM) and the royal mummies went on display in the National Museum for Egyptian Civilization (NMEC)
- Section 2: Prehistoric and Old Kingdom Periods

- Section 3: Middle Kingdom
- Section 4: New Kingdom
- Section 5: Third Intermediate Period through Greco-Roman
- Section 6-C: Coins and Section 6-P: Papyri
- Section 7: Ostraca, Coffins, Textile, Canopic Jars, Mummies, Scarabs
- Section 8: Newly assigned section in the EMC by the RCMDD (from 2007) for the Basement collections

Only objects still in the museum and generally on the display floors at this time, or accessioned subsequently, were given SR numbers and catalogued in a series of handwritten special registers maintained by the individual sections. SR numbers are allocated in the format: 'SR + section number + sequential number'. Objects that left the museum or which were in the basement were not given SR numbers (RCMDD Protocol 2011; Rashaed and Bdr El Din 2018).

SR numbers should not be written on objects, but are attached or placed near them on separate labels. However, occasionally an SR number can be found on the object, usually in black ink, and this can easily be confused with a JE number. Some basement objects are labelled, usually on a separate slip of paper, i.e. 'N 1234', however these numbers are not used by museum staff.

The curators in charge keep the SR Books under lock and key, and the actual books cannot be consulted without the permission of the relevant curator in charge. In addition, there are 15 old Basement Books arranged in seven series, all of which begin with the number 1. By agreement between the head of Section 8 and the RCMDD, these are designated as, i.e., 'SR 8-N/1234', where 'N' is a letter assigned to the series according to the following list:

- King Farouk Collection = SR 8F
- Various = SR 8V
- Medamud Objects = SR 8M
- Aniba Objects = SR 8A
- Basement Pottery = SR 8P
- Corridor SS56 = SR 8B
- Sinai Objects = SR 8S

In addition to the other special registers, there is a Garden Book, in which all the objects that were on display in the museum garden at one point were listed. Most also have JE, TR, or CG numbers, but some have only 'Garden' numbers. The RCMDD has allocated such numbers in a separate format, i.e. 'SR G/43' (Figure 4).

### ***Carter Numbers***

All Tutankhamun objects were given numbers from 1 to 620 by Howard Carter during his works and they are still maintained in the EMC registering database. These numbers are subdivided by alphas: e.g. 'Carter 256-a', 'Carter 256-b', 'Carter 256-bb', 'Carter 256-aaa', with 'Carter 256-aaaa' becoming 'Carter 256,4,a'. These numbers are not written on the objects, but are often found in displayed showcases in association with the objects.

Scholars and museum staff frequently refer to these numbers, which are unique, when they mention Tutankhamun objects. They are thus considered valid and semi-official ID numbers, being used as such within the database. The principal source for the Carter numbers is the Griffith Institute website.<sup>1</sup>

**Legrain K. Numbers (= Karnak)**

These are the excavation numbers assigned to the statues and statue fragments discovered by Georges Legrain at Karnak in the early 1900s. These are principally accessible through the Institut français d'archéologie orientale (Ifao) database.<sup>2</sup>

**Supreme Council of Antiquities Museum and Magazine Numbers (SCA)**

Numbering systems of other official SCA museums take various formats: e.g. 'Luxor J. 136', 'AR' (Arish Museum), GEM (Grand Egyptian Museum), etc.

Official SCA storage magazine numbers must consist of three parts: a unique identifier for the magazine, an identifier for the register book series within that magazine, and a sequential number. Magazine numbers without these unique identifiers cannot be used in the ID field of the database.

For instance, only objects from the Saqqara magazine will have numbers such as 'SQ.SCA.145'. A new SCA documentation project for this specific magazine system was underway under the supervision of Dr Hussein (as of March 2011). Thus, the RCMDD will not assign magazine numbers to such objects – but will allocate a provisional number within the ID field – and a non-unique sequential number is entered in the 'Magazine Number' field as, i.e., Reg. xxx (RCMDD Protocol 2011).

رقم (No.)	رقم المتحف (Museum No.)	الوصف (Description)	المواد (Materials)	رقم التسجيل (Registration No.)	رقم المتحف (Museum No.)	رقم المتحف (Museum No.)	رقم المتحف (Museum No.)	رقم المتحف (Museum No.)	رقم المتحف (Museum No.)	رقم المتحف (Museum No.)
3301	302	كفن، miniature from Cartonnage sheet, contained in no. 302. Relating to the mummy. Relating to the mummy. Relating to the mummy.	Gold, silver, glass	M. 0. 39.						
3302		Scepter of Ramesses IV with gold and glass.	Emerald, copper, gold, glass	M. 0. 43 B.						
3303		Scepter of gold and silver.	Gold, silver	M. 0. 43 A.						
3304		Scepter of gold.	Gold, silver	M. 0. 53 D.						
3305		Head of Ramesses IV with gold and glass.	Emerald, gold, glass, bronze, silver	M. 0. 33 F.						
3306		Head of Ramesses IV with gold and glass.	Emerald, gold, glass, bronze, silver	M. 0. 43 E.						
3307		Scepter of gold and silver.	Gold, silver, glass	M. 0. 33 G.						
3308	302-30	Head of Ramesses IV with gold and glass.	Gold, silver, glass, bronze, silver	M. 0. 51						
3309		Head of Ramesses IV with gold and glass.	Gold, silver, glass	M. 0. 33 H.						
3310		Head of Ramesses IV with gold and glass.	Gold, silver, glass	M. 0. 10						
3311		Head of Ramesses IV with gold and glass.	Gold, silver, glass, bronze, silver	M. 0. 34						
3312		Head of Ramesses IV with gold and glass.	Gold, silver, glass, bronze, silver	M. 0. 32						

Figure 4. SR – Special Register (© Egyptian Museum, Cairo).

<sup>1</sup> 'Tutankhamun: Anatomy of an Excavation': <http://griffith.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/gri/4tut.html> (RCMDD Protocol 2011).  
<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ifao.egnet.net/bases/cachette/>

### ***Educational Numbers (EDU)***

EDU is a new type of number created by the RCMDD in 2008, and currently in use only by this office. These numbers are given to objects that are not antiquities or art objects, but that need to be tracked as they are held by the museum. An EDU number is given to items that have never been registered and therefore do not fall under the responsibility of a curator. Objects allocated EDU numbers include copies, moulds, and miscellaneous objects (i.e. the Lego statues in the Children's Museum). Only objects with no other museum numbers are given EDU numbers. The database format for these is, e.g., 'EDU.2009.1' ('EDU+year+sequential number') (RCMDD Protocol 2011)

### **Unique Temporary Numbers**

#### ***Provisional Numbers (PV)***

In addition to the unique numbering systems outlined above, the RCMDD has created several temporary numbering systems referred to as Provisional Numbers (PV). These are not used by the rest of the museum and are intended for internal record keeping only. Such numbers are assigned to non-accessioned objects, and are used in the database and in the manual system for the purpose of tracking certain types of objects, i.e.:

- Objects in the basement for which no previous number has yet been found, but which may have been registered earlier
- Objects entering the museum from outside for purposes other than in-house exhibitions, or before they are accessioned, or before they leave the museum again (if they do not yet have an official SCA number, i.e. a museum or magazine number).
- Objects entering the museum temporarily as part of an SCA loan, either on their way to, or back from the loan (again, if they do not have official SCA ID numbers).

These provisional numbers assigned by the RCMDD are formatted, i.e., 'PV.2007.001' (PV+year+three-digit sequential number). Such numbers are used only for temporary tracking purposes and are replaced as soon as an original JE, CG, TR, SR, or SCA magazine number is provided, i.e. the object is properly accessioned with either a JE or CG number, or the object leaves the museum and is given a number by another SCA museum or magazine. Once a PV number is replaced by an official ID number, the original PV number is recorded in the database's 'Notes' field (RCMDD Protocol 2011).

#### ***Exhibition Numbers (E)***

These are numbers assigned to objects with no official identification number (JE, CG, TR, SR, or other museum/ magazine number) coming temporarily to the EMC for exhibitions. These objects are identified as, i.e., 'E.2007.05.001' (E+year+three-digit sequential number) (RCMDD Protocol 2011).

### **Non-Unique Numbers**

#### ***Excavation Numbers***

Excavation numbers cannot be registered within the ID number field as they are not official SCA numbers and are not unique. They are instead entered within the 'Excavation Number' field, with the format, e.g., 'Exc. No. 1234-ab'. Carter and Legrain numbers, although technically excavation numbers, are treated as official ID numbers by the RCMDD. They should be recorded in the ID number field and in the Excavation number field (without excavation number).

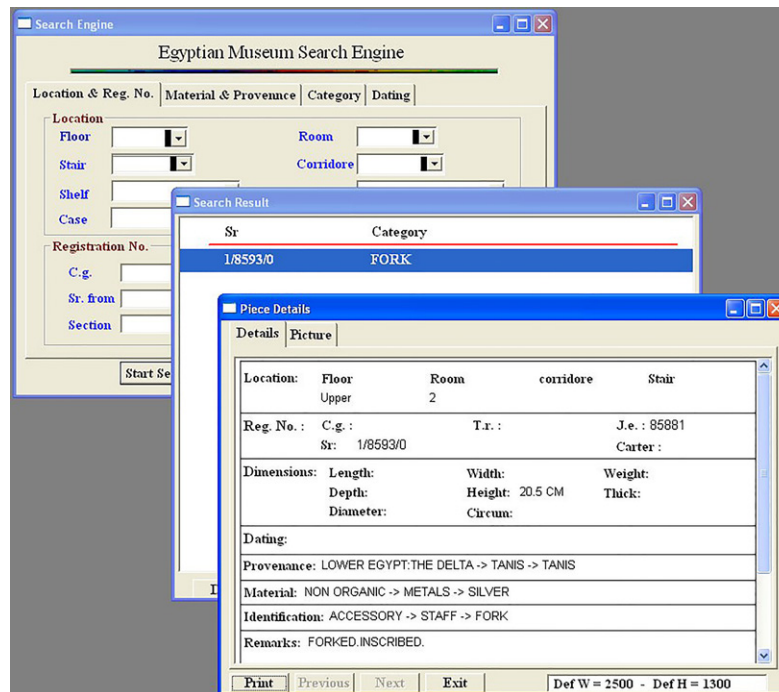


Figure 5. 'Old Search' (© Egyptian Museum, Cairo).

### Magazine Numbers

Objects often come to the museum, mainly for exhibitions, from SCA magazines. These are listed with non-unique numbers, usually as 'Reg.', 'Inv.', or just 'No.', and are to be recorded in the 'Magazine Number' field as, i.e., 'Reg.xxx'.

### Guide Numbers

Several museum guidebooks were written early in the last century (and some even earlier). The register books often mention numbers given to objects in these publications under the object entries. Furthermore, they are also sometimes referred to as 'Exhibition' numbers. These are not official museum or SCA numbers and are not unique. In addition, the RCMDD project does not possess copies of all these books, and the numbering in each is different. The registers, in general, do not distinguish between the various editions and versions.

### Digitisation of Egyptian Museum in Cairo Collection (EMC)

The EMC developed two digital methods for tracking all its collections. One database was trialled before RCMDD, and is referred to within the museum as 'Old Search'. Since 2009, the EMC has employed a collection management database system called 'KE Emu' (Electronic Museum Users). This was created by KE Software, an Australian company based in Manchester, England, which was acquired in 2014 by the Axiell Group.

### 'Old Search'

The most important database system trial began in the 1990s, initiated by the Egyptian Cabinet Information and Decision Support Centre (IDSC) of the Council of Ministers. The museum curators liaised with IDSC personnel and their work was reviewed by EMC section heads. The project was dropped in

**OBJECT HOME PAGE**

Loan: Yes

EMC, GEM, NMEC

**Present Location**  
Museum: EMC, Gallery: R 44, Vitrine/Area: , Shelf/Pup: , Purpose: Conservation

**Permanent Location**  
Museum: EMC, Gallery: R 10, Vitrine/Area: Area B, Shelf/Pup: , Purpose: Display

Image File

Transcription, Location, Condition, People, Label Layout, Movement, Inscriptions, Inventory, Catalogue Card, Scholars/Photo, Quick Lists, Conservation

**ID Numbers**  
CG 616, Luxor J. 901, SR 4/ 13661

**Title**  
Upper Part of a Statue of Ramses II

**Name**  
ramss

**# of objects**  
JE, TR, CG, SR  
CG 616, SR 4/ 13661

**Other Museum**  
Luxor J. 901

**Excavation #**  
**Magazine #**

Inventory Log, Movement Forms, JE, SR, Loan History, Quick List, TR, PM, Movement History, Object List, CG, ER, Scholar/Photo Log, Exhibition/Loan List, Loan Forms, Condition Forms

**Physical Characteristics**  
Height: 80 cm, Length: cm, Width: 70 cm, Depth: cm, Diameter: cm, Weight: gr  
Primary Material: Granite, Other Materials:

**Category**  
Category: Statuary, Subcategory 1: Mummy Layout, Subcategory 2: Statuary Layout  
See Statuary Layout

**Loan Information**  
Loan Number, Loan Name, Dates  
L.2007.03, DPS, 1/1/2008, 12/1/2008  
L.2007.01, The Pharaohs II, 4/11/2007, ??

**Provenance**  
Manner of Acquisition, Region: Delta, Exc./Acquisition Date, Area: Tanis/San el-Hagar, Excavator, Site, Sponsoring Institution, Monument, Source, Feature, Credit Line: Acquisition information not available

**Dating**  
Period: New Kingdom, Dynasty: 19, King: Ramses II, Usermaatre, Registration Date, Insurance Value: 7,000,000 US\$

**Description**  
**Remarks/Notes**  
Taken to Luxor but then brought back to Cairo.  
**Bibliography**

**Recorder**  
Janice Kamrin, Janice Kamrin, Eilina Nuutinen, Amina El Baroudi

**Database Date**  
1/1/2004, 3/18/2005, 2/11/2007, 3/5/2007

**Database Process**  
Record Creation, Label, CG Cross-check, SR Cross-check

**Recorder Remarks**

Figure 6. The EMC FileMaker® database (© Egyptian Museum, Cairo).

2000, but the database is still used (read-only) in the museum by curators and the RCMDD. This database is still an important facility, especially when searching for the ID numbers within the EMC (Figure 5).

### The RCMDD Database

The RCMDD database began in 2007, using FileMaker Pro®. All the information on Egyptian artefacts initially recorded in this database migrated to the 'KE Emu' system on 18 March 2009 (Figure 6). Funding came via a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to the American Research Centre in Egypt (ARCE). The database is currently maintained on a server within the RCMDD offices and consists of 26 modules, of which around 16 are used by the RCMDD. To date (5 January 2023) the database holds information on 170,440 entries.

### The 'KE EMU' Modules

#### Catalogue Module

The 'KE EMU' database includes specific tabs for tracking the EMC collections, facilitating its navigation:

- 'Summary' tab: Edit the main title as informatively and descriptively as possible, but not overlong, choose the correct category, and add all the available ID numbers to the object in the right order, and provide historical dating in detail (Figure 7a-b).
- 'Title/ID' tab: Add the phonetic name (transliterate the hieroglyphs for the name of the object's owner), excavation number, magazine number, and other museum, as well as all visible number(s) on the object.

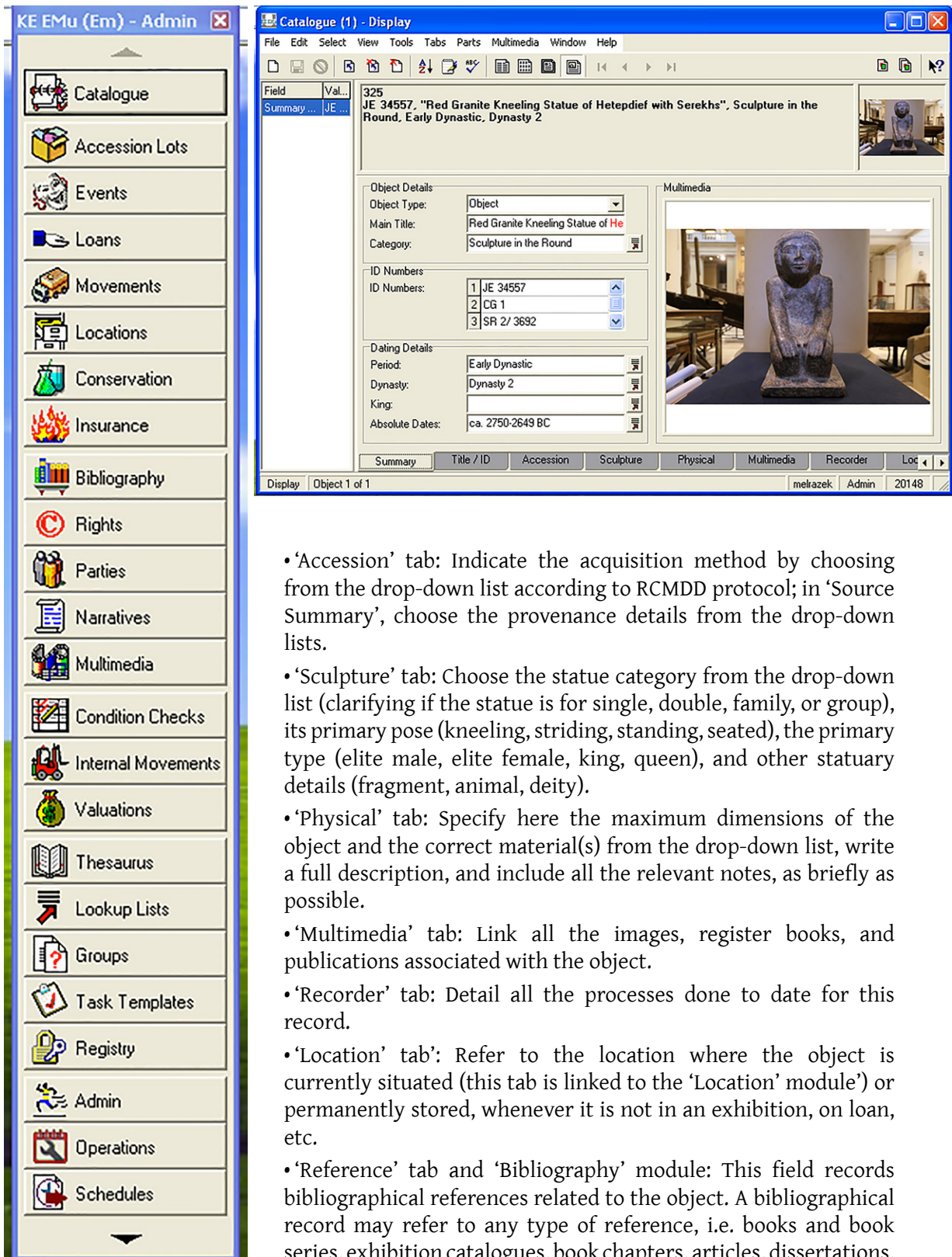


Figure 7 (a-b). 'KE EMu' database modules - 'Summary' tab  
(© Egyptian Museum, Cairo).

- 'Accession' tab: Indicate the acquisition method by choosing from the drop-down list according to RCMDD protocol; in 'Source Summary', choose the provenance details from the drop-down lists.
- 'Sculpture' tab: Choose the statue category from the drop-down list (clarifying if the statue is for single, double, family, or group), its primary pose (kneeling, striding, standing, seated), the primary type (elite male, elite female, king, queen), and other statuary details (fragment, animal, deity).
- 'Physical' tab: Specify here the maximum dimensions of the object and the correct material(s) from the drop-down list, write a full description, and include all the relevant notes, as briefly as possible.
- 'Multimedia' tab: Link all the images, register books, and publications associated with the object.
- 'Recorder' tab: Detail all the processes done to date for this record.
- 'Location' tab: Refer to the location where the object is currently situated (this tab is linked to the 'Location' module) or permanently stored, whenever it is not in an exhibition, on loan, etc.
- 'Reference' tab and 'Bibliography' module: This field records bibliographical references related to the object. A bibliographical record may refer to any type of reference, i.e. books and book series, exhibition catalogues, book chapters, articles, dissertations, electronic resources, websites, etc.

### ***Location Module***

In 2007, the RCMDD started to design an official map for each display gallery within the EMC. Based on these maps, the 'Location' module tracks in detail the location and general conditions of objects.

### ***Object Movement Module***

Each object in the EMC has two locations: its current one (where the object actually is) and its permanent one (the first location for the object when it was originally accessioned). All the movements of the objects are tracked in detail using this module.

### ***Multimedia Module***

In this module, all the artefacts' or event images, including the register books' digital pages, and also any other files in pdf format related to the object's record, are grouped and linked.

### ***Event Module***

This section records details of EMC events, i.e. exhibitions, and includes the following data: exhibition number assigned by the registrars, exhibition title and description, the venue (always the EMC's Exhibition Gallery), the exhibition's start and end dates, as well as the list of objects.

Scholar request information is traceable via this module, including the request number assigned by the registrar, the requester's name, the request description, what the requester needs (publishing, reference images, information, etc.), and the list of requested objects. This module is used for tracking all EMC event details and official documents, i.e. permissions, training, correspondence, etc.

### ***Loan Module***

This module includes all loan details, i.e. loan number assigned by the registrars, short and long name of the outgoing loan, dates, the requesting institution, objects requested, details of venues, insurance details, etc.

### ***Narrative Module***

This module locates labels and panels associated with each EMC object.

### **Study and Publication Procedures for Scholars**

#### ***Rules and regulations for acquiring EMC object images***

The EMC began a researcher policy in 2016, with some guidelines to be followed. Specific documents are required to submit a formal request application to the EMC. Certain fees are also required for permissions.

#### ***General guidelines***

- Scholars may take their own photographs of objects in the EMC, as long copies of all images are given to the Registration, Collections Management and Documentation Department (RCMDD).
- Scholars may also request to be accompanied by an EMC photographer. In both cases,



scholars must be accompanied by an EMC registrar (from the RCMDD) and a curator.

- Images supplied by the EMC may not be cropped or altered in any way without prior approval in writing from the EMC.
- All images remain EMC property and copyright is reserved.
- The EMC credit line for each image should be mentioned for each photograph.
- Permission for the use of images may not be transferred to a third party, and no photographic materials, digital files, or their derivatives may be transferred to any other user, without prior approval in writing from the EMC.
- Once permission for publication is granted from the EMC, the scholar is given a maximum of three years to publish the object. After three years the scholar loses the right to publish the object and must submit a new permission request.
- After the images have been published, scholars must provide five copies of their published article or one gratis copy of their book to the EMC. Alternatively, they may send a PDF of their publication. If these copies are not received within one year of the date of publication, further requests by the scholar will not be considered.
- Study requests for EMC images should be sent to: Egyptian Museum, Tahrir Square, Cairo, Egypt; or by email: emcregistrars@gmail.com.
- Scholars may only make one request per quarter (every three months).

**Required Documents**

- Scholars have to fill out the Study Request Form (it can be submitted by email to the Registrars department or personally at the RCMDD) and include a copy of their national ID (for Egyptians) or passport (for non-Egyptians).
- PhD holders, research project members, Masters and PhD students must send a detailed official letter addressed to the EMC’s General Director, signed and stamped by their institutions.
- The requests should be submitted to the permanent committee on specific issues, i.e. when the requested object is in storage at the EMC; if any special photography (i.e. RTI) is needed; if any special examinations are planned (i.e. X-ray or Cat-Scan).

Requests should be addressed to the Head of the Permanent Committee via email (missions@mota.gov.eg).



Part to be filled by EMC-RCMDD  
 Event:  
 Date:  
 Name:  
 Number of Objects:  
 Fees:

**STUDY REQUEST FORM**

<b>Name:</b>			
<b>Profession:</b>		<b>Affiliation:</b>	
<b>Academic Degree:</b>		<b>Nationality:</b>	
<b>Email:</b>		<b>Phone:</b>	

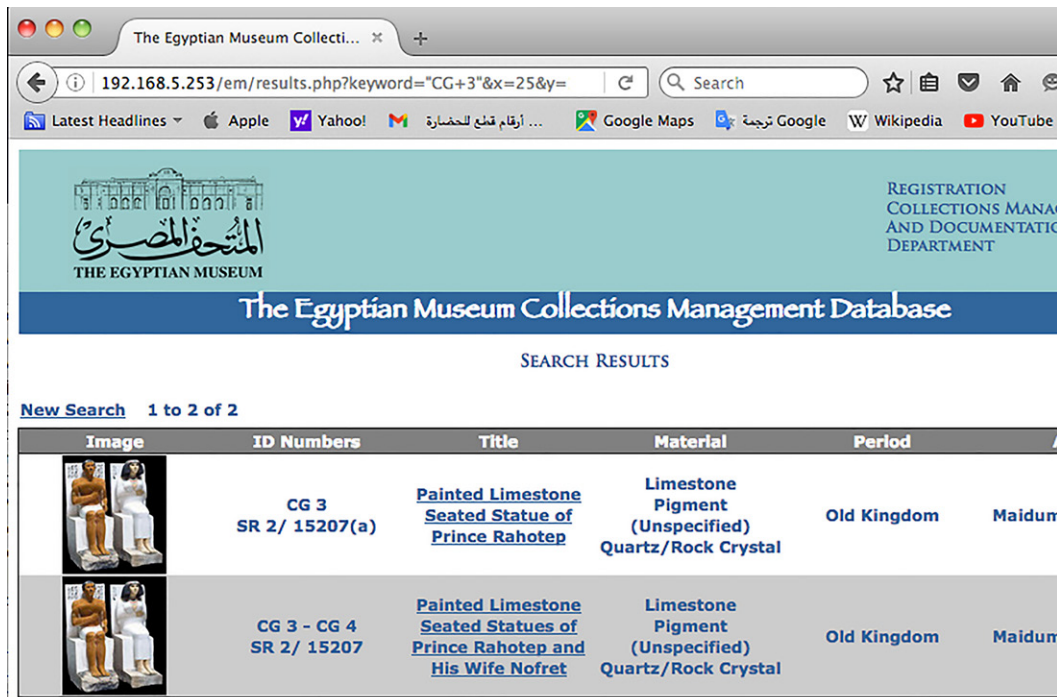
**Request:**  Object information  Photograph(s)  Other:  
**Purpose of request:**  Studying/Reference  Publishing (scientific)

	Object(s) ID number(s)	Object(s) Description	Object(s) Location (to be filled by RCMDD)	Curator Approval
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				

By signing this form, I do confirm that I have read and accepted the “Rules and Regulations for Scholars for the Acquisition of Images of EMC Objects” (General Guidelines + Required Documents + Photography Fees).

<b>Place and Date:</b>	<b>Signature:</b>
------------------------	-------------------

Figure 8. Study Request Form (© Egyptian Museum, Cairo).



The Egyptian Museum Collections Management Database

REGISTRATION  
COLLECTIONS MANA  
AND DOCUMENTATIC  
DEPARTMENT

**The Egyptian Museum Collections Management Database**

SEARCH RESULTS

[New Search](#) 1 to 2 of 2



Image	ID Numbers	Title	Material	Period	
	CG 3 SR 2/ 15207(a)	<a href="#">Painted Limestone Seated Statue of Prince Rahotep</a>	Limestone Pigment (Unspecified) Quartz/Rock Crystal	Old Kingdom	Maidum
	CG 3 - CG 4 SR 2/ 15207	<a href="#">Painted Limestone Seated Statues of Prince Rahotep and His Wife Nofret</a>	Limestone Pigment (Unspecified) Quartz/Rock Crystal	Old Kingdom	Maidum

Figure 9. Internal Search in RCMDD (© Egyptian Museum, Cairo).

### Current Photographic Fees (2023)

- Outside Egypt: 5 US Dollars per object.
- Within Egypt: 10 Egyptian Pounds per object.
- SCA Employees: 5 Egyptian Pounds per object.

### Outside Request Form

The form requires the following from the applicant:

- Name, profession, affiliation, academic degree, nationality, email, and phone number.
- What is the nature of the request from the EMC (images, object information, etc.).
- Purpose of the request (study/reference, scientific publication, etc.).
- Detailed list, with EMC object numbers, title, location, the relevant curator(s)' signatures. Each request cannot usually exceed ten objects, but specific researchers may request more (e.g. for coins, ostraca, etc.).
- Signature. By signing the request form the scholar confirms that he/she has read the document and accepts the EMC's terms and conditions for requests (EMC Scientific Research Policy 2016) (Figure 8).

### Internal Search in RCMDD

Researchers and SCA staff can search for object information either directly from the RCMDD database or consult the registered collections in the EMC and other museums. The first step is for the researcher to sign into the relevant search list, and then access the internal search facility of the EMC database (Abdel Razek 2020) (Figure 9).

## Online Egyptological Bibliography (OEB)

The RCMDD offers free access to the OEB, and researchers access this by signing into the relevant search list.

## Conclusion

Documentation and registration of the holdings of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo (EMC) is an essential part of the institution's progress towards making its collections understandable and appreciated by as wide an audience as possible. Indeed, there is no meaningful museum setting without proper documentation. Initially, this documentation was done through manual procedures, and then transferred to a professional database that was established especially for the EMC's collections. Today, with the advent of digital technology, the paradigm has shifted from physical to digital. The Registration Collection Management and Documentation Department (RCMDD) started by digitising all the registers, scanning all the documents relating to the museum and its collections, and uploading all the possible data and documents into the collection management database.

This present contribution is aimed essentially at presenting an overview of this new digital registration system, explaining its significance, and outlining the digital tools currently in use at the EMC, with the corresponding policies and protocols. In essence, digitisation enhances the impact of museum collections. In this sense, since 2007, the RCMDD has fundamentally contributed to the EMC, via the digital documentation of museum collections, curating vital information, accessibility, and the preservation of collections. Thanks to it, researchers and staff members can easily access the internal search facility and object documentation. Furthermore, the EMC's digital database lies at the heart of its current research, education, creativity, employment, entertainment, economic growth, and sustainable development. Clearly, since there are museums in Egypt that have not yet been digitised, the RCMDD provides a pioneering model.

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# Acceptable Behaviour in the Presence of the King During the New Kingdom

Sally Bahgat

## Abstract

This topic explains one of the aspects of my actual PhD project, which is entitled ‘Social protocol in ancient Egypt: The system of rules and acceptable behaviour between classes of society during the New Kingdom (c. 1550 to 1070 BC)’. The PhD project aims at understanding social dynamics and hierarchy among the elites and at the court of the ancient Egyptian New Kingdom.

The objective of this contribution is to discuss the attested social protocol between the king and his high-ranking officials in different contexts during the New Kingdom. Many individuals of different social categories were participating in various events in which the king attends. Certain standards and rules had to be followed for these events, and each individual had his own task, place, attire, and attitude. We look here for an understanding of the system of rules governing the appropriate behaviour of individuals around the king in formal situations, in addition to examining the possibility for the officials to have a direct contact with the king, according to textual and iconographical sources.

## Keywords

Protocol, Respect, Society, Behaviour, Attitude, Decorum

## Rules of protocol in the presence of the king in textual sources

The main rules governing the appropriate behaviour between individuals in formal situations have been mentioned many times in different textual sources. These sources are of epigraphic and non-epigraphic nature. Inscriptions are biographical and legal texts engraved on the walls of private tombs, where rules of protocol are clearly described, or texts accompanying different categories of scenes in tombs or temples. For example, one of the accompanying texts of a representation, on the west wall of the first hall in the tomb of the chief scribe of Amun Neferhotep TT 49 at El-Khôkha (Davies 1933: 22, pl. LXI, E), describes the sequence that was followed when a high-ranking official intends to enter the palace to meet the king to receive rewards. The representation depicts Neferhotep standing inside the palace before King Ay, raising his hands in a gesture of joy and gratitude. His neck is encircled with collars, while his servants still decorate him and others anoint him. In front of the king, fan bearers, courtiers, and attendants bow to express respect (Davies 1933: 21-22, pl. XIII and LXI E; Gaballa 1976: 92; Hodel-Hoernes 2000: 186). Neferhotep explains his entrance to the palace and the individuals participating in the event saying:



*nis[=tw]≠fr šsp ḥ ø d=wn n=ī nbw n-dr-≠sn m-b3ḥ t3 r-dr≠f<sup>c</sup>q~n(=i) wnf(=w)(?) pr~n(=i) m ḥb rmt {tw}*

*hr nhm n(=i) bw-nb hr dd n dnw=f nfr=w ḥ3(w) hr w3d n(y) p3 ḥq3 nfr p3 hnmw qd(w)*

‘May he [be] called to be greeted (in) the palace. Given to me is the gold without limit in the presence of the whole land. (I) entered in joy and I went out in a festive mood. The people cheer, each one saying to his relative “How joyful is the life of one who stands under the prosperity of the good ruler, the Khnum who builds!” (Davies 1933: 22)

Changes in the royal protocol during the New Kingdom are indeed documented in various texts. Thus, a passage from the Edict of King Horemheb (Helck 1958: 2159-2160; Kruchten 1981: 178-179; Pflüger 1946: 266-267), the successor of Tutankhamun and Ay, indicates that measures are taken to reorganise the protocol of the entry of the dignitaries to the palace as follows:



*t3y tb.wty šms=sn m wsh.wt n ḥn.wty wstn m prt h3y.t hr sb3.w=f nn dd ḥ3 [...] [dd=sn] ink p3 sr ḳ=sn hr sb3.w [nw pr nsw] m ifd hr ssmt r bw dsr tsm m iry (r) rd.wy šmsy hr pḥw.w [...] =sn [...] r'y.t sd [m] [...] tby m tb.wty ḥt m imy-ḥf=f mī ḥ[w]y nw pr '3 m [...] r ḥ'w=f mī sp tp mtr n=i nmtt n ḥnw. ty nt-<sup>c</sup> n ḥnw k3p*

‘Sandal bearers accomplish their service in the halls of the inner palace, unhindered going and coming through its doors without (having to) say: ‘[...] I am the official!’. They enter through the gates [of the palace], speedily by chariot, up to the splendid place, with a greyhound as a companion following the foot of the servant, [...] court, [...] clothed in [...], shod with sandals, with a staff like the sceptre (?) similar to the shepherd[’s] [...] in the right place as before. I have pointed out the protocol for the inner palace (and) the practices of the interior of the house of the princes.’ (Translation based on Kruchten 1981: 180)

Another example can be referred to from the Quban stela of Ramesses II (Kitchen 1979: 355), where the protocol of the meetings between the king and dignitaries has been explained, in addition, to the responsible persons for arranging such meetings as follows:



*dd in ḥm=f n ḥtm.w bity nty r-gs=f nis mī wr.w im.y-b3ḥ nḍ ḥm=f r=sn hr ḥ3st nt ink ir grg.t m hr st3 in=tw hr-<sup>c</sup>wy m b3ḥ ntr nfr 'w=sn m izw n k3=f hr hnw sn-t3 n ḥr=f nfr*

'His Majesty said to the seal bearer who was by his side: summon the grandees before his Majesty to consult with them about this country. I who shall put the needed arrangements into effect. [They] were immediately ushered in before the good god, their arms (raised) in praise of his spirit, jubilation and kissing the earth to his fair countenance.' (Kitchen 1996: 191)

Such formalities in meetings with the king have also been highlighted in the great Abydos inscription (Kitchen 1979: 326; Mariette 1869: pl. 6, col. 33-35):



*dd in hm=f n nsw htmw nty r gs=f dd.k nis šnwt nsw špsw imy-r mnfyt mi kdw imy-r kzt mī šw=sn hr tpw nw pr mdzt st3 inw m b3h hm=f fsd.w=sn h'm m gbt pd.w=sn hr t3 m h'y sn t3 wy=sn m izw n hm=f*

'Then said his Majesty to the royal seal bearer who was by his side, speak and summon the courtiers, the king's notables, all the infantry generals, the superintendents of works as many as they may be and the masters of the archives. They were then ushered in before his Majesty, their noses approaching the ground, their knees on the floor, in jubilation and paying homage, their arms (raised) in praise of his Majesty.' (Kitchen 1996: 166)

Some textual resources explain the protocol of receiving the king after wars. Priests, high officials, and nobles had to acclaim and praise the victorious king on his return. Some of them hold flower bouquets or raise both hands upwards to express rejoicing, while others prostrate themselves and kiss the earth as a gesture of respect toward the king. One of the accompanying texts of a scene on the exterior north wall of the great hypostyle hall in the temple of Amun at Karnak (Gaballa 1976: 101; Gardiner 1920: 100-101, pl. XI; Kitchen 1975: 10; Lepsius 1849-1859b: pl. 128; Seele and Steindroff 1957: 248-249; The Epigraphic Survey 1986: pl. 6) describes the receiving of King Seti I after his conquest in the south as follows:



*hm.w-ntr sr.w h3ty.w n šm'w mhw ii.y r sw3š n ntr nfr hft ii=f hr h3st Rtnw hr h3k '3 š3 n p3.tw nb mitt=f dr rk ntr*

'The priests, noblemen, and leaders of Upper and Lower Egypt come to pay honour to the good god when he comes from the foreign land of Syria with great and numerous plunders. None like him existed since the god's time.' (Kitchen 1993: 8)

Rules of conduct during ceremonies were illustrated in most of the accompanying texts of festival representations. One of these remarkable scenes is in the second court of the temple of Medinet Habu and includes a relevant text that refers to the order and arrangements to be followed around the king at festivals (The Epigraphic Survey 1940: pl. 197). The scene depicts King Ramesses III setting forth from

his palace to participate in the ceremonies of the feast of Min. The accompanying text (Kitchen 1983: 201) above the scene describes the event as follows:



*nswt hr wts h<sup>t</sup> m hprš nswt hr hzt=f db3 m ikmw n niw.[w] hpš.w h<sup>w</sup> nb.w n šms qnb.t ifd hr phw(y).  
fy nswt msw mš<sup>c</sup> hr s3.sn*

‘The king proceeds on the litter, wearing the blue crown, the escort in front of him, equipped with shields, spear[s], scimitar-swords and all the weapons of parade. Four magistrates go at his rear, with royal offsprings and soldiery following them.’ (Kitchen 2008: 169)

Another text from the above-mentioned scene (Kitchen 1983: 203) refers to the individuals who follow the retinue of the king in such festivals:



*sr.w qnb.t nt mš<sup>c</sup> nty m ššm.w hm=f wd3=f hr wts r pr it=f Min nb Snwt*

‘The notables and magistrates of the army who are in his Majesty’s retinue, (as) he proceeds on the litter to the temple of his father Min, lord of Senut.’ (Kitchen 2008: 171)

### Aspects of royal protocol in iconographical sources

Many aspects of royal protocol are found in the temples and private tombs where some of the scenes are not dealing with the liturgy but show the king being addressed by high-ranking officials, as well as addressing them. Other scenes illustrate the common gestures and postures performed by officials as part of conducting the protocol in the presence of the king, i.e. bowing, raising one or both hands, kissing the earth and prostrating themselves (Wilkinson 1994: 192, 194). Thus, one of the representations on the west wall of the first hall in the tomb of the royal scribe and overseer of the granaries of Upper and Lower Egypt Khaemhat TT 57 at Sheikh Abd El-Qurna can be mentioned in this regard (Attia 2022: pl. 27A; Capart 1942: pl. 533; Lepsius 1849-1859a: pl. 76b). The scene depicts King Amenhotep III seated on his throne to reward the leaders of the estates as well as the chiefs of Upper and Lower Egypt, after the statement from the overseer of granaries that they increased the harvest of year 30. Khaemhat is standing directly in front of the king, bowing slightly forward after he has received the gold of honour, while three rows of individuals stand behind him (Figure 1).

The top row shows Khaemhat being rewarded together with other officials. He raises both hands expressing rejoicing, while an official is placing a collar around his neck. Khaemhat is depicted again while receiving a cone of ointment above his head. The other officials stand respectfully, with one hand grasping the opposite shoulder and the other extended in front of the body. The middle row consists of sixteen officials expressing homage before the king, two kissing the earth, four kneeling and raising one of their hands outwards, while the rest of the officials raise both hands outwards toward the king. The bottom row shows a group of nine officials expressing obedience toward the king by bending their backs and extending both hands in front of their knees (Attia 2022: 136-139).

Certain individuals were permitted to enter the royal palace and have direct contact with the king, while others were not permitted to access the king’s surroundings. Access to the person of the king was

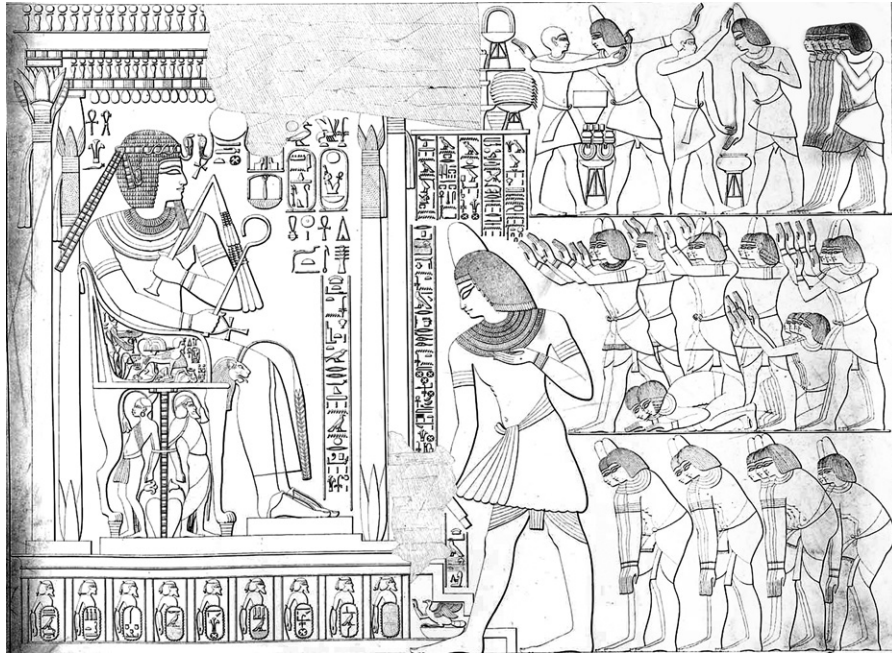


Figure 1. Tomb of Khaemhat TT 57, first hall, west wall (after Lepsius 1849-1859a: pl. 76b).

not confined to the highest-ranking administrative officials and the officials with high status through honorific titles who were meeting the king regularly. Biographical and iconographical sources of the New Kingdom show that some officials encountered the king personally when they are summoned to deliver reports or were appointed by royal commission. Additionally, officials who accomplished special tasks or made a special act of loyalty had exceptional access to the king and were rewarded in the royal palace for their dutiful fulfilment of service (Binder 2008: 50-51).

One of the scenes in the tomb of Ay at Tell El-Amarna is considered a good example of the attested protocol inside the palace in the presence of the king during reward ceremonies (Davies 1908: pl. XXIX; Lepsius 1849-1859b: pl. 103-105). This scene depicts the bestowal of golden collars by King Akhenaten to the fan bearer and the overseer of the horses Ay and his wife Tiy. The king is accompanied by Queen Nefertiti and three of his daughters, who are helping him present the rewards to Ay (Figure 2).

As recipients of the gold of honour were not only allowed to receive the rewards from the hand of the king, but also to have a personal encounter with him and access his surroundings, Ay and his wife can be seen inside the palace, approaching the king to receive the rewards. Tiy raises both hands outwards in a gesture of praise in front of the royal couple.

Behind the porch of the window of appearance, the crowd in the courtyard are divided into groups and ranked in order of precedence. At the back, there are two chariots with two grooms bowing deeply and raising hands outwards toward the royal couple. The second row shows three groups of scribes, Egyptian interpreters, and foreign representatives. They are bowing deeply and raising their hands outwards in a gesture of adoration and praise. The third row shows a group of fan bearers, followed by three squads of police and two guards at the gate. They are all bowing deeply and raising their hands outwards. In the fourth row, there is a group of five high-ranking officials, including a vizier, followed by a group of four sunshade bearers. The two groups are bowing slightly forward and extending their hands outwards. At the end of the row, there is a group of officers with bowmen and spearmen from Libya and Syria, again bowing deeply and raising their hands outwards. In the fifth row, two dignitaries are bowing deeply and



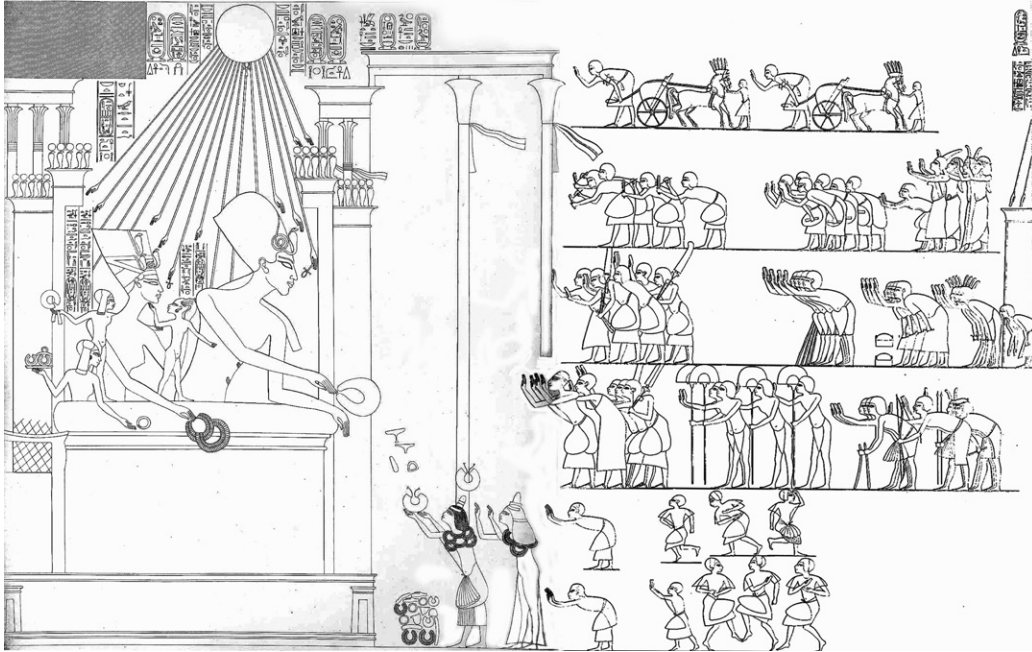


Figure 2. Tomb of Ay, Tell El-Amarna, first hall, north wall (after Lepsius 1849-1859b: pl. 103-105).

extending both hands outwards and a group of dancers celebrating (Davies 1908: 21-22; Dodson and Ikram 2008: 231; Gaballa 1976: 74; Gosse 1915: 139).

Some representations referred to the followed formal arrangements for receiving the king while visiting the temple. This can be found on the north wall of the pillared hall in the tomb of Meryre I at Tell El-Amarna (Davies 1906: pl. X A; Lepsius 1849-1859b: pl. 94). The scene represents the staff of the temple while standing outside the temple to receive the arrival of the royal family (Figure 3).

Different groups of people are arranged in six rows awaiting the arrival of the royal family. They are expressing adoration and praise through different gestures and postures. Guards, female musicians, and servants occupy the first two rows. They express praise and adoration towards the procession of the royal family by raising their hands or by prostrating themselves. The third register shows a group of four kneeling fan bearers; servants with bouquets lead two oxen. Chief servants of

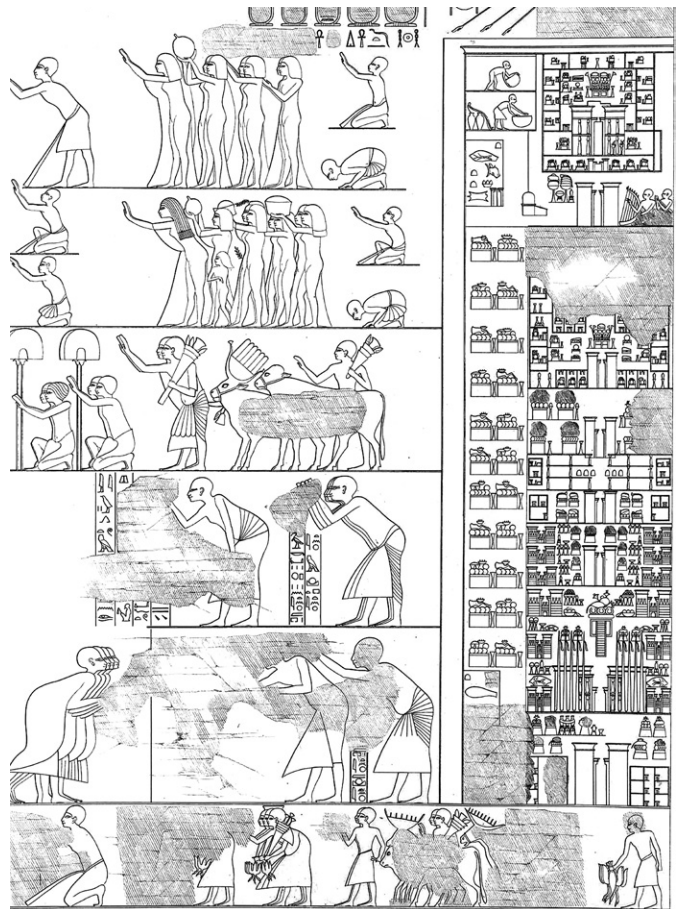


Figure 3. Tomb of Meryre I, Tell El-Amarna, pillared hall, north wall (after Lepsius 1849-1859b: pl. 94).

Aten in the temple occupy the fourth row, showing adoration by bowing and raising hands. In the fifth row, four men from the king's procession are shown running, bowing, clapping, and heading to meet the head officials of the temple, who bow and raise their hands upwards. It seems that the four men are running to announce the king's approach to the temple. The sixth row shows attendants ready to receive the king with bouquets and birds (Davies 1906: 28-29; Gaballa 1976: 75).

The act of addressing the king has been found in different narratives during the New Kingdom. In such narratives the king and one of the officials standing in front of him are extending their right hands towards each other, a conventional gesture indicating that they are talking together. In this case, as a kind of decorum towards the king, the official has to bend his back slightly forward when being addressed by the king. One of the scenes in the first hall of the tomb of Ipuw at Deir El-Medina TT 217, shows King Ramesses II addressing Ipuw during his reward ceremonies (Davies 1927: 46-55, pl. XXVII).

Scenes of celebrating victory include many signs of courtesy toward the king. One of the scenes on the exterior north wall of Medinet Habu Temple, shows King Ramesses III celebrating his victory over the Libyans (The Epigraphic Survey 1930: pl. 22). The king is shown encountering a group of high-ranking officials who are arranged in four rows according to their ranks. All officials are expressing respect before the king by bending their backs forwards slightly. One of them is permitted to address the king and this explains why he is extending his right hand towards the king. The king is surrounded by officers, sunshade bearers and charioteers, who bow slightly forwards as a sign of respect in the presence of the king (Edgerton and Wilson 1936: 13; Gaballa 1976: 121).

Another scene on the north wall of the first court from Medinet Habu temple refers to the order that has been set around the king when celebrating his victory over the Syrians (The Epigraphic Survey 1932: pl. 96). Ramesses III is depicted standing in the middle of the scene. Behind him, and on his left, there are three rows containing eight archers, two sunshade bearers, and two fan bearers. A group of high-ranking officials led by the crown prince have direct contact with the king. They are standing in three lines behind each other. The crown prince is the closest depicted figure to the king; he extends his right hand towards the king. Two officials then bend their backs slightly forwards, extending one of their arms in front of their bodies. Next, we see five officials extending one of their arms in front of their bodies. In front of the king, three rows of captives are being dragged by Egyptian officers, who greet their king by raising their hands upwards. Leading each row is a prince raising one of his hands upwards towards the king (Edgerton and Wilson 1936: 101-102; Gaballa 1976: 127).

## Discussion

A correlation between textual and iconographical sources leads to an understanding of the acceptable decorum and courtesy demonstrated in the presence of the king during the New Kingdom; it also helps us imagine the sequence of rules followed when entering the palace and meeting the king:

1. Summoning the officials by the seal bearer who stands by the king's side.
2. Ushering the officials by the door keepers to enter for the meeting with the king.
3. Arranging the officials according to their rank in front of the king.
4. Certain rules of acceptable behaviour and attitudes needed to be observed in front of the king. These included specific gestures and postures made by officials when approaching the king, whether to express respect (bowing, kneeling, kissing the earth, prostrating themselves, grasping the opposite shoulder), or to express different actions according to the nature of their meeting with the king (addressing, praising, adoring, rejoicing). Both male and female figures followed the same attitudes in front of the king.

5. There are some rules of conduct and formalities that organise the spatial and temporal sequence of officials around the king in formal meetings or ceremonies. Fan bearers walk by the right side of the king. High-ranking officials, such as viziers, always stand in front of him, while lesser officials and servants stand behind him, or on his left.
6. It is worth mentioning that the person of the king was considered more revered and sacred during the Amarna period. Accordingly, officials and courtiers used more expressive gestures and postures than at any other period to convey obedience and respect in the presence of Akhenaten.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to express my deepest thanks to Prof. Dr Benoît Lurson for his sustained support and guidance. My gratitude also goes to the reviewers for their exerted efforts to review this manuscript and all their valuable comments.

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# Insight into the Royal Cult under Amenhotep I at Karnak

Louisa Ben Hamida

## Abstract

The research on the royal cult under Amenhotep I in the temple of Amun-Ra at Karnak is part of two CFEETK research projects: the study and publication of the monuments of Amenhotep I at Karnak and a doctoral research project on the royal cult in Amun's temple. These works intend to highlight the importance of the veneration of the king, of his family and of the royal ancestors in the ruler's achievements at Karnak. Amenhotep I considerably strengthened the presence of the royal cult, i.e. the presentation of offerings to the king, in Karnak, as indicated by his architectural and iconographic program. Thus, the courtyard in front of the Middle Kingdom temple is of great interest because several chapels and niches for the cult of the statue of Amenhotep I were located there. Moreover, the king included the royal cult in the liturgic and economic organisation of the temple. It is illustrated by the 'Ritual of Amenhotep I', the offerings calendar for royal ancestors, as well as the sovereign's calcite bark shrine. This contribution is giving an insight into Amenhotep I's project for his veneration and the worship of his ancestors in the temple of Amun-Ra at Karnak.

## Keywords

Royal cult, Karnak, Amenhotep I, 18th dynasty, Amun-Ra, offering ritual

## Introduction

During his reign, Amenhotep I was particularly involved in artistic and architectural activities (Vandersleyen 2007: 243-244). The pharaoh built many monuments, especially in the Theban area and principally at Karnak, where he began the monumental flourishing of the temple of Amun-Ra by adorning it with many structures. The constructions of Amenhotep I in Karnak represent the first known major architectural addition to the Middle Kingdom temple at a time when the authority of the monarchy was restored. In his projects in the temple of Amun-Ra, the kingship rituals had an important place, as shown by the coronation and jubilee scenes, and the traces of devotion to the royal ancestors. For example, Amenhotep I was greatly inspired by the artistic style of Senusret I. One of the pillars of the so-called 'copy of the Chapelle Blanche' is even a strict copy, in his own name, of the pillar 4.n of the Chapelle Blanche of Senusret I (Graindorge and Martinez 1989: fig. 10; *Projet Karnak*, KIU 1088-1091). Nevertheless, it is principally the 'royal cult', which is the performance of codified ceremonial rites for the sovereign and his ancestors that takes on quite remarkable proportions. Many structures and reliefs show the monarch's interest in royal worship, especially in the courtyard in front of the Middle Kingdom or in the calcite bark-shrine of the king.

However, the monuments of Amenhotep I were quickly dismantled and nothing was left by the reigns of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III. The blocks were reused in the 3rd pylon, in the 'cour de la cachette' and in the foundations of the temple of Montu at North-Karnak. Currently, more than 1000 blocks and fragments of limestone and calcite are identified. The majority is kept in the open-air museum, in the southern storage areas and in the storage rooms of Karnak. A small group is preserved in museums and private collections (Carlotti and Gabolde 2014: 42; Graindorge 2000: 26, 35; 2002: 83). Thus, the study of

these blocks constitutes a considerable research project. Initially implemented under the supervision of Graindorge and Martinez (1989: 36-64; 1999: 169-182; Graindorge 2000: 25-36; 2002: 83-90), the project was transferred in 2006 to Carlotti and Gabolde (Carlotti *et al.* 2019: 4). As part of this study project, this paper aims to present an overview of the structures devoted to the royal cult under Amenhotep I at Karnak.<sup>1</sup>

### The courtyard in front of the Middle Kingdom temple: a ‘royal cult complex’ of Amenhotep I?

The courtyard in front of the Middle Kingdom temple was built by Senusret I and a possible peristyle may have stood there (Gabolde 2018: 225, fig 149 and 339). However, it is Amenhotep I who proceeded to the architectural arrangement of this court (Figure 1). The pharaoh added walls that created two separate spaces: an east court with the bark sanctuary and a solar altar, and a west court with a series of monuments devoted to the royal veneration. They consisted of: 18 niches in the west wall, at least four (or more probably five) little chapels against the north wall, probably followed by a chapel for Amun, not preserved, and five deepest chapels against the south wall, followed by a chapel devoted to Amun (Carlotti to be published<sup>2</sup>). In total, the pharaoh built no less than 27 or 28 structures for the cult of his statues in this courtyard, completed by installations for the cult of the ancestors, as attests the offering calendar on the façade of the northern slaughterhouse. The structures of Amenhotep I were completely

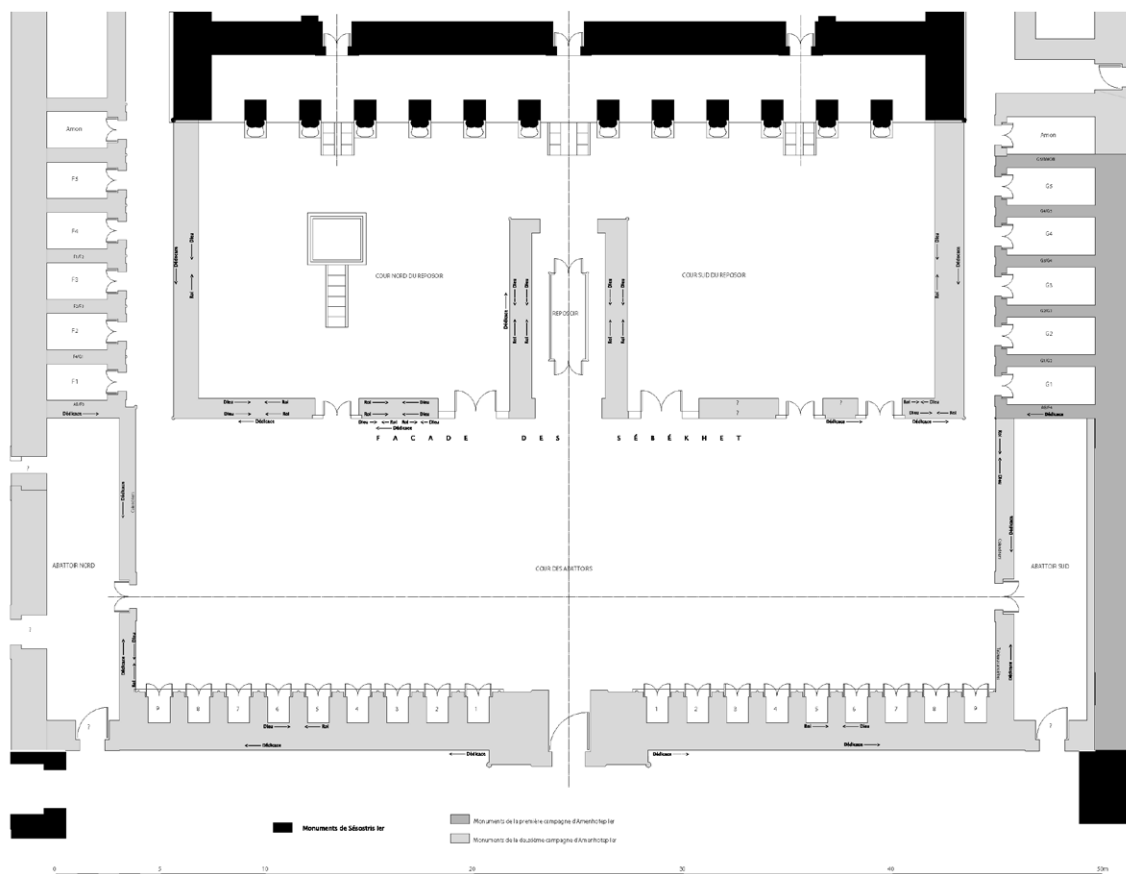


Figure 1. Plan of the courtyard in front of the Middle Kingdom temple under Amenhotep I (© J.-F. Carlotti).

<sup>1</sup> As part of my PhD research on the royal cult at Karnak under the supervision of Prof. Marc Gabolde and Prof. Lilian Postel, I have been involved in this CFEETK project, studying the structures devoted to the royal veneration under Amenhotep I. This project is supported by LabEx ARCHIMEDE from ‘Investir l’Avenir’ program ANR-11-LABX-0032\_01.

<sup>2</sup> Personal communication by J.-F. Carlotti.

dismantled by Hatshepsut for the construction of her offering rooms. After the disappearance of the queen, Thutmose III rebuilt chapels in sandstone for the royal cult in the 6th pylon courtyard at the same place where the chapels of Amenhotep I once stood (Barguet 1962: 124, 126; Porter and Moss 1972: 93, 96; *Projet Karnak*, KIU 1122 and 3439).

### *The niches and the chapels and their decorative programme*

The architecture of the niches and the chapels of Amenhotep I is very similar, not differing from the other known structures of this type. Nevertheless, the southern chapels (h. 310cm, l. 260cm, d. 415cm) are deeper than the northern chapels (h. 310cm, l. 260cm, d. 365cm). The niches are obviously smaller (h. 175cm, l. 110cm, d. 130cm). All these structures were closed by a double door. The architectural study was made by J.-F. Carlotti (to be published).

The chapels and the niches of Amenhotep I follow the same iconographic program. The lateral walls represent the offering ritual to the effigy of the pharaoh, and the rear walls, only preserved for some niches, represent offering scenes of the king to Amun. Even if the chapels of Thutmose III follow the model of the ones of Amenhotep I, they present some differences. There are further chapels on both sides, they are made of sandstone, not limestone; some iconographic details are different and each chapel of Thutmose III associates the veneration of Amenhotep I's statue on one of the lateral walls and the worship of Thutmose III's effigy on the other lateral wall. However, these chapels can still help us to better understand the structures built by the second king of the 18th dynasty.

### *The offering ritual to the statue of the king on the lateral walls*

The representations of the offering ritual to the royal statue are almost identical on each relief. The scenes are simply more developed in the larger spaces, such as the chapels. They represent the image of the enthroned sovereign, always in the same attitude, in front of an offering table. An offering list of type C (Barta 1963: 111-128) surmounts the table. One or several priest(s) is/are presenting the offerings (Figures 2 and 4).

### The king

The representation of the king's effigy is almost always identical. The statue is depicted on a low-backed cubic throne with the *sema-tawy* represented on the side of the seat which stands on a pedestal. The sovereign is wearing the *nemes* headdress, the *shendjyt*, the bull-tail and an *usekh*-necklace. In one upraised hand, he holds a stick, whereas he holds the folded cloth in the other hand over his thigh.

This depiction corresponds to the well-known statuary type of the cult statue of the pharaoh attested by numerous examples in statuary and on reliefs at Karnak and elsewhere. The same iconography is illustrated by the 'Chapelle des ancêtres' (e.g. Delange 2015: 15-111; Porter and Moss 1972: 111-112; Prisse d'Avennes 1847: pl. I; *Projet Karnak*, KIU 6078-6081), the chapels of Thutmose III in the 6th pylon courtyard (Figure 5) (Barguet 1962: 124, 126; Porter and Moss 1972: 93, 96; *Projet Karnak*, KIU 1122 and 3439), the niches and chapels of Deir el-Bahari (Karkowski 2003: 245-248, pl. 41-42, 45-49; Naville 1895: 6-7, pl. IV, VI-VII; 1906: pl. CXXXV-CXXXVI, CXLVI-CXLVII; Porter and Moss 1972: 362 [115a-b, 117a-b], 366-367 [134-137], 374, 378; Rummel 2010a: 248-249 [Kat. 9A], 250-256 [Kat. 11-12]), etc.

The legend accompanying the king presents some of his titles: usually the coronation and birth names, sometimes increased by one of the three other names. Nekhbet, Wadjyt or the Behedety are placed above the statue. In the deepest south chapels, the royal *ka* follows the effigy of the pharaoh (Figure 3)

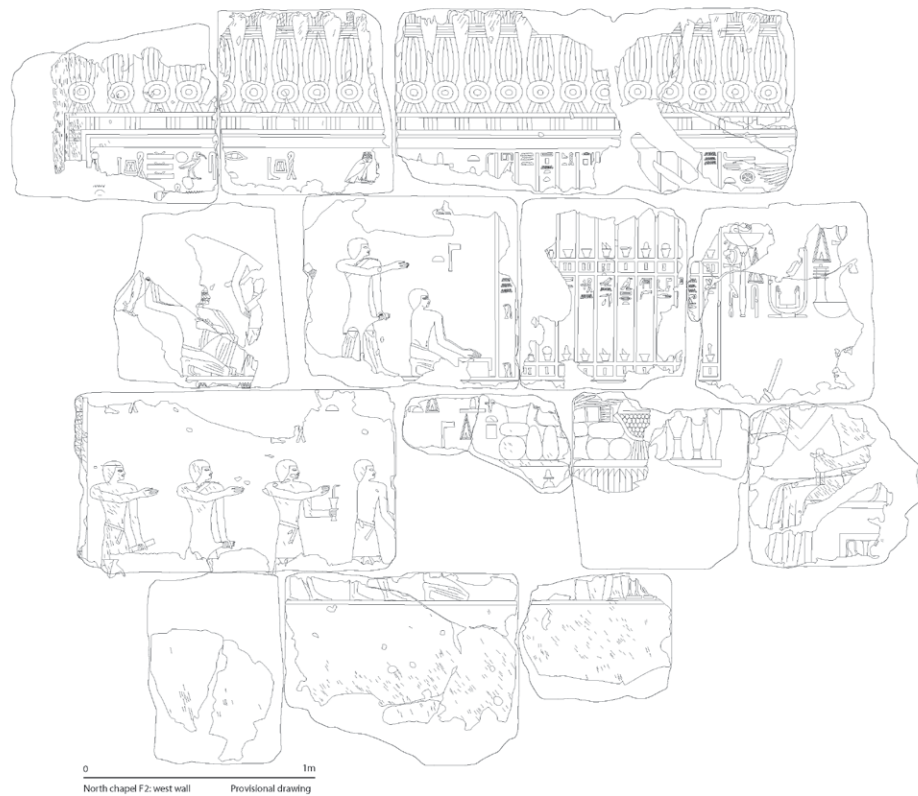


Figure 2. Provisional drawing of the offering ritual to the statue of Amenhotep I on the west wall of the north chapel F2 (Florie Pirou; © CNRS-CFEETK).

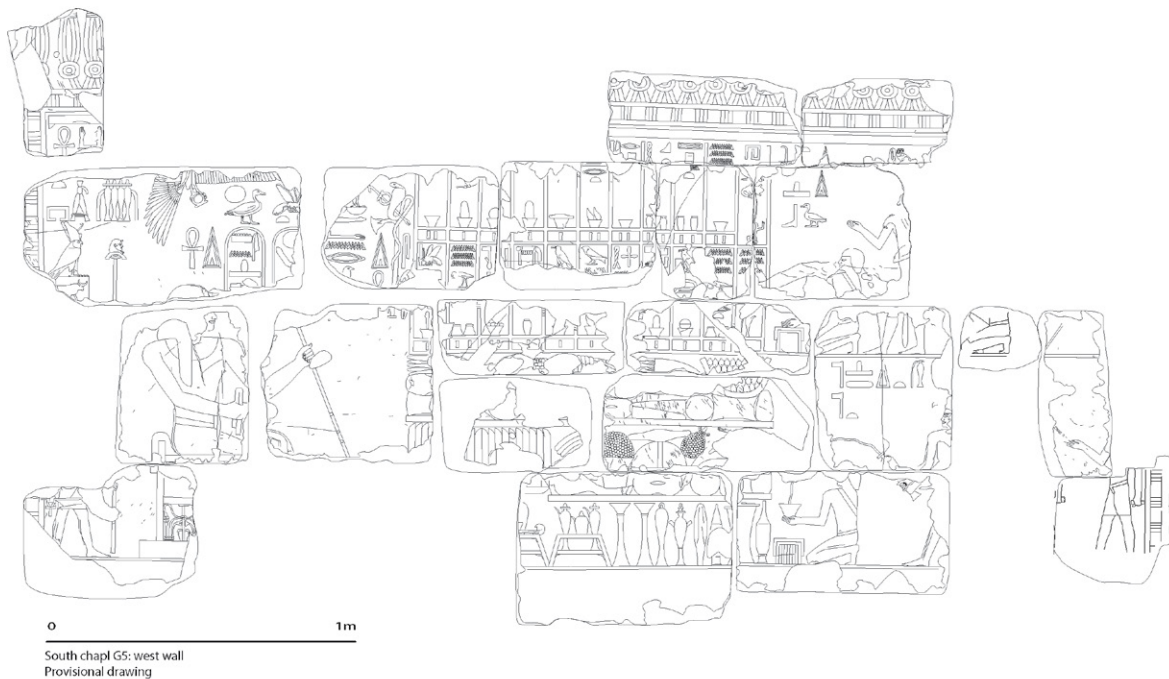


Figure 3. Provisional drawing of the offering ritual to the statue of Amenhotep I on the west wall of the south chapel G5 (Florie Pirou; © CNRS-CFEETK).



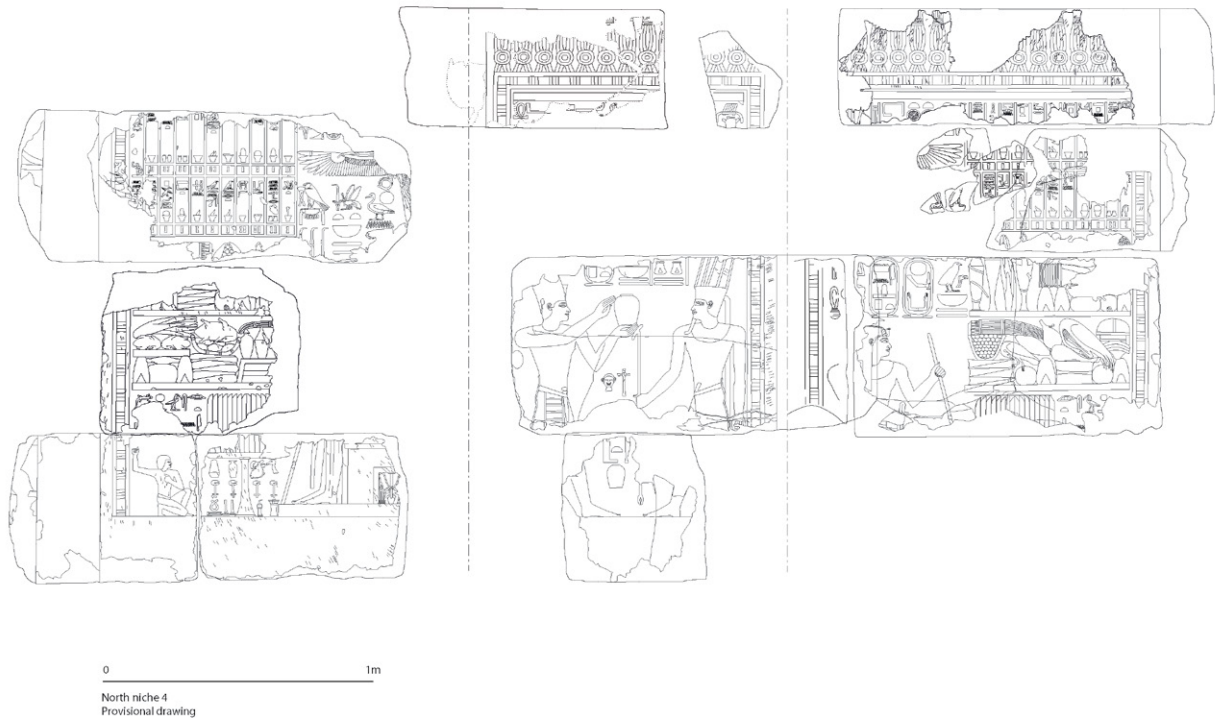


Figure 4. Provisional drawing of the walls of the north niche 4 (Florie Pirou; © CNRS-CFEETK).

such as in the chapels CF.2 and CF.3 of the *Akh-menu* (Barguet 1962: 190; Biston-Moulin to be published<sup>3</sup>; Maruéjøl 2007: 211-212; Porter and Moss 1972: 118 [382]; Ullmann 2002: 75).

### The priest(s)

Two registers of priests are depicted in the chapels (Figures 2 and 3). In the upper register, the first priest is a *it-ntr* kneeling before an offering table and making an ‘offering which the king and Geb give’. The second priest is a *sem*-priest in the gesture of consecration. The third priest is a *hry-ḥb* holding a papyrus scroll. He is followed by three *hry-ḥb* doing several ritual recitations in the attitude of jubilation. The last priest is a *hry-ḥb* sweeping the steps. In the south chapels, the third priest holding a papyrus scroll is absent. The *sem*-priest is directly followed by one or two lector-priest(s) in the attitude of jubilation. In the lower register, the first priest is a *it-ntr* kneeling before an offering table. He is holding a vase in order to receive the libation made by the second priest who is a *ḥm-ntr*. The accompanying-text of the first priest says is doing an ‘offering which the king gives’ or a ‘divine offering’. The third priest is a *hry-ḥb* making a censuring. The fourth priest is a *sm*-priest making the gesture of consecration. The last officiant is another lector-priest holding a scroll of papyrus making the gesture of consecration. The division into two registers of the ritual sequence is characteristic of the Middle Kingdom and the beginning of the 18th dynasty (Stupko-Lubczyńska 2016: 88).

Only one priest is represented behind the offering table in the niches due to the smaller space available (Figure 4). According to the preserved niches, it can be a *sm*-priest consecrating ‘offerings which the king and Geb give’; a *it-ntr* making a libation; or a *hry-ḥb* making a censuring or doing several ritual recitations in the attitude of jubilation.

<sup>3</sup> Personal communication by S. Biston-Moulin.

It is interesting to note that the priests involved are part of Amun's clergy and are not especially devoted to the monarch's veneration. They can be *ḥm-nṯr* priest, *sm*-priests, god's fathers (*it-nṯr*) and lector priests (*ḥry-ḥb*). Several actions are linked to them: consecrating offerings, making libation and incensing, making recitations, sweeping the steps. Each priest in the chapels represents a specific stage of the ritual from the first libation to the final rites of sweeping the steps.

According to Anastasiia Stupko-Lubczyńska, this ritual sequence named *Ritualbildstreifen* (Altenmüller 1972: 87-90) finds its origin in offerings scenes of royal and private tombs of the Old Kingdom (Stupko-Lubczyńska 2016: 62-89. See also Lapp 1986: 153-192). At the beginning of the 18th dynasty, it began to be used in divine temples as well in a non-funerary context, as shown by the chapels of Amenhotep I at Karnak and the chapels of Thutmose III at the same site (Stupko-Lubczyńska 2016: 85-86). However, in the ones of Thutmose III, the priests are no longer displayed in two registers but in one on each wall (Figure 5). The priests' ritual sequence in front of the statues of Amenhotep I is



Figure 5. Offering ritual to the statues of Amenhotep I on the west wall (a) and Thutmose III on the east wall (b) of the south chapel 5 of Thutmose III in the court of the 6th pylon (J. Maucor, É. Saubestre; © CNRS-CFEETK 186743 and 186704).

also found in a funerary context. For example, the tomb of Renni at El Kab (EK 7), dated to the reign of Amenhotep I, presents the exact same *Ritualbildstreifen* as the one we find on the northern chapels of Amenhotep I (Tylor 1900: pl. XVI). However, the ritual sequence is slightly different in the chapels of the royal mortuary complex in Hatshepsut's temple at Deir el-Bahari (Barwik 2021: 46-49, 58-60; Stupko-Lubczyńska 2016: 62-89).

During the reigns of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III, the officiant(s) worshipping the statue of the living king become Iunmutef, sometimes accompanied by Thot. They were not previously attested in this scene. Thus, the royal cult chapels CF.2 and CF.3 in the *Akh-menu* represent the two gods making the consecration of offerings to the statue of Thutmose III. It is also Iunmutef (and sometimes Thot) presenting the offerings to the royal statues in the niches and chapels for the royal cult in the 'temples of millions of years' in western Thebes, such as in the *Djeser-djeseru* of Hatshepsut (Karkowski 2003 : 245-248, pl. 41-42, 45-49; Naville 1895: 6-7, pl. IV, VI-VII; 1906: pl. CXXXV-CXXXVI, CXLVI-CXLVII; Porter and Moss 1972: 362 [115a-b, 117a-b], 366-367 [134-137], 374, 378; Rummel 2010a: 248-249, Kat. 9A, 250-256, Kat. 11-12), as well as in both temples of Thutmose III on the west bank of Thebes (Chapon 2018: 208-212, pl. 47, 108-109; Dolińska 1994: 35-37, fig. 2). This change is a part of a general trend in royal ideology. As a hypostasis of Horus 'loving son', Iunmutef embodies the principle of filiation essential in the Osirian myth and in the monarchic dogma (Rummel 2010a: 96-114, 2010b: 193-208).

#### The offering table and the offering-list

The offering space consists of a small table with numerous slices of bread, surmounted by two offering registers with different foods (several varieties of bread, cattle, poultry, fruit, etc.), vessels, and accessories. The offerings are logically more developed on the walls of the larger chapels than on the walls of the smaller chapels and in the niches (Figures 2 and 4).

The offering-list is inscribed above the offering table (Table 1). As already mentioned, it belongs to the list of type C defined by Barta (1963: 111-128). According to him, it could have been inspired by the funerary offering-lists of type A/B. This list had been displayed since Mentuhotep II and is attested on reliefs of offering rituals for the royal cult and the veneration of members of the royal family in temples. More surprisingly, this list of type C is also attested in offering rituals for private individuals in their tombs, for example in some New Kingdom Theban tombs, i.e. TT 100 of Rekhmire (Davies 1943: pl. LXXIII 1), at El Kab in the tombs of Pahery (Tylor 1895: pl. IX-X), and Renni (Tylor 1900: pl. XVI).

It is a small offering-list with only 22 items and divided into two equal registers. It is almost invariable, only some written forms and quantities vary. The ritual sequence is divided into three parts: it begins with a first meal (C/1-10), followed by an exclamation *h3 snḏ* and an offering of honey (C/11-12), and it ends with a second meal (C/13-22).

#### Title

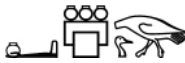
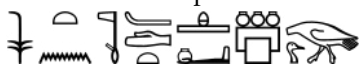
Only two reliefs from the chapels preserved a title, limited to  *hnkt* 'presenting the offerings'. In its more complete version in the chapels of Thutmose III in the 6th pylon courtyard of Karnak, these scenes are entitled:  *bd nswt dbḥt-ḥtp hnkt* 'purifying the king (with natron); reciting the list of offerings; presenting the offerings'. This formula symbolises the essential stages of the cult: first the preliminary purification of the statue, and then the offering ritual – with the recitation of the list and the physical presentation of the offerings.

TABLE 1: STANDARD LIST FOR AN OFFERING RITUAL TO THE ROYAL STATUE IN THE NICHEs AND CHAPELS OF AMENHOTEP I AT KARNAK.


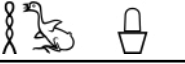
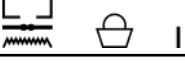


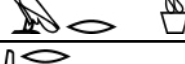
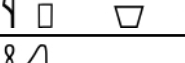
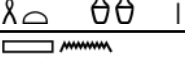
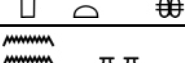

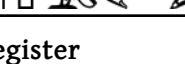
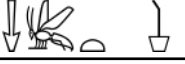




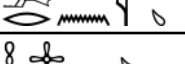
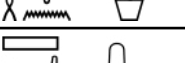



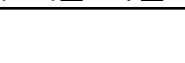
Upper register			
C/1		<i>mw 2</i>	Water 2
C/2		<i>ḥt3 1</i>	Bread <i>hetja</i> 1
C/3		<i>psn 1</i>	Bread <i>pesen</i> 1
C/4		<i>dpt 1</i>	Cake <i>depet</i> 1
C/5		<i>īwr 1</i>	Meat offering 1
C/6		<i>3šrt 2</i>	Grilled meat 2
C/7		<i>īrp 2</i>	Wine 2
C/8		<i>ḥnkt 2</i>	Beer 2
C/9		<i>špnt 2</i>	Jug 2
C/10		<i>mw 2</i>	Water 2
C/11		<i>h3-snd</i>	Exclamation <i>h3-snd</i>
Lower register			
C/12		<i>sn-bit 1</i>	Honey 1
C/13		<i>mw dšrt 2</i>	Water in a <i>desheret</i> vase 2
C/14		<i>bd 1</i>	Natron 1
C/15		<i>īrp mḥy nmst 1</i>	Wine in an ewer 1
C/16		<i>3šrt 1</i>	Grilled meat 1
C/17		<i>wr n īwf 1</i>	Large quantity of meat 1
C/18		<i>ḥwn 1</i>	Meat offering 1
C/19		<i>š't 1</i>	Bread <i>chat</i> 1
C/20		<i>p3d gswy 1</i>	Half a cake 1
C/21		<i>mw dšrt 2</i>	Water in a <i>desheret</i> vase 2
C/22		<i>mw kbḥw 1</i>	Water libation 1



Figure 6. Salutation with a *nemset*-vase of Amenhotep I to Amun on the rear wall of a niche (© L. Ben Hamida).

The title and the priests' different actions show a sequence of rites corresponding to the essential and summarised stages of the daily offering rituals to the divine images, royal statues, and to the deceased (Barta 1963: 67-72; Barwik 2021: 46-49, 58-60; Stupko-Lubczyńska 2016: 62-89). The relation to the funerary cult is remarkable because the reliefs of royal statue worship are very similar to the funerary meals shown in elite tombs since the Old Kingdom. As examples we can quote the funerary meal scenes of several 6th-dynasty tombs of Saqqara: Mereruka (Kanawati *et al.* 2011: pl. 36-42, 86c-89), Watetkhethor (Kanawati and Abder-Raziq 2008: pl. 40-41), etc. The New Kingdom provides numerous examples as well, in private tombs or in offering chapels in 'temples of millions of years'. The presence of offering bearers and the use of offering-list A/B (even if the list of type C is also attested in a funerary context) are the only differences to the offering ritual for the royal statue. Consequently, it appears that the scenes of offerings to the monarch's statue must have been inspired by funerary models.

#### *The offerings scenes to Amun*

The restitution work of the offering scenes to Amun on the rear walls of the niches, and their repartition between the niches, is still in progress. In the southern niches, we find offerings of cloth, oil, *shat* bread, white bread, milk, fresh water, and an adoration scene. In the northern niches, we find offerings of *shat* bread, eyeshadow, wine, oil, *medjat* unguent, and a salutation with the *nemset*-vases (Figures 4 and 6).

There are very few parallels among the niches and the chapels of the same kind at Thebes in the New Kingdom. Only two sets of niches present offering scenes to Amun on the rear walls. The four niches of Thutmose III in the north corridor of the *Akh-menu* show a libation, a wine offering, and a divine offering (Barguet 1962: 180 and n.3; Biston-Moulin to be published; Carlotti 2001: 75; Porter and Moss 1972: 123; Ullmann 2002: 75). The six niches of the *Djeser-djeseru* sanctuary contain a censuring and a presentation of *nemset* and *desheret* vases (Navelle 1906: 7-8, pl. CXXXIV-CXXXVI). These parallels are not completely satisfying because they contain fewer niches and rather common offering scenes

often present in sequences of different rituals. Instead, the rear walls of Amenhotep I's niches show a particular assemblage of washing and clothing offerings, food offerings, adoration, and salutation.

Some other buildings not linked to the cult of the royal statue present sequences of scenes similar to the reliefs on the rear walls of Amenhotep I's niches: the lower register of the north and south interior walls of the bark-shrine of Amenhotep I (Carlotti *et al.* 2019: 58-63, pl. XXXVII-XXXVIII); in the Chapelle rouge on the 6th course of the south exterior wall, on the 2nd course of the south interior wall of the vestibule, and on the 6th course of the north interior wall of the sanctuary (Burgos and Larché 2006: pl. 68-73, 173-174, 224-226; Carlotti *et al.* 2019: p. 60-61; Lacau and Chevrier 1977-1979: 213-225, 267-269, 359-365); in the south magazines of the *Akh-menu* (Carlotti *et al.* 2019: 61-62; Porter and Moss 1972: 114-115 [357-365]); and in room N of the 18th dynasty temple at Medinet Habu (Carlotti *et al.* 2019: 63; Hays 2009: 9). According to Carlotti and Gabolde (2019: 59-63), these rites would belong to a complex ritual developed from several liturgies.

Consequently, it seems that the scenes of Amenhotep I's niches constitute also a composite ritual with rites belonging to a washing and clothing ritual and rites belonging to an offering ritual ('Ritual of Amenhotep I'? See also Contardi 2009: 29-31, 36). In a sense, the rear walls of the niches would have presented a complete daily ritual.

#### *The rear walls of the chapels*

Since the rear walls of the chapels are not preserved, only comparisons with similar Theban niches and chapels of the 18th dynasty can provide us with an hypothesis. What appears from our survey is that the pharaoh dedicates offerings to Amun in smaller spaces (e.g. the niches of Amenhotep I), while he is surrounded by two divinities in bigger spaces. As an example, we can quote the niches of the solar complex and the 3rd terrace in the temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari (Karkowski 2003: 245-248, pl. 45-49; Naville 1895: pl. VI-VII; 1906: pl. CXXXV-CXXXVI; Porter and Moss 1972: 362 [117a-b], 374; Rummel 2010a, 248-249, Kat. 9A, 255-256, Kat. 12B-C), or the chapels CF.2 and CF.3 of Thutmose III in the *Akh-menu* (Barguet 1962: 190; Biston-Moulin to be published; Maruéjol 2007: 211-212; Porter and Moss 1972: 118 [382]; Ullmann 2002: 75). Then, it is possible that the rear walls of the chapels of Amenhotep I presented reliefs of the king between two gods, one being Amun. It could have been scenes of presentation or embracing.

#### *Statues*

The statues represented on the lateral wall of the niches and chapels belong to the type of statue in stone representing the pharaoh. Such cult statues were most probably placed in these kinds of structures. In this case, none are preserved. We must still mention the existence of a granite base fragment of a statue with the name of Amenhotep I, which was probably found in the 'cour de la Cachette' (*Cachette de Karnak*, CK 1245, viewed 1 September 2022). However, it is impossible to determine the type of the statue, and whether or not it had its place within Amenhotep I's royal cult structures.

Nevertheless, some observations can still be made. Indeed, the different dimensions of the structures probably reflect different sizes and different functions between the statues that were placed in it. Smaller statues must have been placed in the niches, while larger ones must have been placed in the chapels. Smaller statues have the advantage, of course, of being more manageable and transportable than larger ones. Thus, the statues for the niches were probably moved and carried in procession. Moreover, the niches face east, towards the bark-shrine of the courtyard. The spatial association between these structures could have been a way to express their ritual link. It should be noted that although the niches of the 3rd terrace in the *Djeser-djeseru* are turned towards the exterior of the temple, they are still facing

east. The association of the royal and divine cult is particularly evident in processional bark-shrines of the 18th dynasty (see below) and in some Ramesside bark-shrines. Indeed, niches for the royal *ka* statues of the king were built in the rear walls of chapels of some 19th dynasty bark-shrines. For example, the bark-shrine of Ramesses II in the Luxor temple presents two niches of this kind in the chapel of Amun (Donadoni 1982: 14; Porter and Moss 1972: 310 [41]; Rummel 2010a: 305, Kat. 57), and the bark-shrine of Seti II at Karnak contains two niches devoted to this worship in the chapel of Mut (Chevrier and Drioton 1940: 39-41, fig. 4-5; Porter and Moss 1972: 26 [30]; Rummel 2010a: 313-314, Kat. 63A), and three others in the chapel of Amun (Chevrier and Drioton 1940: 29-34, fig. 1-3; Porter and Moss 1972: 26 [34]; Rummel 2010a: 314-316, Kat. 63B; Ullmann 2002: 411-413).

The situation in the *Akh-menu* seems to confirm this role. The niches in the north corridor (SF.13) are located in a sector linked to processions in which statues of the king and the queen are presented to Amun and Mut (Barguet 1962: 179-182; Biston-Moulin to be published; Grimal 2010: 360-365, fig. 19-20; Pécoil 2000: pl. 115-117; Porter and Moss 1972: 123; Ullmann 2002: 75-76), whereas chapels CF.2 and CF.3, as well as Amenhotep I's chapels, appear less linked to processions. The statues could have been of higher dimension and the chapels could have hosted a more regular, daily, worship or at least a static one.

### *The offering calendar for royal ancestors*

Another important element for the royal cult takes place in this courtyard. An offering calendar for royal ancestors was represented on the façade of the northern slaughterhouse (Gabolde 2018: 144, 180, 205, fig. 82, 180; Larché 2019: dép. 50). The relief takes the form of a table, with dates to make offerings to royal ancestors, as well as the sacrifices, their number, and their provenance. Among the names preserved are Mentuhotep II, Mentuhotep III, the divine father Senusret, father of Amenemhet I, Ahmose-Nefertary, and probably Nyuserre Iny or Amenemhet II. The study of this calendar is in progress by Gabolde.

### *A 'royal cult complex' of Amenhotep I?*

#### *A typical pattern of the beginning of the 18th dynasty*

The courtyard arranged by Amenhotep I in front of the Middle Kingdom temple constitutes a complex architectural and cultic space where royal and divine worship are intrinsically linked. The spatial layout shows an intense reflection on the choice of the structures, their disposal and iconography. Amenhotep I probably took inspiration from Old and Middle Kingdoms examples. The sovereign also uses some architectural and iconographic models already attested at Karnak, such as the chapels on both sides of the first courtyard of the Middle Kingdom temple or the scene of offering to the royal statue on the verso of block 87 CL 59 (Gabolde 2018: 343-344, fig. 220) (Figure 7). This relief, showing a king of the



Figure 7. Offering ritual to the statue of a Middle Kingdom pharaoh (Senusret I or Mentuhotep III) on the recto of the block 87 CL 59 (© CNRS-CFEETK 109084 (K. Dowi Abd al-Radi). See also Gabolde 2018: fig. 220).

Middle Kingdom, is the first worshipping scene to the king's statue preserved and attested at Karnak. Only the lower part of a cartouche containing the sign *ka* is preserved. Gabolde (2018: 343) has suggested that the pharaoh represented could have been Kheperkare Senusret I or Sankhkare Mentuhotep III. Thus, it is highly possible that a king of the Middle Kingdom, especially Senusret I, had already built a chapel for his own or his ancestors' statuary cult in Amun's temple (Gabolde 2000: 18; 2018: 345; Lorand 2011: 268-269; 2013: 447-466). Amenhotep I would have continued this model and amplified it in the courtyard in front of the Middle Kingdom temple. The same structures of royal veneration, with the same iconography, are also attested under Thutmose III at Karnak in the courtyard of the 6th pylon (Figure 5 and *supra*. See also *Projet Karnak*, KIU 1122, 3439) and in the *Akh-menu* (Barguet 1962: 190; Biston-Moulin to be published; Carlotti 2011: 75). These scenes of offering ritual to the royal statues correspond to the typical iconography on the lateral walls of chapels and niches devoted to the statuary veneration of the monarch at the beginning of the 18th dynasty.

They can also be found in 'temples of millions of years' of western Thebes, especially in Hatshepsut's temple at Deir el-Bahari (Karkowski 2003: pl. 41-42, 45-49; Naville 1898: pl. IV, VI-VII; 1906: pl. CXXXIV-CXXXVI, CXLVI-CXLVII; Porter and Moss 1972: 362 [115a-b, 117 a-b], 366-367 [134-137], 374), or in both temples of Thutmose III, the *Heneket-ankh* (Chapon 2018: 208-212, pl. 47, 108-109), and the *Djeser-akhet* (Dolińska 1994: 35-37, fig. 2,6). However, after the reign of Thutmose III, those niches and chapels with reliefs of offering rituals to the royal statue are no longer attested at Karnak and on the west bank. The veneration of the pharaoh takes on different forms, linked to the ideological developments of the period.

#### *How to understand this courtyard?*

This courtyard does not constitute the first development for the royal cult at Karnak. Amenhotep I follows the steps of his predecessors, but he gives a considerable impulse to the royal cult with the multiplication within the same space of the structures devoted to the royal cult. He built around 27 or 28 niches and chapels for his own statuary cult, and he also managed to give a place to the royal ancestors, with an offering calendar for their veneration. Yet, the question of the purpose and function of this space remains open.

All the structures of the courtyard definitely work as a whole in terms of their architectural, iconographic, and functional similarities. The layout of the courtyard also reflected the cultic links between the different buildings and the association between Amun's cult in the bark-shrine, and in the south-east chapel (and perhaps in the north-east chapel), and the king worship in the niches and chapels. This association is particularly evident in the niches on the west wall, where offerings are made to the monarch on the lateral walls and to the god on the rear walls. However, the lack of preservation of the structures and the absence of textual sources from the time of Amenhotep I make it difficult to understand these liturgies. Therefore, our interpretations remain hypothetical.

Moreover, the question of the designation of such a space also arises. Indeed, an area associating the royal veneration (niches and chapels), the ancestors' worship (offering calendar), as well as the cult of Amun (eastern south chapel and bark sanctuary), and probably a solar cult (solar altar), is also very reminiscent of a type of temple: the 'temple of millions of years'. In New Kingdom Thebes, these 'temples of millions of years' do not belong to a very narrowly defined temple category. Their common point is rather the fact that they are devoted to the royal cult, closely related to the divine cult and processional ways. They also share frequent features in the distribution of the spaces and the kind of cult. The west bank temples host the royal and dynastic cult, the veneration of Amun of Karnak, a local form of Amun, and the bark of Amun, as well as a solar cult and a cult to Hathor.



Several ‘temple of millions of years’ of the 18th dynasty in Thebes can help us understand the courtyard of Amenhotep I at Karnak, especially the superior courtyard of Hatshepsut’s temple at Deir el-Bahari and the *Akh-menu* of Thutmose III at Karnak. The three monuments contain more or less the same elements, although the architectural forms are very different. They all present chapels and niches for the royal cult and places for ancestor worship, as well as spaces devoted to the cult of Amun and a monument for the solar cult. These structures are gathered around a courtyard in the case of Amenhotep I and Hatshepsut, and a hypostyle hall in the *Akh-menu*. All are linked to the daily and festival cult. The *Djeser-djeseru* and the *Akh-menu* clearly qualify as a ‘temple of millions of years’ (Barguet 1962: 162; Ullmann 2002: 26-52; 60-83). The mention of *hwt-k3* on the south wall of the Annals (cols. 56 and 58) could also be a reference to the *Akh-menu* (Gabolde and Gabolde 2015: 77, 99-102). Thus, all the characteristics seem present to enable the same designation to the court of Amenhotep I.

Nevertheless, despite the several common points between the three monuments, the design and purpose of certain structures differ (e.g. the offering scenes for Hatshepsut and Thutmose I in the royal mortuary complex of the west bank of Thebes occur in a funerary context, which is not the case for Amenhotep I). The buildings of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III are not strict and perfect parallels to the courtyard of Amenhotep I. Moreover, in the current state of the research, no text or dedication designate this space as a ‘temple of millions of years’ or a *hwt-k3*. It is especially during the Ramesside period that parts of temples can be associated, perhaps, with ‘millions of years’ (Leblanc 2010: 19-57; Ullmann 2002). There is also no textual evidence of the existence of such a temple of Amenhotep I at Thebes. To conclude, the designation of ‘royal cult complex’ is more applicable, and still emphasises the crucial place of monarchic veneration in this sector of the temple of Amun-Ra at Karnak. The question must remain open until the discovery of more conclusive documents.

### **The king receiving offerings in the calcite bark-shrine of Amenhotep I**

During his reign, Amenhotep I also built a calcite bark-shrine for the bark of Amun at Karnak that shows elements linked to the royal cult. This monument was published in 2019 by Carlotti, Gabolde, Graindorge and Martinez (2019). The original location of the chapel is unknown, but it was probably in the south-western corner of the courtyard, in front of the 4th pylon, or at the later ‘siège d’intronisation d’Amon’, to the south-east of the 5th pylon (Carlotti *et al.* 2019: 11-20).

#### ***A representation of a statue of Amenhotep I***

A scene from the upper register inside the chapel shows the king kneeling and making offerings to the bark of Amun; this is followed by an enthroned statue of Amenhotep I in front of an offering table and facing the bark (Carlotti *et al.* 2019: 72-81, pl. XXXVII-XXXVIII, XLVII-L, LIII-LIV, LXIII-LXVI) (Figures 8 and 9). It is typical of the first half of the 18th dynasty, as we find the same iconography in the calcite bark-shrines of Thutmose III (Arnaudès-Montélimard 2003: 159-234, pl. I; Barguet 1962: 85, 256; Carlotti *et al.* 2019: 33-35, 83-84; Maruéjol 2007: 233; *Projet Karnak*, KIU 3054), Thutmose IV at Karnak (Arnaudès-Montélimard 2003: 160-216; Barguet 1962: 86; Carlotti *et al.* 2019: 33-35, 83-84; Letellier and Larché 2013: 84-96, pl. 20, 40-41, 205, 210-211, dép. 34-42; Porter and Moss 1972: 71; *Projet Karnak*, KIU 3214) (Figures 10 and 11), and perhaps already in the limestone bark-shrine of Sensusret I at Karnak (Carlotti *et al.* 2019: 34-35; Cotellet-Michel 2003: 349-352; Traunecker 1982: 123, pl. II/a-II/b). The desert temple of Thutmose IV and Amenhotep III at El Kab also represents the same scene, but there statues of the two kings are depicted (Tylor 1898: pl. VI-XII). The cult of the deceased ancestor Thutmose IV and the cult of the reigning king Amenhotep III are thus associated. The Ramesside bark-shrines show an evolution: they contain niches with representations of a standing *ka* statue of the king.

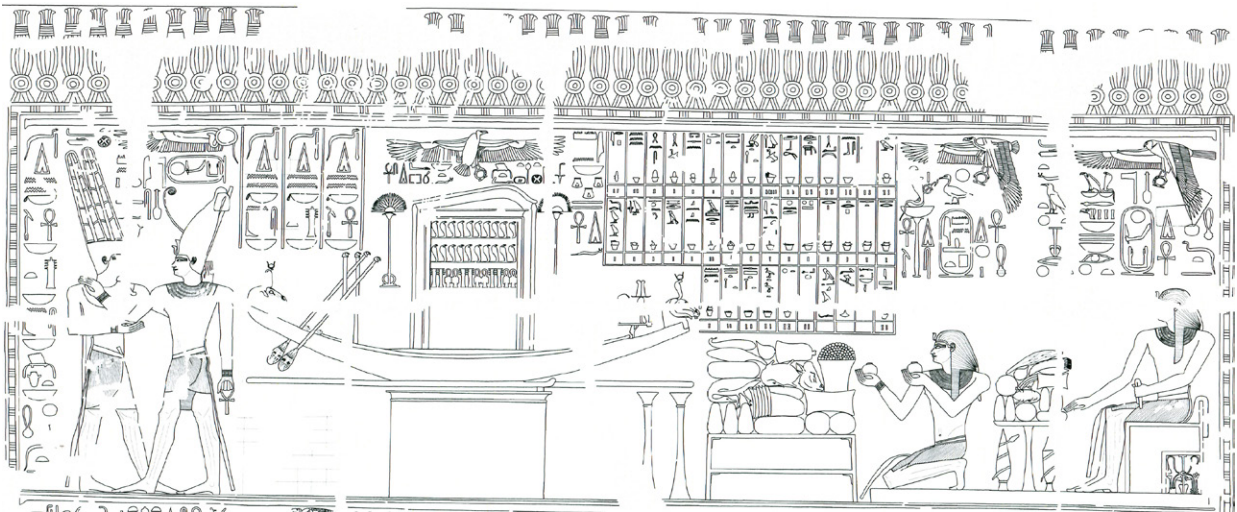


Figure 8. Upper register of the north interior wall of the calcite bark-shrine of Amenhotep I (Ph. Martinez, J.-Fr. Carlotti, L. Gabolde © CNRS-CFEETK. See also: Carlotti et al. 2019: pl. XXXVIII [detail]).

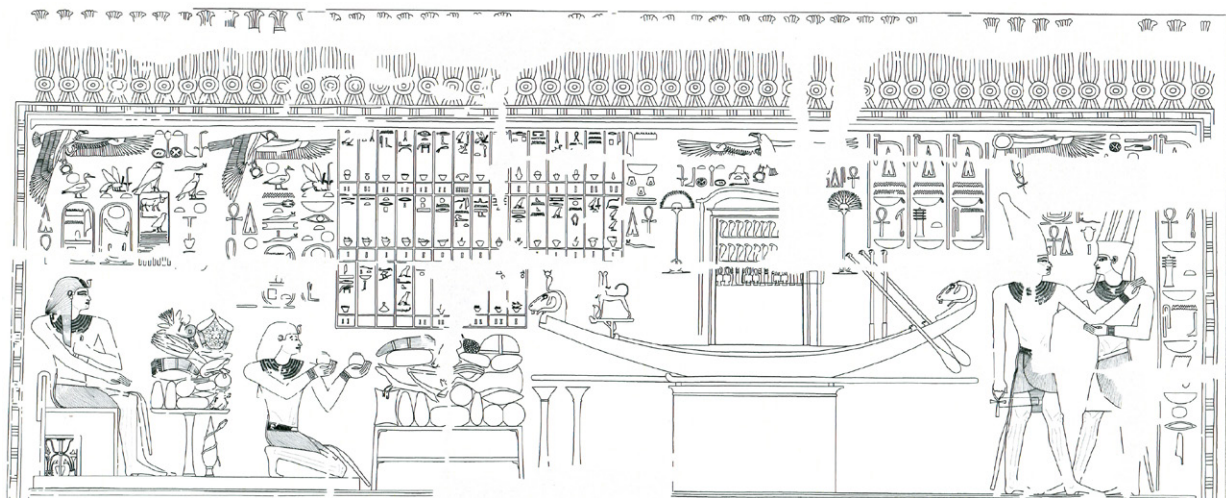


Figure 9. Upper register of the south interior wall of the calcite bark-shrine of Amenhotep I (Ph. Martinez, J.-Fr. Carlotti, L. Gabolde © CNRS-CFEETK. See also: © Carlotti et al. 2019: pl. LIV [detail]).

The scene in the bark-shrine of Amenhotep I is very similar to the representations of offerings to the royal statue in the niches and chapels seen above: the effigy of the king is identical; he is enthroned in the same attitude before an offering table. However, there are some major differences: there is no priest and no offering list. In fact, these two elements are present in the first part of the scene: the officiant is the king, kneeling and consecrating to the bark; the offering list of type D is above the bark. The list of type D is used only for the bark of Amun for processional feasts during the New Kingdom (Barta 1963: 136-139).

#### **‘Taking part in the offerings’**


All these changes from the chapels and the niches of the offering ritual to the statue of the king are linked to the function of the bark-shrine: it is devoted to the cult of Amun during processional feasts. The god is the prime and principal beneficiary of the rites and offerings. The worship of the royal statue was only secondary in the bark-shrine. The pharaoh was benefiting from the reversion of



Figure 10. Detail from the upper register of the north interior wall of the calcite bark-shrine of Thutmose III (J. Maucor, É. Saubestre; © CNRS-CFEETK 184445).



Figure 11. Detail from the upper register of the north interior wall of the calcite bark-shrine of Thutmose IV (J. Maucor; © CNRS-CFEETK 154031).

offerings presented to the bark of Amun. The title is very explicit:  *f3t ht r sm3 ht* 'setting up the offerings in order to take part in the offerings', according to the title on the bark-shrine of Thutmose IV (Figure 11). The titles of the scenes from the bark-shrine of Amenhotep I have two graphic particularities: the writing of the verb *f3i* and the *r*-sign placed after the *sm3*-sign (Figures 8 and 9. See

also: Carlotti *et al.* 2019: 72, 74). The *r*-sign is also placed after the *sm3*-sign in the title of the scene from the bark-shrine of Thutmose III (Figure 10). The reversion of offerings is a common phenomenon and it was even inscribed in the 'Ritual of Amenhotep I', especially in Episode 54, which presents a list of pharaohs benefiting from the reversion of offerings presented to Amun during one of his feasts (see below).

### **The 'Ritual of Amenhotep I'**

The Ramesside papyri Cairo CGT 58030 (Turin Inv. Suppl. 10125 and Chester Beatty IX BM EA 10689) preserved a liturgy known as the 'Ritual of Amenhotep I' (e.g. Bacchi 1942; Cooney and McClain 2006: 41-78; Gardiner 1935: 78-106, pl. 50-61; Golénischeff 1927: 134-156, pl. XXIV-XXVII; Nelson 1949a: 201-232; 1949b: 310-345; Tacke 2013 especially vol. 2: 308), the 'Ritual for the Royal Ancestors' (David 1981: 83-87), and also the 'Offering ritual of the New Kingdom' ('Ritual di offerta' in Contardi 2009: 30-31, 'Opferitual des ägyptischen Neuen Reiches' in Tacke 2013). The ritual is also known thanks to sequences of scenes in: the second hypostyle hall in the temple of Seti I at Abydos; the hypostyle hall of Karnak; the first courtyard of the temple of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu; and on the naos of Seti I from Heliopolis (Museo Egizio CGT 7002). According to Contardi (2009: 30-31) and Tacke, the 'Ritual of Amenhotep I' is an offering liturgy within the daily ritual. Tacke (2013: especially vol. 1, 1-2, vol. 2, 294-296, 308) also believed it was part of the daily and solemn worship of Amun at Karnak and that the ritual may have been instituted by Amenhotep I, although it is preserved only through Ramesside sources, with probable modifications from the original liturgy. This ritual is of great interest when studying the royal veneration under Amenhotep I at Karnak because it contains two lists of kings benefiting from offerings, and it suggests that Amenhotep I had an important role beside Amun.

### ***The two lists of pharaoh's names***

Episodes 48 and 54 of the 'Ritual of Amenhotep I' present lists of pharaoh's names benefiting from the reversion of offerings presented to Amun in the Cairo/Turin papyrus and in the British Museum papyrus (Table 2).

Episode 48 of the daily ritual, 'Illuminating the sanctuary with a torch', contains a first list (Tacke 2013: vol. 1, 195-201, vol. 2, 181-187). The rite and the offerings benefit Amun, then other deities, and finally a selection of kings, principally from the 18th and beginning of the 19th dynasty. Episode 54 of the festival ritual, 'Bringing the offerings during the festival of Amun', provides a second list of monarchs (Tacke 2013: vol. 1, 256-264, vol. 2, 220-225). In this episode, the offerings are presented to Amun and then to a series of kings who also reigned, principally at the beginning of the New Kingdom. Since the preserved lists are Ramesside, most of the rulers recorded are posterior to Amenhotep I. Obviously, if the ritual already existed under Amenhotep I, the selection of kings was different, probably being similar to the one in the offering calendar on the façade of the northern slaughterhouse (see above).

Thus, the 'Ritual of Amenhotep I' shows us that the supply of offerings for the pharaoh and his ancestors was included in the daily and solemn worshiping of Amun by a system of reversion. Applied to Karnak under Amenhotep I, the statues of the niches and chapels could have benefited from the reversion of offerings presented to Amun during the daily ritual, and perhaps also during a processional feast (see above and Figures 2 to 4). The calcite bark-shrine indeed displays an image of the reversion system during one of the feasts of the god of Karnak (see above and Figures 8 and 9).

This practice is well attested by several textual and iconographic sources. At Karnak, it is documented by a stela of Thutmose III found in the temple of Ptah, where several gods and statues of Thutmose III benefit from the offerings each in turn (Cairo CG 34013, cols. 13-20, see Porter and Moss 1972: 198 [6]; Sethe 1907:

768,11-769,5). It is also illustrated by a stela fragment of a royal decree recording the reversion of the offerings presented to a statue of Ahmose-Nefertari to a woman. The woman was probably Henutdjoo, who was attached to the cult of the queen (Cairo n° 8/11/26/8, see Gabolde 1991: 161-171). As a last example, we can remind ourselves of the bark-shrines of Senusret I, Amenhotep I, Thutmose III, and Thutmose IV at Karnak, as seen above.

TABLE 2: LISTS OF PHARAOHS IN EPISODES 48 AND 54 OF THE 'RITUAL OF AMENHOTEP I', ACCORDING TO TACKE (2013: VOL. 1, 195-201, 256-264, VOL. 2, 181-187, 220-225).

List A Episode 48		List B Episode 54	
<i>p. Cairo CGC 58030 + p. Turin Inv. Suppl. 10125 (13 kings)</i>	<i>p. BM 10689 = Chester Beatty IX (14 kings)</i>	<i>p. Cairo CGC 58030 + p. Turin Inv. Suppl. 10125 (12 kings)</i>	<i>p. BM 10689 = Chester Beatty IX (15 kings)</i>
Ramesses II	Ramesses II	Amenhotep I	Ramesses II
Seti I	Seti I	Ramesses II	Seti I
Ramesses I	Ramesses I	Seti I	Ramesses I
Horemheb	Horemheb	Seti I	Horemheb
Thutmose I	Amenhotep III	[...]	Amenhotep III
Thutmose III	Thutmose IV	Thutmose III	Thutmose IV
Amenhotep II	[Amenhotep II]	Amenhotep II	Amenhotep II
Thutmose IV	Thutmose I	Thutmose IV	Thutmose III
Amenhotep III	Thutmose II	[Amenhotep III]	Thutmose II
Thutmose II	Amenhotep I	Horemheb	Thutmose I
Amenhotep I	Ahmose II	Kamose	Amenhotep I
Ahmose II	Kamose	Thutmose II	Ahmose II
Mentuhotep II	Senusret I	Mentuhotep II	Kamose
Ahmose-Nefertari	Mentuhotep II	Ahmose-Nefertari	Senusret I
		Satmerytamun	Mentuhotep II

### *The place of Amenhotep I*

The place of Amenhotep I beside Amun in this ritual is surprising in the preserved textual sources. Nevertheless, according to Tacke (2013: vol. 2, 282-296), the importance of the king in the 'Ritual of Amenhotep I' must be put into perspective.

In the British Museum papyrus, the liturgy is addressed to different forms of Amun, while Amenhotep I and Ramesses II are only officiants. It is only in the Cairo/Turin papyrus that Amenhotep I, now 'deified', becomes the principal beneficiary of the rites. He can appear as a member of the Theban gods alongside Amun, Mut, and Khonsu (Episodes 50 and 51), or he can replace Amun beside Amunet (Episode 39). He is also presented as a manifestation of Amun in Episode 34 (Tacke 2013: vol. 2, 291-296).

In both papyri, the place of Amenhotep I is important, and this is most likely a record of the king's considerable actions for Amun and Karnak. Amenhotep I worked on the architectural development of

Karnak and he also contributed to the ritual and economic organisation of the liturgies. It constitutes the first major project, some 400 years after Senusret I.

However, the memorial legacy of Amenhotep I at Karnak must be questioned. First, the pharaoh is not present in the well-known representations of the 'Ritual of Amenhotep I'. Second, he is also absent from the selections of royal ancestors receiving a cult at Karnak after Thutmose III. Finally, we do not know what his place was in the textual sources of the ritual prior to the Ramesside period: was he present as a beneficiary with Amun? Did he have the same importance? If the 'Ritual of Amenhotep I' was indeed related to the chapels, the niches and the bark-shrine, this would mean that the statue of Amenhotep I was the beneficiary of a great part of the ritual beside Amun.

## Conclusion

In the path of his predecessors, Amenhotep I contributed to the royal cult at Karnak. It took on a great importance under Amenhotep I with the multiplication of the places devoted to his worship and his ancestors' veneration. The king may also have dedicated an entire part of the temple to the royal cult. Amenhotep I also created a complex ritual organisation, with specific liturgies on specific dates and incorporated into the liturgies of Amun. At the beginning of the 18th dynasty, Thebes is the capital of the Two Lands. The sanctuary of Amun-Ra once again plays the important role of monarchical and dynastic centre, as does the temple of Ra-Atum at Heliopolis in the north. It is perhaps from this point of view that we should partly understand Amenhotep I's will to build such a 'royal cult complex' within Karnak. Studying these monuments may help us to better understand the processes of installation and development of the monarchic veneration inside the *temenos* of Amun-Ra. For now, it seems that this contribution will raise more questions than it answers. This is an on-going research project and forthcoming investigations will allow a better understanding of the royal cult under Amenhotep I at Karnak, especially in his courtyard.

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# Ancient Egypt in Exlibris

## Objects and Images: Egyptological and Archaeological Sources

Valentin Boyer

### Abstract

There are hundreds of bookplates ('exlibris', 'ex-libris') featuring scenes of ancient Egypt. Some compete in terms of originality, others consist of a few patterns evoking ancient Egypt, as well as widespread clichés. The goal of this research on the reception of pharaonic civilisation through bookplates – a little known artistic medium reserved for the sphere of bibliophiles – is to discover and understand the mechanisms of the perception of ancient Egypt, the critical reception of Egyptology and its history. Fidelity to the original archaeological monuments and iconographic features has not stopped the creativity of bookplate artists. On the contrary, they demonstrate a certain originality by revisiting and reinventing the patterns thanks to their subjective sensibility: they recreate, transpose them into other settings, adapt them to new forms, and bring them to life by reanimation. The aim of Egyptomania is not to revive ancient Egypt but to propose an evocation of it, removed from the fluctuations of time. As a vector of ideas and provider of images, exlibris are not a simple description of ancient Egypt but a creative recreation that awakens the imagination and arouses passions.

### Keywords

Bookplates, Exlibris, Egyptomania, Egyptian Revival, Bibliophilia, History of Egyptology

### Introduction

A real visual tradition of representation of ancient Egypt has developed, enriched with new motifs in the 19th and 20th centuries, particularly after the French campaign in Egypt and Syria, the decipherment of the Egyptian hieroglyphs by Champollion, and the discovery of Tutankhamen's tomb, if we arbitrarily take these three particularly significant events in the development of Egyptology and therefore jointly as representations of the craze for Egyptomania. This 'catalogue' of visual references, full of aesthetic and symbolic essence of ancient Egypt, can be found in bookplates – also known as 'exlibris'. The aim of this research into Egyptological and archaeological sources through this little known artistic medium, usually reserved for the sphere of bibliophiles, is, first of all, to examine the iconography and the appearance of specific patterns to understand the perception and the reception of Ancient Egypt.

### *What is an Exlibris?*

Exlibris are, most of the time, gummed printed paper nameplates fixed inside the covers of books to indicate to whom they belong. Book lovers have used these for centuries, not just to specify ownership, but to enhance the beauty of their book collection (Boyer 2020: 82). 'Ex Libris', from the Latin, is translated as simply 'from the library of'. With 'ex bibliotheca', the formula 'ex libris' is the most used in Latin languages, but there are also many others formulations, i.e. 'this book belongs to' (English), 'boek van' (Dutch), 'z knih' (Czech), 'из книг' (Russian), 'denna bok' (Swedish), 'könyve' (Hungarian), 'dos libros de' (Portuguese), etc.

Up until the 20th century, bookplates were mainly used by aristocratic families in Europe for their library collections, the design usually based on their coat of arms (Boyer in press). As more and more people could afford their own books in the late 19th century there was an explosion of creativity in the design of bookplates. At the same time more artists took an interest in the format and began creating specially commissioned designs.

After researching exlibris in books held in the library of the Egyptian Museum in Berlin, in the library of the Museo Egizio in Turin, in numerous databases, and currently in the Library of Egyptology of the Collège de France, more than a thousand different bookplates with Egyptian patterns have been listed and referenced. This profusion of examples representing real archaeological objects, sometimes integrated into totally fanciful compositions, was the starting point for this study, focused exclusively on bookplates taking their motifs from ancient Egypt, a highly specific theme when compared to the production of bookplates in general, which must amount to several hundreds of thousands of examples. The search for archaeological sources improves our understanding of the diffusion of certain motifs more than others, and the study of these motifs is a study of the reception of ancient Egypt.

### The Earliest ‘Ex libris’ in History?

#### *An Ancient Egyptian Artefact*

If there is one archaeological object that should be presented first of all, it is the one considered to be the first ‘ex libris’ in history – a plate with the name of Amenhotep III (Figure 1) (Konrad and Pamminger 2014: 17-18). It is a small blue-glazed earthenware plate in the shape of a curved stele that belonged to the pharaoh Amenhotep III and the Great Royal Wife Tiye, excavated from Tell el-Amarna. Several such artefacts are known, in particular the one with dark-blue text on light-blue enamel now

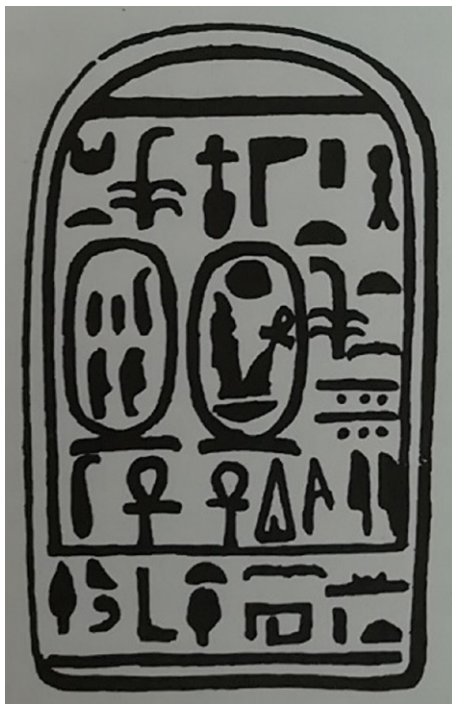


Figure 1. Facsimile of the ‘ex libris’ of Amenhotep III, H. 62 mm; W. 38 mm, faience, London, British Museum (EA 22878; Keimer 1929).



Figure 2. Fragment of the ‘ex libris’ of Amenhotep III, H. 21 mm; W. 8 mm, faience, Yale Art Gallery (1936.1, Yale University Art Gallery, public domain).

in the British Museum in London (No. EA 22878) and first published in 1935 by the Belgian Egyptologist Capart (1877-1947), and more recently by Aufrère (1999) and Parkinson (1999).

Another, incomplete, example (Figure 2) is from the Yale Art Gallery (1936.1). Although fragmentary, its size is identical to the bottom section of the British Museum's plaque. A further example, with blue text, is to be found in the Louvre, Paris (N 588; E 3043).

The precise function of these rectangular glazed labels remains uncertain, but the hieroglyphic text suggests that these plaques served as labels for papyrus scrolls, belonging to the royal library, associated with Amenhotep III and Tiye, or perhaps they were fixed to separate compartments within a box designed to hold papyri.

The hieroglyphs on the fully-preserved example, now in the British Museum, can be read as: 'The Good God, Neb-maat-Re, given life, beloved of Ptah, king of the two lands, the King's wife Tiye, living', and at the bottom: 'Book of the Sycamore Tree and of the Dom Palm'. This title may refer to a horticultural treatise, but a more likely reference is to a dialogue between two trees, such as that included within the corpus of New Kingdom love poetry. In his article entitled 'An Egyptian Royal Bookplate: The ex libris of Amenophis III and Teie', Hall (1926: 31-32) was interested in the successive translations of Opitz, Bezold-Budge, Ranke and Borchardt that were proposed for the identification of the *b3kw*-tree, but Capart (1935) hypothesised that the 'book' stored within the box decorated with this 'ex libris' was a botanical treatise describing *Moringa arabica*, from which *ben*-oil was derived.

#### ***A Subtle Reference to Ancient Egypt in the Modern Exlibris?***

It is not so surprising, therefore, that this first 'ex libris' in history, moreover one from ancient Egypt, should feature in modern bookplates. It is more than a subtle reference to ancient Egypt, but rather a true homage, as evidenced by depictions that make the label of Amenhotep III an object of adoration and veneration. On a modern exlibris belonging to Egart Andersson (Figure 3) (Blum 1992: 148; Konrad and Pamminger 2014: 17; Vanlaethem and Oost 2013: 5), created by the Latvian artist Pēteris Upītis (1899-1989) (Neureiter 2009: 449), two women dressed in fine linen dresses pick lotus flowers and hold up their arms in adoration of a representation of the first 'ex libris', i.e. the British Museum's artefact. Upītis has based his scene – hunting and fishing in the marshes – on one from the Tomb of Menna (TT 69) at Sheikh Abd el-Qurna, which is precisely contemporary with Amenhotep III (Boyer 2022: cat. 3).

On the exlibris of Raimonos Inkis (Figure 4), designed by the Latvian artist Elita Viliama (b. 1954) (Neureiter 2009: 459), several leather-bound codices lie randomly in the foreground (Vanlaethem and Oost 2013: 6; Boyer 2022: cat. 71). Above, two Egyptian women can again be seen worshipping the same label of Amenhotep III. Thus, this antique label becomes something of a motif within a visual catalogue artists have used



Figure 3. The bookplate of Egart Andersson designed by Pēteris Upītis (1899-1989), woodcut, 1973, H. 147 mm, W. 106 mm, No. 2021\_004 (private collection).

to create an iconography referring to ancient Egypt. In the rarified circle of bibliophiles, this motif becomes more than a reference, it becomes an icon that has to be shown. This can be seen very well in Gernot Blum's exlibris (Figure 5) made by Upītis in 1981 (Konrad and Pamminger 2014: 18; Boyer 2022: cat. 14). The monumental Sphinx of Giza dominates the scene. In the foreground, a cup of Hygieia, with a serpent wrapped around it, is represented. The snake seems to hold a spatula or a knife in its mouth. In the lower right corner there is a stylised lotus flower with side buds. In the background, a caravan of dromedaries passes at the foot of the pyramid of Khafre. And, of course, the label of Amenhotep III (BM, EA 22878) is instantly recognisable. The Egyptomania phenomenon observed in these representations, and in this very particular field of bibliophilia, is not a simple description of ancient Egypt, but a true evocation that awakens the imagination and commemorates the pharaonic civilisation through what can be described as the 'archaeologisation of the imaginary'.

### Emerging Egyptology: a Stimulus for Egyptophilia and Egyptomania

#### What is Egyptomania and Egyptophilia?

Egypt fascinates the West: the universe revealed by archaeological excavations arouses scientific and intellectual curiosity. To qualify this enthusiasm and this passion for ancient Egypt, various closely related terms are often used interchangeably. To define only the main ones, Egyptomania (madness or mania of Egypt) denotes, first of all, the reuse of decorative elements borrowed from ancient Egypt by our contemporary societies, without really caring about the original context. This corresponds to a cultural reappropriation through the recreation of objects that sometimes have nothing to do with the Pharaonic civilisation. It is not enough for the Egyptian forms to be merely copied; they need to be recreated with the sensitivity of the artist, who thus reflects a history of aesthetic taste specific to their time.



Figure 4. The bookplate of Raimonos Inkis by Elita Viliama (b. 1954), aqua fortis and aquatint, 1987, H. 175 mm; W. 123 mm, No. 2021\_247 (private collection).



Figure 5. The bookplate of Gernot Blum by Pēteris Upītis (1899-1989), woodcut, 1981, Opus 548, H. 149 mm; W. 111 mm, No. 2021\_018 (private collection).

The term Egyptomania appears at the end of the 18th century and means both a taste, a penchant, an exuberant obsession for ancient Egypt. Egyptophilia (the love of Egypt) characterises the enthusiast travelling to Egypt and having a passion for antiquities, to the point of bringing them back to exhibit in their 'cabinets of curiosities'. Curiosity and passion are the characteristics of the Egyptophile, who might be a scholar, scientist, traveller, collector, or patron. The descriptions of Egyptophile travellers, as well as their drawings, serve particularly as a source of inspiration for Egyptomania. The term 'Egyptianising' (reminiscent of Egypt) refers to the addition of ancient Egyptian decoration on a non-Egyptian element. An example might be a sphinx (a Greek hybrid creature) wearing the *nemes*. In the field of bibliophilia, we can point to forms and patterns that have become Egyptianised through the overflowing imagination and creative force of artists.

### ***The First Egyptological Publications as Sources of Inspiration***

Since the decipherment of Egyptian hieroglyphs by Champollion and the numerous archaeological discoveries in Egypt during the 19th and 20th centuries, the visual tradition of depicting ancient Egypt has developed and been enriched by details specific to features such as tomb murals, temple reliefs, representations of specific archaeological objects, etc. This 'catalogue' of visual references embodying the aesthetic and symbolic essence of ancient Egypt can also be seen reflected in bookplates. Indeed, the Egyptian 'ex libris' reveals in a certain way, through its iconography, the key works of art of Pharaonic civilisation, brought to light thanks to the discipline of Egyptology.

Our objective is to find the multiple sources of archaeological inspiration illustrating the history of Egyptology in the 19th and 20th centuries. We can look first at the range of scientific publications, i.e. the publication of the *Description de l'Égypte*, a series appearing first in 1809 and continuing until its

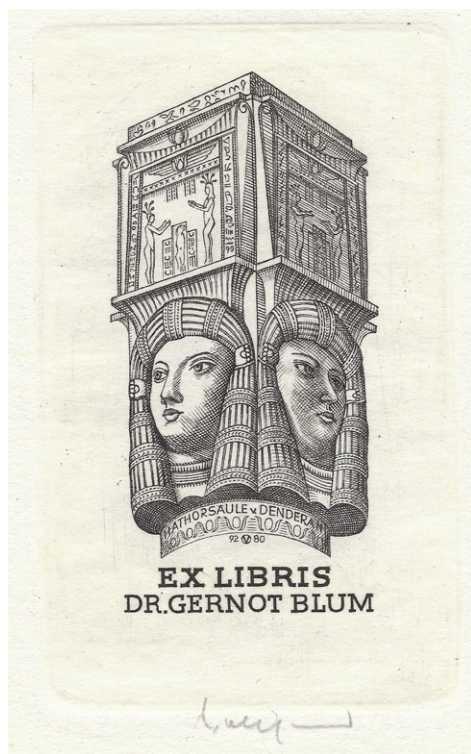


Figure 6. The bookplate of Gernot Blum by Oswin Volkamer (1930-2016), copper engraving, 1980, Opus 92, H. 122 mm; W. 87 mm, No. 2021\_017 (private collection).



Figure 7. The bookplate of L. Waelsch by Jaromír Stretti-Zamponi (1882-1959), aquatint and aqua fortis, 1910, H. 148 mm; W. 106 mm, No. 2021\_183 (private collection).

final volume in 1829; the *Monuments de l'Égypte et de la Nubie* by Champollion (1835-1845); the *I monumenti dell'Egitto e della Nubia* by Rosellini (1832-1845); and the *Denkmäler aus Ägypten und Äthiopien* by Lepsius (1849-1856). Less well known, but equally important works, include *Voyage dans la Basse et la Haute-Égypte...* by Vivant Denon (1802); *Voyage à Méroé, au Fleuve blanc au-delà de Fazoql...* by Cailliaud (1826-1827); *Panorama d'Égypte et de Nubie* by Horeau (1841); *Histoire des usages funèbres et des sépultures des peuples anciens* by Feydeau (1856-1858); *Histoire de l'Art Égyptien - Atlas* by Prisse d'Avennes (1869); *Aegypten in Bild und Wort* by Ebers (1880); *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians...* by Wilkinson (1837); etc. These have all served as invaluable sources of inspiration to artists.

Two examples of exlibris whose iconography is undoubtedly directly taken from the *Description de l'Égypte* illustrate this borrowing from early Egyptological publications. The bookplate made for Gernot Blum (Figure 6) (Blum 1992: 236; Konrad 2015: 100-101) by the German artist Oswin Volkamer (b. 1930) (Neureiter 2009: 462) in 1980 illustrates an Hathoric capital, with the face of the goddess Hathor wearing a heavy wig and recognisable by her cow ears. Hieroglyphic inscriptions are only suggested, most probably due to the technical limitations of the engraving technique. However, one can only emphasise the general finesse of the details. The source of inspiration for this exlibris is a detail of a column from the portico of the temple of Hathor at Dendera, taken from the famous *Description de l'Égypte* (A, vol. IV, pl. 12), a monumental work ensuing from the French campaign in Egypt and Syria (1798-1801). This capital is also represented on the frontispiece of the same work, made after the painting by Panckoucke (1825) (Boyer 2022: cat. 13).

The exlibris made for Waelsch (Figure 7) (Blum 1992: 186; Konrad 2015: 57), by Jaromír Stretti-Zamponi (1882-1959) (Neureiter 2009: 424), highlights the Sphinx of Gizeh, still silted up, spanning the centuries and falling into ruin (Boyer 2022: cat. 144). This romantic view is taken from a plate from the *Description de l'Égypte* (A, vol. V, pl. 11). The Latin motto *HORA RUIT* recalls the Latin phrase *Hora ruit, tempus fugit* ('The hour rushes, time flies').

These two bookplates, one from the beginning and one from the end of the 20th century, both refer to the *Description de l'Égypte*, demonstrating the continuing importance of this work in the inspiration of Egyptomaniac artists. Although this work was not perceived in the same way at the beginning of the 20th century as at its end, the plates from it continued to circulate and to feed the creative imagination of artists. The iconographies that developed thus contributed to conveying Egyptological discoveries by enriching the visual repertoire, intimately linked to the history of this field of research, i.e. Egyptology, which has established itself over the decades as a rigorous discipline. This 'archeologisation' of the imaginary places Egyptomaniac artists in the role of 'journalists' – covering the birth and construction of Egyptology.

### **Objects seen in Museums**

For example, the French poet, novelist, and art critic Théophile Gautier (1811-1872), was a museum enthusiast who regularly visited the Louvre. His bookplate (Figure 8), with a monogram intertwining the letters (T. G. A. U. T. I. E. R.), is very rare. Dated to the year of the writer's death, it only appears in a few of his books. The date is uncertain because it was created by Aglæus Bouvenne (Neureiter 2009: 64) in 1872 but possibly used posthumously in his books (Vanlaethem and Oost 2013: 72; Boyer 2022: cat. 60). The source of inspiration is a pectoral bearing the name of Ramesses II (Ziegler 1994: 352-353) found in 1852 by Auguste Mariette (1821-1881) in the tomb of Apis II at the Serapeum of Saqqara (Mariette 1857: pl. 9) and now in the Louvre (No. E 79). In a trapezoidal frame surmounted by a cavetto cornice are represented the goddesses Nekhbet (a vulture with outstretched wings) and Wadjet (a cobra), respectively goddesses of Upper and Lower Egypt. A ram-headed hawk surmounts them. Gautier's monogram replaces the cartouche of Ramesses II. The depiction of the *djed* pillars, however, is clumsy. Gautier drew much of

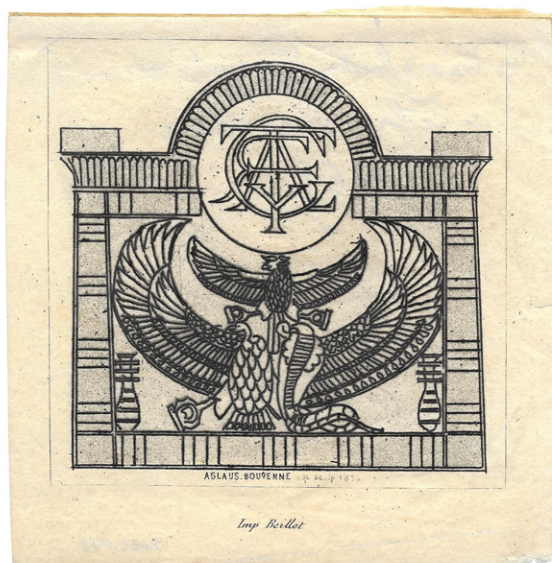


Figure 8. The bookplate of Théophile Gautier by Ernest-Gustave Bouvenne, also called Agläus (1829-1903), 1872, printer Beillet, H. 80 mm; W. 80 mm, No. 2021\_075 (private collection).



Figure 9. The bookplate of Helmer Fogedgaard by Hendrik (Henk) Blokhuis (b. 1936), woodcut, 1991, Opus 131, H. 99 mm; W. 87 mm, No. 2021\_072 (private collection).

his inspiration from ancient Egypt, initially from his regular visits to museum collections as previously mentioned, publishing *Une nuit de Cléopâtre* (1839), *Le pied de momie* (1840), and *Le Roman de la momie* (1858). He travelled to Egypt in 1869, his travelogue *L'Orient* being published posthumously (1877).

Another pectoral from the Louvre also served as the primary source of inspiration for the exlibris made for the Danish journalist Helmer Fogedgaard (Figure 9) by the Dutch artist Hendrik Blokhuis (b. 1936) (Neureiter 2009: 56) in 1991 (Vanlaethem and Oost 2013: 52; Boyer 2022: 58). This is a representation of the pectoral of the Vizier Paser (New Kingdom, 19th dynasty, reign of Ramesses II). It was also discovered in 1852 by Mariette (1857: pl. 12) in the sarcophagus of Apis III in Saqqara and is now in the Louvre (No. E 68). Made of gold, lapis lazuli and moulded-glass paste, its decoration consists of a scarab flanked by the goddesses Isis and Nephthys. In a decidedly more modern style, the pectoral is represented here in colour. The choice of the woodcut technique does not allow for such precise details that we can see in the exlibris of Théophile Gautier (above), made in the previous century, certainly on copperplate (however, the printing technique of the Blokhuis example is not confirmed).

These two previous examples are faithfully represented, with only a slight modification for the Gautier exlibris, in which the cartouche of Ramesses II is replaced with his own monogram. With the deciphering of ancient Egyptian, the conceit of alphabetically, or phonetically, transcribing one's name into hieroglyphs using unilaterals became widespread. Jeanine van Heck's exlibris (Figure 10), designed by Dutch artist Ad Snelders (b. 1947) (Neureiter 2009: 412), shows a funerary figurine (*shabti*) wearing everyday dress, with the characteristic short-sleeved tunic, kilt, and projecting apron, usually with a finely detailed bipartite wig (Boyer 2022: cat. 67). The figurine's arms are crossed, brought back on the chest, and the hands hold agricultural tools. He is wearing a typical 19th-dynasty frizzled wig. On his loincloth, a column of hieroglyphs transcribes alphabetically the first name of the holder: *j-3-n-y-n*, followed by the determinative of a woman. Real signs are used here, not to express themselves in ancient Egyptian, but to transcribe, letter by letter, a modern first name on the reproduction of an archaeological object that actually exists, i.e. the limestone *shabti* of Nakhtamun, now in the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden



(No. 3.2.5.9), Leiden. This *shabti* is well known, appearing on the cover of Schneider's book – *Shabtis: an introduction to the history of ancient Egyptian funerary statuettes with a catalogue of the collection of shabtis in the National Museum of Antiquities at Leiden* (1977).

### Reflecting the Research in Egyptology in the 20th Century

In addition to reflecting the history of archaeological discoveries and their impact on the modern reception of ancient Egypt, bookplates can also be viewed as markers of the state of Egyptological research at a specific time. By their iconography, they can document the understanding of an object at affixed point in time, later to be seen as erroneous and revised by the updating of Egyptological knowledge, which is in constant evolution (Boyer in press).

#### *Erroneous Identification and New Reattribution*

The most telling example is the one represented on a bookplate designed for Gernot Blum (Figure 11) (Blum 1992: 24; Konrad 2015: 168-169) by the Czech artist Vladimír Pechar (b. 1931) (Neureiter 2009: 339) in 1982 (Boyer 2022: cat. 19). On it appear the cartouches of Ramesses II: *wsr-Mꜣꜥ.t-Rꜥ* ('The justice of Re is mighty'), *stp-n-Rꜥ* ('The Chosen of Re'), and *Rꜥ-ms-sw* ('Re begot him'), *mry-Jmn* ('The beloved of Amun'). The head represented next to these cartouches is that of a pharaoh wearing a *khepresh* crown, long erroneously identified as Ramesses II. The source of inspiration is a red quartzite sculpture attributed for decades to Ramesses II and then to the pharaoh Amenmesse (Yurco 1979); it is now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (No. 34.2.2). In fact, the head belongs to a statue, usurped by Seti II, but originally of Amenmesse, the remains of whose quartzite standard-bearer statue was found inside the great hypostyle hall of the temple of Amun at Karnak (Hopper 2010: 193-204). This statue is exhibited *in situ* at Karnak, north of Column 71, and the neck break clearly matches with the



Figure 10. The bookplate of Jeanine van Heck by Ad Snelders (b. 1947), woodcut, H. 139 mm; W. 90 mm, No. 2021\_081 (private collection).



Figure 11. The bookplate of Gernot Blum by Vladimír Pechar (b. 1931), offset, 1982, Opus 461, H. 149 mm; W. 102 mm, No. 2021\_024 (private collection).

head in New York (MMA 34.2.2). It is, however, most unusual, in that standard-bearer statues wearing the *khrepush* are exceedingly rare. The successor to Amenmesse (c. 1199 BC) was Seti II, who may have been the previously ousted Crown Prince. Certainly, he seems to have exercised a *damnatio memoriae* on his predecessor's monuments and added his own name to earlier ones, as on this statue. Although the titulary of this statue belongs to Seti II, the hieroglyphs have been recut. It is, therefore, particularly interesting to note the evolution that the erroneous identification of this 'head' has undergone, and that has made this exlibris the lasting witness of a state of research at a precise moment in the history of Egyptology.

### **Pyramid or Flat Structure? A Case of Bias**

In some cases, the iconography chosen for an exlibris represents a real bias. For example, the bookplate of Zbigniew Szymański (Figure 12) (Blum 1992: 222) born in 1942 (Neureiter 2009: 430), designed by himself, has a pyramidal shape visible in the architectural reconstruction of the mortuary complex of Mentuhotep II at Deir el-Bahari, the elevation of which, however, is problematic (Boyer 2022: cat. 131). Some see it as a pyramidal top, others as a flat building, or even as a mound covered with trees, reminiscent of the image of the tomb of Osiris. This representation of the temple is here inspired by the reconstruction proposed by the American Egyptologist Herbert Winlock (1884-1950), who saw in the central building of the complex of Mentuhotep II a massif in the shape of a pyramid (Wilkinson 2000: 22). This reconstruction proposal has however been called into question by the German Egyptologist Dieter Arnold, who prefers to see it as a flat structure. This bookplate thus crystallises the different interpretations and the progress of research in understanding this structure.

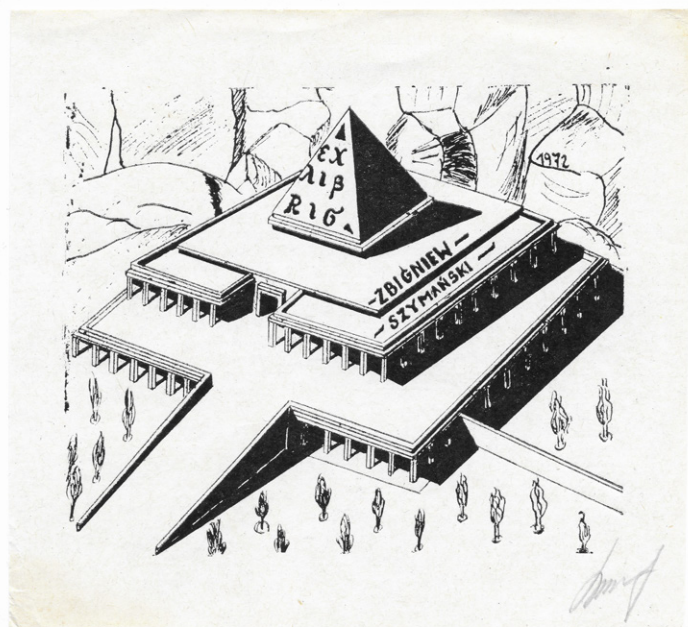


Figure 12. The bookplate of Zbigniew Szymanski, designed by himself, linear zincotyping, 1972, H. 110 mm; W. 121 mm, No. 2021\_171 (private collection).

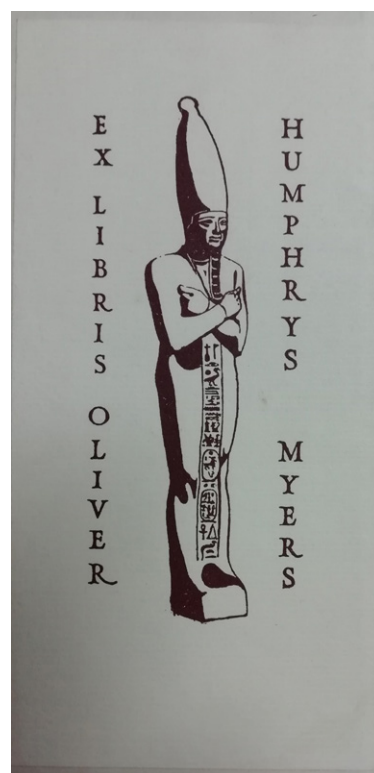


Figure 13. The bookplate of Oliver Humphrys Myers, in Petrie (1891) (Berlin, Ägyptisches Museum, NG 5380 L183 P4; photo: Valentin Boyer).

***An Egyptologist’s Bookplate: Excavations as a Source of Inspiration***

A third example is the bookplate of British archaeologist Oliver Humphrys Myers (1903-1966). This vignette (Figure 13) represents a sandstone statue, almost 2 m high, of King Mentuhotep III as Osiris. This statue was re-inscribed in antiquity for King Merenptah and is now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (No. 38.1395). The statue originally stood in the temple of Montu at Armant and was excavated by Myers and Sir Robert Mond during the expedition of the Egypt Exploration Society in 1937 and given to Boston in 1938. It was one of six such figures that had been buried ceremonially beneath the floor when the temple was rebuilt in the Greco-Roman period. Although no longer needed in the new building, they were evidently still considered too sacred to destroy nearly two millennia later. The inscription running down the centre is misleading as it identifies the king as the 19th-dynasty pharaoh Merenptah. The text, however, was inscribed centuries after the statue was erected, perhaps at a time when Merenptah undertook renovations of the temple. Most of the other figures of Mentuhotep found with it are uninscribed. Myers’ bookplate, therefore, offers a reflection of the state of research in Egyptology at Ermant through the representation of a newly discovered statue, since this bookplate was designed in the early 1940s.

***Reflecting the State of Conservation***

The scenes depicted in the exlibris are comparatively faithful. In some cases, they make it possible to ‘immortalise’ a particular state of conservation, structural defects, or missing picks or polychromy that are still visible. All bookplates are not necessarily fanciful, or seeking to recreate a completely imaginary Egypt. Artists are inspired by original artefacts and, even if they adapt them, or include new settings, they are generally very recognisable, especially when the artist focuses on very specific details. What results is a kind of ‘visual condition’ report. On the bookplate designed for Alexandr (Figure 14) by the Latvian artist Elita Viliama in 1978 (Boyer 2022: cat. 2), a high dignitary is depicted in an unconventional posture, kneeling on the ground, armed with a throwing stick and shown hunting ducks under the rays of the Aten disk. This kneeling posture is usually that of submission (captive strangers) or prostration (worship scenes). This figure is a composition, since only the upper body is taken from a scene on



Figure 14. The tomb of Menna (TT 69) and the bookplate of Alexandr designed by Elita Viliama (b. 1954), aqua fortis and aquatint, 1978, H. 150 mm; W. 113 mm, No. 2021\_243 (notations: copy of original defects/missing picks) (private collection).

the north wall of the longitudinal hall of the tomb of Menna (TT 69). When identifying the source of inspiration, here the tomb of Menna, a doubt remains. However, if we look closely at the details we can see that the missing elements (at the level of the elbow and the face) from the original scene are faithfully reproduced here. Although Menna's upper body was oriented differently, the same missing elements (elbow and face) from the original scene are faithfully reproduced.

## A Patchwork of Patterns

### *Three Dynasties in the Same Image*

Many bookplates mix archaeological sources of inspiration to create a kind of patchwork that it is interesting to unravel. The primary objective of bookplate designers/artists is not to achieve scientific consistency in the use and association of motifs. Some use an anthology of motifs to evoke ancient Egypt through international icons, i.e. Tutankhamun, Nefertiti, Cleopatra, Ramesses II, the Sphinx of Giza, the Pyramids, etc. Others take the liberty of mixing less well known motifs from the Egyptomaniac world, but transcribe a real Egyptophile feeling through the choice of subjects, even if they are anachronistic. Eeva Louhi's bookplate is a good illustration of this (Figure 15) (Boyer 2022: cat. 88). We are presented with three dynasties in one: the figure of the seated man is taken from the scene of divine adoration found on the north face of pillar 1 of the burial chamber of Sennefer's tomb (TT 96) at Sheikh Abd el-Qurna (18th dynasty); Sennefer is seated and at his feet we see his wife (the scene is very easily recognisable thanks to Sennefer's earrings); The falcon with outstretched wings is the representation of Ptah-Sokar-Osiris from the tomb of Pashed at Deir el-Medina (TT 3), who was 'Servant in the Place of Truth to the West of Thebes' (19th dynasty); the man on the left is a Wab priest, Ken, who holds a statuette of Osiris and a box for *shabtis*, taken from a scene in the tomb of Inherkhau (TT 359) at Deir el-Medina (20th dynasty).

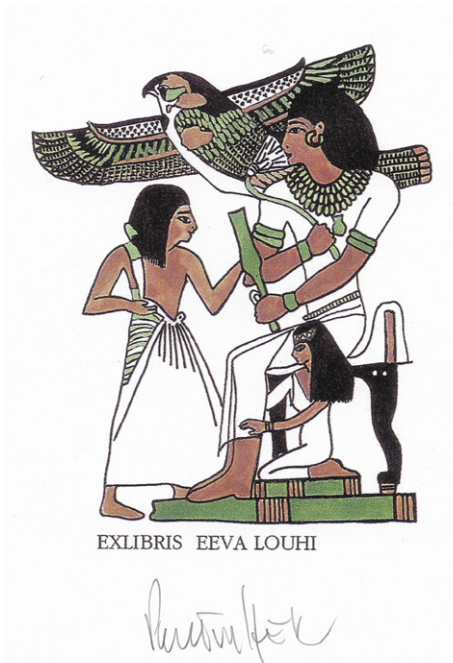


Figure 15. The bookplate of Eeva Louhi, H. 147 mm; W. 104 mm, No. 2021\_255 (private collection).

Figure 16. The bookplate of Klaus Rödel designed by Richard Preusse (1888-1971), copper engraving and aquatint, 1968, H. 121 mm; W. 107 mm, No. 2021\_145 (private collection).

**Religious and Funerary Decor in the Same Image**

The patchwork of patterns can also combine representations from monuments with very different functions, some religious, others funerary, within the same image. In the foreground of the exlibris designed for Klaus Rödel (Figure 16) (Blum 1992: 114; Vanlaethem and Oost 2013: 66; Konrad 2015: 91-94; Boyer, 2022, cat. 112) in 1968 by the German artist Richard Preusse (1888-1971) (Neureiter 2009: 354), the scene of the ritual of the opening of the mouth by a priest playing the role of Anubis is taken from a scene at the back of the vaulted room of the tomb of Nebemmaat (TT 219) at Deir el-Medina (19th dynasty), discovered in 1928 by the French Egyptologist Bruyère (1879-1971). In the background, the Egyptian temple pylon, featuring its two moles and four banners, is that of the Temple of Horus at Edfu (from the Ptolemaic period). On its facade, the classic scenes of the massacre of enemies by the pharaoh brandishing his club are recognisable. It seems highly probable that this scene is taken from Heck (1860, pl. 243 VII, B.1, fig. 3), in which we can see many similarities, i.e. the representation of the long poles flying banners in the wind.

**Hieroglyphic Inscriptions as Aesthetic or Symbolic Decor?**

*The Hunefer ‘Book of the Dead’*

From a series of more than ten bookplates (Czosnyka 1992) designed by the Czech artist Vladimír Pechar for different people, and having as their themes emblematic figures from pharaonic times (kings, queens, high dignitaries), an exlibris made for Gernot Blum (Figure 17) honours King Senusret III (Boyer 2022: cat. 26). In the background, a hieratic text runs along the bottom. Despite graphic differences, it could be an extract from vignette 1 of the Hunefer papyrus (19th dynasty) in the British Museum (No. pBM EA 9901), corresponding to spell 15 from ‘The Book of the Dead’ (the Hymn to the sun-god). The face of Senusret III is placed in the middle of the composition. Despite the misinterpretation of certain signs, the omission of a few groups of signs, and entire passages of the text, one can clearly identify the passage



Figure 17. The bookplate of Gernot Blum, designed by Vladimír Pechar (b. 1931), offset, 1987, Opus 745, H. 150 mm; W. 101 mm, No. 2021\_251 (private collection).



Figure 18. The bookplate of Bianca Najork, designed by Richard Preusse (1888-1971), aqua fortis, 1961, Opus 62, H. 120 mm; W. 101 mm, No. 2021\_129 (private collection).

in the Hunefer papyrus that served as a model. Apart from a few variations in the order of the columns, it is the same text we see as the background for all the series. Column 1 in the exlibris, however, is column 11 in the Hunefer papyrus. Why Hunefer's 'Book of the Dead' was chosen remains unanswered: was it really a simple coincidence of material easily accessible to the artist, or did its primary function (as a travelling companion for eternity) add to its undeniable graphic aspect? In any case, the Hunefer papyrus had been a clear source of inspiration for several bookplate designers.

#### *Kha's 'Book of the Dead'*

There is a very interesting patchwork of patterns on an exlibris designed for Bianca Najork (Figure 18) by the German artist Richard Preusse in 1961 (Boyer, 2022, cat. 102). In the foreground is the famous bust of Nefertiti (Berlin, No. ÄM 21300) represented in profile. The bust thus stands out against a background that uses the text and vignettes of spells 83 (being transformed into a *bennu*-bird) and 84 (being transformed into a *chenty*-bird) of the *Book of the Dead* of Kha (18th dynasty), discovered in 1906 by Schiaparelli (1856-1928) in TT 8, and kept in the Museo Egizio, Turin (No. S. 8316/03 = S. 8438). The inscriptions are faithfully reproduced, simply taken from the lower half of the papyrus. The vignettes are also perfectly consistent with the original, except that they have been swapped and completely reversed. Through this horizontal symmetry, the engraver was able to place the two birds in the oblique dynamic created by the queen's crown. The signs thus retain their original meaning, oriented towards the right, like Nefertiti, but the birds face her.

#### Conclusion

Although only a few very eclectic examples of the representations on bookplates have been presented in this contribution, they show the variety of iconographies created based on real archaeological models. It is not always easy to guess the sources of inspiration. Beyond the recognition of ancient Egyptian artefacts, it is very difficult to know why these motifs were chosen rather than others. Most of the owners of bookplates remain anonymous, and it is difficult to obtain information on them and the

intentions behind their choice of motif, hindering the study of these bookplates and the reception of ancient Egypt in the periods that they were produced. Such information must remain elusive: did the commissioner, the holder/owner, the designer/artist (who might all be different individuals) have any precise knowledge of ancient Egypt? Which of these individuals chose the motif?

The picturesque iconography of such bookplates featuring ancient Egyptian patterns stand as contributions to the transmission of Egyptological discoveries through the enrichment of its visual repertoire, intimately linked to the history of the field of research that is Egyptology, which has established itself over the decades as a major discipline. This archaeologisation of the imagination places both the designers/artists and the holders/owners of Egyptianised bookplates as 'journalists' of the history of Egyptology.

Fidelity to the original archaeological monuments and iconographic features has not affected the creativity of designers of bookplates. On the contrary, they demonstrate a certain originality by revisiting and reinventing the patterns thanks to their subjective sensibility: they recreate them, transpose them into other settings, adapt them to new forms, and reanimate them. The aim of Egyptomania was not just to revive ancient Egypt, but to also conjure up an evocation of it, removed from the fluctuations of time. As vectors of ideas and providers of images, these remarkable 'exlibris' are not simple depictions of ancient Egypt but creative images to stir the imagination and induce a wonder of the past.

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# **Preliminary Report on the Project ‘Arsinoe 3D’: Archival and Digital Reconstructions of the Italian Excavations at Arsinoë**

Ilaria Cariddi, Alessio Corsi

## **Abstract**

The archaeological remains of the Roman phase of Arsinoë (present-day Medinet el-Fayyum/El-Fayyum), threatened by urban expansion, were investigated during a single emergency campaign in 1964-65 by the Istituto Papirologico ‘G. Vitelli’ (University of Florence), and subsequently covered by modern buildings. The project ‘Arsinoe 3D’, led by the papyrologists and archaeologists of the Istituto Vitelli (Scientific director: Prof F. Maltomini) and by the DAdA-LAB team of the Department of Civil Engineering and Architecture of the University of Pavia (Scientific director: Prof. Arch. S. Parrinello), aims to achieve a virtual reconstruction of the site, based upon film negatives, excavation journals, and the unpublished findings and data preserved in Florence. Through cutting-edge photogrammetry, 3D-modelling technologies, and digital storytelling, it has been possible to recreate the environment as it was in 1965, thus allowing us to visit a site that no longer exists.

At the same time, numerous findings of that field campaign have been studied, catalogued, 3D-scanned, and virtually reinstated in their original archaeological context. The project ‘Arsinoe 3D’ will be offered as a virtual and physical exhibition, due to be launched in 2023. The present contribution serves as a preliminary illustration of the archaeological and archival research, the methodologies of the past excavation, and the modern reconstruction, for a project designed to qualify as a case study of contexts and sites endangered or no longer accessible.

## **Keywords**

Arsinoe, Crocodilopolis, Krokodilopolis, Graeco-Roman Egypt, Fayyum, Digital reconstruction, 3D reconstruction, archives

## **Arsinoë: historical outline of the site and its excavations (I. Cariddi)**

‘Arsinoe 3D’ is a multidisciplinary project aimed at shedding new light on the capital of the Fayyum region, Shedet (Šdt/Šty), known in the Ptolemaic period as Krokodilopolis (Κροκοδίλων πόλις), and later, as Ptolemais Euergetis (Πτολεμαῖς Εὐεργέτις, from 116 BC), and Arsinoitōn Polis/Arsinoë (Ἀρσινόϊτων πόλις/Ἀρσινόη, from the 4th century AD; Casarico 1987a: 133-135; 1987b; see also TM Geo 327). Probably dating back to the Predynastic period, the city was re-founded by Amenemhat I as a strategic centre for the control of the Lake Moeris waters, and it developed along the banks of the Bahr Yussuf canal. After the second project of land reclamation and agricultural extension at the beginning of the Ptolemaic period (Davoli 2012: 154), it became the capital of the Fayyum region, its largest and most important centre.

However, the present knowledge of the settlement is extremely fragmentary: almost entirely incorporated within the modern suburbs of Medinet el-Fayyum, Arsinoë is frequently referred to as ‘the lost city’. Its location at the very centre of the agricultural area, intensively inhabited, exploited for crops, and

subject to flooding, was its fortune in antiquity, its ruin for long-time conservation. The complete loss of the capital of the Fayyum is acutely lamented by archaeologists, historians, and papyrologists alike.

Yet, unlike most of the other hinterland settlements in the Fayyum, vanished due to constant dampness and agricultural use (Davoli 2012: 155), until the 1850s, the remnants of Arsinoë were still well visible in more than ten high mounds. The first European visitors and excavators, Jomard (1821: 446-447), Belzoni (1835: 361-362), Rifaud (1829: 4-19), Lepsius (1970: 30), Vassalli (1867: 59-69), could recognise, amongst the prominent *kiman*, vast remains of architecture and statues dated to the Middle Kingdom, Ramses II and the Ptolemaic era, residential quarters, and Roman baths.

In particular, Jomard, one of the *savants* who accompanied Bonaparte's expedition to Egypt, provides valuable information on the extension of the remains of Arsinoë – at the beginning of the 19th century, the surface occupied by the ruins measured about 4 × 3 km, a not inconsiderable area (Jomard 1821). The first 'excavations' of the site were those of J.J. Rifaud, in 1823-1824, who distinguished four levels of occupation recorded in a simplified, yet indicative, section plan. The explorer conducted a survey of the 51 m-tall hill of 'Koum-Medinet-el-Farès', probably corresponding to the 'Kom Fares' later mapped by G. Schweinfurth, where abundant fragments of Pharaonic and Greco-Roman stone elements surfaced. Under the *kom* he located mudbrick structures, interpreted as residential, a subterranean conduct leading to a vast water basin and three cisterns, all on a north-south axis, and the monumental vestiges of a thermal complex (Rifaud 1829: 4-19).

During the late 19th century, as ancient sites were reinhabited in the process of modernisation and intensification of agricultural production promoted by Muhammad Ali Pasha, several Fayyum sites, including Arsinoë, were used as quarries for building materials, and spoiled by *sebbakhin*; their activities unearthed sizeable quantities of archaeological remains, and particularly papyri, later sold to the largest collections in Europe and Egypt (Breccia 1936: 297-298; Davoli 1998: 150). The site was thus progressively ruined, both by diggers and the development of cultivation, and by the modern capital of the Fayyum.

The most important landmark in the documentation of Arsinoë came about in 1886, when the German botanist, ethnologist and explorer Schweinfurth (1887: pl. 2) led a detailed survey, producing what remains the only extensive planimetry of the area. At that time, the ruins occupied roughly 2.4 × 2.2 km, in eight tall *kiman*, mainly located to the north of the modern city. In 'Kom el-Chariana', he unearthed a residential quarter and the ruins of a great public building, from which most of the previously discovered papyri were said to derive. The excavation of the prominent 'Kom Fares' brought to light wall sections and papyri; nearby lay the remains of what the excavator interpreted as the temple of Hadrian or Jupiter Capitolinus. In 'Kom el-Addama', Schweinfurth dug some trial trenches in a 5th/6th century AD necropolis, the grave goods and rich textiles of which are presently in the Berlin Museum. The most extended ruins were those of the *temenos* of the main temple of Sobek/Suchos, in the area known as 'Deir el-Dab', and Schweinfurth (1887: 75-77) recorded there several red granite architectural fragments with cartouches of Amenemhat I and III, and Ramses II.

In 1888, W.M.F. Petrie investigated what survived of the temple of Sobek, renown in antiquity as the principal centre for the cult of the god in the Fayyum region, presently located in the northern district of Medinet el-Fayyum (area 1 of Davoli and Ahmed 2006: 81, 85-86, 90-91). Even though the sanctuary was, by then, almost covered by cultivation, Petrie was able to describe its stratigraphy in four main phases: a (re?)foundation in the 12th dynasty, probably under Amenemhat I or, more probably, III and, subsequently, the Ramesside, Saitic, and Ptolemaic layers. The temple, whose *temenos* measured c. 300 m in length and 250 m in width, was abandoned around the 3rd century AD, and by the 4th century, its entrance was occupied by private houses (Petrie 1889: 59). The great temple was dedicated to 'Sbk Šdty', 'Sobek of Shedet', and other *sunnaoi theoi*, probably including Thoeris, Thot and Amenemhat III/

Pramarres (Habachi 1955). A number of literary and papyrological sources suggest the existence of several cultic facilities of this temple, notably including a library, and a lake or basin housing the live reptilian hypostasis of Sobek. However, the excavations and the dispersed architectural finds have not yielded sufficient information to identify any of these structures (Casarico 1987a: 137-139; 1995: 72; Rossetti 2020: 88-93).

The aforementioned papyrological sources also record additional sanctuaries in Hellenistic and Roman Arsinoë, such as a temple for Ptolemy (identified with area 2 of Davoli and Ahmed 2006: 85-86, 90-91), one for the triad Isis-Osiris-Harpocrates, two for Soknebtynis ('Sobek-lord-of-Tebtynis') and Soknopaios ('Sobek-lord-of-Pay', especially worshipped at Dime), a Boubasteion, a synagogue, a Sebasteion, and several others (Casarico 1995: 72-75; Rossetti 2020: 93-95), all poorly or not documented archaeologically.

Scattered finds were made continuously as the modernisation of the city went forward (for a list see Davoli and Abd El-Aad 2001; Davoli and Ahmed 2006: 85-86). Above all, 14 colossal fragments of red granite columns with cartouches of Amenemhat III were brought to light c. 700 m south of the *temenos* of the Sobek temple, in the area known as the 'Kiman Fares' (also transcribed 'Kiman Faris'), from the name of the central mound, the 'Kom Fares'. Habachi (1937) theorised that they had to belong to another, previously unknown, large Middle Kingdom temple or cultic facility.

In 1964, the Chief Inspector of El-Fayyum compiled a report on the area of the Kiman Fares, documenting its endangered state, at this point reduced to less than half the area Schweinfurth mapped. The areas recorded and partially excavated on that occasion included the Sobek temple north of the Kiman Fares, the nearby remains of two red granite statues of Ramses II, the supposed Amenemhat III temple in the south, the Ptolemaic temple in the east, and two large Roman baths north and south of the Kiman (Davoli and Ahmed 2006: 85).

At that time, the long-term scientific collaboration between Egypt and the Istituto Papirologico 'G. Vitelli', University of Florence (henceforth: IPV), was resuming after the halt forced by the war (Manfredi, Menci and Pesi 2007: 625; Pintaudi 2009: 83-84). The IPV was thus granted the excavation permit for the Kiman Fares (centred in sector marked as 'Kom el-Arabi' in Schweinfurth 1887), the district that included the monumental ruins south of the Sobek temple, and the area believed to have produced a quantity of the famous bulk of papyri. No other foreign mission had previously worked on the site, and the aim was therefore twofold: investigating the architectural remains, in particular the presumed 'other' Middle Kingdom temple, and, if possible, searching for papyri. However, it also was devised as an emergency excavation, since, as the Government forewarned, the building expansion was rapidly progressing.

V. Bartoletti, then Director of the IPV, entrusted the excavation to S. Bosticco and M. Manfredi, professors of Egyptology and Papyrology respectively, at the University of Florence. Arriving on site on 3 December 1964, and having started the excavation two days later, they first mapped the identifiable stone structures. In particular, Manfredi detected a section of masonry in limestone blocks, located north of the concession area, with a fragmentary Ptolemaic inscription in Greek which attested that it was part of a theatre (Rathbone and Pintaudi 2020). The original plan of some thermal buildings in baked mudbricks, largely plundered, could be distinguished in negative, and a cemented stone pavement of Roman age, at the same level as the other thermal installations throughout the city, was unearthed under a 2 m-thick layer of debris. The excavation activity, focused in the central-east sector over an area of c. 12,500 m<sup>2</sup>, was conducted by Bosticco, Manfredi, and the mission members C. Barocas and F. Forte, leading the labour force of 50 workers from Quft. In addition, S. Donadoni (University La Sapienza of Rome) and E. Bresciani (University of Pisa) provided consultancy and collaboration (Bosticco 1997: 285-

286). The team carried out only one, brief campaign, from 5 December 1964 to 24 February 1965, after which the site disappeared completely.

In fact, after Bosticco's excavation and some final investigations by the *Service des Antiquités*, in 1966 the entire site was listed by the Inspectorate as free from antiquities, and buildable (Davoli and Ahmed 2006: 85). The district was fully urbanised, and, in 1970, only five areas with substantial architectural remains were preserved (Davoli and Ahmed 2006: 85-86, 90). Today, these sections have mostly disappeared under modern buildings (Davoli 2015: 93). More scattered finds continued to be unearthed and identified over the years. In particular, a fragment pertaining to a copy of the 'Marriage Stela' of Ramses II, probably from the temple of Sobek, provided new and significant evidence of the eminent role played by the city of Shedet in the Ramesside era (Davoli and Ahmed 2006: 83-85, 87). The last monumental and statuary vestiges were transferred in 2015 to the Open-air Museum of the Kiman Fares, in the archaeological area of ancient Karanis (today Kom Aushim, c. 35 km north of Medinet el-Fayyum), as part of the 'URU Fayum project' (University of California Los Angeles, Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, and the University of Auckland). The museum was funded by the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and the American Embassy in Cairo as a contribution to the local redevelopment of tourism.

Therefore, the 1964-65 campaign led by the IPV proved the last opportunity for a systematic archaeological investigation of a fairly large sector of Arsinoë. Later in 1965, Bosticco and his team intended to resume their work on the site, exploring the areas planned for the following seasons, including the remains of residential quarters in the area mapped as 'Kom er-Rustn' in Schweinfurth 1887, however this was not possible given the advanced state of the urban expansion (Pintaudi 2009: 84, 88-89). Thus, the documentation was left at a preliminary stage, and the only extant publication consists of two concise reports (Manfredi 1965; Bosticco 1997).



Figure 1. Egyptian workmen moving the fragments of the red granite columns (photo by C. Barocas, © 1964-65 Istituto Papirologico 'G. Vitelli', Florence).

As a result, the evidence of the Arsinoite metropolis in the Graeco-Roman era has, until now, relied almost exclusively on the papyrological sources; the published archaeological documentation has been deemed insufficient for any sort of reconstruction (Casarico 1995: 69; Davoli and Ahmed 2006: 87).

### **The results of the 1964-65 Italian excavations and the 'Arsinoë 3D' project (I. Cariddi)**

The Italian campaign determined that there was no trace of a Middle Kingdom temple in the archaeological layers beneath the red granite columns. Probably deriving from the neighbouring temple of Sobek, these had been gathered there and broken, presumably to be reused. The columns and nearby blocks were photographed, recorded, and drawn; they also revealed cartouches of Ramses IV, in addition to the already recorded ones of Amenemhat III, Ramses II and VI (Bosticco 1997: 286, and unpublished documentation [see *infra*]). It has been hypothesised that they were originally part of a colonnade erected by Amenemhat III in the temple of Sobek, later restored by Ramses II and Ramses VI (Davoli and Abd el-Aal 2001: 208).

The most important discovery was that the area preserved a section of the Roman aqueduct of the city, regarded as a peculiarity of the site. The mission excavated sizeable remains of pipes and canals, at the point where the principal line of the aqueduct that wound through the city from north to south connected with an east-west branch, as well as deep cisterns scattered throughout the site. These possibly belonged to the same complex of conduits described by Jomard (1821). Perhaps the most noteworthy of the hydraulic installations was located to the south of the excavation sector, comprising of a double series of canals, at three different levels, which supplied a large elliptical cistern, 3.75 m deep (Leclant 1966: 139-140; Manfredi 1965: 94), which produced no significant findings (Bosticco 1997: 286). A stone-lined well in the central sector, however, contained whole amphorae, ollas and cups, which confirmed the Roman dating of the construction (Bosticco 1997: 286). Some Pharaonic architectural fragments were found re-employed in the Roman aqueduct, validating the hypothesis of reuse for the Middle Kingdom and Ramesside monuments. In the south-west and north sectors of the excavation, two different complexes of several rooms were brought to light, both dated to the Ptolemaic age on the basis of the coins and pottery.

### **The findings and groundwork of the project (A. Corsi)**

No new papyri were recovered at Arsinoë, but archaeological finds were abundant, mostly still unpublished. Some 1500 pieces were granted to Italy in the *partage* with the *Service des Antiquités*. Provisionally deposited for over thirty years in the storerooms of the National Archaeological Museum in Florence, in 2001 these were transferred to the IPV, and today they are one of the two cores of its archaeological collection (Manfredi, Menci and Pesi 2007: 625-626, 629-633). Some 450 votive terracotta statuettes, and eight limestone fragments, currently under study, were recovered during the mission, dating from the end of the Ptolemaic age to the early Roman period (Menci and Pesi 2012: 5-16, and unpublished documentation [see *infra*]). While a substantial part of the collection is on display, much remains still within the deposits of the IPV.

The corpus of the terracotta statuettes of the IPV includes all typologies of figurines common in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt, illustrating the devotion of the inhabitants to local, Greek, and syncretic deities (Barrett 2011: 421-424). Egyptian divinities are mainly recognised by their crowns and headdresses, while Greek gods and goddesses of analogous prerogatives are often assimilated to them with different attributes (Menci and Pesi 2012: 14). The problem related to the destination and use of such statuettes is still open. As for several other areas of the Fayyum, most of the statuettes were found, unfortunately, separated from their original contexts; however those retrieved *in situ* seem to confirm the prevalent private and domestic use attested elsewhere in the region (Dunand 1979: 9; Nachtergaele 1985: 224).

Divinities of fertility and fecundity prevail, testifying to a characteristic faith popular to the masses (Dunand 1979: 107-117). Isis, related to agricultural fertility and procreation (Dunand 1979: 60-67), is the most predominant among the figurines of goddesses; she is also assimilated to Demeter in statuettes bearing attributes of both divinities and, as Isis-Hathor, also to Aphrodite, as protector of women.

Harpocrates ('Horus-the-Child'), on the other hand, is the predominant god among the statuettes portraying male gods, and, once again, he acts as guardian of the household and animals, propitiating fertility and abundance (Dunand 1979: 74-86). He is often depicted characteristically with his right finger pointing to his mouth, wearing a wreath of flowers (on top of which he normally wears a *pschent* and/or lotus blossoms), sometimes holding loaves and pots, or a *cornucopia*; occasionally he is represented with a shaved head and the typical childhood braid, closer to his Pharaonic iconography.

The collection of terracotta statuettes of the IPV also features a rare figurine of Mithras, whose cult seems otherwise documented only in Memphis and Hermopolis Magna (Harris 1996).

Bes, on the other hand, is fairly well attested among the autochthonous divinities, either as figurines in the round, or applied to torch holders or miniature altars.

The archaeological mission also recovered c. 800 pieces of pottery, mainly kitchenware, oil lamps and *unguentaria*, which testify once again to the residential use of the area. These were mainly produced in series, while some objects were imported. This part of the collection is still unpublished.

Lastly, an important core of the Arsinoite IPV collection consists of amphorae and amphorae handles with marks and inscriptions (in Greek and Latin) that give supplemental evidence of the intense commercial exchanges between the Fayyum and the other maritime centres of the Mediterranean Basin, especially Rhodes, Phoenicia, and Puglia (Manfredi and Rizzo forthcoming).

In recent years, several efforts have been dedicated to the collection and digitalisation of the unpublished documentation of the 1964-65 campaign still held at the IPV, something long wished for by the scientific community. This has allowed for a wealth of new studies that have expanded the results published by Bosticco and Manfredi. As part of the 2017 PRIN project '*Greek and Latin Literary Papyri from Graeco-Roman and Late Antique Fayum (4th century BC - 7th century AD): Texts, Contexts, Readers*', the IPV envisaged a collaboration with the DAda-LAB team from the Department of Civil Engineering and Architecture of the University of Pavia (henceforth: DAda-LAB), for an experimental project to try and recreate some of the original, physical context of the renown Arsinoite papyri. The IPV researches have thus supplied the architects and engineers with the original, and especially the newly catalogued documentation, extensive to some degree, but also incomplete, and difficult to publish, or to 'let it speak for itself' as it was.

A multi-disciplinary team was established to create a tool for the critical interpretation of such diversified sources – 'to make explicit the interconnection of the existing, fragmented historical data, giving an image to the relationships between the findings, and revealing the lost landscape' (Parrinello, Dell'Amico and Galasso 2022: 897). Despite the difficulty of dealing with a context no longer visible, but also precisely because of this feature, the working group devised several strategies to digitise this vanishing heritage, and to provide different means, for both general and specialised audiences, to explore the dynamic context of an excavation, and its many timelines – the Hellenistic and Roman lives of Arsinoë, the 20th century archaeological investigations, and the current research.

### Unpublished documentation (A. Corsi)

Numerous items of unpublished documentation from the excavation, still kept in the archives of the IPV, have been thoroughly reviewed and digitalised. These consist of:

- original film negatives
- contact prints of film rolls
- printed pictures
- handwritten excavation log journals (diaries, worker lists, finds lists, architectural and planimetric sketches), and a final report on the excavation for the *Services des Antiquités*
- general plans drawn by Forte

The photographic documentation consists of medium and small format negative films (see paragraph 'The reconstruction'), and 35 prints, of which no negatives are stored in the archives. Contact prints of the small format film rolls were also recovered, easing the cataloguing process of the pictures.

Once the photographic documentation had been organised, probably the most important step of this preliminary stage of the reconstruction was to locate and consequently geo-reference the 1964-65 excavation. The only extant excavation plans and the general plan, in fact, lacked precise geographical references, and the whole district is presently covered by modern buildings. Confronting and juxtaposing historical maps, the general excavation plan, and satellite images, we have thus been able to locate the investigated site with a good degree of approximation: it has finally been identified in an area now occupied by the premises of the Fayyum University (29°19'13.0" N, 30°50'07.0" E, Figure 2).

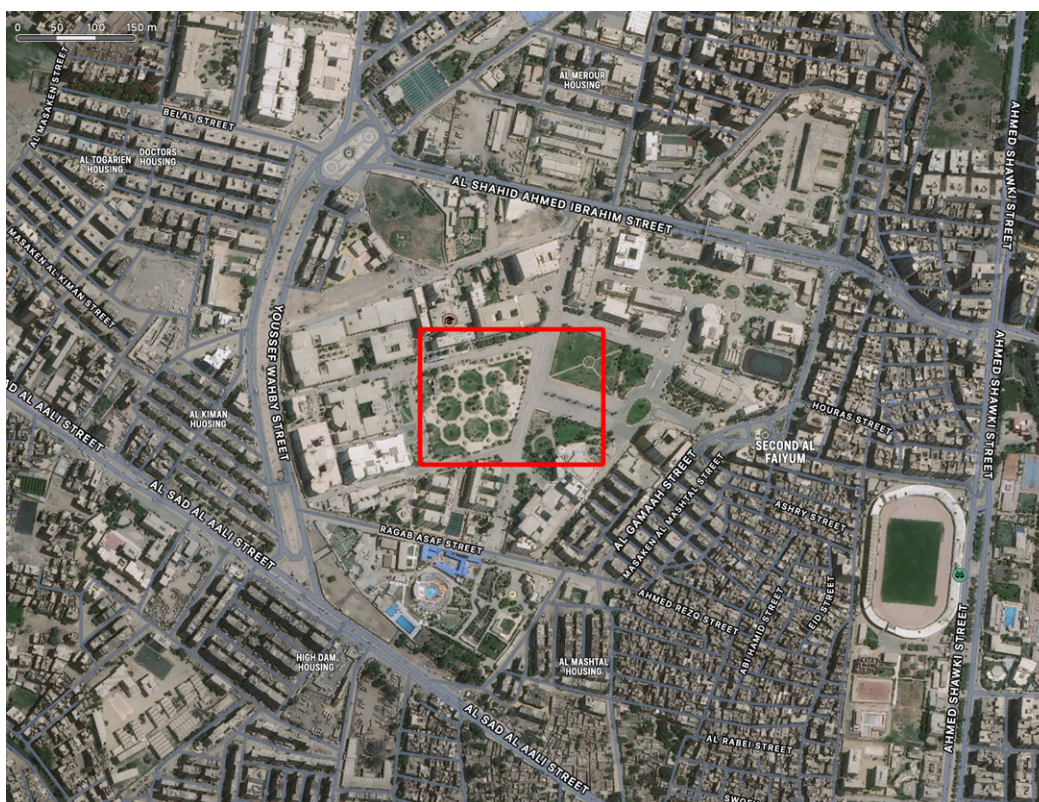


Figure 2. Satellite image of the area of the Fayyum University, with the approximate location of the sector excavated by the Istituto Papirologico 'G. Vitelli' in season 1964-65 highlighted in red (Apple Maps satellite photo with graphic elaboration by A. Corsi).

## **The reconstruction: findings, pictures, methodology (A. Corsi)**

This attempt at a digital reconstruction of a lost archaeological site can be seen as a case study, with all the peculiar traits of a ‘test’, i.e. the timespan of that excavation was short, the excavated surface was limited, and the available documentation was scarce and left at a preliminary stage. Moreover, we do not have the possibility to verify the data on the actual location. These characteristics have posed a challenge, but gave us the opportunity to put this methodology ‘under stress’ with a virtual reconstruction of what is perpetually lost, thus permitting a recontextualising of the findings and the whole excavation.

In cooperation with DAda-LAB, we decided to focus on two study paths: (1) 3D models of select findings, that will represent the core of the virtual exhibition ‘Arsinoe 3D’, aimed at building a narrative of the history and daily life of the site for the wider public, and (2) also a digital reconstruction of the excavation site as it was at the end of the Italian archaeological campaign in 1965. The findings were chosen, prioritising those found *in situ*, that had specific findspots recorded, other than relevant pieces from the piles of pottery fragments close to the buildings of sector D and from the layers of debris.

To create a 3D model of the artifacts, two different techniques were employed:

Some objects were 3D scanned using two handheld 3D laser scanners (for smaller or larger artefacts): the scanner is rotated around the object and the model is automatically created.

For other objects, photogrammetry techniques were preferred. They were photographed from different sides, and all datasets were finally merged to complete the 3D model of the whole artefact. Both techniques allow the recording of the textures of the artefacts directly during the ‘capturing’ phase (for technical details see Parrinello, Dell’Amico and Galasso 2022: 895-896).

### ***The 3D reconstruction of the archaeological site***

The most challenging part was the attempt at a digital reconstruction of the excavation area of the Italian campaign.

The original negative films were scanned, as well as the contact prints, the latter having eventually proven very useful as some of the original frames were damaged. The majority of the 1964-65 photos was taken with a small format camera, but medium format was also used, probably equipped with a 75 mm lens. The notes left by the mission members recorded only the film used and shutter speed and aperture; no notes were left about the type of camera and/or its lens. Studying the original pictures, it has been hypothesised that both a 50 mm and a wide-angle lens were used. At least two small format cameras were brought to the excavation: one used by Manfredi, who shot seven rolls for the entire campaign, and another by Barocas, who took the 35 pictures. Of the latter we only have 11 × 7.5 cm prints.

Given the scarcity of the available pictures, as film was expensive at that time, the initial idea of using photogrammetry techniques to recreate the 3D model of the excavation was soon discarded, since many pictures of the same object or area from different angles and views are needed for the photogrammetry software programs to produce a 3D model (for an in-depth study of techniques of modelling environmental systems from pictures, see Parrinello and Picchio 2014).

The first step was to connect the available pictures to the general excavation plan, identifying the archaeological remains in the pictures with their drawing on the plan. This task has been especially demanding, not only as the list of pictures taken was not exhaustive, but also since the photographic



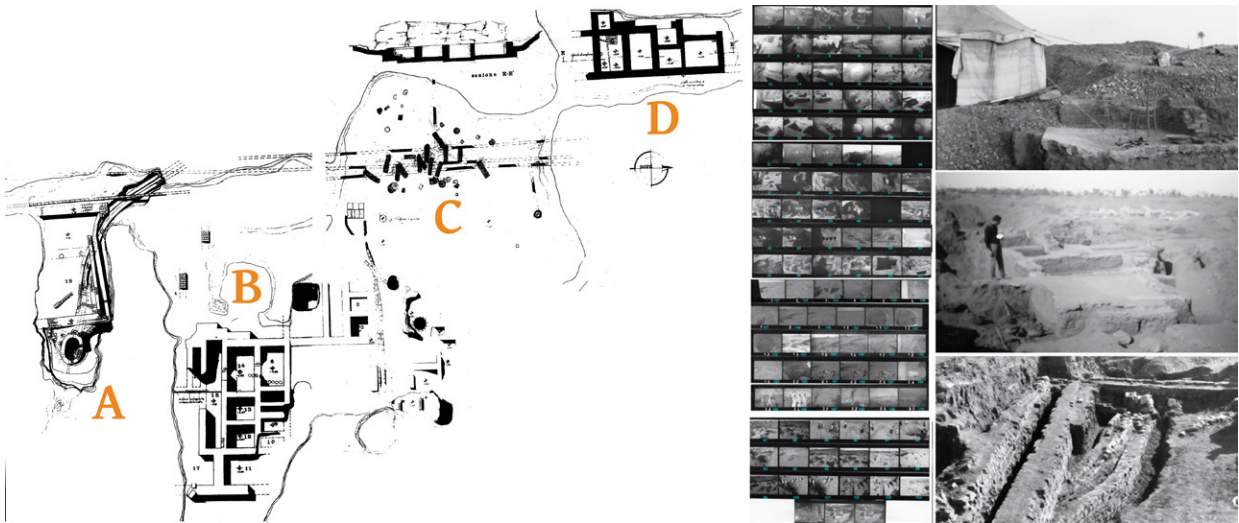


Figure 3. Original general plan of the excavation, with the four sectors, supplemented with examples of the photographic documentation, catalogued according to said sectors (© 1964-65 Istituto Papirologico 'G. Vitelli', Florence, and DAdA-LAB).

campaign did not always include the basic references needed to isolate and orient the photographed subjects within the general site arrangement. Moreover, as multiple shots were taken at different stages of the excavation, without associated notes, the same setting and surroundings appear very different from picture to picture, making the recognition of each structure a lengthy and problematic process. Four excavation sectors were finally identified and the pertinent pictures catalogued in synoptic frameworks according to these subdivisions (Figure 3).

Every landmark, wall, well, shaft, hole, and pile of debris that we could recognise has been identified, both in the general plan and on the pictures, and then colour-coded to help sort the multitude of data. This preliminary cataloguing step proved to be extremely helpful, especially in terms of understanding the several excavation phases of the same structures, and constituted the necessary premise to attempt a reconstruction of the environment in 3D.

Another essential task, and factor of complexity, was to identify the exact spot the pictures were shot from, detailing every stage of the excavation and every reference point to fully understand the morphology of the environment and thus virtually 'place' the camera in it.

Basically, two different modelling techniques were employed jointly, to compensate for the uncertainties resulting from the partial knowledge of the site, in order to optimise the reliability of the virtual reconstruction process.

#### (1) Lines of perspective

It was extremely important to identify the focal length of the lenses used to take each photo so as to have reliable lines of perspective on which the whole 3D model could be grounded. This step was essential, as longer focal lengths tend to flatten the perspective while shorter ones exaggerate it, giving the impression that objects are much further away than they actually are.

The structures were then directly 3D-built over the pictures, matching the perspective lines of the 3D model to those of the reference photo.

This technique was used especially for sector A, since that area was one the most photographed and had clearly visible lines of perspective.

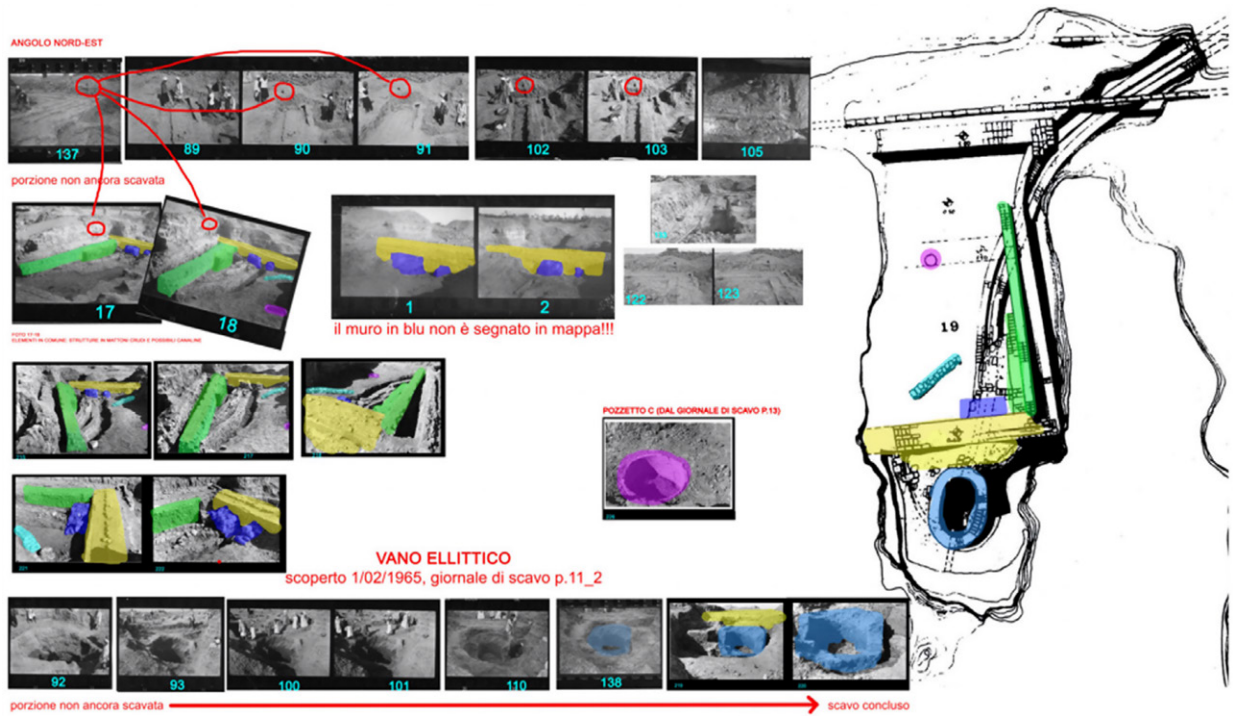


Figure 4. Synoptic maps of general plan and photos with colour-coded structures (© DAda-LAB).

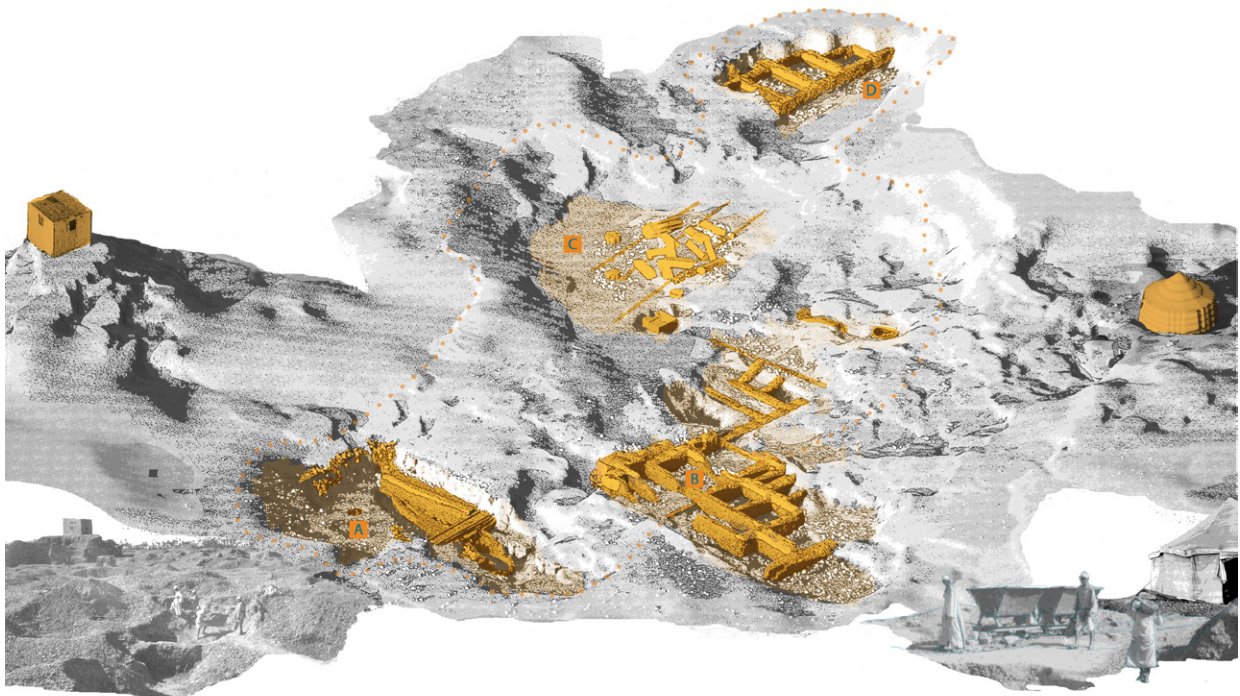


Figure 5. General 3D plan of the sectors, with principal structures highlighted in yellow (© DAda-LAB).

## *(2) Extrusion technique*

The central part of the excavation, sectors B, C and D, however, could not be reconstructed using the same technique as the photographic documentation was not complete enough. That area was then traced above the plan and extruded to create the 3D model of the walls.

A digital environment was then designed using the pictures as references for the height of the structures and of the mounds as well as the notes on the excavation journal that listed the highest elevations of the structures. This operation was difficult as the archaeological remains were within an open environment that had to be created from scratch; also, the models of both the setting and the structures had to be constantly adjusted to have the same perspective as in the reference pictures.

The last phase was to apply the corrected textures to the models: the materials were identified according to the information in the excavation journal. The textures were extracted from modern pictures taken in the same area (especially for the colours of sand and mudbricks).

The final step was the decimation of the polygons to achieve a more user-friendly smoothness during the navigation inside the model. Eventually, the whole environment was set to dusk to add a layer of 'affective historicity' (as defined in Winnerling 2014), thereby conveying a sense of something past and irretrievable (Figure 6).

In this digital setting, according to the archaeological data provided by the excavation journals, the findings (with their own 'object cards') were then placed in the same spots where they were found.

### ***The exhibition 'Arsinoë 3D'***

The exhibition will then be declined in two different concepts:

A 'physical' exhibition in which the visitors will be guided through a path with explanatory panels and objects (some of which never before displayed) illustrating the site, the excavation, the inhabitants of Roman Arsinoë, and their economic, religious and daily lives, paired with selected papyri from the Greek and Egyptian collections of the IPV. 3D printed models of objects will be available to be touched.

A 'virtual exhibition' on a dedicated website, where the data from its 'physical' counterpart are combined with ample additional content, organised and interconnected in a narrative structure with a neural



Figure 6. A provisional frame from the 3D reconstruction of the excavation, implemented with Unreal Engine (© DAda-LAB).

network approach, at several reading levels. They will both include a 3D immersive experience with two platforms of choice:

Using a 3D visor provided during the event, the visitors can immerse themselves in the digital reconstruction of the site and literally walk in it and explore it, appreciating its size, context, and tridimensionality that no plan could ever transmit. In their exploration of the site, visitors will encounter the findings in their original findspots and have access to all the objects' details.

More traditionally, the visitor can navigate the digital environment remotely, using a computer or a tablet, in a kind of blendable, 'serious game' approach that provides the opportunity for a catered experience for different categories of audience: scholars of Egyptology, Papyrology and Antiquities, or laypersons, young adults and children, who will be able to explore the layered historical timeframes of the city, the sectors and the protagonists of the excavation, browsing through specialist or more general information.

### ***Final remarks***

We would like to reiterate that this reconstruction and these techniques were not an end in themselves: through modern technology, old and partial documentation that one could hardly interpret can still provide plenty of data and, therefore, is no longer mute. Reconstructing Arsinoë as it was when the Italian mission left it in February 1965 helps the scholar to study and contextualise the site, much more than from the incomplete photographic documentation alone. In the words of the DAda-LAB experts, 'this practice does not replace the emotional experience of the visit, but it can amplify its communicative potential [...] Bringing an archaeological site back to life, giving meaning to the signs of history, becomes the main objective of Virtual Archaeology, whose purpose lies precisely in [...] making easier the access to information contents, and in the correlation between two main aspects, the communication of the finds and the archaeological research' (Parrinello, Dell'Amico and Galasso 2022: 893). The model acts as a 'container' that can now be further enriched with different datasets, such as scattered finds from museums, or information provided by papyri and previous studies of the site.

These techniques reveal an enormous potential, proving to be extremely successful even in contexts with limited data and diachrony, not to mention when they are used for much more documented sites. Thus, they can serve as a different, auxiliary support in data interpretation, as well as providing new ways for the general public to visit sites, either extant or lost in time, such as the Italian excavations at Arsinoë.

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# The study of Greco-Roman Period Ex-votos: New Perspectives on the Cult of Bastet/Bubastis in Egypt and in the Mediterranean

Emanuele Casella

## Abstract

The study of ex-votos is a useful tool to aid the understanding of the development of Egyptian cults, especially for the diffusion of specific religious practices. Votive objects are also reflective of the perception that society has of a specific divinity – both from an iconographic and a functional point of view.

The ex-votos to Bastet/Bubastis, from the Greco-Roman period, are an excellent case-study that confirms the importance of material culture in the research of Egyptian religion. This study aims to present the main characteristics of the cult of Bastet by analysing the typical productions of the Greco-Roman period.

There are six types of votive objects attributable to the cult of the cat goddess that show the change in products from the Pharaonic age, where Bastet is associated with Sekhmet and in which she is presented above all as a lioness, to the Greco-Roman period, where she becomes a goddess at peace, a cat and protector of pregnant women and children.

In the Ptolemaic period, the Greek ateliers modified the traditional ex-votos by introducing a new type of object in the cult of Bubastis – child statuettes. Furthermore, it will be precisely the Hellenised image of Bastet which the Romans will adopt as a representation of the goddess in local cults and which they then exported beyond Egypt and throughout the Mediterranean.

## Keywords

Greco-Roman Period, Bastet, Bubastis, Religion, Ex-voto, Mediterranean

## The iconographic evolution of Bastet

During my PhD at the EPHE-PSL, I studied the votive objects produced and dedicated to Bastet in Egypt in the Greco-Roman Period. I also extended my research to the Mediterranean, where these ex-votos spread from Ptolemaic times, linked to the Hellenistic cult of Bubastis. This present contribution analyses the characteristics of the cult of Bastet in the Ptolemaic and Roman periods through the continuity and the discontinuity of the products dedicated in the sanctuaries, or which had in any case a distinct votive function. We focus here only on material attestations, omitting analyses of texts, as the documentation comes largely from the Greco-Roman sanctuaries of Upper Egypt (which have a complex theology that cannot be treated marginally); moreover it would not have been possible to include these in the thesis as well as a large corpus of texts.

The first attestations of the goddess show Bastet as a lioness, seated on a throne, often with the solar disk, holding a sceptre in the form of a papyrus and an *ankh* – a representation certainly linked to Sekhmet (Lange-Athinodorou 2016: 310-316).

Bastet is represented in the form of a lioness until the Late Period, when she appears, - particular in the ex-voto, as a cat, and also changing her function, i.e. as protector of pregnant women and young children (Corteggiani 2007: 89-90; Kockelmann 2009). This protective function is manifested within the great Egyptian temples of the goddess, e.g. at Tell Basta, where Bastet is the tutelary deity of the royal dynasty (Spencer and Rosenow 2006: 39-55). This iconographic change is probably associated not only with the new protective function of the goddess but also with a diffusion, in the Egyptian cities, of the cat as a pet, although this remains an hypothesis, as studies have yet to precisely date the domestication of the cat in Egypt (Régen 2014). A practical consequence of the importance of this feline in Egyptian society is the appearance, from the Third Intermediate Period, near the temples dedicated to Bastet, of a cat necropolis where the votive mummies were buried (Charron 2012; Zivie and Lichtenberg: 2005).

The cat, as a representation of Bastet, becomes a symbol of protection for the most vulnerable parts of the family, while at the same time being a 'sacred' animal, brought by priests into the Egyptian temples to perform rituals. As such, the votive objects produced in the workshops inside the *temenos* reflected the vision that ordinary people had of the goddess: a woman with a cat's head holding attributes (*sistrum*, aegis, basket) that connect her to other deities of motherhood, i.e. Isis and Hathor (Pinch 1993).

It should be pointed out that the iconography of Bastet as a lioness will predominate in later periods on the cat-headed Bastet, and will continue to be used in the scenes inside the temples because of the connection with the important 'appeasement rituals' of Sekhmet (Goyon 2006). The sanctuaries that exhibit the image of Bastet in relation to rituals, epiclesis of the goddess, or assimilations with other divinities, maintain the traditional idea of the lioness, as the same hieroglyphic texts do not address a cat goddess, a 'popular' image, but the most elitist and ancient version linked to the myth of the 'Distant Goddess' (Vernus and Yoyotte 2005: 526). The similar iconography of Sekhmet and Bastet is clarified only by the texts accompanying the scenes; they are considered as two sides of the same coin.

Therefore, we can see a discrepancy between the perception that the population had of Bastet, evidenced by the myriad of cat votive bronzes and the images in the cult centres. However, this factor should not be considered a sign of caesura between the eras, as the Egyptians were not only aware of the difference in rituals that were performed inside or outside the temple, but a proof of the evolution of the cult that makes the figure of Bastet independent.

The impulse of the 22nd dynasty towards the cult of Bastet is evident in the construction of the 'Great temple' of Bubastis, and in the consecration of the goddess as a leonine tutelary deity of the royal dynasty (Rosenow 2008). The spread of this cult is linked to the production of numerous votive offerings and amulets depicting the goddess as a cat that were dedicated in temples during the great national festivals of the Egyptian calendar.

Herodotus describes the Bubastis Festival as an important national celebration that attracted great numbers to the largest cult centre of Bastet in the Delta. According to the historiographer, 700,000 people participated in this pilgrimage and the rituals included the immoderate consumption of alcohol. The women were the main protagonists - disrobing, shouting obscenities, and dancing throughout the boat procession (Rutherford 2007: 140-144).

This festival remained very important even in later times; in fact, it is mentioned in the Ptolemaic Period in the 'Decree of Canopus' with the term 'Boubastia' and is associated with the celebrations relating to the Lagide dynasty (Perpillou-Thomas 1993: 53). Moreover, there are also references in Roman times to a celebration of Bastet with the same Greek name, which was criticised because it was based on the consumption of wine and orgiastic rituals (Montserrat 1996: 164-165; Quack 2013: 76-77).



Among the numerous ex-votos offered to the goddess during the festival, we also find amulets linked to motherhood. These represented naked women accompanied by cats, with baskets on their heads and were possibly images of women attending the Bubastis festival (Bulté 1991: 117-120).

The productions of the Late Period are the prototypes on which the image of Bastet in the following periods was built: a bronze statuette with a cat lying down nursing her kittens, symbolic of the goddess who protects children. Mothers went to the temples, often bringing these bronze votive objects with them. The same applies to the more common seated cat statuettes, which were exported in the Ptolemaic Period beyond Egypt and were to become symbols of the Isiac cult of Bastet in Greek territories (Weiß 2012: 493-494). The influence of Greek culture was a major one in the Ptolemaic Period, when the ex-votos witnessed certain iconographic and stylistic changes in the image of the goddess.

The bronze statuettes of Bastet, a traditional Egyptian production, now show a woman with a cat's head, dressed in a short-sleeved tunic with long vertical bands, adorned alternately with small circles and straight or reversed chevrons and with decorations derived from Syrian clothing (Tiribilli 2018: 120-133; Weiß 2012: 302-305, 670-680). The goddess always carries the three traditional attributes in her hand. (Weiß 2012: 52-57). In some examples, the goddess is also represented with a long *himation* - a traditional Greek dress that fastens at the chest with a knot.

The inscription on the base that accompanies these statuettes is the traditional hieroglyphic formula of votive objects, composed of the name of the deity with epithets, e.g. 'Bastet, great goddess', followed by the word '*ankh*', and then the name of the offeree (Gee 2014).

We believe that in the Ptolemaic Period a process of reworking of the image of Bastet was begun by local Greek artists who refer to the canons of Hellenistic art, whereby the figurines are presented in draped clothes of Greek tradition and elements of oriental art. The Alexandrian and Delta ateliers are now probably the centres of production of these votive objects.

Furthermore, Herodotus refers to Bastet by the Hellenised name 'Bubastis', often assimilating her to the Greek goddess Artemis by applying an *interpretatio graeca* - the process where two deities are associated by iconographic characteristics and similar functions (Henri 2015). As Artemis protected women during childbirth, so did Bubastis. This Artemis-Bubastis assimilation, however, is only made theoretically, as the epigraphic attestations demonstrate a clear division of the cults of the Greek and Egyptian goddesses, to whom separate offerings were dedicated (Quaegebeur 1991).

In the Roman Period, the iconographic change of Bastet is completed. The goddess is now represented with the head of a cat, but with Greek clothing (*himation* and *chiton*), fastened at the chest with an 'Isiac-knot' and decorated with rich drapery. She holds different attributes, i.e. the cornucopia or living animals - doves, cats, etc. (Kayser 2019: 120; Roeder 1956: 269; Schmidt 1997: 84).

Moreover, the assimilation with Isis from a theological and figurative point of view leads to the creation of a totally human iconography of Bubastis, often defined as Isis-Bubastis (Bricault 2006: 77, Dunand 1962: 85). We now have depictions of a woman with a Hellenistic hairstyle, the *anastolè* with a crown of two bovine horns surmounted by a sun disk, traditionally linked to images of Isis and Hathor. She wears a long *chiton* and a *himation* and holds in her right hand a *sistrum*. With her left, she leans lightly on a pillar on which a cat rests, the only clear reference to the traditional representation of Bastet (Bayer-Niemeier 1988: 141; Weber 1914: 121).

Unfortunately, the votive context in which these statuettes (mainly terracotta, but occasionally stone) were dedicated remains unclear, however it is probable that they were linked to a domestic cult of the

goddess Bubastis. This iconographical evolution was to become the cornerstone of my dissertation, because through votive objects it is possible to study the evolution of worship and ritual practices linked to Bubastis in the Greco-Roman Period.

## **Votive objects dedicated to Bastet in the Greco-Roman Period**

### ***The formation of the corpus and study problem***

To study the changes to the cult of Bastet and understand the factors that caused it, I created a corpus of 264 objects divided into six categories: Bastet statuettes, cat statuettes, statues of children, stelae, votive tablets, and personal statues with inscription. Additional distinctions were made according to the iconographic peculiarities of each class of objects (posture of the subject, attributes of the divinity, etc.), e.g. statuettes of a seated cat, statuettes of a lying cat, or statuettes of Bastet seated and standing. In each class of object, the records were classified according to the material that characterised the object (stone, bronze, terracotta, faience).

The objects taken into consideration are dated to the Ptolemaic and Roman periods and have been published in museum and exhibition catalogues or cited in articles. Only published objects were chosen as studying unpublished finds in museums or from excavations can be problematic, as they are often unlisted and unstudied, or limited by research projects.

We define 'ex-votos' as objects that a devotee dedicates to a deity as an expression of individual piety in gratitude for a grace obtained as a result of a vow that was formulated in this sense, or as a result of a protection obtained during a particular situation in life (Osborne 2004; Pinch and Waraksa 2009: 2).

There remains, however, the problem of ex-votos not linked to a specific deity, or apotropaic objects that have a connection to the sphere of daily life. Additionally, there could be objects that have a ritual use but that are not linked to the personal piety of the faithful, e.g. objects such as the aegis and the *sistrum* that do not have a strictly votive function (except in a few cases), but are objects used within the cult for specific rituals. They are also certainly linked to Bastet, but also to other deities, e.g. Hathor, Isis and Sekhmet (Barguet 1953; Guidotti 2003: 26).

The ex-votos of Bastet are made of different materials, which therefore pre-suppose many types of production, with their own methods of analysis and study. Unfortunately, it is not possible to carry out a specialised study of each specific type of production as the focus of this research would then be lost. However, the problems must be taken into consideration to be able to compare with other productions.

We note that the ex-votos of Bastet are primarily made of terracotta, as evidenced by the large quantity of figurines linked to courotrophic cults produced and sold in workshops during the Greco-Roman periods. These objects are also seen as manifestations of religious practices that took place at home; a 'domestic' or 'private' religion, the union of all rituals and religious behaviours that took place outside temples (Boutantin 2014).

There are also several bronze objects (mostly statuettes of Bastet and cats) which are local productions traditionally linked to the cult of Egyptian deities and are also widespread in the Mediterranean as valuable votive objects.

Additionally, fewer than half of the objects studied have a determined provenance, or precise dating: most were purchased at antique markets and had the provenance assigned by the dealer. Out of 264 objects, 122 have a certain provenance, either being discovered in situ, in archaeological excavations, and/or

thanks to archival documents certifying the place of discovery, or by means of dedicated inscriptions on the object specifying the temple where they were dedicated to Bastet.

An example comes from the Bubasteion of Alexandria, where, in 2009, numerous ex-votos to Bubastis were found in votive deposits (Abd El-Maksoud *et al.* 2012). However, even if this archaeological context is an ideal case study, unique of its kind, unfortunately the data from the excavation is not accessible and very few of the objects have been published yet. In my dissertation, therefore, I was only able to include analyses of 1% of the ex-votos found.

### ***The reworking of Bubastis's ex-votos in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt***

For this present contribution I chose not to analyse all the six categories (referred to above) of votive objects dedicated to Bastet in the Greco-Roman Period, but focus on the 'new' productions, those linked to the local Greek ateliers widespread in Egypt in the period under examination.

The two most popular categories of votive objects in Egypt during the Greco-Roman Period are also those (as expected) productions traditionally linked to the representation of the goddess Bastet, i.e. cat figurines (57%), and statuettes of Bastet (33%). The remaining 10% include votive objects from the other four categories.

The cat statuettes spread throughout Egypt from the Late Period as an ex-voto to the goddess. In the Ptolemaic Period, there were some ateliers, particularly in the Delta, that reworked these statuettes in a style and technique of Greek origin.

Many terracotta cat statuettes have been found in the votive deposits of the above-mentioned Bubasteion of Alexandria, dated to the 4th/3rd century BC (Abd El-Maksoud *et al.* 2018), and produced with the Greek technique of the bivalve matrix. The cat is represented in a more realistic, squatting posture, alone or holding down a duck with its paw (Abd El-Maksoud *et al.* 2012: 433-441; Abd El-Maksoud *et al.* 2016; Abd El-Maksoud *et al.* 2018: 53-57). The Greek ateliers modified the traditional iconography of the cat sitting face on (Scott 1958), with an 'in the round' dynamic image that derives from the Greek technique for the production of clay figurines.

Other important examples include c. 20 large-scale statues, made of Greek marble, from Naucratis, where the cat is represented in a realistic pose and is rich in anatomical detail (Thomas and Higgs 2017). The sculptures are certainly produced using Greek techniques, as is revealed by the material used, which is foreign to Egyptian art, and they represented the feline hunting birds or looking towards its prey, arching its back. The Naucratis cat statues have no relation to traditional Egyptian votive objects but are the result of a specific request by Greek devotees of the goddess Bubastis, as shown by the inscriptions on the base (Thomas and Higgs 2017: 14).

These new productions join the traditional cat bronzes that continue to be dedicated at the major cult places of the Delta. Alexandria is probably at the centre of this reworking of traditional Bastet ex-votos to adapt productions to Hellenistic tastes, at the request of the local population of Greek origin. In fact, there are many iconographic similarities with the representations of felines in Greek-Hellenistic art.

Additionally, the cat figurines from the Bubasteion of Alexandria and Naucratis have Greek inscriptions on the base that follow the traditional hieroglyphic formula of offerings to the deities: i.e. the name of the dedicatee and of the giver, followed by the name of the deity, Bubastis, and ending with the word 'EYKEN – 'as an offering' (Abd El-Maksoud *et al.* 2012: 439; Thomas and Higgs 2017: 14). The votive inscriptions cite Greek devotees with Hellenised names – some of the Egyptian Greek population, who,

in the Ptolemaic Period turn to a local divinity – to ask for the protection of their children, or of mothers during childbirth.

Some votive steles of the Ptolemaic Period testify also to devotion to Bubastis by the Greeks of Egypt. These are often dedications, in Greek, made by wealthy Greek families to the goddess; these are sometimes accompanied by donations, such as the construction of altars or chapels for Bubastis (Bernand 1975: 63).

The foundation plaques of the Bubasteion of Alexandria even link the Lagide royal family to the cult of Bubastis, e.g. Queen Berenice II is the promoter behind the building of the temple of Bubastis in the heart of the capital (Abd El-Maksoud *et al.* 2015). It is one of the few attestations of the foundation of a sanctuary by the queen herself, and not by the king.

Between the 1st and 2nd century AD, there is an interesting production of terracotta cat figurines linked to the Memphite area and found within domestic contexts (Boutantin 2006). This group, of c. 20 figurines, was produced using the same matrix and probably in the same atelier (Boutantin 2006: 328-329; 2014: 404); the cats are represented sideways, the head turned towards the viewer, and are characterised by a pronounced snout and long ears. The feline often wears a small collar around its neck, with a *bullae* or a small moon (Boutantin 2014: 412-414; Weber 1914: 234).

We are already aware of similar productions of seated cat figurines in Memphis dating from the Ptolemaic period, probably in connection with the cult of Bastet and the Bubasteion located on the Saqqara plateau (Boutantin 2014: 405). Nevertheless, the statuettes of the Greco-Roman period reflect a certain adaptation of local workshops linked to a specific demand from the population. The figurines could have been produced and sold under the aegis of this sanctuary, one of the most important in the Delta, to be then brought home so that pilgrims might benefit from the protection of Bastet, at a much lower cost of course, in their own homes (Boutantin 2014: 91-95).

Domestic cults are well documented in Egypt, especially in the Roman period, when there was a large production of this type of terracotta linked to cults of courotrophic deities (Boutantin 2014: 97-155). The Greek ateliers also introduced new classes of ex-votos dedicated to Bubastis, which are totally foreign to the Egyptian tradition.

The child statues, dating to the end of the 4th century BC and found in the Bubasteion of Alexandria, are certainly among the most interesting examples of original production in the Ptolemaic period that are linked to the cult of Bubastis. The statue represents a child seated, dressed in a short, draped tunic, or naked, and holding a bird or a cat (Abd El-Maksoud *et al.* 2012: 438-440). The heads of the children are sometimes decorated with the Hellenistic *stephane*. The Greek inscriptions on the base define the statues as ex-votos, offered to Bubastis for the protection of young children (Abd El-Maksoud *et al.* 2012: 439).

We can find comparisons of this production outside Egypt in coeval votive objects dedicated to Artemis in the sanctuary of Brauron in Attica (Bobou 2015: 58-62; Mitsopoulos-Leon 2009). These could also confirm the religious assimilation, proposed by Herodotus, of the Greek goddess with the Egyptian Bastet. The Brauron statues show, as in Alexandrian iconography, children crouching as they play with certain animals, and are the testimony of vows to Artemis by rich families for the protection of children during the rituals of passage into adulthood (Gentili and Perusino 2002: 43-64).

In the Near East there are also votive statues of children, dated between the 5th/4th century BC, from the sanctuary of Eshmun in Sidon which were dedicated by parents for the protection of their children (Stucky 1993: 83-115).

Such ex-votos are probably the result of a reworking of an ancient type of Cypriot statue referred to as ‘temple boys’, produced from the 6th century BC and then spreading throughout the Mediterranean (Beer 1994; Caneva and Delli Pizzi 2014; Hadzisteliou-Price 1969).

Thus the statues of children represent another clear example of devotion to Bubastis by a part of the Egyptian population of Greek origin who introduced ‘new’ ex-votos that were more closely suited to their cultural and religious backgrounds. It seems, in the opinion of the present author, that it is still in the city of Alexandria, where cultures meet and mix, that we can place the production of these votive objects with Hellenistic characteristics.

### *The diffusion of ex-votos to Bubastis in the Mediterranean*

From the 3rd century BC, the cult of Bubastis spread in the Mediterranean, thanks firstly to the Greek sanctuaries of Delos and Samos, where the tutelary Egyptian gods of the Lagide dynasty – Isis, Serapis and Harpocrates – were venerated (Bricault 1997: 2013). Bubastis is now assimilated to Isis, and the image of the goddess is what we can see conveyed by the Alexandrine culture (Gallo 2016). There are statuettes of cats of Egyptian manufacture in the Greek temple, which are considered by local devotees as luxury ex-votos, exotic objects with no connection to the traditional cult of Bastet (Jantzen 1972: 20; Weiß 2012: 512-513).

From to commercial exchanges with the ports of Pozzuoli and Ostia (Malaise 1972: 69-100), the cult of Bubastis arrived from Greece into Italy, then spreading throughout the Roman Empire as far as the extreme northern borders of Pannonia, as evidenced by the altar of Scarbantia (Sopron), with its dedication in Latin to Isis-Bubastis (István Király múzeum 1998: 105).

However, the material documentation is scarce, with only 15 objects in total in the corpus under consideration here, which mainly includes stelae or altars with inscriptions in Latin or Greek dedicated to Bubastis or Isis-Bubastis. The cult centres are difficult to identify, even if most of the ex-votos come from famous Iseia, such as those of Italica (Seville) (Bricault 2013: 406-408; Gavini 2017: 70-72; Puccio 2010a, 2010b) and Ostia (Gavini 2017: 65-66), or from the small temples of the goddess Bubastis found within sanctuaries, e.g. the temple of Diana in Nemi (Rome), where a stele was found that listed a series of votive offerings of great value dedicated in a temple of Bubastis (Gavini 2017: 66-67; Ghini 1997; Leclant 1992).

The ex-votos mention priests, especially women, practising within the territories of the Empire, who devoted themselves to the worship of the goddess, e.g. the ‘*Bubastium sacerdos*’ (Gavini 2017: 65; 2007: 209-211; Le Glay 1984), and specific religious associations, i.e. the ‘*Boubastiaca*’ (Gavini 2007: 211; 2017, 66; Malaise 1972: 190), which can be compared to the so-called *Isiacoi* – an important religious association (of Memphite tradition) in Roman society (Wohlthat 2018: 28-29). This was made up of rich women and rich families of *liberti* who participated in social and religious life (Malaise 1972: 41-46).

Moreover, the creation in Italy of female associations linked to the cult of Bubastis represented an important aspect of continuity with Egypt, where there were religious associations and specific female priesthoods connected to the places of worship of the goddess in the Delta (Wohlthat 2018: 29-35). An example is an altar from Ostia, dated to the middle of the 2nd century AD, where a woman with the title ‘*Boubastiaca*’ donates some objects in precious material to Isis-Bubastis (Gavini 2017: 66).

## Conclusions

Bastet is one of the most cited goddesses in literature, especially relating to the great diffusion in Egypt of cat statuettes, produced in all periods of Egyptian history – and therefore represented in every significant museum collection. Surprisingly, a systematic study of the votive objects associated with this goddess had not hitherto been undertaken.

There is a tendency to consider the cult of Bastet as a typically pharaonic manifestation of ‘popular’ piety, often underestimating the evidence from the Greco-Roman period, when many artistic, religious, and social innovations happened. However, this present study has also highlighted various problems associated with the subject, i.e. the difficulty of dating the objects, the lack of intact archaeological contexts, and the enormous heterogeneity of the productions of this period.

The ex-votos have always been important indicators in terms of our understanding of certain aspects of the cult of a deity: the relationship that the population had with the divine image, its perception within society, and the way sacred rituals influences the daily lives of people of all strata (i.e. the poorest, the elites, or sovereigns).

However, the votive objects presented describe only part of the cult of Bastet, which must also have been accompanied by epigraphic documentation of votive steles, and other ritual activities recorded in hieroglyphic texts within the temples of Bastet in Upper and Lower Egypt.

The great popularity of Bastet, which originates from Egyptian myths, had its peak in the Late period under the pressure of some pharaonic dynasties. This impulse materialises in the production of such ‘iconic’ votive objects as the cat bronzes, which will become a symbol of Egyptian manufacturing in the Near East and the Mediterranean also.

From the theological point of view, Bastet takes on an independent connotation in relation to Sekhmet, becoming the goddess who protects small children and pregnant women. The goddess is no longer perceived by the majority of the population as a ferocious entity to be pacified with specific rituals, but as a maternal and protective deity of daily life.

Thus the great diffusion in Egypt of cat figurines and their kittens, or the cat goddess surrounded by kittens, symbols of the function of the deity, are direct evidence of the involvement of the entire Egyptian population in the cult of Bastet, who expressed their devotion through personal ritual offerings.

Herodotus in the *Histories* emphasises the popularity of the goddess and her close connection with cats, without referring to other leonine representations often to be seen in the Bastet sanctuaries of the Delta.

The Ptolemies, like the pharaohs before them, elevated Bubastis to a prominent position in the Egyptian pantheon. Several events seem to confirm this, including the construction of a Bubasteion by Queen Berenice II in the centre of Alexandria, the restoration of the ‘Great Temple of Bastet’ in Bubastis (Lange-Athinodorou 2005; Leclère 2008: 370-381; Vaelke 2009), which was the most important sanctuary of the goddess in the Delta, and the reform of the decree of Canopus, whereby the great feast of Bastet was made to coincide with the celebration of *Euergesia*, the national festival dedicated to sovereigns (Hölbl 2001: 108; Perpillou-Thomas 1993: 30; Thomas 2015: 63, n. 671). This is a political and religious programme that fits very well with the Ptolemaic idea of restoring and promoting ancient cults, implemented especially in the 3rd/2nd century BC.

Alexandria becomes the point of production and reworking of votive objects linked to Bastet, whose ancient name is only used afterwards within the cult centres, and replaced in votive epigraphs by the Hellenised Bubastis. Moreover, there are numerous traditional Bastet votive offerings, such as cat bronzes, which were exported from the Lagide capital, which become luxury votive gifts in Greek Isiac sanctuaries. Example are the temples dedicated to Isis and Serapis on Samos and Delos, to which rich families travelled to offer these specially imported bronzes to the divinities (Quack 2005: 50; Vittmann 2003: 203).

During the Ptolemaic period there is no discontinuity in the cult practices relating to Bubastis, however the two manifestations of the goddess continue to coexist: the protector of motherhood, and the appeased one linked to Sekhmet. The Greco-Roman temples of Upper Egypt still maintain the leonine representation of Bastet, an archetype of the Pharaonic period (Pantalacci and Traunecker 1998: 141, 230; de Rochemonteix and Chassinat 1895: 335,3; Chassinat 1929: 239,11; Chassinat 1934: 64). The priests retain the ancient iconography of the goddess and make reference to the ancestral theology.

The Greeks of Egypt encounter a goddess already changed into a cat with a protective role; the numerous inscriptions on the votive objects naming Bubastis testify to the great popularity of this cult within this part of Egyptian society. The Delta ateliers, therefore, made significant modifications to the productions of ex-votos to adapt to the requests and tastes of the Greek population. The image of the cat becomes more dynamic and realistic, using Greek materials and techniques. The Alexandrian ateliers take the statues of the Mediterranean 'temple boys' as a starting point to create a new form of ex-voto to Bubastis, although they have the same curatrophic votive functions as traditional Greek-Oriental objects.

Later in the Roman period, we note the first discontinuities in the offerings to Bastet, and there are some substantial iconographic changes in the representation of the goddess, suggesting also a change in the sphere of worship. The creation of terracotta figurines of Isis-Bubastis, with the goddess having a completely human and Hellenised aspect, shows the assimilation of Bastet with Isis. Indeed, in the ritual texts of the temple of Horus at Edfu and the temple of Isis at El Qal'a, the name Bastet becomes the cryptographic, *Ba-n-Isis*, 'the Ba of Isis' (Leitz *et al.* 2002: 739, n. 141; Pantalacci and Traunecker 1990: 48, 111), a direct epiclesis of Isis.

In many of these ex-votos there are symbolic references to Hellenistic culture, i.e. the attributes of the cornucopia and the doves in the hands of the goddess, or the *himation* and the *chiton* - typical clothing of Alexandrian statuettes. The image of the boy with the bird is a *topos* of Hellenistic art that we see again in the production of statues of children dedicated to Bubastis. However, these are stylistic references, i.e. there is always a small illusion to the traditional image of Bubastis in the form of a cat - e.g. crouched above the small column in the figurines of Isis-Bubastis.

These small terracotta ex-votos are a manifestation of ritual practices carried out in the domestic sphere and involving the lower social strata - a sort of 'popular' religion (Dunand 1979: 9) that was also successful outside Egypt.

Additionally, our study seeks to analyse the material attestations of the goddess Bubastis in the Mediterranean, confirm the spread of this cult within Roman society - up to the borders of the Empire. The goddess was assimilated by the Romans as a foreign, Hellenistic goddess, with the theological and iconographic aspects having developed in the Ptolemaic period, and then exported to the main Greek sanctuaries.

The Roman West elaborated certain traditional Egyptian aspects and re-elaborated its own form of devotion, which was transferred via the consecration of specific ex-votos in the temples. The image of

Bubastis was certainly the one conveyed from Alexandrian culture, a syncretic figure combining aspects of Egyptian deities linked to maternity.

The Roman emperors themselves, like the Lagide kings, interested themselves in the cult of Bubastis. We see that Trajan renewed the canal and sanctuary at Tell Basta, the famous site of the cult of Bastet (Vaelske 2009); Vespasian favoured the formation of an independent cult linked to Bubastis, with his *liberti* as its main devotees; Nero included Egyptian festivities in the Roman calendar (Wohlthat 2018: 32–34). We also have the inscription from Hyampolis (c. AD 97–102), which testifies to the celebration of the famous Egyptian festival of the Bubastis ('the *Boubastia*') (Leclant 1992: 251; RICIS 106/0303).

By the 2nd century AD, the cult of the goddess had become well established. We see the appointment of specific priests and religious associations of high-status Roman women visiting small temples dedicated exclusively to Bubastis or Isis-Bubastis, bringing donations of luxury ex-votos with them for the goddess.

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# The Temple of Hathor at Philae

Silke Caßor-Pfeiffer

## Abstract

The temple of Hathor at Philae is probably the second most important sanctuary on the island after the temple of Isis as the main deity. Hathor is a key figure of the second local divine circle (together with Khnum-Re, lord of Senmet) and venerated in particular as the Distant Goddess. The latter aspect plays a prominent role in her temple, decorated in the period from Ptolemy VI Philometor to Augustus, celebrating here her return to Egypt, which she first re-entered at Philae.

The temple was never fully decorated and largely destroyed, probably already in late antiquity, only the first room of the temple building proper, the pronaos, has survived. Its kiosk was reconstructed at the end of the 19th century and since then at least twice more. However, the actual state is still neither complete nor entirely correct. Therefore, based on the current work of the Philae Temple Text Project, this contribution aims to propose a new virtual reconstruction of the kiosk to correct some of the misplaced fragments, and to add further blocks, including the recovered and hitherto unpublished architrave fragments presenting the monthly deities of the Egyptian calendar. Furthermore, the key elements of its building chronology and diverse decoration will be highlighted. Some of the inscriptions even allow us to retrace the exchange of texts from one temple to the other. Finally, its decoration pattern will be analysed and how this fits in the overall theological pattern of Philae's temple complex.

## Keywords

Graeco-Roman temples, Philae, Distant Goddess, Hathor, Isis, Osiris, representations of the year

The temple of Hathor (Figure 1) is probably the second most important cult place on the island of Philae after the temple of Isis, as that of the main deity.<sup>1</sup> It is located on the eastern half of the island, to the east of the temple of Isis. Usually, the temple is attributed to the worship of Hathor in her form of the Distant<sup>2</sup> Goddess (Hathor-Tefnut). According to the myth of the sun's eye, Hathor left her father Re enraged and went to Nubia from where she was brought back by Arensnuphis-Shu and Thoth, appeased through wine, beer, dance, and music.<sup>3</sup> It is the cataract region where the goddess re-entered Egyptian soil, and the temple of Hathor where she was welcomed and her return celebrated (Daumas 1968: 3-4, § 5; Junker 1911: 8 and 31; Kockelmann 2013: 111-112).

It is this small temple, the Philae Temple Text Project is currently working on, with the kind permission of the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and the support of the local Taftish at Aswan. We are preparing the edition of the inscriptions as Volume IV of the Philae series. In the following, I will

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<sup>1</sup> This contribution is dedicated to the memory of the former director of the Philae Temple Text Project, Prof Dr Erich Winter, and Prof. Dr Shafia Bedier, member of the Philae Temple Text Project.

<sup>2</sup> Also designated 'Gefährliche Göttin' – 'dangerous goddess' (e.g. Stadler 2009: 5), or 'heimkehrende Göttin' – 'home-coming goddess' (Quack 2002: 285).

<sup>3</sup> For the myth and its rituals, see Lieven 2003; Junker 1911, especially for the tradition in temple texts; Inconnu-Bocquillon 2001, for the Philae version of the myth.



Figure 1. Temple of Hathor at Philae and block depot (© H. Kockelmann/Philae Temple Text Project).

present our preliminary results of the virtual reconstruction by giving an overview of the different parts of the temple and their building history, an exemplary analysis of its decoration pattern and theological or cultic context as well as some examples of the problems we encounter in the edition.

### General Architectural Outline and Dating

When the temples of Philae were rediscovered, the temple of Hathor was found largely destroyed, its blocks amongst others reused in the surrounding buildings (cf. Lyons [1896]: 27), the destruction most probably already dating back to antiquity. Therefore, we do not know the exact outline of the sanctuary. According to the examinations of Lyons ([1896]: 27 and plan VI), who, together with Barsanti and Borchardt, worked on the island in 1895/96, it originally consisted of three rooms (the pronaos with a secondary entrance in the southern wall and two adjacent rooms), to which a fourth room behind the sanctuary was added later (cf. Haeny 1985: 229, fig. 5 and 230-231; Pilgrim 2021: 90-92) as well as a kiosk<sup>4</sup> in front of it, according to Haeny (1985: 230-231) replacing an older mudbrick structure, and the western central entrance gate (Figure 2).

Another later alteration was the extension of the passage leading from the pronaos to the second room, during which part of the reliefs of the door jambs was cut off (Figure 3). At the back of the temple, in the direction to the Nile, a terrace was added with a cryptoporticus underneath (Arnold 1999: 248).<sup>5</sup> Only

<sup>4</sup> Different designations and original appearances have been proposed for this part of the temple. Arnold (1999: 248) calls it '(entrance) kiosk' with a roof, Haeny (1985: 230) speaks of a 'forecourt' that 'was rooved over by a porch'. Even though no traces of the roof structure have been found, a roof can be reconstructed from similar structures (see for this Arnold 2001). In contrast, for example Daumas (1968: 1, 3) speaks of 'propylées' and 'cour à ciel ouvert', Hölbl (2004: 81) of 'Propyläen' or 'Porticus', Cauville and Ali (2013: 300) of 'porches à colonnes'.

<sup>5</sup> Haeny (1985: 230-231) dates its construction around the middle of the 1st century AD, based on decorated sherds found in the filling material (but n.b. his attribution of the kiosk to the time of Tiberius is wrong. It is Augustus whose names were inscribed there).

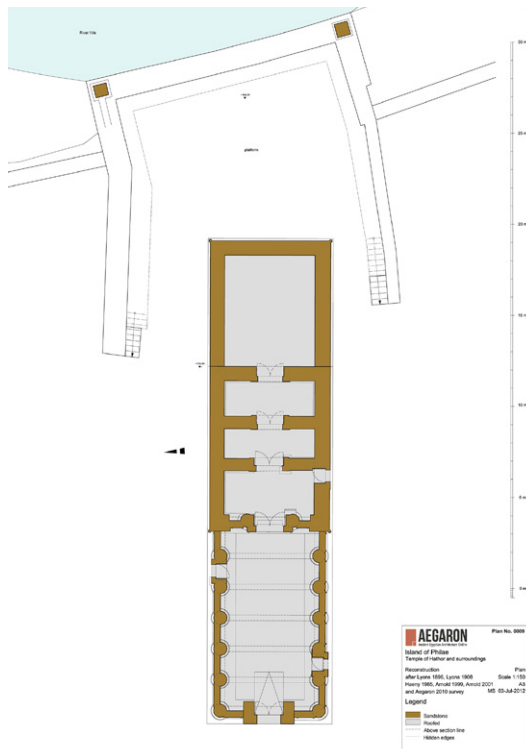


Figure 2. Reconstruction of the temple of Hathor, AEGARON, 2022, 'Philae\_Hathor\_Reconstruction\_Plan\_0009\_2.pdf', Philae, <https://doi.org/10.25346/S6/KZKMWA/ALU8S3>, UCLA Dataverse, V1 (last accessed 31 January 2023).



Figure 3. Example of a scene on the door leading from the pronaos to the second room, which was cut off to enlarge the passage (left = southern door jamb, third register, Philae IV 156 (© H. Kockelmann/Philae Temple Text Project)).

the first room, the pronaos, has survived. The kiosk and western entrance gate were reconstructed in 1895/1896 (Lyons [1896]: 27-28, photos nos. 12-15) and 1902 by Barsanti (1903: 250; Pilgrim 2021: 90).

As is usually the case, the exact date of *construction* is unknown. The *decoration* of the temple of Hathor, however, started under the reign of Ptolemy VI Philometor, with work on the interior walls of the pronaos, its entrance gate, as well as its adjacent columns, with only minor additions under Ptolemy VIII Euergetes. However, the exact placement of the latter seems somewhat arbitrary, with the engraving of the name of Ptolemy VIII Euergetes in the southern half of the *bandeau de la frise*, the scene in the second register of the east wall's southern half, and the Greek dedication on the cornice of the gate from the pronaos to the second room (mentioning Ptolemy VIII Euergetes together with Cleopatra II and III). Haeny (1985: 230) suggests that it was also during the reign of this king that the aforementioned addition of the fourth room and the extension of the passageway from the pronaos to the second room took place, which might also explain the Greek dedication. A similar building pattern (addition of a fourth room and enlargement of the passageway) can be found in the temple of Arensnuphis (Figure 4), which is theologically closely connected to the temple of Hathor,<sup>6</sup> suggesting these developments of construction are most likely contemporary. The time of Ptolemy VIII Euergetes is the most probable date for this building activity in the Arensnuphis Temple (and the mammisi, where we have a similar phenomenon with the addition of a third room in this case) (Haeny 1985: 211-212, 222, 230).<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> See already the remarks of Borchart in his letter to Erman on 14 January 1896 (Pilgrim 2021: 90-92; further Haeny 1985: 230).

<sup>7</sup> The dating is confirmed by a cartouche of Ptolemy VIII Euergetes engraved in the passageway leading to the added room.

THE TEMPLE OF HATHOR AT PHILAE

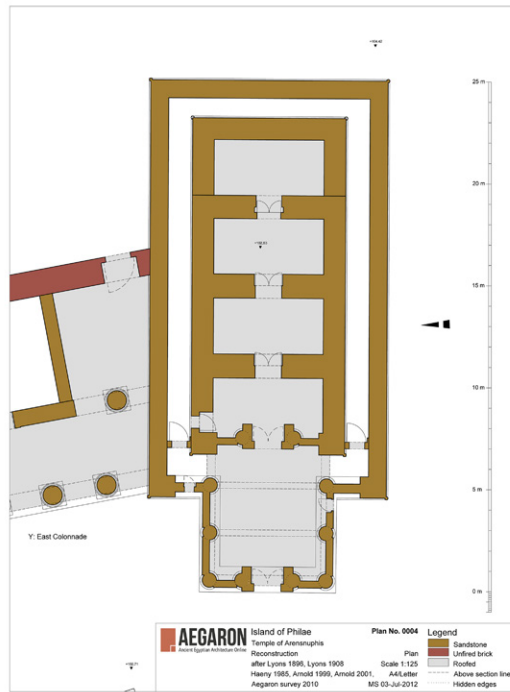


Figure 4. Reconstruction of the temple of Arensnuphis, AEGARON, 2022, 'Philae\_Arensnuphis\_Reconstruction\_Plan\_0004.pdf', Philae, <https://doi.org/10.25346/S6/KZKMWA/JLQVPY>, UCLA Dataverse, V1 (last accessed 31 January 2023).

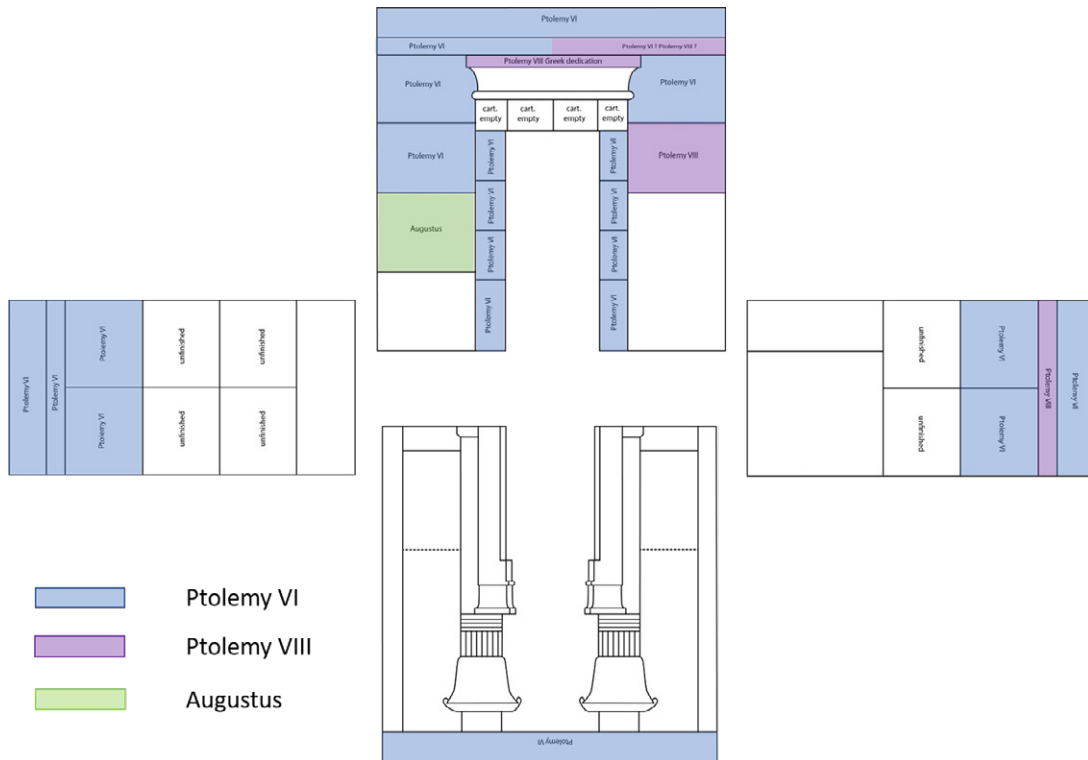


Figure 5. State of execution of the decoration of the pronaos of the temple of Hathor (© S. Caßor-Pfeiffer/Philae Temple Text Project).

Yet, the decoration of the pronaos was never finished (Figure 5). Whereas the third registers all contain hieroglyphic texts, this applies to the second register only on the east wall. The scenes in the second register on the north and south walls, as well as in the first register on the north wall, were left unfinished in different stages of execution. The figures are all carved out; whereas in the second register of the north wall the column margins as well as the protection formula of the king and the outline and titles of the cartouches have been prepared, this is only partially true for the same register on the south wall (merely a few of the column margins, cartouches, and protection formula are only partially executed, for example) and even less has been realised in the first register of the north wall, where we only find rectangular text fields where the inscriptions are meant to be. The first register in the southern half (east and south walls) is missing completely. The scene in the first register of the east wall's northern half was added later and inscribed with the cartouches of Augustus.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, the inner rooms of the naos seem to have been left undecorated, since the still existing small parts of the lateral walls and the western wall of the second room show no traces of engravings.

The western entrance gate was likewise completely destroyed in antiquity. The present reconstruction of the gate on site (realised by Lyons and Barsanti) is neither complete, nor entirely correct. A more accurate (virtual) reconstruction is provided by Morardet (1981: 139-155, pls IV-VIII), who examined the remains in 1974-1975. Some blocks mentioned there have not been replaced in the actual reconstruction, but are still existing, e.g. the ceiling of the passageway, the inner lintel, the corniche, and some single blocks from the inner door jambs. Most of these are now stored next to the temple (some of them containing parts of the so-called *menu*-song,<sup>9</sup> a recitation of the recipe of the appeasing beverage for Hathor used during the ritual of offering beer to the goddess, which is engraved on the outer lateral walls of the gate). Furthermore, the two upper blocks of the northern inner door jamb need to be switched, as these are actually parts of one single scene, not two. This rearrangement is confirmed by the text of the *menu*-song on the outer lateral wall (Morardet 1981: 140-141, pls V and VI). In general, the scenes are all badly damaged, rubbed off, and/or more or less destroyed.

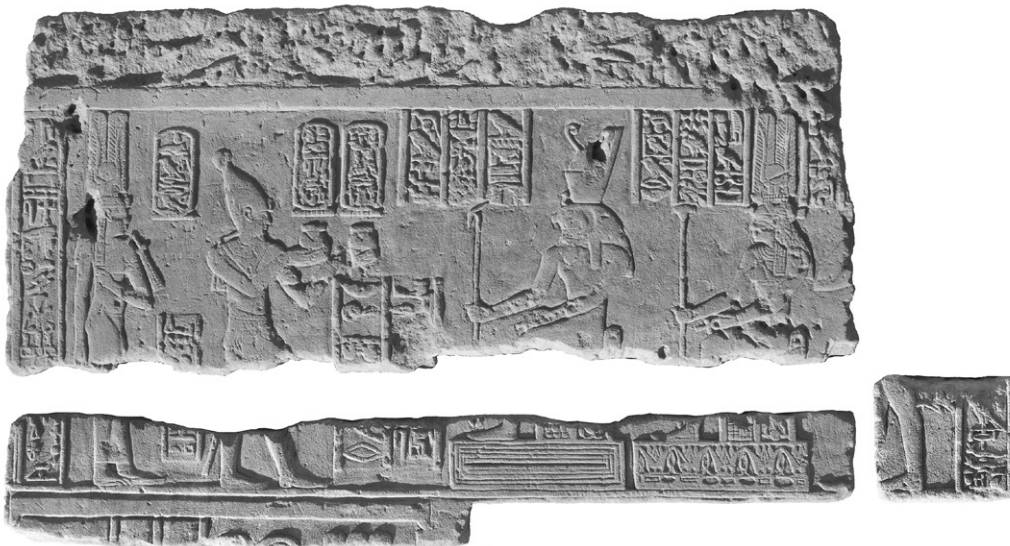


Figure 6. Western entrance gate, lintel, scene on the southern half, virtual reconstruction of the three blocks, Philae IV 26 (© H. Kockelmann/Philae Temple Text Project).

<sup>8</sup> For a detailed description of the reliefs of the pronaos, see Vassilika (1989: 54-55).

<sup>9</sup> They belong to the outer lateral walls, Philae IV 27a and 27b. For the latest compilation of the versions of this text, including an incomplete version of this Philae example, see Athribis III/1, 458-494.



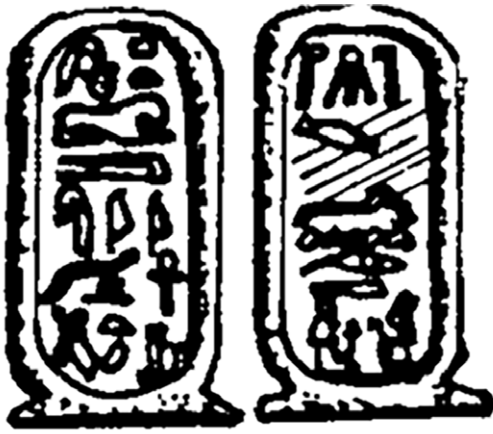




Figure 7. Western entrance gate, lintel, scene on the southern half (cartouche after Morardet 1981: 148, fig. 10 [cutting]).



Figure 8. Western entrance gate, lintel, scene on the southern half, cartouche, Philae IV 26 (© S. Caşor-Pfeiffer/Philae Temple Text Project).

As far as dating is concerned, only one pair of cartouches remains on the exterior of the gate with the name of Ptolemy XII Neos Dionysos (second register of the southern door jamb). On the interior, it is the southern scene of the lintel (no longer *in situ*) that also bears the cartouches of the same king. Since Morardet (1981: 146-148 with fig. 10; likewise Ciampini 2013: 71), it was falsely attributed to Ptolemy VI. The scene in question (Philae IV 26), a wine offering of the king, accompanied by a queen Cleopatra, before Harendotes, Hathor, and Harpokrates (Figure 6), is composed of three single blocks (two stuck together – when this happened, we do not know, most probably during one of the early restorations – without considering the correct distance), now placed on mastabas next to the temple by the Philae Temple Text Project.

The inscriptions, and also the figures, are of a minor quality; they seem somewhat clumsy and some hieroglyphs are unconventionally inversed, e.g. in the cartouche of Cleopatra and in her words. The signs of the king's cartouche are barely readable, but Morardet's reading (see Figure 7 for the detail of his drawing) of the name of Ptolemy VI can be ruled out without any doubt, as the proposed radiant sun disc flanked by the two *ntr*-signs does not fit the remains, and also the *iw*<sup>c</sup>-sign is on top and not below this group, as suggested by Morardet. Instead, we would like to

propose the reading Ptolemy XII   (compare with the detailed photo in Figure 8), which would match the usual writing of the king's name in Philae (with the restriction that the *nw*-vessels are usually written above *p* and *t*, not below them).<sup>10</sup>

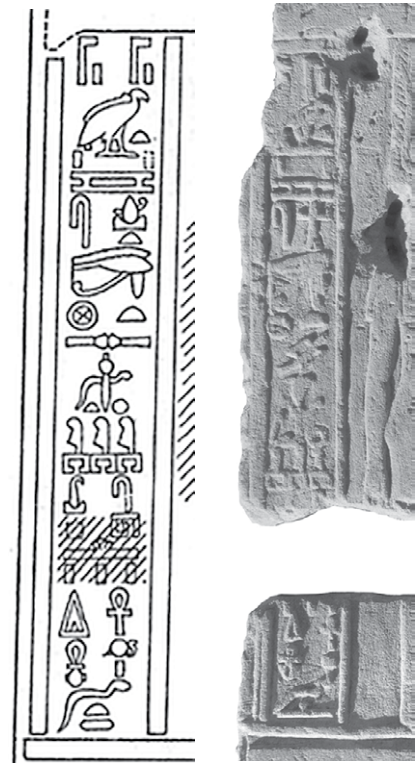


Figure 9a (left). First pylon, north side, east tower, königliche Randzeile (Philae II, 406).

Figure 9b (right). Western entrance gate, lintel, scene on the southern half, virtual reconstruction of the three blocks, detail königliche Randzeile of scene Philae IV 26 (© H. Kockelmann/Philae Temple Text Project).

<sup>10</sup> For a typical writing, see e.g. Philae I, fig. 2.

It is possible that Morardet's misdating may have resulted from the royal marginal column (*Königliche Randzeile*), which in fact begins with the naming of the Philometores. However, this is an (erroneous) copy of a scene of Ptolemy VI from the north side of the east tower of the first pylon (almost in view, Philae II, 406, 407, 13–15) (Figure 9a and b), which had not been altered when copied.

In the upper register of the northern door jamb, the cartouches are left empty, or were only painted, whereas in the second register of the southern jamb and both lower registers the name of Augustus is engraved. The latter, however, seems to have been added later as it is executed in sunken relief, contrary to the rest of the scenes in raised relief. Therefore, it seems that the decoration of the gate began in the time of Ptolemy XII Neos Dionysos on the exterior and was then continued on the interior, first on the lintel and then on the door jambs, which were partially finished in the time of Augustus. The thicknesses of the exterior door jambs and the outer lateral walls of the gate were likewise decorated under Augustus, the *menu*-song being engraved on the outer lateral walls.

As already mentioned above, the kiosk, too, was completely destroyed. Due to its destruction, its exact appearance remains uncertain. The lateral walls are composed of six columns linked by five screen walls and an additional screen wall on the western front between the entrance gate and the first column. On each side, a lateral gate was installed instead of a screen wall, on the north side between columns five and six, and on the south side between columns two and three. In the debris many fragments of Hathor capitals have been found. So, we have to imagine the columns crowned by those capitals, carrying the architraves (see also Haeny 1985: 231; for a reconstruction see below Figure 19), similar to the pronaos or ambulatory of the Philae mammisi. The exterior of the lateral walls remained in rusticated stone. The interior, as well as the western exterior columns and screen walls and the outer lateral parts of the façade of the pronaos, were again decorated in the time of the first Roman emperor, Augustus.

For the first time, the kiosk was reconstructed at the end of the 19th/beginning of the 20th century by Barsanti, then again in the course of the transfer of the temples in 1977–1980, and another time in 2012 by Egyptian colleagues. During the different works, the composition of some of the screen walls had been changed as some scenes had been put together incorrectly;<sup>11</sup> unfortunately, until now several mistakes have not been corrected. Some of these remaining misplaced blocks will be discussed below. Several of the upper parts of the columns have also been rearranged.

## The Decoration and its Cultic and Theological Context

### *The Main Temple Building*

The unfinished state of the decoration makes it difficult to determine the cultic or theological programme of the interior of the pronaos (Figure 10). Therefore, we will concentrate here on the scenes in which the accompanying inscriptions were carried out, i.e. the third register and the entire east wall.

The third register shows the pantheon of Philae, with strong references to the cult topography of the whole region and its southern relations. Two triads form the centre on the east wall, i.e. Osiris, Isis, and Harpocrates on the right half (looking outside from the sanctuary's point of view = northern half, Philae IV 139 = PM VI, 252 (29) = Berl. Ph. 882), and Khnum-Re, Satet, and Anuket on the left (= southern half, Philae IV 147 = PM VI, 252 (32) = Berl. Ph. 884). The latter are designated as gods of the region of Senmet or Ta-seti, only Satet is also 'Lady of Elephantine' as well as 'foremost in Senmet'. This unites

<sup>11</sup> Compare for example Berl. Ph. 88 and 94 to Elgawady (2016: pl. 66), and to Figure 1 of this contribution.

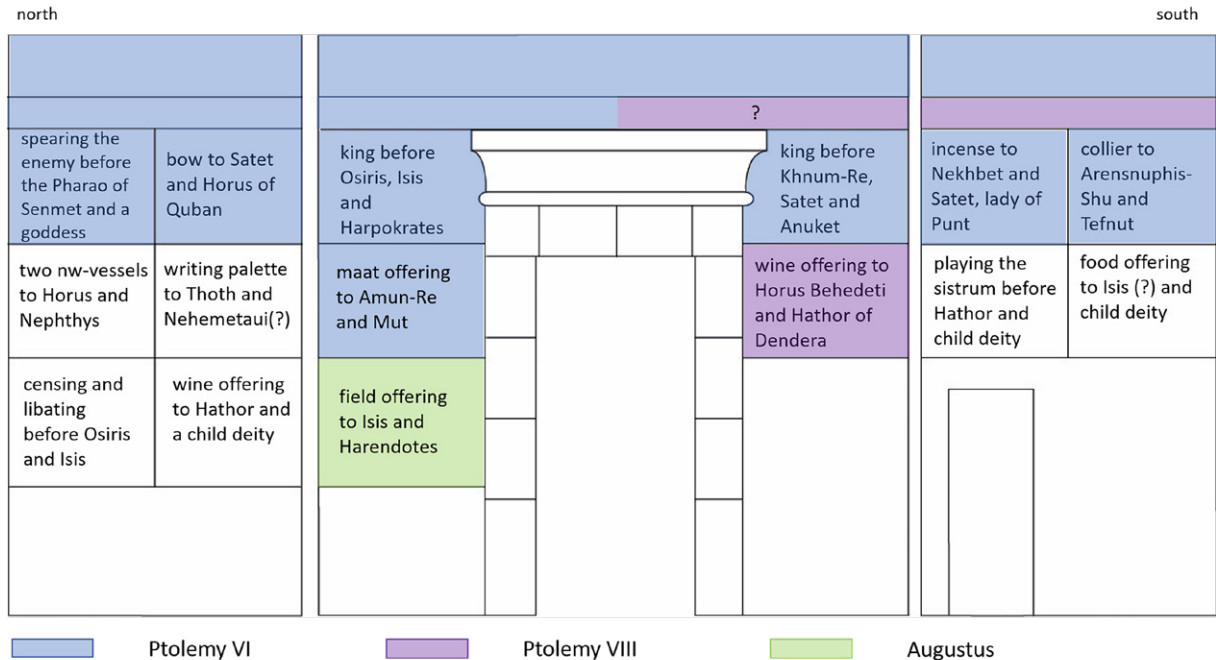


Figure 10. Decoration programme of the interior of the pronaos (© S. Caşor-Pfeiffer/Philae Temple Text Project).

the ‘new’ gods of Philae, Osiris and Isis, with the traditional deities of the region of Senmet, Khnum-Re and Hathor.<sup>12</sup>

On the north wall, two ritual scenes precede the one with the triad of Philae, the first showing the spearing of an enemy in front of the Pharaoh of Senmet, and a goddess, whose name is lost (Philae IV 137 = PM VI, 252 (27) = Berl. Ph. 879); the second the presentation of the bow to Satet, Lady of Elephantine and Horus, Lord of Quban (Philae IV 138 = PM VI, 252 (28) = Berl. Ph. 879). This is a compilation of deities and rituals or offerings that are all directly related to the protection of the region of Senmet, and in particular the protection of Osiris and the Abaton. Since the Middle Kingdom, Satet is attested as protector of the southern border of Egypt and later linked to the tomb of Osiris at Bigge (Valbelle 1981: 97, § 18, 119, § 41, 140-141, §§ 61-62).<sup>13</sup> Both the Pharaoh of Senmet and Horus of Quban also assume a guardian function, especially of the border region around Philae, and appear as Horus, protector of his father Osiris.<sup>14</sup>

The scenes on the south wall show a clear reference to the southern regions, be it through the deities themselves or the counter-offerings they provide. On the one hand, we have an incense offering to Nekhbet of Hierakonpolis, who in turn gives Punt, with everything in it, and who is accompanied by Satet, Lady of Punt (Philae IV 146 = PM VI, 252 (31) = Berl. Ph. 880). The adjacent scene refers to the myth of the Distant Goddess with Arensnuphis-Shu traversing Kenset and Tefnut, the uraeus of Re (Philae IV 145 = PM VI, 252 (30) = Berl. Ph. 880). This again is, of course, directly related to the second main divine circle of Philae, Hathor and Khnum of Senmet, positioned on the eastern wall’s southern half.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> For Khnum and Hathor of Senmet, see Kockelmann (2013: 109-111). The toponym Senmet seems to have been used not only for the island of Bigge, but also for the whole region around Philae and Bigge, see for further references Rickert (2015: 209).

<sup>13</sup> Laskowska-Kusztal (2007: 61) speaks in this context of the ‘sauvegarde du royaume terrestre’.

<sup>14</sup> For Horus of Quban, see Rickert (2015: 183-184); for the Pharaoh of Senmet, see Kockelmann (2017: 181, with n. 29).

<sup>15</sup> At the same time, the latter two deities in particular can in turn act as protectors of Osiris as well, cf. Kockelmann (2013: 106 with n. 68).

The pantheon is expanded in the second register to the deities of the northern cult sites, Karnak, Edfu, and Dendera, with a Maat offering to Amun-Re and Mut (in the northern half, Philae IV 136 = PM VI, 252 (29) = Berl. Ph. 882), and a wine offering to Horus Behedety and Hathor of Dendera (in the southern half, Philae IV 144 = PM VI, 252 (32) = Berl. Ph. 884).<sup>16</sup> In the time of Augustus, the scene in the first register of the northern half was added showing the presentation of a field to Isis, the main deity of the island of Philae (Philae IV 133 = PM VI, 252 (29) = Berl. Ph. 881).

A general decoration pattern is already indicated in the aforementioned examples and it can be found throughout most parts of the temple of Hathor, but also in some of the other buildings on Philae. Although the whole temple is dedicated to Hathor, as clearly shown by the Greek dedication and, for example, the dedicatory inscriptions to Hathor in the *bandeau de la frise* of the pronaos, almost everywhere the decoration is nonetheless characterised by the arrangement in pairs with Isis of Philae, the main deity of the temple complex, on the one hand and Hathor of Senmet, the old cataract deity, on the other, including their respective divine circles.<sup>17</sup> Isis is on the right side of the axis and Hathor on the left, connecting the former to the north and the latter to the south (cf. also Ciampini *et al.* 2015: 1296-1297). This repartition is, of course, again connected to the two main myths that characterise the local theology – the Osiris-Horus myth to the divine circle of Isis and Osiris, and the myth of the Distant Goddess/the solar eye to the divine circle of Hathor.<sup>18</sup>

For example, on the right door jamb of the entrance gate of the pronaos, the lower Egyptian Nile comes to Isis, who gives life, Lady of the Abaton, and on the left, the upper Egyptian Nile comes to Hathor, the great one, Lady of Senmet (Philae IV, 112 = Berl. Ph. 95 and Philae IV 117 = Berl. Ph. 886). Similarly, on the door's thicknesses, it is the house of Isis that should endure and Isis who gives life, Lady of the Abaton, mistress, Lady of Philae, who loves the king, on the right one, and the house of Hathor and Hathor, Lady of Senmet, who loves the king, on the left one.<sup>19</sup> On the inner scenes of the lintel of the doorway to the second room, the king is depicted at the *Opferlauf* before divine couples, on the right before Osiris,

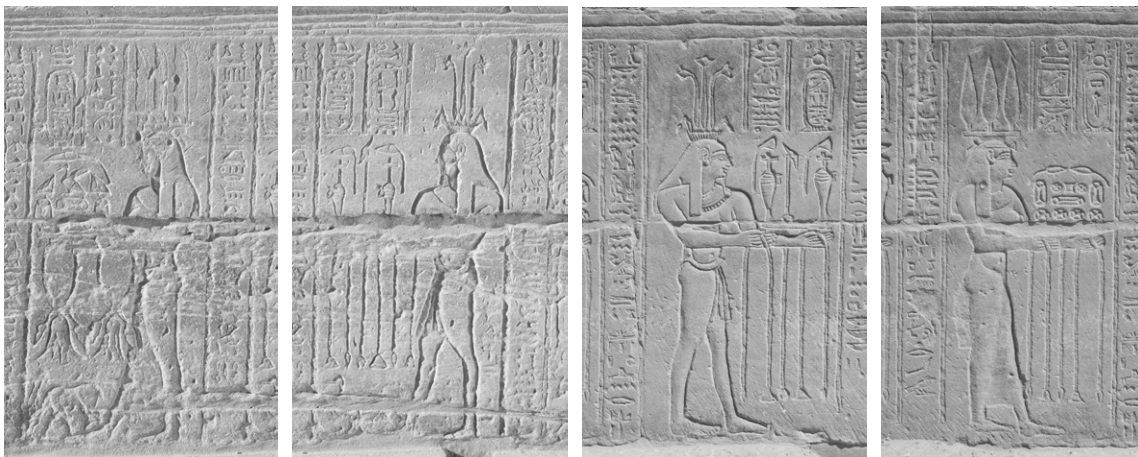


Figure 11a-d. Pronaos, outer lateral walls, soubassement north (left, Philae IV 84.f and g) and soubassement south (right, Philae IV 92.k and l) (© H. Kockelmann/Philae Temple Text Project).

<sup>16</sup> Cauville and Ali (2013: 309), analyse the gods out of the scene context and assign them purely to their place of origin; they state that the path of the feminine flood through the Nile valley is described with the listing of the different places.

<sup>17</sup> For these two circles, cf. Kockelmann (2013: 105-112). See also Gutbub (1985: 135).

<sup>18</sup> This distribution not only corresponds to the general placement of Upper and Lower Egypt in the temples of Philae, but also equals north and west, as well as south and east, which in turn is also influenced by the real topography, with the Abaton, the tomb of Osiris in the west, cf. Gutbub (1985: 134-135).

<sup>19</sup> Philae IV 121 = PM VI, 248 (23) and Philae IV 124 = PM VI 248 (24) – both descriptions PM VI 252 (23) and (24) are incorrect. For the texts see already Daumas (1968: 2-3).

Lord of the Abaton and Isis, the god's mother, Lady of the Abaton (Philae IV 159 = PM VI, 252 (33) = Berl. Ph. 885), on the left before Khnum-Re, Lord of Senmet and Hathor, Lady of Senmet (Philae IV 161 = PM VI, 252 (34) = Berl. Ph. 885).<sup>20</sup> The same distribution applies to the outer walls of the pronaos from Augustan times in the ritual scenes in the registers of the façade and the lateral walls, to the lateral entrance in the south, as well as to the soubasements.

Of special interest are the Augustan soubasements that address the divine couples, Osiris, great god, Lord of the Abaton or Lord of Philae, and Isis who gives life, Lady of the Abaton or Lady of Philae, on the right, i.e. northern side (Philae IV 84 = PM VI, 252 (37)-(38) = Berl. Ph. 80-81) and Khnum-Re, Lord of Senmet, and Hathor, Lady of Senmet or Lady of the House of Calling, on the left, i.e. southern side (Philae IV 92 = PM VI, 252 (39)-(40) = Berl. Ph. 76-77) (Figure 11). Here, we have the rare pattern that the offerings are presented to the deities of the respective couple separately and alternately by the respective bringer of offerings: on their respective side to Isis and Hathor by the field goddess, and to Osiris and Khnum-Re by the Nile god.

Moreover, the soubasements are an interesting example of text transfer between the Egyptian temples and also for the occurring difficulties, as shown here in the example of the inscription Philae IV 84.f (Figure 11a), in which the field goddess brings various offerings to Isis, can be found in different temples (Figure 12).

It is first attested in Edfu (Edfou IV, 369, 3-5) under Ptolemy IX Philometor II as an almost complete version. The same text now appears at Philae in the Augustan inscription of the soubasement, so it was

E IV, 369, 4-5



Philae IV



Kalabchah 76, 15-16



Figure 12. The soubasement text Philae IV 84.f and its parallels (the parts of the text that are discussed are underlined).

<sup>20</sup> The same constellation can be found on all the lintels of the inner rooms of the mammisi, cf. Philae II, 64-67, 80-81 and 88-89, 122-125, 138-141, or connected architecture, cf. the western gate of the first pylon that functions as the entrance to the mammisi, Philae I, 180-183. In the mammisi, it is only on the lintel of the hypostyle that Khnum-Re is called 'lord of Elephantine' and where he is accompanied not only by Satet, Lady of Elephantine, but also Hathor, Lady of Senmet.

obviously transferred to Philae as it is known from other texts at Philae.<sup>21</sup> Unfortunately, the engravings here are of very poor quality, already the carvings themselves were badly shaped. Additionally, they have been rubbed off and destroyed so that the state of preservation is fragmentary and the signs difficult to read. Moreover, the Philae text seems to be a corrupt version of the Edfu text. As a result, the correct understanding of the texts is often difficult or even impossible. The comparison with the Edfu text helps to decipher some of the hieroglyphs on the wall, and it further reveals some of the mistakes that made a coherent reading possible. So, the formula, although addressing Isis, reads *injsf*, 'I come to you', with 'you' referring to a male deity, which of course was correct in the Edfu text but was not adapted when splitting the Philae version between Osiris and Isis and using this text for the female deity. One can also see, for instance, that *k3.w n.w* before *ibd.w* was omitted and that the writing of *m mhr* at the end became difficult to understand in the Philae text. In a second step, this corrupted version was then transferred to Kalabsha; the text there is similar to the Philae text (Kalabchah 76, 15-16; in other parts of the procession, however, sometimes even worse).<sup>22</sup>

### **The Western Entrance Gate**

As far as the decoration, especially the deities on the western gate, is identifiable, the decoration pattern of the gate follows the already known order, with Isis on the right, i.e. in the northern half, and Hathor on the left, i.e. southern half (except for the *menu*-song, which extends over both outer lateral walls and is only directed to Hathor). Another pattern on the door jambs is also quite common in the Philae temples. As on all the gates in the axis of the temple of Isis, the deities depicted are only female ones.<sup>23</sup> While on the interior the offerings are performed before one goddess, on the exterior two goddesses are depicted in each scene. Here, we find not only Hathor (and most probably Isis) as the first goddess, but also in the second row, goddesses like Wepeset on the southern door jamb, and a lion goddess on the northern doorjamb (most probably Tefnut, as in the kiosk and on the façade of the pronaos she is placed in the northern half, whereas Sekhmet is to be found in the southern half).

On the one hand, the gate obviously marks the limit between the profane and the sacred, guarded by these lion- and fire-goddesses (Stadler 2009: 300). On the other hand, it is a reference to the Distant Goddess<sup>24</sup> and her return to Egypt symbolised in passing the gate, as it marks the passageway from the south, where the Distant Goddess rages, and the region of Senmet, the local place of transformation where the goddess is appeased.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, the aforementioned goddesses play an important role in the protection of the region of Senmet (i.e. the cataract region around Philae and Bigge island), and especially those of Osiris and his grave (cf. Cassor-Pfeiffer 2017: 128-131, 142-143). Therefore, by being depicted on the gate, the goddesses have an apotropaic function and not only protect the entrance to the temple but also to the region of Senmet (cf. Cassor-Pfeiffer 2016: 60).

### **The Kiosk**

The kiosk is the most famous part of the temple, with the depiction of the musicians and an offering bearer in the lower registers of the columns. These are part of the festival processions in celebration

<sup>21</sup> For textual parallels in the temples of Edfu and Philae, see Winter (1995: 310-319) (the texts quoted there are Philae III, 6, 12 and 21). In our case, however, we are dealing with a less successful transfer of texts and adaptation to the local theology.

<sup>22</sup> For the text transfer from Philae to Kalabsha, see already Winter (1995: 306-310) (the text quoted there is part of Philae III, 2). As the theology of the temple of Kalabsha depends on that of Philae, one has to assume a transfer from Philae to Kalabsha (or at least a passing by) and not vice versa, for the contemporary texts as well.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. the compilation in Cauville and Ali (2013: 244-245).

<sup>24</sup> One of the goddesses, whose name is lost, is also called *irt R'*, 'eye of Re' (Philae IV 12 = PM VI, 251 (3) = Berl. Ph. 73).

<sup>25</sup> Cf. for this concept Martzloff (2011: 126).

of the return of the Distant Goddess.<sup>26</sup> To the same festival-context belong the *menu*-song on the outer lateral walls of the western gate, as well as on the lateral part of the front of the pronaos, the two hymns to Hathor on the thicknesses above the screen walls of the pronaos's front, and the six hymns on the inner side of the columns, upper register, i.e. the two columns in the north-west and south-west corners, and those next to the lateral doors. The latter hymns seem to have the same aforementioned decoration pattern, since in the four texts that mention both Hathor and Isis, Isis is addressed first in the northern texts and Hathor in the southern ones. Having been examined by Daumas (1968: 1-17), there is no need to present these texts and scenes here in detail.

The remaining three upper registers of the columns on each side, as well as the screen walls,<sup>27</sup> all bear offering scenes. Here, we can detect an interesting distribution: all offering scenes directed to male deities are placed on the columns, while those to female deities are engraved on the screen walls. As all these scenes have been completely reconstructed in modern times, some blocks, unfortunately, have been misplaced. Some of these errors have already been corrected on site, others have been mentioned by colleagues but are still in place, some have not been discussed or noticed until now. Those still remaining uncorrected all concern the northern half of the kiosk. In the following, some of these will be addressed before or in the context of giving a first analysis of the decoration pattern and its theological context.

### Screen Walls

Contardi has already pointed out the misplaced blocks in the screen walls (Ciampini *et al.* 2015: 1301-1304, fig. 7 and 8). The blocks of the scenes of Mut and Satet (Figure 13<sup>28</sup>) have been mixed up.

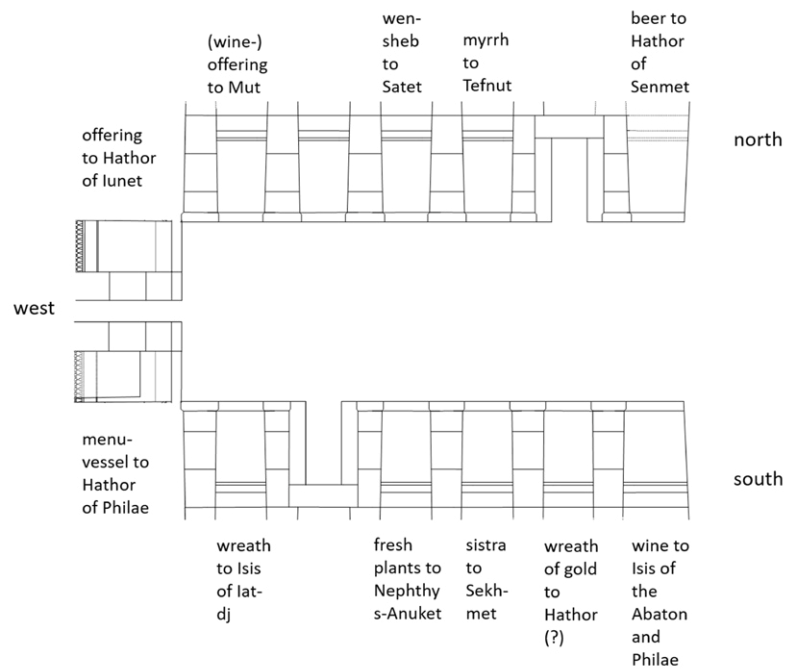


Figure 13. Kiosk, actual composition of the screen walls (© S. Cașor-Pfeiffer/Philae Temple Text Project).

<sup>26</sup> For the scenes in question, see, e.g., Hickmann ([1961]: 34-39) and Daumas (1968: 1-10, with pls 1-V); for a discussion of the musical instruments used in the festival, cf. Lieven (2003: 50).

<sup>27</sup> For an edition of the screen walls, see Elgawady (2016: 368-373) (unfortunately adopting the errors of the reconstruction to be discussed below).

<sup>28</sup> For the current distribution of the scenes, see also Cauville and Ali (2013: 305).

Based on iconographic reasons (the crowns of king and goddess) and the inscriptions, the following rearrangements are necessary: The upper block of the scene of Mut, which was lying next to the temple at the time of the Italian mission in 2006, is nowadays situated in the first northern screen wall (from the west), and needs to replace the upper block of the *wensheb*-offering on the third northern screen wall (from the west), in which the goddess Satet is addressed.

However, instead of only replacing the block, as Contardi suggested, I would propose keeping the Satet block in its place and move the Mut-scene to the west, to the second northern screen wall (empty at the moment), in consideration of the whole decoration pattern in connection with the corresponding scenes in the south. In this way, Satet would parallel her natural counterpart Nephthys-Anuket<sup>29</sup> in the south, putting Mut opposite the doorway, since an equivalent is missing (see Figure 14).

Another block, lying next to the temple by the time of the Italian mission and now placed in the western screen wall of the northern half, shows the name Hathor of Iunet. Analogous to the couple Hathor (north) and Isis (south) on the last screen wall (from the west), already Contardi (Ciampini *et al.* 2015: 1303-1304, fig. 8) has proposed placing this block in the first northern screen wall (from the west), opposite the offering of a wreath of flowers to Isis. This assumption can be confirmed if one looks at the geographical epithets of both goddesses. On the block in question we find, as already mentioned, Hathor, ‘Lady of Iunet (i.e. Dendera)’, and Isis in the opposite scene is Isis, ‘Lady of Iat-dj (i.e. the Isis Temple in Dendera) who dwells in Iunet’ (Philae IV 60 = PM VI, 251 (13) = Berl. Ph. 88, 89, 1586), the only two mentions of Dendera on the screen walls. With the principles of the *grammaire du temple* in mind, it thus seems appropriate to contrast these two scenes with regard to their geographical relationship.

As the kiosk is entirely reconstructed, the actual position of each screen wall can only be a relative one, especially in terms of the corresponding scenes. However, the now proposed layout, largely based on

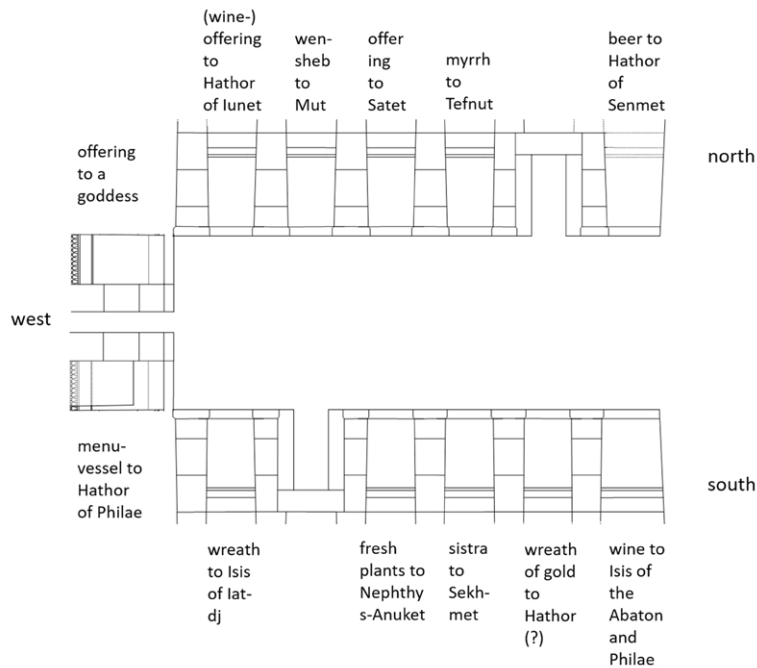


Figure 14. Kiosk, virtually reconstructed composition of the screen walls (© S. Cassor-Pfeiffer/Philae Temple Text Project).

<sup>29</sup> For the identification of Nephthys with Anuket, see also for example Philae I, 222, 6-8; Valbelle (1981: 142, § 63); Cassor-Pfeiffer (2017: 136).



the one already established by Lyons and Barsanti, especially on the southern side, provides, for the lateral screen walls, a geographical order that aligns from west to east the mentioned toponyms in a north-south order, from Dendera via Karnak to Elephantine and the region of Senmet, with Philae as the culmination point.<sup>30</sup> Almost all the different goddesses<sup>31</sup> mentioned in these cult places, can also assume the aspect of the Distant Goddess (missing out, however, such important places as Kom Ombo and El-Kab, which on the other hand fit less in the Philae pantheon). Moreover, the connection to this myth is present in all the scenes, as the offerings presented are those mentioned in one of the invocations celebrating the return of the Distant Goddess on the south-western column (cf. already Ciampini *et al.* 2015: 1301). This also leads to another important observation for which I have no explanation up to now: On the screen walls, Hathor is more dominant on the right and Isis is only situated on the left, contrary to the pattern in all the rest of the temple.

### Columns

Not only the screen walls, but also the columns of the north side have to be rearranged, at least the second and fourth column (from the west), the former showing an incense offering to Osiris (Philae IV 31 = PM VI, 251, Columns (b) = Berl. Ph. 83, 101 top right),<sup>32</sup> the latter an offering of *ḥrw-ꜥ*, most probably to Horus Behedety (Philae IV 35 = PM VI, 251, Columns (d) = Berl. Ph. 85) as he is the typical recipient of this offering (Figures 15 and 16).<sup>33</sup> As the protection formula of the scene on the fourth column shows two *nb*-signs, one above each other, it is evident that the upper and lower block do not belong together, and also the offering, the ‘potent potion’ *ḥrw-ꜥ*, mentioned in the formula, does not match the hand gesture. The latter gesture, in fact, is that of placing incense into the burning incense pot. It is this exact



Figure 15. Kiosk, northern half, column two, upper register: the king offers incense to Osiris, Philae IV 31 (© H. Kockelmann/Philae Temple Text Project).



Figure 16. Kiosk, northern half, column four, upper register: the king offers *ḥrw-ꜥ* to Horus, Philae IV 35 (© H. Kockelmann/Philae Temple Text Project).

<sup>30</sup> The location of west = north and east = south corresponds hereby to the usual location in Philae, cf. Gutbub (1985: 134-135). Cauville and Ali (2013: 307) assume that Hathor and Isis of Dendera ‘se rendent à Philæ pour accompagner leur double local lors de la venue de la crue’.

<sup>31</sup> For Isis as Distant Goddess in Philae, see Nagel (2019: 36-39, 44-49); Kockelmann ([in press]: 20).

<sup>32</sup> The block with the recipient’s name was still in place on the Berl. Ph.

<sup>33</sup> For the offering, cf. Cauville (2011: 48-49). A *ḥrw-ꜥ*-offering to Horus Behedety can also be found on the lateral gateway of the pronaos (Philae IV 103 = PM VI 252 (41) = Berl. Ph. 77).

offering that we find in the scene on the second column. Hence, we propose to place the fragment here. The resulting iconography of the king with the white crown on the bag wig is unusual but attested twice more in Philae (Berl. Ph. 1304 und Philae III 117), one example (Philae III 117) also showing the ram horns between crown and wig, which we would expect here as well.<sup>34</sup>

The previous considerations lead to the following scene arrangement (Figure 17): The three scenes on columns two to four of the northern wall show, from west to east: (1) a fumigation to Osiris, (2) the offering of probably fresh water (deduced from the counter-offering) to Khnum-Re (Philae IV 33 = PM VI, 251, Columns (c) = Berl. Ph. 84), and (3) giving the ‘potent potion’ *hrw-ꜥ* presumably to Horus Behedety. This corresponds on the southern side on columns four to six to (1) giving the *mekes* to Harendotes (Philae IV 47 = PM VI, 251, Columns (j) = Berl. Ph. 90 right, 91 right), (2) giving wine to Arensnuphis (Philae IV 49 = PM VI, 251, Columns (k) = Berl. Ph. 92 right, 93 right), and (3) giving milk to Harpokrates (Philae IV 51 = PM VI, 251, Columns (l) = Berl. Ph. 92 left, 93 left). As is usually the case, the scenes of the northern half interact with the scenes of the southern half in the sense of the *grammaire du temple*.

The most obvious relationship is the one between the recipients and the offerings of the corresponding scenes (even if the scenes here are not exactly opposite each other, they are shifted in relation to each other due to the different placement of the gates on the two sides). For example, on the first pair of columns we have the funerary offering to the father Osiris on the northern side and the handing over of the *mekes*-sign to his son and successor Horus, the avenger of his father, confirming him to be the rightful heir (see Kinnaer 1991: 96-97), on the southern side. Here again, we can equate the north with the west and the south with the east, which puts the deceased king Osiris in the west, in the netherworld or at Bigge, where his tomb is to be found geographically, and the rising new king in the east like the

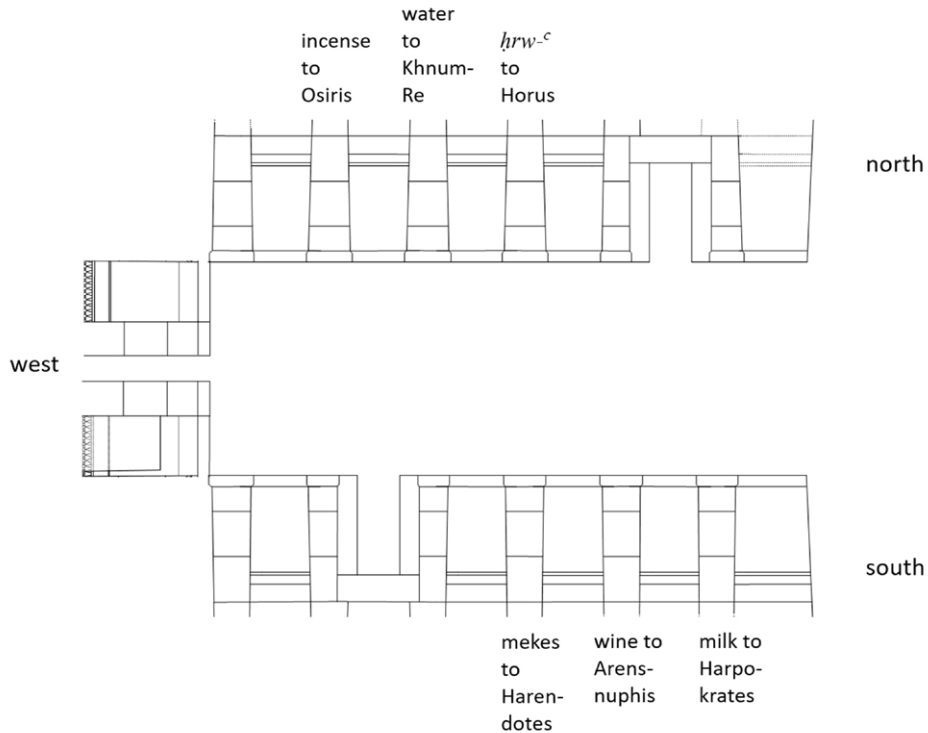


Figure 17. Kiosk, distribution of the offering scenes on the columns (© S. Cassor-Pfeiffer/Philae Temple Text Project).

<sup>34</sup> This ensemble with the Atef-crown instead of the white crown is also attested on the southern side of the kiosk in the first screen wall scene mentioning Isis of Dendera, Philae IV 60 = PM VI, 251 (13) = Berl. Ph. 88, 89, 1586.

rising sun.<sup>35</sup> Accordingly, the offering to the local child deity, Harpokrates, is also placed in the southern half. Here, we have a similarity to the corresponding scene with respect to the offering. The milk for Harpokrates and the 'potent potion' *ḥrw*-<sup>c</sup> for Horus are both beverages specific to the respective recipient and both aim at strengthening him to (re)gain his full power.

Moreover, we can observe crosswise connections between these four scenes. On the one hand, we have the two forms of Horus, on the other again the pair Osiris and his son and heir, this time in his child form as Harpokrates,<sup>36</sup> corresponding to each other respectively. The middle section, on the other hand, is composed of the two companions of Hathor, Khnum-Re, Lord of Senmet on the northern and Arensnuphis(-Shu) who accompanies the Distant Goddess coming from the south on the southern side. Here again, the repartition north-south may again be an allusion to the geographical area of activity of the respective god. However, the repartition this time does not work for the division of the two main myths, the Osiris-Horus myth on the one hand and the myth of the Distant Goddess on the other, represented by the divine circles. Both are represented on the columns, but here the deities of the myth of the Distant Goddess are encircled by the gods of the Osiris-Horus myth.

### *Architraves*

The lesser known parts of the temple may be the blocks of the architraves of the kiosk, most of them discovered during the dismantlement of the temples in the street foundations around the temple of Hathor. For a long time almost forgotten,<sup>37</sup> in 2017 they were properly stored on mastabas with the other single blocks next to the temple by the Philae Temple Text Project and will be fully published in the forthcoming volume. The blocks date to Augustus and are, if completely preserved, inscribed on three sides. The outer one contains a dedication inscription (north and south) or the accompanying inscription of the winged sun disk (west), the inner one shows the representations of the months and epagomenal days, and the soffits carry the names and epithets of Hathor and the king.

Of special interest are the representations of the months on the inner side of the architrave (Figure 18).<sup>38</sup> Each group usually consists of a hieroglyphic text of seven columns, not attested up to now in other

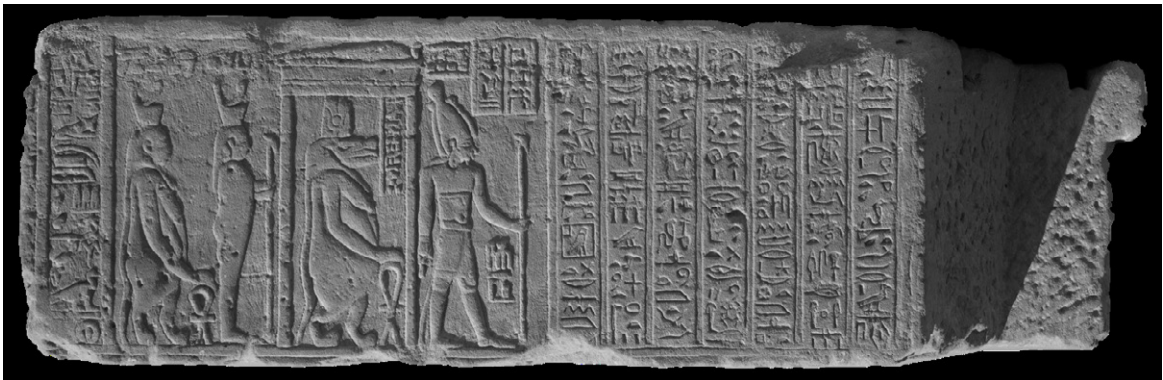


Figure 18. Kiosk, architrave, west side, northern half; first epagomenal day, Philae IV 67i, block H.125b (© H. Kockelmann/Philae Temple Text Project).

<sup>35</sup> See for a similar arrangement in the lateral chapels of the sanctuary of the Isis Temple Caḥor-Pfeiffer (2017: 146-147).

<sup>36</sup> See for example Philae I, 174, 16-176, 20, where both forms of the heir of Osiris are depicted together accompanying their father.

<sup>37</sup> The blocks are briefly mentioned by Haeny (1985: 231); Ciampini (2013: 69, with figs 4 and 5); Ciampini *et al.* (2015: 1299-1300 with fig. 5); one block has been published by Goyon (2015: 68-70, pl. 1), but unfortunately misinterpreted as a door jamb.

<sup>38</sup> For an account of the examples and an analysis of the representatives of the months (and epagomenal days) known to date, cf. Mendel (2005).

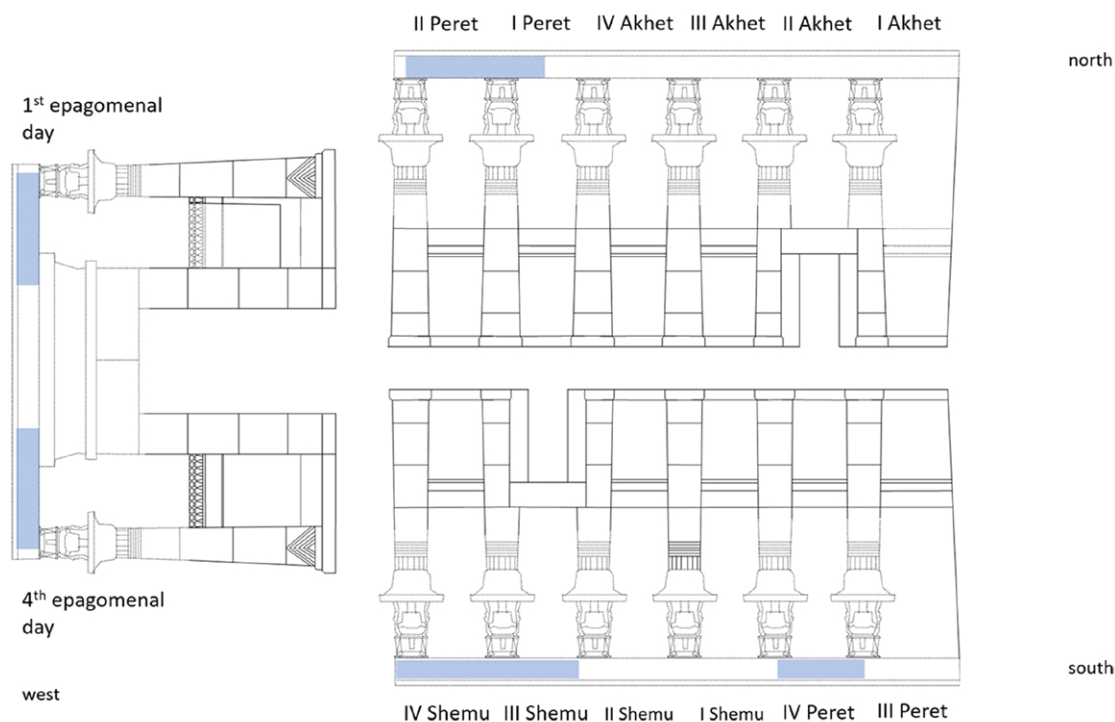


Figure 19. Kiosk, architraves, distribution of the months and epagomenal days (the remaining blocks are indicated) (© S. Cassor-Pfeiffer/Philae Temple Text Project).

examples of the representations of the months, followed by the group of deities of the respective month or epagomenal day: the deity of the month, the goddess of the month in hippopotamus form, a child god, and the goddess Sekhenet (also in hippopotamus form). The arrangement of figures has a parallel in the mammisi of Philae (at least the first two, the last two vary quite often), on the architraves of the vestibule (Philae II, 206–211) (the decoration of the ceiling dating to Ptolemy VIII) and is also described in the first column of the introductory text. It reads: ‘The god in his month comes to you, mistress, and his goddess together with her son and her Sekhenet.’ The following text contains a description of how these gods provide Hathor and her temple with offerings etc., followed by incantations to the goddess whose names conclude the inscription. Contrary to the deities of the months, the deities of the epagomenal days are followed by at least one other line of text (the middle part of the western architrave, however, is missing, so the context of this text remains unclear).

The remaining larger fragments allow a reconstruction of the original arrangement (Figure 19). The first month of Akhet to second month of Peret were placed in the north, the third month of Peret to the fourth month of Shemu in the south (from east to west placing the 7 column-inscription always on two blocks joining right on the Hathor capital) and two epagomenal days in the west (the first – birthday of Osiris – in the northern half and the fourth – birthday of Isis – in the southern, the middle part is unknown but due to lack of space most probably held no further epagomenal days). Preserved are (parts of) the first and second months of Peret, the fourth month of Peret, the third and fourth months of Shemu, as well as the first and fourth epagomenal days; some of the (smaller) fragments, however, could not be assigned to a month.

## Conclusion

As the previous description has shown, despite its small size and (ancient and modern) incompleteness, the temple of Hathor is an important part of the cultic landscape of the temple island and offers new insights into its local theology and decoration concept. Furthermore, it gives hints on the integration of the temple texts of Philae into the overall Egyptian temple landscape. The reconstruction is not finished yet. Not only can more blocks be added to its actual state, but also the current installation on site has to be enhanced – both at least virtually. Parts of the texts give us an insight into the ancient textual tradition and illustrate the necessity of cross-temple comparison for a (better) understanding of the compositions.

The analysis of the decoration reveals that the design of the temple fits seamlessly into the decoration system of the temple island. Nevertheless, it also shows two different emphases. The interior of the pronaos seems to focus more on the dualism of the two main female deities<sup>39</sup> as well as their respective divine circles, also representing the regional divine pantheon, whereas the aspect of the Distant Goddess is rather less prominent. In contrast, the (later) decoration of the kiosk in particular puts forward the myth of the Distant Goddess.<sup>40</sup> It is therefore probably no coincidence that the name of the temple building that explicitly refers to the return of the Distant Goddess is not attested inside the pronaos (keeping in mind, however, that the inscriptions there were, of course, never fully executed), but only on the lintel of the pronaos entrance gateway (dating to Ptolemy VI). Here, Hathor (as the second deity in this scene) bears the title of Lady of  $p3 \text{ } ^c\text{-}n\text{-}\text{š}$  ‘the House of Calling’.<sup>41</sup> In the kiosk, however, this designation of the temple can be found almost everywhere.<sup>42</sup>

The decoration and inscriptions of the kiosk clearly mark it as the centre of the festivities for the Distant Goddess, celebrating not only the homecoming of the goddess but also the beginning of the inundation (the goddess is equated with Sothis/Sirius whose rise/return at this time announces the Nile flood) and thus the ideal beginning of the New Year invoked in one inscription on the southern columns (Philae IV 43 = PM VI, 251, Columns (h) = Berl. Ph. 89; Daumas 1968: 6-8, §§ 11-13).<sup>43</sup> Likewise, it emphasises the aspect of cyclical renewal, also reflected in the representations of the year on the architraves (cf. Ciampini 2013: 69; Ciampini *et al.* 2015: 1300; Mendel 2005: 72-73).

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<sup>39</sup> The exact relationship of the two goddesses to each other will be the subject of further research.

<sup>40</sup> Or does this rather indicate a change in the goddess’s nature? Does she become less furious when entering the interior of her temple and is presented inside as her pacified self (reference courtesy H. Kockelmann)? This is just one further question that will be dealt with in further research.

<sup>41</sup> For the name of the temple, see Daumas (1968: 3-4, §§ 4-5).

<sup>42</sup> Perhaps, the multiple occurrences in the kiosk are a consequence of the fact that here the myth of the Distant Goddess is so dominant. Maybe the myth, and thus also the name, is more frequently represented in the later decoration because the importance of this cult may have increased from Ptolemy VIII Euergetes onwards, cf. Kockelmann ([in press]: 16-17). One might also consider that the name ‘House of Calling’ may – at least in Roman times – not (or no longer) have been used for the whole temple, but perhaps only for the kiosk as the centre of the festivities celebrating the return of the goddess. All these questions will also be the subject of our further research on the Philae temple texts.

<sup>43</sup> For the connection of Hathor-Tefnut and the beginning of the inundation = rise of Sothis, see Lieven (2001: 280-282; 2003: 47); further Ciampini (2013: 62-63, 74); Pfeiffer (2004: 265-266). Cauville and Ali (2013: 301-304) view the kiosk also as the place where not only the goddess but also the Nile flood is appeased, the raging goddess/flood enters the kiosk through the southern lateral entrance and the appeased goddess/flood leaves through the northern lateral door.

Leipzig University and Director of the Philae Temple Text Project, for most helpful discussions and comments. My sincerest thanks also go to Dr Ann-Katrin Gill, Leipzig University, for correcting the English; any remaining errors are, of course, the responsibility of the author.

## Abbreviations

- Athribis III: Leitz, C. and D. Mendel 2017. *Athribis III: Die östlichen Zugangsräume und Seitenkapellen sowie die Treppe zum Dach und die rückwärtigen Räume des Tempels Ptolemaios XII* (Temples 13). Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale.
- Berl. Ph.: Photographs taken by the Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, 1908-1910.
- Edfou IV: Chassinat, E. 1929. *Le temple d'Edfou IV*. Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale.
- Kalabchah: Gauthier, H. 1911-1914. *Le temple de Kalabchah*. Temples immergés de la Nubie. Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale.
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# Soldiers Becoming Pharaohs or Pharaohs becoming Soldiers? Kingship and Warfare between the Middle Kingdom and the Second Intermediate Period

Francesco De Gaetano

## Abstract

A fundamental aspect of Egyptian kingship is the characterisation of the ruler as a lone fighter, defender of the cosmic balance and destroyer of enemies. However, it is arduous to establish, beyond the ideological narrative, a direct involvement of the pharaoh in military campaigns or even in fighting. A change may have occurred during the Middle Kingdom, with an evolution of the Egyptian military and the connection between the king and a considerable number of military campaigns. The unclear period between the end of the Middle Kingdom and the Second Intermediate Period, marked by ephemeral and little-known rulers, saw an increase in the importance of military officers, with some of them rising to the throne. Accordingly, a parallel between alleged Egyptian soldier-kings and Roman 'barracks emperors' has been suggested by scholars. Pieces of evidence point at a stronger connection between the Theban kings and their military forces, and a direct involvement in warfare is possible. This is evident with the rulers of Abydos, thanks to the study of the human remains of one of them, who fell in battle or was executed after a clash. This contribution aims to clarify if any Egyptian king-soldier could be identified, and if any military officials could have become king in the 13th dynasty. Furthermore, the military role of the Egyptian rulers in the Second Intermediate Period is identified.

## Keywords

Kingship, Pharaoh, Middle Kingdom, Second Intermediate Period, Military

## Were there King-soldiers in Second Intermediate Period Egypt? An Introduction

Since the beginning of the studies on the Second Intermediate Period, the hypothesis reconstructing the political history of Egypt in that period has had to rely on scanty and fragmentary data. After the rulers of the 12th dynasty, a time frame of great stability for the kingship, the long series of ephemeral kings of the 13th dynasty brings into question the nature of kingship during the Late Middle Kingdom and the stability of the pharaonic institution. To further complicate the view, the following establishment of the Hyksos rulers at the expense of the last rulers of Itj-Tawy raises the number of coeval and opposing rulers. For about one hundred and fifty years of the 13th dynasty (c. 1783-1630 BC), a number between thirty and sixty rulers succeeded to the Egyptian throne, with an average reign of two/three years. Unfortunately, the fragmented nature of the Turin Royal Canon prevents us from defining the number of Egyptian kings properly (Allen 2010; Ryholt 1997; Siesse 2019: 23-126). It seems legitimate that scholars, facing an unexpected historical situation, attempted in the past to understand this time frame by looking for comparisons. A similar and more well-known situation could have been seen in the age of the Roman 'barrack-emperors', called *Kaisersoldaten* in German, during the 3rd century AD. The analogy becomes self-evident. A sequence of ephemeral kings easily equates to a series of kings without effective power, and rapidly wiped away by other political 'agents': the court, the élite families, or the army. Like the Roman Empire, could Pharaonic Egypt have also experienced a crisis of his rulership, with 'king-

soldiers' seizing power thanks to the army and removed if defeated or unable to rule? Doubtless, the comparison represents an easy solution to a tricky historiographical reconstruction.

The hypothesis of Egyptian king-soldiers in the Second Intermediate Period was held to be valid first by Beckerath in his influential work *Untersuchungen zur politischen Geschichte der Zweiten Zwischenzeit in Ägypten*. The impossibility of a father-son succession of so many Egyptian rulers could only have an uninterrupted chain of usurpations as its cause and effect. A violent end, with a regicide or a military coup, had to be considered for this scholar as likely in most cases:

'(...) This [the uninterrupted chain of usurpations] would far exceed the period of the "soldier emperors" in the Roman Empire (AD 193-285) in both duration and intensity (...)' (Beckerath 1964: 86)<sup>1</sup>

Given the absence of a solid succession of rulers and families lasting over time, the kings of this period may have risen from high-ranking military officers: or they even could have been soldiers who had built a career or been foreign rulers.

'(...) The fact that they [the pharaohs] describe themselves in their (...) stele inscriptions as being loved by their soldiers makes them appear as king-soldiers (...)' (Beckerath 1964: 91)<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, the crisis of Egyptian kingship was being explained often by the role of the army and military usurpations. The army acted then as 'king-maker' (Beckerath 1986: 1443); even the kings of the 14th dynasty, may previously have been successful commanders (Bietak 1984: 73). Moreover, a king of the Theban 16th dynasty can be explicitly referred to as a king-soldier if he has a proven relation with his army (Franke 1988: 259). At first glance, the parallelism between the barrack emperors and the ephemeral kings of the Second Intermediate Period seems not entirely out of place. During the forty-nine years of the so-called 'Military Anarchy' (AD 235-284) there were no less than twenty emperors, to which must be added a dozen usurpers at least. A strong political, economic, and military crisis greatly stressed the role of the army as king-maker, with the rise to power of many military officers. Many of these men were low-born, allowing their leadership to depend solely on their military career and the respect of their soldiers; conspiracies of subordinates or deaths in combat often marked the end of a *Kaisersoldat* (Johne 2008; Sommer 2010). The phenomenon of the barracks emperors was undeniably a response of the Roman political system to a crisis, the solution of which was also to skilfully manage the army and defend the provinces. Even if the rise of the Hyksos could be recognised as a military regime change by Asiatic rulers, it would be a forceful hypothesis to see the Second Intermediate Period as a period of military crisis for the Egyptian state. Similarly, looking necessarily for king-soldiers between the Egyptian kings in the Second Intermediate Period could lead to misunderstandings. To dispel all doubts, it is necessary to set out some explanations of the relationship between war and Egyptian kingship before the New Kingdom, and to discern whether some pharaoh may have based their power on having been previously a military commander.

### **Kingship and Military in Ancient Egypt**

The figure of the fighting pharaoh is a pillar of the Egyptian conception of kingship (O'Connor and Silverman 1995; Petschel and Falck 2004). As the defender of the cosmic order (Maat) his mission was to eradicate the forces of chaos, especially when they are embodied by foreign invaders or rebels. The

<sup>1</sup> 'Das würde die Zeit der "Soldatenkaiser" im Römischen Reich (193-285 n. Chr.) sowohl an Dauer als auch an Intensität noch weit übertreffen.' (English translation by the author).

<sup>2</sup> 'Dass sie sich in ihren (...) Steleninschriften als geliebt von ihren Soldaten bezeichnen, lässt sie als "Soldatenkönige" erscheinen.' (English translation by the author).

pharaoh's victory in combat is given as obvious, being compelling for the survival of the universe. The image of the king smiting his enemies, known since the Predynastic and reproduced, with some variations, until the Roman era (Hall 1986), is an integral part of the representation of the pharaoh, the 'cultural memory' of the unification of the Two Lands focused on his person (Luiselli 2011). However, the figure of the king as a solitary, fighting hero is an ideological matter, whereas his real role on the battlefield remains difficult to ascertain. Even for the most well-known warrior pharaohs of the 18th dynasty, direct involvement in fighting has been questioned (Shaw 2008: 115). While the honour of victory rested with the king, there were his military officers who led operations in the field. We have evidence of the high-ranking military title of 'superintendent of the troops' (*jmj-r3 mš*) since the 1st dynasty (Chevereau 1987: 20). Moreover, court officials and provincial governors were responsible for leading expeditions on behalf of the king (Moreno Garcia 2010). The internecine conflicts of the First Intermediate Period may have led to an evolution in the relationship between kingship and warfare. Indeed, the victorious Theban kings were actually local rulers who had achieved supremacy also thanks to a sequence of clashes. Could the Middle Kingdom have seen the transition from a '*roi de guerre*' to a '*roi connétable*', citing Gundlach (2009)? It remains to be ascertained whether it is right to recognise in the Middle Kingdom the time frame in which the sovereign may have become a field commander, flanking and commanding his military officers.

### Pharaohs and Warfare in the Middle Kingdom

The Middle Kingdom, with territorial expansion in Lower Nubia and a large amount of mining and military expeditions, represents a watershed for the Egyptian warfare (Spalinger 2013: 421-437). Various records suggest a direct involvement in the military campaigns of some rulers. In a fragmentary inscription from Deir el-Ballas, Mentuhotep II appears to address directly the army 'recruited by him' at one point (Darnell 2008: 87-89). Khnumhotep I, ruler of the 16th nome of Upper Egypt, claims to have followed Amenemhat I in a naval expedition (Lashien and Mourad 2019: 23). In a rock inscription in Lower Nubia three 'retainers' (*šmsw*) are quoted in connection with a campaign led by the same ruler (Obsomer 1995: 646-647; Žaba 1974: 31-35). It is legitimate to assume the presence of the king: it is quite probable that the 'retainers' already at the time represented a chosen armed bodyguard intended for the king's security during expeditions (Berlev 1978: 206-229; Chevereau 1991: 71-78; Stefanović 2008). Senwosret III could also have been personally involved in expeditions to Nubia and Asia, if the autobiography of the commander Khusobek, inscribed on his funerary stele, is taken as reliable (Baines 1987). However, the four campaigns in Nubia dating to the reign of Senwosret III, as well as the coeval construction of fortresses in the Semna gorge, have led scholars to consider plausible the presence of this ruler as an active field commander in this region (Obsomer 2017; Tallet 2005: 40-52). These data certainly do not alone prove the role of the sovereign as a fighting leader. There are many records of high-ranking military officers in the Middle Kingdom; Khusobek too, during the Asiatic expedition, had a leading role as 'commander-in-chief of the city troops' (*3tw 3 n njwt*). Even in the 12th dynasty, the management of war could take place without the physical participation of the pharaoh. However, the large number of expeditions and wars probably affected the official characterisation of kings. The royal phraseology is enriched with epithets that exalt his physical strength (*nht*) and warlike ability (*hps*) as a military commander (Blumenthal 1970: 205-263). From the set of archaeological and literary evidence available, the image of the pharaoh as '*roi de guerre*' during the Middle Kingdom seems to have been fully constructed.

### The claimed King-soldiers of the Late Middle Kingdom

Two points are worth mentioning to understand the relationship between kingship and warfare in the late phase of the Middle Kingdom. Firstly, the attestations of military titles, such as 'commander of the Ruler's crew' (*3tw n tt hq3*), 'commander in chief of the city troops' (*3tw 3 n njwt*) and their

subordinates ‘officer of the city regiment’ (*nḥw n njwt*) and ‘officer of the Ruler’s crew’ (*nḥw n tt ḥq3*), are greatly increased. This fact represents excellent evidence to indicate a more stable and influential military organisation (Siesse 2019: 249-258; Spalinger 2013: 421-437; Stefanović 2006). Several officers with military titles are listed among the court officers registered in P. Boulaq 18 (Ilin-Tomich 2021; Quirke 1990: 72-86;). Furthermore, many ‘troop superintendents’ (*jmj-r3 mšꜥ*) during the 13th dynasty are labelled with the high-ranking title ‘royal seal bearer’ (*ḥtmty-bjty*), which places them among the most important officials of the Egyptian central administration (Grajetzki 2003: 116-129).

On the other hand, differing from high-ranking officials attested in large numbers, the figure and power of the pharaoh during the 13th dynasty are much more difficult to ascertain. To further complicate the question, the transmission of royal power seems obscure. An ‘elective monarchy’ has been suggested (Meyer 1926: 309), as well as ‘puppet’ kings manipulated by more powerful viziers (Hayes 1955: 144-149). Finally, a ‘circulating succession’, with men chosen from the élite families to rule the country, seems more plausible (Quirke 1991). In addition to this, usurpations and military coups remain in the background; nevertheless, with data now available, those are difficult to prove. In fact, there are few examples of kings of the 13th dynasty with a known military background who could have had the features of a ‘king-soldier’:

- Wegaf (*ḥw-t3.wy-rꜥ wḡ3ꜥf*) – 13th dynasty: On the scarab seal BM EA 37686 (Martin 1971: pl. XIX) an official named Wegaf is recorded as ‘royal sealer’ (*ḥtmty-bjty*) and ‘chief overseer of troops’ (*jmj-r3 mšꜥ wr*). These titles prove him to be a high-ranking official in the Late Middle Kingdom administration. Given the infrequency of the name (Ranke 1952: 87), a relationship between the king and the official, being the same person, seems possible (Franke 1988: 249; Quirke 1991: 131; Ryholt 1997: 219-220). Furthermore, records of the king in the Nubian fortresses of Semna and Mirgissa could be evidence for a previous military career (Siesse 2019: 133).
- Imyramesha (*smnh-k3-rꜥ jmj-r3 mšꜥ*) – 13th dynasty: The *nomen* of this pharaoh was previously translated, from his entry in the Royal Turin Canon, as Smenkhare the General (Gardiner 1959: pl. III). The *nomen* was then previously understood as a title. Thanks to that, this king was thought also to be an officer of foreign origins, named by his military title (Beckerath 1964: 52); then, he could have risen to power with a military coup. Despite this, the name ‘Overseer-of-troops’ does not necessarily mean a military man. Imyramesha could have been a personal name at the time, formed with a title like the names ‘Overseer-of-house’ and ‘Overseer-of-cattle’ (Ranke 1952: 25). Otherwise, it could reflect a family tradition in the military (Quirke 1991: 131) or some military background for this ruler (Ryholt 1997: 221-222).
- Sobekhotep III (*šḥm-rꜥ-sw3d-t3.wy sbk-ḥtp*) – 13th dynasty: A ‘commander of the Ruler’s crew’ named Sobekhotep, begotten by a ‘commander of Ruler’s crew’ named Montuhotep, is recorded by not less than twenty-one scarab seals and seal impressions. (Franke 1984: 345; Martin 1971: pl. XXIII) These officers are the ‘commander of the Ruler’s crew’ best recorded, and the number of seals, found in Abydos as well as in Lower Nubia, could prove the importance of these officers within the Egyptian central administration (Ryholt 1997: 222-225). It has also been hypothesised that the ‘commander of the Ruler’s crew’ Sobekhotep mentioned many times in P. Boulaq 18 may be identified with the future king (Quirke 1990: 72-74). The ruler’s family is known from various records (an altar from Sehel, a rock inscription in the Wadi el-Hol, and the stela Louvre C8). Therefore, the members of the king’s family are well known; among the others, the ‘god’s father’ (*jt ntr*) Mentuhotep and the ‘king’s mother’ (*mwt nswt*) Jewhetibu are recorded. The titles of the king’s parents prove Sobekhotep was not of

royal birth. (Ryholt 1997: 222-225; Siesse 2019: 135-139). Furthermore, the two brothers of Sobekhotep, Khakaw and Seneb, are recorded as 'King's son' (*s3 nswt*). Starting from the 13th dynasty, this title marks administrative and military tasks of paramount importance, in most cases being the officers without blood relations to the pharaoh (Schmitz 1976).

- Neferhotep I (*h'-sh̄m-r' nfr-h̄tp*) – 13th dynasty: The family of the three brothers ruling as pharaohs in the mid-13th dynasty (Neferhotep I, Sahathor, Sobekhotep IV) seems not to come from a family of any outstanding rank. The stela Rio de Janeiro 637/638[2428] records the grandfather of those rulers as just an 'officer of citizen troops' (*'nh̄w n njwt*) Nehy (Kitchen and Beltrao 1990: 67-71). Their father Hankhef, also in this case, holds the titles of 'royal sealer' (*htmty-bjty*) and 'god's father' (*jt n̄tr*) (Siesse 2019: 139-143).

Only four examples of rulers who could have had connections with the military are known. From the evidence currently available, it is therefore possible to state that the accession to the throne by military officers was not the outcome of a greater political importance of the army. Most certainly, it shows how during the 13th dynasty the lack of succession rules could have led members of the court and of the central administration, such as military commanders, to take power.

### **Kings as Field-commanders? The Second Intermediate Period**

It is difficult to prove that Hyksos rulers seized control of Lower Egypt thanks to military clashes, in the absence of deciding data concerning this (Bietak 2010). Nonetheless, the time frame of the Second Intermediate Period is distinguished by a conspicuous increase in the records of military titles and a remarkable 'militarisation' of the Egyptian élites (Grajetzki 2010). Upper Egypt after the demise of the 13th dynasty was characterised by political fragmentation and exposed to raids by the Nubian kingdom of Kerma (Davies 2003). It appeared as subjected to war against foreign invaders and local conflicts between regional leaders. The Theban 16th dynasty, probably the outcome of a local secession already before the end of the 13th dynasty (Ilin-Tomich 2014), seems to have, from the scarce available sources, a defensive military strategy, with garrisons and local military commanders. The rulers of Thebes seem to seek legitimacy in the favour of the gods and local potentates (Morenz 2010). Moreover, the kings link themselves to powerful local élites, tied by marriages to the royal court and charged with high-ranking military titles, as in the case of the governors of El-Kab (Davies 2010). It seems that the rulers of Thebes could have found their opponents in the rulers of Abydos. The discovery of a Second Intermediate Period royal necropolis at Abydos has added new evidence for the existence of a local dynasty based on this site (Wegner 2015; Wegner and Cahail 2021: 240-374). The analysis of the osteological remains belonging to two rulers of Abydos (Senebkay and the anonymous ruler buried in tomb CS10) seems to put forward the most ancient evidence for horse riding and the habit of using the composite bow. Both pieces of evidence seem to furnish proof of the custom of the sovereigns in the practice of warlike activities (Hill *et al.* 2017; Wegner and Cahail 2021).

In this context, with foreign and domestic enemies, it is clearly plausible that the Egyptian rulers of Abydos and Thebes should have based their power on the control of their soldiers and the ability to face opponents in war. It has also been hypothesised, without convincing evidence, that the Hyksos rulers invaded Upper Egypt at some point and put an end to the two Egyptian dynasties with a sequence of military campaigns (Ryholt 1997: 151-166). Later, the Theban kings of the 17th dynasty, starting probably from the reign of Seqenenra, were involved in the defeat of the Hyksos. The military campaigns of the kings Kamose and Ahmose testify for the first time the use of the war chariot, proving possession of new war technologies, which perhaps were previously hindered by the Hyksos themselves (Habachi 1972; Shaw 2001). Despite the scant evidence, five Egyptian rulers at least are thought to be connected in some way to Second Intermediate Period warfare:

- Dedumose (*dd-nfr-r<sup>c</sup> ddw-msw*) – 16th dynasty: On the Cairo stele CG 20533, from Gebelein, the king is characterised by a fragmentary epithet that can be reconstructed as ‘surrounded by his soldiers’ (*phr mnf3t=f*) (Lange and Schäfer 1908: 136-138; Morenz 2010: 294-301). The ruler wears the blue crown (*hprš*), one of the earliest attestations of this headdress. Although it was previously recognised as a military headdress (Beckerath 1964: 68), this crown appears to be simply an evolution of the cap-crown that occurred during the Second Intermediate Period (Davies 1982).
- Senebkay (*wsr-jb-r<sup>c</sup> snb-k3y*) – Abydos dynasty: The excavation of the CS9 tomb in the Abydos royal necropolis has led to the discovery of the skeletal remains of a male, 35-45 years old, probably killed in a battle or an ambush. The skeletal remains of Senebkay reveal at least thirteen wounds, from the feet to the head. A wound to the frontal bone, caused by an axe, seems very likely to be the cause of death. The bone remodelling in the area of the lower body (pelvis and femur attachments) is consistent with habitual equestrian activity. The collected body of evidence has led scholars to consider the Abydos ruler as a victim of an assault while on horseback. Senebkay would have been wounded in the lower limbs and thrown from his horse by several attackers. Finally, the type of wound suggests ritual execution after defeat in battle (Wegner and Cahail 2021: 104-137).
- Neferhotep III (*šhm-r<sup>c</sup>-s<sup>c</sup>nh-t3.wy nfr-htp*) – 16th dynasty: The stela Cairo JE 59635 was discovered in 1933, following the emptying of the Third Pylon of the Temple of Karnak. Two representations of the goddess ‘Victorious Thebes’ are shown, turned towards the outside of the monument as if to prevent the attack of a possible aggressor. The first portrait is shown with the bow and arrows in her hand, while the other one is holding a club with a curved blade. The king himself holds a mace, as well as a baton. The ruler is praised as ‘the strong king, loved by his army (*nswt nhttt mry mš<sup>c</sup>=f*)’ and ‘the guide of victorious Thebes’ (*sšm n w3st nhttt*) (Ryholt 1997: 160). The inscription remembers the king as ‘the one who makes his city emerge after it has sunk, struggling with foreigners (*h3st.jw*), who reconciles to him rebellious foreign countries (*h3s.wt bštt*)’. Without further elements, it is not possible to say whether ‘foreigners’ could mean Egyptian adversaries or Hyksos and Nubian invaders (Ryholt 1997: 305-306; Vernus 1982).
- Mentuhotepi (*s<sup>c</sup>nh-n-r<sup>c</sup> mntw-htpj*) – 16th dynasty: The stela Luxor CL 233G was also discovered fragmented thanks to the emptying of the Third Pylon. There king Mentuhotepi is praised as ‘loved by his army’ and there are references again to victorious Thebes. The ruler is once more called ‘the one who brings down the aggressors’ (*šhr.w tkn.w*). There are mentions of ‘fortresses’ (*h<sup>c</sup>tm.w*) and ‘bastions’ (*t<sup>c</sup>sm.wt*). It seems that the warrior exploits of the sovereign, if effective, were of a defensive nature, to protect Thebes from foreign aggression (Vernus 1989).
- Seqenenra (*sqnj-n-r<sup>c</sup> t3 3*) – 17th dynasty: The body of the king was found in 1881, between the royal mummies of the Deir el-Bahari Cachette, poorly preserved. The tale of ‘The Quarrel of Apophis and Seqenenra’ (P. Sallier I) may have been, in its final part, now lost, the literary account of a military clash between Seqenenra and the Hyksos (Spalinger 2010). Serious wounds are identifiable on the body of the king and caused by weapons, suggesting a death in combat (Bietak and Strouhal 1974). Three of these wounds (upper frontal bone, lower frontal bone, base of the skull) could certainly have been fatal. A noteworthy hypothesis re-enacts Seqenenra’s death, from the evidence of the wounds on his body, as being the consequence of ritual execution at the hands of an enemy commander, following a Theban defeat in the field (Shaw 2009).

- Knowledge of the kings of the Second Intermediate Period and their ruling are based on very scant evidence. In the case of the kings of Abydos, human remains speak more than written records. These rulers may have been among the first to exploit new warfare tools, such as the use of the horse, to establish and defend their leadership. The relationships between the kings and the military élites of Upper Egypt may then have been crucial. For this reason, the discovery of an *apotropaion* (Cairo Museum CG 9433) with the name of King Senebkay in the burial pit of a ‘commander of the Ruler’s crew’ named Sobekhotep is meaningful (Wegner and Cahail 2021: 346-351).

## Conclusion

Although occasionally recalled by some scholars, an equivalence between the so-called Egyptian king-soldiers and the Roman barrack emperors seems difficult to assert. As commander in chief of the Roman army, the emperor had the task of ruling by arbitrating between the needs and demands of the people, élites, and soldiers. Due to the uninterrupted situation of rebellions and invasions, the crisis of the 3rd century took the military side of the Roman leadership to extremes; but this was only a moment of crisis and a transition towards a further evolution of the Roman imperial system. Even in the Egyptian conception of royalty, the sovereign had a clear connection with warfare, due to deeply rooted ideological and religious beliefs. The king was personification of the army as a whole; in official records, only the king could be described as killing enemies. However, for a long time, the pharaoh was away from the battlefield, delegating the leading of warfare to his high-ranking military officers.

The situation evolved after the First Intermediate Period. A more complex military organisation, in a time frame marked by many military expeditions and campaigns, affects the figure of the pharaoh as lord of the country, endowed with leadership and warlike skills. Greater adaptability in the succession to the throne, or the lack of rules concerning this, allowed some high-ranking military officers during the 13th dynasty to become lords of the Two Lands. Greater involvement of the Egyptian rulers in warfare found fertile ground in the period of political fragmentation and clashes of the Second Intermediate Period. The Theban rulers had to show off their connection to the military, the protection of a warrior goddess (the ‘Victorious Thebes’), and their ability to defend their realm. On the other hand, the rulers of Abydos probably found part of their legitimacy to govern with the involvement in warfare, with the mastery of the most updated and sophisticated war technologies of the time, even in the face of extreme consequences, as in the case of King Senebkay. The same can probably also be said of the unfortunate pharaoh Seqenenra.

However, a clear distinction between the ‘*roi de guerre*’ and the ‘*roi connétable*’ cannot be drawn even during the Second Intermediate Period. The few available sources, sometimes only brief inscriptions, and epithets, tend to hide the pharaoh’s direct involvement in the war, nevertheless accidentally revealed by the human remains of rulers who fell brutally during a fight. Even during the New Kingdom, the pharaoh’s involvement in war seems to vanish in front of the usual ideological system, which portrays him as an excellent sportsman and great fighter, leaving the efficient Egyptian military organisation in half-light. Yet it is hard to doubt that the warlike personality of some kings of the Second Intermediate Period helped to shape the image of the fighting pharaoh of the New Kingdom.

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# Jean-François Champollion: Some New Thoughts on his Method of Deciphering Hieroglyphs

Marco De Pietri

## Abstract

This paper presents the translation of a Saitic stela, today kept in the ‘Musei Civici’ of Pavia (Italy), preserved in a manuscript (kept in the ‘Archivio storico civico’ of Pavia) written by Champollion; the translation of the stela took place during Champollion’s journey to Italy (1824-1826) on the occasion of his visit to the private collection of Egyptian antiquities belonging to the Marquis Luigi Malaspina di Sannazzaro in Pavia (March 1825). Since this manuscript reports and testifies a translation made by Champollion a little after his decipherment (1822), I will present my own translation of the aforementioned stela, comparing it with the French translation provided by Champollion in 1825, underlining the main similarities and discrepancies, showing how the young scholar was able to translate almost 90-95% of the inscription, and focusing on some ‘gaps in translation’ that Champollion left untranslated. In summary, this contribution aims at determining Champollion’s competency with hieroglyphs at the time (1825), at least for what concerns the stela of Pavia, highlighting once again the genius of one of the Fathers of our modern Egyptology.

## Keywords

J.-F. Champollion, decipherment, Malaspina Collection, ‘Musei Civici’, Pavia, Saitic Stela

## Introduction

In this year of celebrations for the anniversary of the decipherment of the hieroglyphic system by Champollion, I would like to pay homage to the great French *savant* by presenting one of the many translations he made during his journey to Italy (1824-1826). In fact, the subject of this contribution is an Egyptian Saitic stela belonging to Hotepamun (Figure 1) today kept in the collection of the ‘Musei Civici’ of Pavia at the ‘Castello Visconteo’ (for this Egyptian collection, see De Pietri 2022; cf. Mora 1980; Pernigotti 2000; Piacentini 1996). The stela was viewed by Champollion, who provided the previous owner of the stela, the Marquis Luigi Malaspina di Sannazzaro (who bequeathed his collections of antiquities to the city of Pavia on his death in 1834), with a translation of the text of the offering formula displayed on the lower register of the stela; Champollion’s translation is preserved in a manuscript (Figure 2) today in the ‘Archivio storico civico’ of Pavia (Malaspina’s Archive, folder 3, folio no. 6; see De Pietri 2020). In the following sections, we present some historical notices about Champollion’s visit to Pavia, the stela of Hotepamun itself (together with my transliteration and translation of the offering formula), the translation of the text given by Champollion as attested in the aforementioned manuscript, and a final synopsis of the two translations (i.e. Champollion’s and mine). I hope this contribution will be useful to better understand the genius of Champollion even in his very first translations, sometimes not perfect but in any event always illuminating his brilliant mind and method (on this topic, see e.g., Polis 2022). Although I have already published the photographs of the stela and Champollion’s manuscript, along with a first transcription of the latter (De Pietri 2020); nonetheless, here I display again, for the ease of the reader, these two pictures, and I will further elaborate on the transcription, which slightly diverges, in a single place, from the one presented in my previous paper.

## Champollion's visit to Pavia

We know about Champollion's visit to Pavia, and to the Egyptian collection of the Marquis Malaspina di Sannazzaro specifically, thanks to two letters he wrote during his journey to Italy. In the first, dated 5th March 1825, sent from Bologna and addressed to the abbot Gazzera, Champollion writes:

'M. Cattaneo m'a piloté chez le marquis Malaspina, véritable *momie vivante*,<sup>1</sup> quant au physique, mais du reste un excellent et galant homme. J'ai examiné ses petites collections égyptiennes, parmi lesquelles se trouve un contrat démotique *non déroulé*,<sup>2</sup> et des calques ou dessins fort intéressants,<sup>3</sup> provenant de la collection Nizzoli. Du reste, rien de bien saillant.' (Hartleben 1909: 181)

In the second letter, written by Champollion, again from Bologna but to his brother J.-J. Champollion-Figeac, on 6th March 1825, we read:

'La petite collection du marquis Malaspina, qui est, au physique, un véritable abbé de Tersan, m'a fourni quelques petites notes [...].<sup>4</sup> J'y ai trouvé un véritable cylindre persépolitain,<sup>5</sup> en terre émaillée Égyptienne, mais les figures d'hommes et d'animaux barbares qui le couvrent sont toujours dignes du beau siècle de Cambyse. Cette amulette ne porte aucune inscription.' (Hartleben 1909: 183)

Another document attesting to Champollion's visit to Pavia is represented by a passage in a catalogue written by the Marquis Malaspina in 1832, mentioning Champollion's translation of the stela:

'In un altro stelo osservasi scolpita e colorita tutta la formalità del giudizio delle anime nell'*Amenti*<sup>6</sup> riguardo ad un defunto sacerdote di *Osiride*, con sottoposta iscrizione geroglifica, tradotta in camera mia dal celebre sig. Champoillon [*sic*] il giovane, prima di recarsi in Egitto, donde recentemente riportonne oggetti preziosi e più precise cognizioni.' (Malaspina di Sannazzaro 1832: 41-42)

In a note to this passage, Malaspina records the translation of the stela provided by Champollion, adding a comment explaining the gaps left by Champollion in his translation:

'I vuoti segnati con punti rispondono al nome d'una delle tante Regioni che gli Egizi supponevano tra la terra e la luna, e che a quell'epoca non era ancor nota al sig. Champoillon [*sic*].' (Malaspina di Sannazzaro 1832: 41, fn. \*)

As can be easily observed, Malaspina's explanation of these passages left untranslated by Champollion is somewhat *naive*, as well as nonsensical from an Egyptological perspective; in the last section of this chapter, I offer another explanation for these gaps, indicated by Champollion with ellipses.

<sup>1</sup> *Italic* as is in the original edition of letter.

<sup>2</sup> Champollion here refers to a demotic papyrus (Inv. no. Eg. 4) published in Botti (1939).

<sup>3</sup> Among these calques, we can mention a calque of a small stela of Pinudjem I (Inv. no. Eg. 143) published in Crevatin (2005: 178).

<sup>4</sup> [...] indicates text omitted in the present quotation.

<sup>5</sup> This object is not an Egyptian cylinder seal, as believed by Champollion, but a Mittanian cylinder seal; see Di Paolo (1997) and Stenico (1957).

<sup>6</sup> *Italic* as in the original text of Champollion's manuscript.

## The stela of Hotepamun

The Saitic stela translated by Champollion, probably purchased from Giuseppe Nizzoli by the Marquis Malaspina before 1823 (although the stela is not openly mentioned in the first catalogue; see Malaspina di Sannazzaro 1823), but certainly before 1832 (being the stela mentioned in the second catalogue, see Malaspina 1832: 40-41), is a funerary stela with a round edge at the top, catalogued as Inv. no. Eg. 2 by C. Mora (1980: 223); it can be dated to the 26th dynasty (i.e. 664-525 BC, following the chronology in Hornung *et al.* 2006: 494) on the basis of comparisons with other similar stelae,<sup>7</sup> and could come either from Edfu, because of the reference in the first register to the ‘the great god, Lord (of the) sky, (of) Behedet’ (*ntr ʕ nb p.t Bhd.t*), or even more likely from Akhmim, since the owner of the stela is qualified as a priest of the god Min of Ipu (i.e. Akhmim), and also because of typological comparisons; between these two possibilities, precisely because of the typological comparisons presented above, I would opt for a provenance in Akhmim. The stela is made of limestone and measures 33.5 cm × 22 cm × 4 cm and belongs to Hotepamun, priest of Min at Ipu; it is divided into three registers: the uppermost displays a winged sun-disk with two *uraei* (with solar disks on their heads) and carries an inscription on three columns (the text of the first and third columns is the same, although mirrored) mentioning ‘the great god, Lord (of the) sky, (of) Behedet’ (cf. above); in the middle register (divided from the top register with a decorative band and the hieroglyphic sign for the sky, *p.t*, i.e., N1) we see, from right to left, the deceased Hotepamun gesturing worshipfully towards the god Re-Harakhty; behind this god, stand Isis (with winged arms and an *udjat*-eye in front of her) and the four Sons of Horus; in the lower register, we read the offering formula, engraved in four lines, from right to left. This text is presented and discussed afterwards.

### Transliteration and translation of the offering formula

In the following sections, I present my own transliteration and translation of the offering formula placed in the lower register of the stela.<sup>8</sup>

#### Transliteration of the offering formula

- 1) *ḥtp-dj-nsw R<sup>c</sup>-ḥr-ʕh.ty ntr ʕ hr.y ntr.w pr<j> m ʕh.t <J>tm nb t3.wy*
- 2) *Jwnw dj=f pr.t-ḥrw <m> t ḥnq.t k3.w ʕpd.w sntr šs mnḥ.t jrp jrṯ.t*
- 3) *ḥ.t nb.t nfr.t w<sup>b</sup>.t <n> Wsjr w<sup>b</sup>-<sup>c</sup>.wy Mnw nb Jpw Ḥtp-Jmn*
- 4) *s3 <J>tm-jr{.t}-dj=s<w> m3<sup>c</sup>-ḥr.w ms nb<.t> pr Ḥp<.y>-jr{.t}-di=s<w/t> m3<sup>c</sup>-ḥrw*

#### Translation of the offering formula

- 1) (An) offering (that the) king gives (to) Re-Harakhty, (the) great god above (the) gods who appears at (the) horizon, (and to) Atum, Master-of-the-Two-Lands (of)
- 2) Heliopolis, (so that) he may grant (an) invocation offering (of) bread, beer, cattle, poultry, incense, alabaster, clothes, wine, milk,
- 3) (and) any good (and) pure goods (to the) Osiris, (the) pure-of-arms priest (of) Min, Lord (of) Ipu, Hotepamun,
- 4) son (of) Atumirdis, justified, born (to/from the) mistress (of the) house Hapyirdis, justified.

<sup>7</sup> See mostly Munro (1973: 312-313 and Pl. 46, Figs 162-163 *Akhmim* I, A: Louvre, E 19503bis and Cairo, CGC 22093).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. also Pernigotti (2020). I do not report here the hieroglyphic transcription of the whole text (I mean, that in the upper and middle register), since the stela is to be published elsewhere by the present author; for the same reason, I omit here any philological or lexical remarks about the text of the offering formula in the lower register of the stela.



Figure 1. Limestone stela of Hotepamun, 26th dynasty, Inv. no. Eg. 2, 'Musei Civici', Pavia, Italy (© 'Musei Civici' of Pavia; reproduced with permission).

Que soit approuvant Ré (Soleil) Dieu Sauveur  
~~directeur~~ du ciel et des dieux, manifesté dans ... Région  
 antique Mars Seigneur du Monde et de ... Région.  
 qu'il accorde une bonne maison, des saints, de l'eau pour  
 boeur des oies du vin et autres biens purs à l'Osirien  
 frère de Mendès Seigneur de la Région de de Aphou,  
Step Aménoph fils de Tgou-satès homme enfanté  
 de Dame Hapévé-satès.

Figure 2. Manuscript of Champollion kept in the 'Archivio storico civico', Pavia, Italy (© 'Archivio storico civico del Comune di Pavia'; reproduced with permission).

## Champollion's translation

In this section, I reproduce the transcription of Champollion's translation of the stela, as it is attested in the manuscript kept in the 'Archivio storico civico' of Pavia.<sup>9</sup>

Que soit approuvant Rè (<sup>Le</sup> Soleil) Dieu Sauveur / protecteur [?] <sup>directeur</sup> du ciel et des Dieux, manifesté dans ... Région / <sub>céleste</sub>, ainsi que Mars Seigneur du Monde et de ... Region. / qu'il accorde une Bonne maison, des Pains, de l'eau / des bœuf [*sic*], des oies [*omissis*] Du vin et autres bien purs à l'Osirien / Prêtre de Mendès Seigneur de la Region de de [*sic*] Aphon, / Step Aménoph, fils de Igom-Satès, [*omissis*] hommè [*sic*] enfanté / de Dame Hapév/ré-Satès<sup>10</sup> [*omissis*].

## Translations in synopsis

In this section, I offer a synopsis of the translations provided by the present author (right column) and by Champollion (left column), highlighting their main differences/discrepancies. After this synoptical table, I present some considerations based on the comparison between the two translations, outlining some notable points (similarities or differences/discrepancies) which can highlight peculiar features of Champollion's translation.

No. <sup>11</sup>	Champollion (1825) <sup>12</sup>	De Pietri
1	<u>Rè</u> (Le Soleil)	Re-Harakhty
2	<u>Dieu Sauveur</u> / <u>protecteur</u> [?] directeur du ciel et des Dieux	(the) great god above (the) gods
3	manifesté dans ... Region / céleste	who appears at (the) horizon
4	ainsi que <u>Mars</u>	(and to) Atum
5	Seigneur du Monde et de ... Region	Master-of-the-Two-Lands (of) Heliopolis
6	qu'il accorde une Bonne maison	(so that) he may grant (an) invocation offering
7	[ <i>omissis</i> ] de l'eau	bread, beer
8	[ <i>omissis</i> ]	incense, alabaster, clothes
9	[ <i>omissis</i> ]	milk
10	Prêtre de Mendès	(the) pure-of-arms priest (of) Min
11	Seigneur de la Region de de [ <i>sic</i> ] <u>Aphon</u>	Lord (of) Ipu
12	<u>Step Aménoph</u>	Hotepamun
13	<u>Igom-Satès</u> , [ <i>omissis</i> ] hommè [ <i>sic</i> ] enfanté	Atumirdis, justified, born (to the)
14	Dame	mistress (of the) house
15	<u>Hapév/ré-Satès</u> [ <i>omissis</i> ]	Hapyirdis, justified

<sup>9</sup> In transcribing Champollion's translation, I attempted to stick as far as possible to the original by visually rendering the format of the text as it was actually written by Champollion; for this reason, I strike through (i.e. xxx) the words emended by Champollion, and I use superscript and subscript as in the original; words underlined are thus in Champollion's manuscript (see Figure 2); [*omissis*] indicates one or more words omitted by Champollion in his translation; [*sic*] stands for words misspelled in French, but in this form in the original; '[?]' is used where a word cancelled/obliterated by Champollion is not clearly readable (but, nonetheless, quite easily reconstructed).

<sup>10</sup> In the transcription of the name of the owner's mother, I am still doubtful about the penultimate letter of the first compound of the anthroponym is a 'r' or a 'v'; in De Pietri (2020:191, ft. 11) I retained the latter as more likely (mostly because of the comparison with the 'v' in the word 'vine', just 3 lines above; nonetheless, I am still not completely convinced of this reading (cf. Pernigotti 2001: 24, transcribing 'Hapéré').

<sup>11</sup> This progressive numbers will be used as a reference in the commentary following this table.

<sup>12</sup> I omit in this table the use of superscript and subscript.

We can summarise the main features of Champollion's text, by comparing his translation with the one offered in the present paper (see above), mostly outlining some differences/discrepancies but also some similarities; I first present this analysis in a plain, just pinpointing some peculiarities of Champollion's translation, following step-by-step the fifteen relevant passages extrapolated from his manuscripts and presented above in tabular, synoptical form:

1. In one instance (no. 1), the name of the god seems not to have been fully understood by Champollion, who simply translates 'Re-Harakhty' as 'Rè (Le Soleil)'.
2. In no. 2, Champollion seems to be doubtful about the translation of *ntr* '3 *hr.y ntr.w*; this looks evident from the fact that the French scholar, in this passage, deleted a word ('protecteur'), added another word in superscript ('directeur') to substitute the one he had obliterated, and seems not to fully understand the terms for 'great' (i.e., '3, which he translates probably as 'Sauveur') and the prepositional nisbe *hr.y*.
3. In no. 3, Champollion likely translates the term *3h.t* as 'Région céleste', instead of 'horizon', and the ellipsis written here by the *savant* seems to suggest that he had some troubles with this passage.
4. In no. 4, Champollion renders the name of the god Atum as 'Mars'.
5. In no. 5, a specimen quite similar to the previously discussed no. 3, Champollion leaves an ellipsis, correctly translates the term *nb* with 'Seigneur', but renders the term *t3.wy* as 'Région', omitting the toponym Heliopolis (*Jwnw*).
6. Interestingly, in case no. 6, Champollion translates the term for 'invocation/funerary offering' with 'Bonne maison', probably reading only the first, upper sign for 'house' (i.e. *pr*, for which cf. below at point 12).
7. Even more interestingly, in point no. 7, Champollion omits the word for 'bread' ('t') and translates the term *hnq.t* not as 'beer' but as 'eau'.
8. In nos 8-9, Champollion omits the other goods of the offering (i.e. incense, alabaster, clothes, and milk); about the goods of the offering, cf. e.g. Champollion (1836: 81).
9. At point 10, Champollion translates the term *w<sup>b</sup>-<sup>c</sup>wy* as 'Prêtre', simply rendering the word *w<sup>b</sup>*, leaving untranslated the second part of the title 'pure-of-arms priest' (for which see Erman and Grapow 1926: 281.1516); furthermore, in the same passage Champollion translates the name of the Egyptian god Min with a name of a city, 'Mendès'.
10. In no. 11, Champollion correctly translates the word for 'lord' but then renders the toponym Ipu as 'Aphon' (a term that, honestly, I am unable to explain, being a term, as far as I am aware, unattested in other works by Champollion or other French scholars); the dittography in the French word 'de' (written twice) could indicate, perhaps, that Champollion was translating very quickly, 'in a hurry' (so to speak); nevertheless, we should keep in mind that the same phenomenon (and many others due to the 'note-feature' of this documentation, e.g. 'saut du même au même', ellipses, dittography of words, etc.) is attested also in other manuscripts of Champollion reporting his notes and transcriptions of hieroglyphic texts seen in Italy (see e.g. the manuscripts BnF MSS NAF 20381-20382); this strengthens my idea (better elaborated in the conclusions, see below) that this is not properly to be considered as a 'translation' (*strictu sensu*).
11. As for nos 12-13 and 15, I do not want to focus too much on the rendering of the personal names (this would be too long and surely a topic to be fully dealt with in another contribution); nonetheless, I would like to emphasise that in nos 13 and 15 Champollion completely omitted to translate the term *m3<sup>c</sup>-hrw*, 'justified', and this



is, at least to me, a small enigma, since in other documents (as the two manuscripts mentioned above at point 10) Champollion proved himself to be fully aware of the meaning of this Egyptian term; in no. 13, it is also noteworthy that Champollion writes in his translation, before the word ‘enfanté’ (which correctly translates the Egyptian term *ms*), a word (i.e. ‘hommè’ which I consider a misspelling for ‘homme’) which is not attested in the original text (see below the discussion in the final conclusions).

12. At no. 14, Champollion translates the female title of Hotepamun’s mother, qualified as *nb<.t> pr*, simply as ‘Dame’, apparently omitting to translate the term for ‘house’, a fact which is, at least to me, inexplicable, since he surely knew the term *pr*, as is clear from analysing what we have said above at point 6 (and the sign for ‘house’ is correctly recognised and mentioned in other works of Champollion; see e.g. Champollion 1824: 277; cf. *idem*, Tableau général 15, nos 278-280; although I am not sure that at this time (1825) Champollion was fully aware of the reading *pr* for the sign of the house, i.e. O1). Nevertheless, we could find an easy explanation for this translation: in fact, in his *Précis*, Champollion discusses this female epithet, translating it consistently as ‘Dame’ (see e.g. Champollion 1824: 112; cf. Champollion, Planches, 44, Pl. VII, no. 2, where Champollion compares the Egyptian term to another Coptic lemma, TNEBH, translating it *verbatim* as ‘maîtresse de maison (dame)’; cf. also Champollion 1836: 206, where the *savant* translates *nb.t pr*, again ‘transliterated’ with the Coptic TNEBH, as ‘dame de maison’).

## Conclusions

In the end, by comparing the translation left by Champollion and other translations (and, most of all, by comparing with the original hieroglyphic text), it seems quite clear to me that this manuscript of Champollion does not represent a proper ‘translation’ but rather a kind of ‘paraphrasis/summary’, or, even better, a ‘free translation’ (so to speak) of the text of the stela made as an extempore or impromptu ‘sight translation’. This is evident if we consider the many *omissis* in Champollion’s ‘translation’ and even some misspellings in French, as we see for example in the word ‘hommè’ (which I interpret as ‘homme’), where Champollion includes an incorrect accent, perhaps influenced by the following word ‘enfanté’. Most probably, Champollion, pressed by the insistent request of the Marquis Malaspina to provide him with a translation, wrote not a proper ‘translation’ but simply a mere ‘sight translation’ of the content of the Egyptian offering formula. Otherwise, if we consider this manuscript as a proper translation, we must acknowledge that Champollion had still limits or, at least, some difficulties in translating some passages of the text, which could be the correct interpretation. The research and analysis of this manuscript will not end, of course, with the present publication: in fact, I strongly believe that a further comparison with other works of Champollion will certainly benefit us by providing a much more insightful understanding of Champollion’s mind as a translator; for instance, it would be helpful to better elaborate on the French translation (‘que soit approuvant ...’) of the beginning of the offering formula, i.e. *htp-dj-nsw* (on this topic, I here limit myself to refer the reader to Champollion (1836: 167), where this incipit of the offering formula is ‘transliterated’ in Coptic as COYTN†WΘϢ, the passage being translated as ‘un acte d’adoration’; cf. also Champollion (1836: 507), where ‘acte d’adoration’ is the translation for the same incipit, ‘transliterated’ with Coptic COYTN†WTΦ); moreover, I also think that a deeper analysis of the way Champollion transcribed the anthroponyms could provide us with a clearer idea of how the *savant* understood these words at the sheer phonetical level (these could be indeed topics for a future contribution). All in all, this document retains a remarkable (at least in my view) importance as a source of information about the first steps of Champollion in improving and strengthening his own knowledge of hieroglyphics (this was, in fact, one of the purposes of his journey

to Italy) and in testing the validity of the system derived from his historical decipherment that took place just few years before his visit to Pavia, i.e. in 1822.

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# The Imitation of Wood: An Open Door on the Cultural and Social Perception of Wood in Ancient Egypt

Julie Desjardins

## Abstract

Ancient Egyptians believed that performativity of verbs and images granted the artists a creative power, allowing them to bring to life concepts, images, and materials. Wood was a popular material in Egypt due to its rarity and was represented in temples and tombs, and appearing in gardens, wood cutting and craftwork scenes. From the reign of Djoser (c. 2592-2566 BC) to the beginning of the New Kingdom (c. 1539-1077 BC), we see the appearance, followed by their gradual disappearance, of objects imitating wood. A priori, these simulacra consist in the magical transformation of a real material from an object into an emulated material. Regarding the preliminary research of my thesis project, I present some thoughts and an overall picture of how imitations of wood manifest themselves in an attempt to better understand the phenomenon. I begin by presenting the context of appearance of this artistic practice and its functions in the architectural field. Then I analyse this decoration, which also appears on a variety of objects, suggesting that the function of wood simulacra is polysemic. Finally, I question the variable degree of realism of the imitation of wood and what it can tell us about the way ancient Egyptians conceived wood and its associations.

## Keywords

Wood, Simulacrum, Imitation, Realism, Colour Schemes, Cultural Memory

## Introduction

Although Egypt has never been a territory with an entirely green landscape, the fertile Nile valley and the oases have always favoured the growth of a varied flora<sup>1</sup>. Plants, especially trees, played a central role in commerce, crafts, and even in the way the ancient Egyptians lived, relying on them for the shade their foliage provided in hot weather. Museum collections show that wood was massively used to make a wide variety of objects, decorated or not. The imitation of wood has particularly caught my attention because ancient Egyptians believed in the performativity of verbs and images. Artists were invested with the magical power 'heka' to give life to events, concepts, characters, and materials (Mougenot 2013: 66-67). The simulacrum of wood is the oldest attestation of simulated materials recorded and several observations led me to believe that the case of wood imitation is specific and deserves more attention.

Three functions are attributed by Egyptologists to explain the practice of simulation of wood. The imitations appearing in architecture transpose wood, a perishable material, into stone, a durable material. Valérie Angenot states that one of their functions is to ensure the durability of the medium while continuing a prototypical visual tradition dating back to the kings of the early dynasties, who conceived their tombs with wood and mats, among other materials (Angenot 2011 d2). When simulacra are painted on different types of objects in tombs or temples, they are associated with the other function of magically transforming the real material of the object into an ideal matter. It is usually explained by a desire to confer to an object of lesser quality the characteristics of a material of greater value

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to warmly thank Aude Semat for her advice and the valuable discussions that helped me define my subject.

(Andreu 2002: 160). Finally, the simulacra could also indicate fashion trends or even attest the social rank of its owner (Gander 2012: 268). These theories have all been convincingly defended, but none is devoted to an exhaustive and specific analysis of wood simulacra.

Regarding the preliminary research for my thesis project, I will present an overall picture of how wood imitations manifest themselves and provide some thoughts to better understand the phenomenon. I will begin by presenting the context of appearance of this artistic practice and its functions in the architectural field. I will then analyse this decoration, which also appears on a variety of objects, suggesting that the function of wood simulacrum is polysemic. Finally, I will question the variable degree of realism of the imitation of wood and what it can tell us about the way ancient Egyptians conceived wood.

### **An architectural tradition dating back to the Old Kingdom**

Wood is the first material imitated in art by the ancient Egyptians. The first known examples so far appear in architectural contexts and date from the reign of Djoser during the 3rd dynasty. One of these is in the hallway of the Djoser pyramid and the other is on the ceiling of its Temple T (Figure 1), both located at Saqqara. These examples of factitious architecture appear as a succession of beams carved side by side in the stone of the ceiling and mark the beginning of a new practice: material imitation in Egypt. There are two different techniques to simulate wood in architectural context: carving and painting. These can be done by using specific colours, patterns, and shapes. Wood simulations can be found in numerous royal monuments dating from the Old to the New Kingdom, while in private tombs they are mostly dating from the New Kingdom. Egyptologists have long agreed that the purpose of the



*Figure 1. Imitation of wooden beams sculpted on the ceiling, Temple T, Saqqara. (© Kairoinfo4u, Flickr).*

wood simulacra in architecture is to recreate the appearance of the early funerary temples dating from the first kings of dynasty 0 at Abydos. These monuments had the form of a mastaba, with a ceiling made of actual wooden beams. According to Dieter Arnold, the early kings of the 1st dynasty had access to a considerable number of timbers and had the opportunity to build monuments in wood. The beams would have been a notable characteristic of their architecture. However, because of the particularities of its climate and soil, Egypt was never destined to develop wooden architecture in the long term (Arnold 2006: 37-38).

According to Valérie Angenot, the imitation of materials can be fully understood through the *Book of the Heavenly Cow* (Angenot 2011). This myth of origins explains the events that led to the separation between the world of gods and the world of men; those who dwell in cosmic eternity and others who reside in the earthly and decaying world. Men had to maintain balance on Earth by themselves, a task that was once performed by the gods. This task is articulated through art since the king was responsible for perpetuating the perfect forms established by the gods (Maystre 1941). Art would then refer to cosmic forms as archetypes to be imitated by men; they would then create prototypes on Earth. These are the prototypes that Egyptians imitated over centuries, thus constantly placing the archetypes *in abime* (Angenot 2011: d10-15).

While explaining his theory on cultural memory of Ancient Egyptians, Jan Assmann wrote that the past is born only by the fact that we refer to it. To do so, one must have a record of the past as such, which presupposes two things: the past has not yet completely disappeared, and there are still testimonies of it, which have different characteristics from the present day (Assmann 2010: 29). We can clearly see a link between the role of the simulation of wooden beams at Saqqara and the concept of cultural memory as theorised by Assmann. Early kings, such as Djoser, probably saw ancient constructions made in perishable materials slowly disappear and decided to perpetuate this model through stone, preserving the memory of these monuments and what they symbolised (Angenot 2011: d3).



Figure 2. Facsimile of a ceiling decoration imitating wood, Tomb of Tetiky, TT 15. No. 30.4.4. (© Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York).

The tradition initiated by them was also perpetuated in private tombs under a different form. As a matter of fact, we can see examples from the tomb of Renni (EK 7) located at El-Kab and the tomb of Tetiky (T 15) at Dra Abu'l Naga (Figure 2; Wilkinson 1983: 71). It appears on the ceiling as a single beam depicted as a plank, as opposed to the previously mentioned timbers carved at Saqqara. Those tombs also show that the plank of wood is part of a larger whole including colourful geometric patterns. These patterns may represent the mats used to cover house walls and to make tents (Angenot 2010: 36-37). They could be inspired by the ceilings of predynastic dwellings, composed of a wooden frame and

tended textiles (Wilkinson 1983: 29-30), which reaffirm the inspiration of perishable architecture from the past.

These examples also show that factitious architecture is not a strictly royal matter, and it goes on for decades. Although the origins of wood simulations come from the field of architecture, we also find this type of decoration on objects.

### An architectural decoration transposed on objects?

Since the practice of imitation of wood began in temples and tombs, architectural characteristics were also attached to some objects decorated as simulacrum. It is interesting to see that this decoration is mostly painted on different kinds of artefacts, like vases and boxes made of wood that were previously stuccoed (Gander 2009: 88). Some of these have a shape reminding one of a building, which might explain the transposition of the factitious architectural decoration to particular objects.

The most popular object of this kind is the shabti box in the shape of the *pr-nw* chapel. This type of building is made of light materials and dates from the archaic period. It is particularly recognisable by its rectangular shape, its single or double rounded vaulted roof and the walls that exceed the height of the roof on both sides (Badawy 1948: 49). A couple of shabti boxes preserved at the Louvre correspond to this description. They are decorated with an ochre-yellow background with red veins and knots that imitate the texture of wood, and the edges of the object are painted in black (Figure 3). According to David Aston, the pointed lid is unusual for boxes of this type, which normally have rounded or flat lids, resembling archaic chapels (Aston 1994: 38). The shabti boxes shaped like *pr-nw* chapels are not systematically decorated with a wood pattern, but many have a decoration related to its architecture, like the motif of a false door. Under some of these boxes, we also notice the presence of runners, an element that can be associated with those used to move the large chapels with statues (Andreu 2002: 291).

According to Angenot, the imitation of a wood motif on an object that is already made of wood is a semiological statement that possibly indicates that one or more meanings can be given to the object's decoration. Her idea is articulated around the example of a shabti box and focuses on the link that exists



Figure 3. Shabti box in the shape of a *pr-nw* chapel. No. N 2943. (© Musée du Louvre, distr. RMN-Grand Palais, Hervé Lewandowski).



Figure 4. Box decorated with simulacrum of wood. No. S. 8613. (© Museo Egizio, Torino).

between this type of object, its function, and its connection with different mythological deities, such as the deities of the sycamore, Osiris, and his sons (Angenot 2017: 413-414). Although her theory is very convincing, and exposes that the simulacrum decoration has a polysemic function and meaning, it does not enable us to fully understand the phenomenon, since this decoration can be found on other types of objects.

The shape of other types of boxes is also inspired by buildings, such as the Kha and Merit boxes shaped like what appear to be tombs (Figure 4). Kha and Merit were buried with many boxes, some being the type of the 'box with a Gable Lid' (Killen 2017: 54). The rectangular shape of the box, the arched lid and the decoration are all evocative of the shape of a tomb. A wood motif appears in locations that refer to the architecture of the first tombs, appearing in the vault of what would correspond to the roof, and in the center of a wall decorated with geometrical motifs, such as stretched mats in ancient tombs. Even the top of the object is decorated with motifs similar to geometric patterns on the tomb's ceiling, while the centre of the 'roof' is crossed by an inscribed yellow band that recalls the beam of the ceiling scenes. Since an offering scene for Kha and Merit is depicted, the connection between the box and the tomb is logical. In future research, I will study this type of box and look more closely for other characteristics, systematically represented or not, that might come from the architecture and could possibly shed light on the use of the wood motifs on objects.

Even if several objects can be associated with architecture, based of their shape and decoration, this link is not enough to explain the presence of a simulacrum decoration on one object rather than another. Traditionally, the reason provided to explain the presence of this decoration is the desire to transform the real material of an object into a more valuable or so-called 'noble' matter (Andreu 2002: 160). This is the explanation given by Frederic Mougenot to understand the choice of decoration on a shabti box dating from the New Kingdom preserved at the Louvre (similar to Figure 3). According to Mougenot, the painter wanted to represent cedar wood, a valuable species imported into Egypt and usually represented in red. The purpose of this decoration would be to hide the type of wood used to make the object and magically transform into a noble wood. This process would transfer the object into a high-status item to be recognised as luxurious in the afterlife (Andreu 2002: 160).

However, this theory is difficult to prove as museum institutions do not systematically carry out tests to determine the type of wood used to make the objects they curate. It is not possible to determine whether the wood used in the manufacture of the object is of inferior quality comparatively to the one imitated. Although it is sometimes difficult to identify exactly which colours are used to make wood imitations on objects, in general red, yellow, and brown are the most commonly observed. According to Manuela Gander, a varnish can be applied to some objects, which can change their colours into yellow, even orange, or purple (Gander 2009: 88). The inconsistency between the appearance of tree-fibre varieties, and the patterns used to imitate wood, e.g. persea, pine, and cedar, cannot confirm that a specific type of wood is being imitated. Angenot suggests that a pattern and its colours refer to 'any type of wood' rather than to a particular type (Angenot 2017: 413-414). The objective of the painters would have been to simply represent a certain type of wood. From this information the question arises: why paint this pattern? We saw that objects borrowing a shape from the architectural canon could refer to the buildings of the ancient kings made of perishable materials, but what about the objects whose shape refers to nothing in particular, which are only boxes? Wood simulacra can be part of the decorative programme of objects of great finesse (Figure 5). Their small numbers lead Gander to believe that this decoration may have followed the vagaries of fashion (Gander 2012: 268). This explanation seems insufficient to me, although it is legitimate. An exhaustive census would allow us to see the waves of popularity of this work. Some periods of Egyptian history are known for their archaisms (Laboury 2013) and perhaps the simulacrum of wood is also attached to the memory of previous practices or traditions.



The theory supported by Mougenot about the status of materials points out that the imitation of wood also had a religious function, as the transformation of the matter is carried out through the passage to the afterlife. Considering that all the imitations studied hitherto come from a funerary context, this idea should certainly contribute to explain the function and the meaning of the simulation of wood. Following Baines' conception of visual culture, I believe this decoration has religious, economic, social and ritual purposes (Baines 1994: 74). Regardless of the quality of the used material, Mougenot states that the decoration itself would have been expensive, although clearly less than having a whole object made of cedar, for example (Andreu 2002: 160; Gander 2009: 98). Kathleen Cooney, who studied the value of funerary art in the Ramesside period, shows that decoration can, indeed, significantly increase the price of an object. The total price of an object was influenced by the type of wood used, of course, but also by the time invested by the artisan to make it (Cooney 2002: 226), suggesting that the more precise and detailed the decoration is, the more expensive it will be. Indeed, the Turin Papyrus, Journal 17 B shows the decoration of an object can significantly increase the price of an item. The papyrus lists the prices of decorations for a variety of objects, enabling us to estimate the value of the painting work (Cooney 2002: 229). However, since it is not possible to compare the papyrus data with the actual object, it is difficult to accurately determine its quality. The decoration itself is a symbol of luxury and increases the value of an object, although this increase in value would not only come from the wood pattern but also from the presence of a specific decoration.

If the decoration alone was expensive, why would one want to represent a wood pattern? Even if it allowed the material to be changed into a more exclusive material for the afterlife, how would this transformation be useful for the object's owner? The possibility of owning valuable objects by imitation allows for the 'democratisation' of luxury objects, and influences the social status of an individual. According to Cooney (2002: 258-259):

[Within] our own civilization, individuals and societal groups persistently assign different social, economic, material, aesthetic, and cultural values to material goods [...] the primary textual data proves that the ancient Egyptians also compared the actual and perceived



Figure 5. Box with a fine decoration of an imitation of wood. No. Cat 2448 (© Museo Egizio, Torino).



Figure 6. Box with a decorated lid. No. S. 8527 (© Museo Egizio, Torino).

differences of value in their own property, especially those objects that would increase their status, like the funerary objects in which they invested so much capital.’ (Cooney 2002: 258-259)

Whether in life or in death, the object’s decoration is a visible feature symbolising a wealthy situation. Taste for luxury crosses borders and time. Indeed, according to Anaïs Albert:

‘[a]u-delà des objets eux-mêmes, le luxe est un marqueur sociologique, un style de vie qui manifeste l’appartenance aux classes supérieures et qui distingue ses utilisateurs. Parler de démocratisation du luxe sert à décrire l’effritement de cette spécificité’ (Albert 2015: 75).

The imitation causes this fraying and the creation of simulacrum may possibly have allowed more people from the elite to enjoy a similar prestige as those who could afford objects made of real imported wood. They could buy cheap material and turn it into quality wood through painting (Gander 2012: 268). This social impact can occur in life or death, because an object may have been used during its owner’s lifetime but only decorated when it was time to add it to the funeral trousseau (Näser 2020: 654; Killen 2017: 54). According to Carr and Neitzel, ‘[...] far from being “conceptually decoupled” from function, decoration is an integral part of the artifact [...]’ (Carr and Neitzel 1995: 35). Nevertheless, the function of an object can evolve over time, according to the needs of its owner, as may be the case with the wooden box decorated in simulacrum preserved at the Museo Egizio (Figure 6). The particularity of this simulacrum is that it appears only on the lid. The decoration also includes an offering formula inscribed on a yellow band. This arrangement raises new questions about the functions associated to imitations of wood. If the artist’s intention would have been to transform the object into another material, he would have decorated the entire object. In my opinion, this choice can be explained in two ways: either the owner could only afford a modest decoration, or the motif has a direct link with the offering formula and has a ritual role. At this point of my research, I cannot yet provide an answer to this question, but I intend to investigate this further in the future.

The motifs imitating wood seem to give the objects a special status since they also appear on those represented on the walls of royal and private tombs. In scenes from tombs, wooden objects usually appear in different, plain colours and with few motifs. However, sometimes, one object is decorated in simulacrum as is the case in the tomb of Menkheperreseneb (TT 79). In a scene representing many objects, including several wooden boxes, only one depicts a wood imitation. It is painted in red, where the background is paler than the veins. A similar motif appears in the tomb of Nebamun and Ipuky (TT 181), in a purification and mourning scene, where we can observe a tomb door decorated with veins. Anyone looking at these scenes knows that the objects depicted are made of wood by their nature, there is no need to imitate the material. In this case, why are they not decorated with plain colours like the other objects in the scene? The veins pattern seems to play a specific role in these objects. According to Aston, the inspiration to imitate wood on the shabti boxes could come from the painter’s desire to copy a pattern observed in a royal tomb, such as that of Tauseret (Aston 1994: 38). The reason why the box is represented in Tauseret’s tomb may be because the queen might have possessed such an object and wanted it to be depicted there. Perhaps it was really made of imported wood, and, in cases of wall representation, this motif may designate ‘any prestigious wood’, as Angenot said. Only further investigation can address this hypothesis.

No systematic census of objects simulating wood has yet been carried out. However, Gander has studied objects simulating different materials preserved in the Egyptian Museum of Berlin; a few years ago she counted 228 vases and fragments of vases painted in simulacrum and she noticed that in several cases the object had been varnished (Gander 2009: 87-88). This practice may reflect a desire to preserve the decoration, as seen on the most famous example of this kind in the tomb of Nakht. On one wall is depicted a funeral banquet scene probably related to the ‘Beautiful Feast of the Valley’, in which three

female musicians appear. This representation is the only section of the wall on which a varnish has been applied. According to Dimitri Laboury, this rather rare practice testifies to the fact that the painter himself considered this portion of the scene to be particularly successful and worthy of preservation (Laboury 1997: 64). It is very instructive to see this process being used on decorations that simulate wood, as the varnish could be a testimony of the importance Egyptians gave to the simulation of materials on objects. This aspect represents, in my opinion, one more reason for me to study the phenomenon of wood simulacra.

Gander's sample analysis also reveals that stone and glass are the materials that were usually imitated, probably explaining why more researches have been done on the simulation of these materials. She notes, however, that most of the objects she studied date from the New Kingdom and are made of clay or wood, which goes against what we have seen earlier about factitious architecture painted or carved in stone (Gander 2009: 87). The architecture of the predynastic period and the first dynasties required large tree trunks, which were rarer than the smaller pieces of wood that were usually used to make common objects. Wood in architecture was then also synonymous of wealth and rarity. As for the manufacture of small objects, such as vases, wood was easier to access and especially easier to carve than stone. Nevertheless, this reversal in the use of materials is perhaps a sign of a change in mentalities or artistic and commercial practices. With an exhaustive inventory, I would like to identify the origin of this turning point and analyse it in the light of the social and economic situation of the time. I want to determine if the symbolism of wood and its functions were affected by this change.

### **Realism and representations 'blended' or 'hidden'**

We have seen that wood can be imitated in architecture and objects. Although this practice comes from a tradition that goes back to the kings of the first dynasties, it is noticeable that not all imitations have the same quality nor the same degree of realism. Until now, an imitation of wood is recognised by the presence of a wave pattern representing the veins of a piece of wood. The colours are always organised in the same way: red veins painted on a yellow background. According to my preliminary observations, the colour schemes and the whole design of ceilings and objects could be a different way to identify another kind of wood imitation, one that I call 'blended' or 'hidden'<sup>2</sup>. This category includes non-realistic imitations that are generally not included in simulacra studies, but which, in my opinion, also reproduce the essence of the practice.

I have previously mentioned that the plank of wood painted in a realistic way on the ceilings of certain private tombs, such as Renni's (EK 7) and Tetiky's (T 15), are part of a larger composition that includes large sections of geometric motifs. In each case I studied so far, I was able to notice a certain ceiling typology. Indeed, the wood imitations painted are always flanked by a band whose colours can vary from black to white to varied combinations of patterns and colours. This colour scheme attracted my attention, as I believe it is a defining characteristic that identifies imitations of wood. For example, painted on the ceiling of Nakht's tomb (TT 52) we can see geometrical coloured motifs with yellow bands bordered by thick white and red lines (figure 7). No veins are painted on the yellow bands, but the overall arrangement of the decoration allows us to recognise the yellow stripes as the wooden frames that are traditionally represented with fabric patterns. Could the arrangement of the yellow band flanked by thick lines be an imitation of wood in its simplest, most schematic form? On the ceiling of the Bakenkhonsu tomb (TT 288) is painted a similar arrangement, but the yellow bands flanked by white lines with coloured patterns have the particularity of being inscribed. It is possible that the link made earlier between the simulacrum's decorations and the yellow band on the Merit box (Figure 6) can also be made with the ceiling's decorations. In my research, I would like to investigate the ceiling typology

<sup>2</sup> At this point in my research, I have not yet chosen a suitably appropriate word or term.

by making an exhaustive list of wood-simulated ceilings and ‘blended’ imitations, since I believe the analysis of realism is an important element to the full understanding of the phenomenon. The interest in doing so arises from the fact that realism is not systematic. I would like to question the painters’ choices to represent the material in a realistic way or not. What are the reasons for adding or omitting this kind of detail? Is this a matter of the financial capabilities of the tomb owner? This answer seems unlikely, since Nakht was a scribe and an astronomer of Amun. Additionally, his tomb is richly decorated, but nevertheless the imitation of wood on the ceiling is not realistic. It is interesting to note that in this example, only the wood is represented more simply, whereas the geometric patterns are very detailed. How can we explain the simplicity in the representation of the wood appearing in those two tombs? Is it because the set representing a frame and its textile is so institutionalised that it is assumed that the yellow background will be recognised as wood without being detailed? Perhaps the ancient Egyptians did not need to be precise in terms of these designs for them to be recognised as an imitation of this material used by their ancestors.

A similar principle could be applied to the decoration of objects, where the same type of items was perhaps decorated with the same colours as those decorated in simulacrum, but without featuring any pattern. For example, shabti boxes shaped like the *pr-nw* chapel would be decorated with a simulacrum (Figure 3), while others would only display plain colours (Figure 8). However, the colour scheme used would be the same as for the simulacra, i.e. a yellow background with black edges. The resemblance between these two decorations is significant and leads me to believe that the subject of the representation is perhaps the same: wood. A similar observation can be made with other styles of container, such as the box from the Museo Egizio (Figure 5), the colour scheme of which resembles other similar types of items with plain colours. The plain colours could reflect the simplification or schematisation of a wood pattern. This process has been seen in other occasions in Egyptian art, as with the representation of the Serekh motif. In an article entitled ‘The Serekh Palace Revisited’, Dieter Arnold discusses the origins of the Serekh motif in the early beginnings in the predynastic period. Among other topics, he addresses the longevity of this motif, which can be seen in tombs dating back to the Middle Kingdom (Arnold 2006: 37). Originally constructed in wood, the Serekh Palace is a type of building dating to the Neqada III/ Dynasty 0, and would have required a large quantity of timbers. According to Arnold, the rarity of

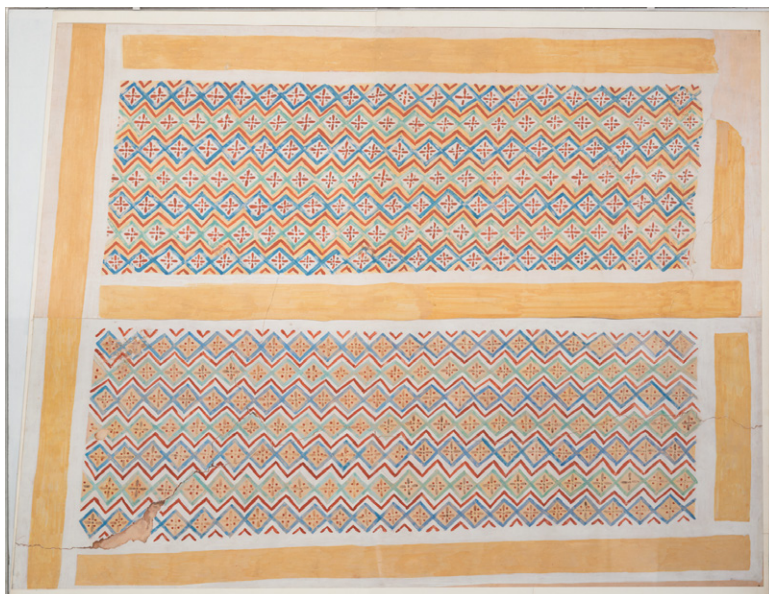


Figure 7. Facsimile of a ceiling decoration, Tomb of Nakht, TT 52. No. 15.5.19g. (© Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York).



Figure 8. Shabti box with yellow and black color scheme. No. Cat. 2434 (© Museo Egizio, Torino).

materials may have been a reason why these buildings were smaller in size. Moreover, some assume that the Serekh was perhaps not a building but only a façade. When the Serekh motif gradually disappeared from the decorative programmes of the tombs, it survived in the form of false doors (Arnold 2006: 38). The motif has thus been simplified, presented in its simplest form, so that only a trained eye can identify its structure and all its elements. The origins of the Serekh façade might suggest that wood was probably represented more in art and architecture than it seems. This is why the representation of ‘blended’ or ‘hidden’ wood in different scenes is also an angle of research that I would like to investigate.

According to Karine Seigneau, how different materials are represented is potentially revealing of the circulation of techniques among painters to depict materials. Even if Seigneau looked at imitations of materials in general, and did not concentrate on wood patterns, many of her observations about stone imitations can be useful for my study. She writes: ‘[The] representation of matter has a very important place in artistic creation because it highlights the special link between the representation of reality and technical mastery’ (Seigneau 2018: 226). Thus, the techniques and ways used to represent the material are as important as the realism that one does or does not apply to its representations. The same scholar also observes that stone is often associated with a random organisation of patterns (Seigneau 2018: 232), which would show that the painters were not necessarily trying to represent the material faithfully, but looked to reproduce a mental conceptualisation they had of it. As verbs and intentions also have creative power in ancient Egypt, we can imagine that wood did not need to be represented in a realistic way to magically transform it into an ideational material. This idea, that painters were not always trying to represent the material accurately, but their mental conceptualisation of it, is generally accepted (Seigneau 2018: 234; Angenot 2017: 419; Gander 2009: 99). The fact that the realism of the pattern was not used to deceive but simply to represent the way the ancients conceptualised the material does not allow us to fully understand the phenomenon, as it does not include the ‘blended’ or ‘hidden’ imitations. This observation raises a question: which characteristics were retained to represent wood? This concern relates precisely to *skeuomorphism*, a concept in which the significant characteristics of one material are reproduced into another (Frieman 2010: 33). I am, as yet, unable to answer this question, but I have some ideas on it.

Stone is imitated by a variety of patterns of different colours and shapes, depending on the type of material desired. For example, in the case of red granite, a red dot pattern is used to imitate the grain characterising this material (Seigneau 2018: 226). From one decoration to another, the stone is still identifiable, as the patterns used relate to the visual characteristics of different types of stone. The examples of ‘blended’ or ‘hidden’ imitations challenge the idea that wood imitations may not have been systematically achieved by the pattern of veins on a yellow background. My preliminary observations of sources suggest that wood imitations may also be induced by the colour scheme, rather than being systematically or only depicted by the presence of veins. When painted, wood patterns are finely realised and appear quite realistic, whereas stone patterns sometimes seem to have been painted with less care. This comparison leads me to believe that, apart from the veins, the colour scheme could be an essential element in the ancient Egyptians’ conceptualisation of wood, and may be a significant feature in identifying it. The wood pattern then appears as a richer way to emulate wood, while plain colours would be a faster, cheaper way to imitate it. Arnold’s discussion on the evolution of the façade of the Serekh motif slowly transforming into a false door motif through time, as mentioned earlier, shows that the preservation in various forms of architectural visuals and motifs representing perishable materials is common in Egyptian art (Arnold 2006: 38). I intend to study more these ‘blended’ or ‘hidden’ imitations to ensure that the colour scheme is recurrent, if not systematic, and characteristically used to represent a schematised or simplified wood. This idea is consequential with the principle of *aspectivity*, which is very present in Egyptian art. This concept, theorised by Emma Brunner-Traut, is at the heart of artistic conventions in ancient Egypt and allows us to understand the iconographic choices of artists. *Aspectivity*

implies the principle that the image must represent the essence of an object and not its appearance, as observed by the eye (Brunner-Traut 1974: 421-445). *De facto*, Egyptian images are not supposed, or even expected, to be realistic, but representative of the prevailing canons, based on a conceptual and aspectual essence (Angenot 2017: 419). In my research, I will further explore the link between *aspectivity* and ‘blended’ or ‘hidden’ representations, as I believe this link can help demystify how ancient Egyptians perceived wood as a material and how it translated into iconography. This reflection leads us to ask ourselves a question of vocabulary. If the wood does not need to be realistically imitated to be recognised, can it still be called ‘imitation’? I believe so, because, as in the case of imitation of stone, if the conceptual image is what took precedence for the ancient Egyptians to recognise the materials represented, I think this same logic should be applied to wood. Unlike the imitation of different types of stone, which are recognisable by the shapes and colours used to achieve the patterns, the imitations of wood should also be recognisable by the colour scheme used to represent them.

## Conclusion

The first wood imitations appeared in architecture during the reign of Djoser and were intended to imitate the constructions in perishable materials of the kings of dynasty 0. This practice turned into a tradition, since wood imitation was also used to decorate many types of objects. Many of them adopt shapes and colours characterising various buildings, leading to think there is a transposition of symbolism from architecture to objects decorated with imitations. However, studying the containers only representing boxes suggests a polysemic function of wood imitations, namely religious (objects of the funeral trousseau), economic (price of the materials, of the decorations, and of the artisan’s work), social (luxury associated with these objects) and ritual (possible links between the formulas inscribed on the imitations). The simulacra are characterised so far by a realistic imitation of wood, produced with painted veins on a yellow background. In my thesis, I will investigate the possibility that the colour scheme could be a characteristic that significantly participates in identifying representations of wood in art. The ancient Egyptians based iconographic conventions on how they conceptualised reality, in this case, material. I want to interrogate the particularities they attached to wood, as my preliminary research suggested that the vein pattern was not systematic in the imitations: it was not a determining factor in the imitation of wood. Realism was not a priority in Egyptian art because, in order to be recognised, an imitation must be decorated with the attributes that best characterise it. I think the study of colour arrangement is a promising way to identify different types of wood imitations.

The production of simulacra is often treated across theories as a phenomenon that translates in the same way and has the same intention over time. At this stage of my investigation, I was able to observe that wood imitations had a polysemic function and more research is needed to fully understand the articulation of this complex practice. For this reason, I propose to investigate the simulation of wood with an exhaustive corpus of various attestations coming from architectural contexts and material culture. The study of these attestations on a large scale would allow me not only to focus on case studies, which only give us a partial explanation of this phenomenon, but to develop a diachronic and contextual understanding of wood imitation in Egypt.

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# Investigation of Three Ancient Egyptian Funerary Linen Amulets from the University of Aberdeen Museums Collection, Scotland

Marion Devigne

## Abstract

This contribution focuses on three ancient Egyptian linen amulets from the University of Aberdeen Museums and Special Collections in Aberdeen, Scotland. A linen amulet is a square or rectangular textile that depicts a deity or a protective symbol in a black outline without any written inscription. Evidence suggests that linen amulets were placed on the deceased during mummification in the Late and Ptolemaic periods.

Using non-destructive methods, three key aspects were considered during this study: iconography, materiality (textile characteristics), and provenance research. The investigation was conducted using visual and microscopic examinations, multispectral photography, and archival research.

This collection-based research brings new information about the textiles in terms of their structure and iconography but also sheds light on the context of their journey from Egypt to Aberdeen. These results are a first step in developing a deeper understanding of linen amulets, which have been overlooked and occasionally misidentified within museum collections.

## Keywords

Textile, Linen Amulet, Late and Ptolemaic Periods, Non-Destructive Methods, Museum, History of Egyptology

## Linen amulets: A brief introduction

### *Scope of the ancient Egyptian textile collection*

The collection of Egyptian artefacts at the University of Aberdeen comprises more than 6000 items, ranging from predynastic, dynastic to modern Egypt (Curtis and Eladany 2022: 78) and is one of the largest ancient Egyptian collections in Scotland. This extensive collection comprises numerous ancient Egyptian textiles, consisting of plain wrappings and most notably more than 350 pieces of inscribed linen with text or vignettes of the *Book of the Dead*, dating mainly from the Late to Ptolemaic periods (Curtis *et al.* 2005: 55-56). Other inscribed textiles include an hypocephalus (Mekis 2020: 268) and nineteen linen amulets. Among the latter, three were selected for further analysis:

- a linen amulet representing the combination of a bird and the hieroglyphic sign *nṯr* (ABDUA: 84210) (Figure 1)
- a linen amulet depicting the goddess Nut (ABDUA: 84209) (Figure 2)
- a linen amulet depicting the god Shu (ABDUA: 23241) (Figure 3)

### *What are linen amulets?*

Funerary linen amulets have specific characteristics and can be categorised as a distinct category of linen. Evidence suggests that during the Late and Ptolemaic Period, additional square or rectangular





Figure 1. ntr linen amulet (ABDUA:84210) (© University of Aberdeen).



Figure 2. Linen amulet depicting Nut (ABDUA: 84209) (© University of Aberdeen)

pieces of textiles were placed on the deceased during mummification. Due to its relatively small dimensions compared to the long and narrow bandages, its primary use was not to wrap the body. It was added as a 'supplement', possibly to symbolically protect the deceased and to accompany other amulets made of precious materials. Thanks to their inclusion within bandages, linen amulets had the advantage of always protecting the deceased, even if other precious metal, stone, or faience amulets were stolen by grave robbers in antiquity.

On these textiles, a figure such as a protective deity or a hieroglyphic symbol was drawn with a black outline in the centre. Importantly, there is no accompanying inscription, which can help distinguish the amulets from sections from the *Book of the Dead*. We can say that these textiles were placed on the deceased during the embalming ritual as some resin spots are present on some examples. Unfortunately, there are only a very few records of the position of the linen amulets when the unwrapping of mummified bodies was carried out. However, one can say that the textiles were found on all parts of the body, including the head, torso and legs of the deceased, as noticed on the mummified remains of *T3-kr-hb* (Kockelmann 2008: 312). The chest and upper body are probably the most typical areas for positioning the linen amulets (Kockelmann 2008: 312).



Figure 3. Linen amulet depicting Shu (ABDUA: 23241) (© University of Aberdeen)

### ***Previous research***

Despite the previously mentioned distinctive characteristics, the textile amulets are often mistakenly catalogued and published as fragments of a shroud or part of an inscribed bandage from the *Book of the Dead* (Kockelmann 2003: 237), and this is indeed the case in the online catalogue of the University of Aberdeen Museums Collection. Indeed, at the time of writing, one of the three linen amulets studied here (ABDUA: 23241) is described as a 'linen fragment with vignettes', while the other two still need to be added to the online database (ABDUA: 84209 and ABDUA: 84210).

As Kockelmann suggests (2008: 309), a linen amulet should be distinguished from other inscribed wrappings and be classified as a separate category of funerary textiles. During his research, Kockelmann visited Aberdeen and studied the textile amulets housed at the university collection centre at Marischal College. The 'almost twenty linen mummy amulets' were briefly mentioned at the end of the article (Curtis *et al.* 2005: 67). This present study represents the first to solely focus on linen amulets in the University of Aberdeen collection.

### ***Aims of the project***

This research aimed to select and gather information about three linen amulets in terms of their structure, iconography, and provenance. The identification of the fabric structure helped to understand the manufacturing process of linen and identify any variations in the technique used. This research also sought to offer an interpretation of religious beliefs by examining the symbolic representations outlined on the linen amulets. Archival research helped to trace the textiles and get new information about their acquisition by the University's Museums Collection. Finally, the project aimed to provide new data and thus contributes to the development of research on linen amulets, a category of funerary artefacts still little explored by scholars.

### **Material and Methods**

#### ***Selection process***

Due to time limitation, three linen amulets mounted on cardboard were chosen for this study. The selection was made according to the diverse iconography, condition, and completeness of the fragment. Although we assume that the three textile amulets have been placed between layers of wrappings during mummification, there are no recorded accounts of the unwrapping of mummified bodies and their subsequent discovery.

#### ***Analytical methods***

In order to investigate the textiles as precisely as possible, the methodology was divided into three parts: iconography, materiality, and historical evidence. To provide comparable data, each textile was analysed systematically, using a standardised terminology. During this project, only non-invasive methods of investigation were used to preserve their integrity and limit the manipulation of the textiles.

#### ***Iconography***

As linen amulets were part of mummification rituals on the deceased, it is significant to examine which figure was depicted and thereby assess its religious meaning. The depiction of a single figure on the textile may suggest a deliberate choice and underline the importance of specific deities in ensuring a safe journey to the afterlife. Also, several linen amulets with a similar motif are attested and are now found in various museums across the world. Such an overview is provided in Kockelmann's publication (2008).

This research included the study of similar linen amulets in other museum collections. This comparative data could be used as a relative dating method and help situate the three linen amulets in a specific temporal context.

#### *Materiality: Significance of the textile analysis*

In order to make an accurate and detailed study of archaeological textiles, the technical description is a major aspect of archaeological textile research (Kuttruff and Strickland-Olsen 2000: 25). In this project, the technical description is based on physical analyses (both macroscopic and microscopic) to allow, when possible, the characterisation, classification, and identification of each textile fragment.

The examination of the textiles includes the investigation of the structure, materials, and current condition (American Institute for Conservation n.d.). Such a thorough examination is essential to get an understanding of the textile manufacturing used, as well as evaluating the complexity and current condition of the textiles (Kuttruff and Strickland-Olsen 2000: 25). The description, recording, and cataloguing of each textile are essential as a basis for comparative studies between the linen amulets and other textile wrappings.

Standardised steps were used during the visual examination to record information about the textiles:

- macroscopic examination including the use of callipers and a textile magnifier
- microscopic examination using a Dino-Lite Edge Digital Microscope

This observation revealed several characteristics of each linen amulet: measurement, colour, linen quality, edge (selvedge, cut or torn), loss, staining, weave pattern, thread structure (twist), and thread count.

Finally, the last stage of the physical analysis of the textiles was photography. The three linen amulets had previously never been photographed, so taking pictures of each textile was part of the recording process. Images were captured using a Sony ILCE-6400 camera with a SEL50M28 (FE 50 mm F2.8 Macro) lens. Additionally, multispectral imaging was tested using an ultraviolet light (UV), and a modified Fujifilm MX-1400 FinePix 1400 Zoom Digital Camera for infrared imaging (IR). This non-destructive technique was applied to distinguish any stains or pigments not noticeable under visible light (Haldane *et al.* 2010: 240).

#### *Historical evidence*

As often with ancient Egyptian textiles in museum collections, little information is known about the provenance of the artefacts. Provenance research was conducted using the archives of Marischal Museum. Various documents were studied, including ancient inventories, several catalogues of ancient Egyptian antiquities, a personal diary, and newspaper articles. General museum accounts and reports were also examined to get a better contextual historical understanding.

## **Results and Discussion**

### ***Iconographical study***

#### *The 'ntr' linen amulet (ABDUA: 84210)*

The symbol outlined on the 'ntr' linen amulet is a combination of two distinct signs. On the left, the body of a bird, likely a falcon, is visible. The head and front part of the body have been replaced by the ntr

symbol, hieroglyphic sign for ‘god’ or ‘deity’, and emblem of divinity. The combined figure is standing on a standard. It is noteworthy that this representation brings together two of the four main forms of writing ‘god’ in hieroglyphs, namely the falcon usually depicted on a standard and the flag-topped pole (Wilkinson 2003: 26).

This depiction is not unique, as a similar symbol has been identified on three other linen amulets in the Historical Collections at Gustavianum in Uppsala (Figure 4), the Petrie Museum in London (Figure 5), and the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna (Figure 6).

Each linen amulet also represents the body of a bird in profile, facing to the right. The wing is hatched, and the animal is standing on a standard. On the textile amulet from Uppsala, the ‘flag’ replaces the head of the bird, as is the case in Aberdeen. On the other two amulets, this feature is not visible and only the ‘pole’ from which the flag could be attached is represented. However, as the textile from Vienna is damaged in this area, it is possible that this element was present but is no longer visible.

*The linen amulets depicting Nut (ABDUA: 84209) and Shu (ABDUA: 23241)*

Both gods appear as anthropomorphic figures and are depicted in the most traditional way. Nut, the goddess of the sky is recognisable with the *nw*-pot on her head. In her left hand she holds the *wadj* sceptre, a papyrus column symbolising eternal youth, and in her right is the *ankh* sign, symbol of life. She is facing to the right and is depicted standing on a bottom line.

Shu is depicted in a similar fashion (Figure 7). Facing to the right as the god of air, he is depicted with a feather on his head – the hieroglyphic sign for his

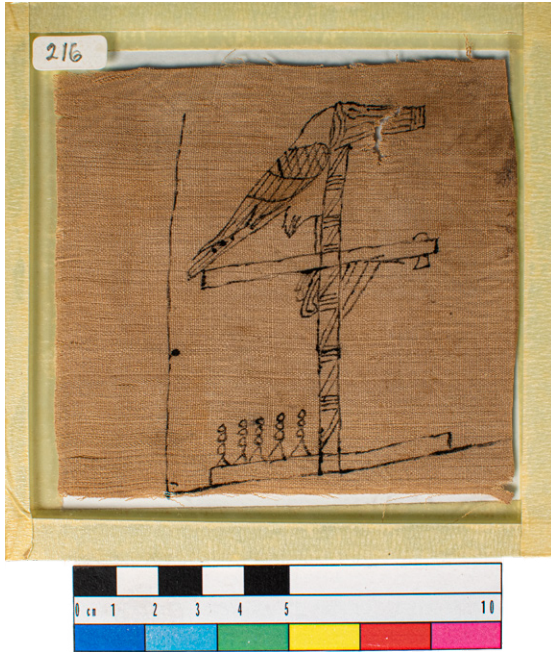


Figure 4. Linen amulet, VMMB216 (© Josef El Mogy, Gustavianum, Uppsala University Museum).



Figure 5. Linen amulet, UC5519 (© The Petrie Museum of Egyptian and Sudanese Archaeology, UCL).

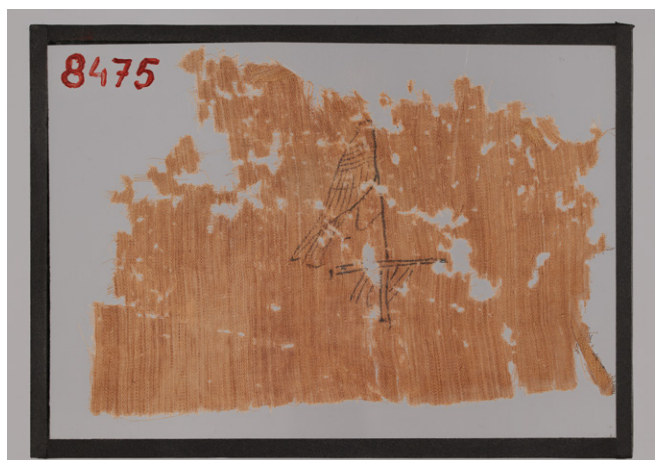


Figure 6. Linen amulet, AS8475 (© KHM-Museumsverband, Vienna).

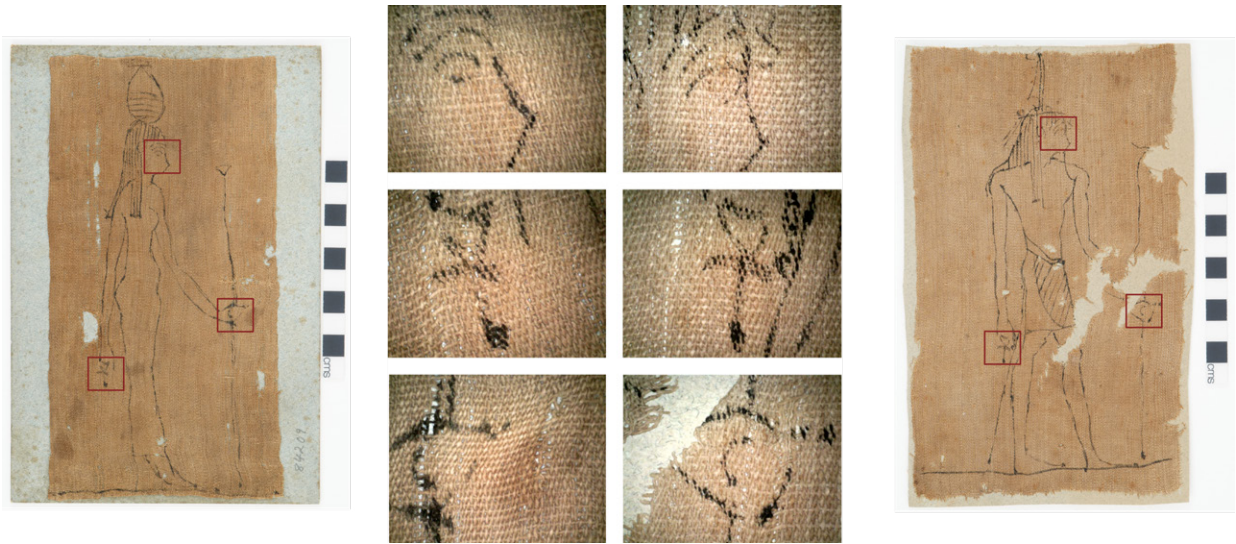


Figure 7. Style comparison between Nut (left) and Shu (right): the similar technique used to draw the gods is highlighted here with individual close-ups of the eyebrows, ankh sign, and left hand.

name. He is holding the *ankh* sign and was sceptre, symbol of power. The style employed to draw the body parts of Nut and Shu is very similar: pointy nose, absence of a mouth and iris, two eyebrows. The *ankh* signs have similar dimensions, and the ink has been applied in an identical fashion. Both thumbs of the left hand are extruding and drawn horizontally, while the four other fingers are not detailed and represented as a semi-circle.

So far, there has been no mention of linen amulets depicting Nut or Shu in other museum collections (Kockelmann 2008: 316-317). However, this uniqueness could be explained by the lack of published studies in relation to linen amulets.

#### *Reflections on the iconography*

Placing a textile representing Nut recalls her common representation on coffins, sarcophagi and wall reliefs, when she is protecting and assuring the resurrection of the deceased (Wilkinson 2003: 160-162) (Figure 8). Here, another material is used to represent the goddess, but her role in the concept of resurrection remains the same. One can, therefore, see the presence of Nut on the textile as a desire for protection, resurrection, and rebirth.

The iconographic style of the linen amulet depicting Shu is also found on other funerary artefacts. The god was depicted on coffins, sometimes standing alongside other protective deities holding an *ankh* and was sceptre, as seen on the Late Period coffin of Wedjarenes, now part of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (Accession Number O.C. 22). Another well-known depiction shows him holding the arched body of his daughter Nut (Figure 9). We could, therefore, interpret his presence within plain bandages as a wish that the deity associated with life protects the deceased.

The choice to represent a god or the *ntr* symbol is significant because in ancient Egyptian art and statuary, objects and subjects were used as ‘counterimages’ – their representations were actual substitutes for the god or object represented (Teeter 2011: 4). Therefore, the depiction of the hieroglyphic symbol for ‘god’, as well as male and female deities on linen could shape and influence the journey of the deceased to the afterlife. Thanks to their transcendent powers, the gods would ensure the deceased’s well-being.



Figure 8. On this funerary stela, the deceased Tabakenkhonsu is led by Thoth in front of Isis and Osiris. The body of Nut is bending over the scene. Painted wooden panel of Tabakenkhonsu (Accession Number 96.4.4). From Deir el-Bahri, Egypt, c. 675 BC (© The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York).



Figure 9. Shu was frequently depicted in Egyptian art holding the arched body of his daughter, the sky goddess Nut, above his son, the earth god Geb. Coffin of Nespawershefyt (© Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge).

## Materiality

### Textile analysis

The three linen amulets are well-preserved. The *ntr* linen amulet is in good condition, without stains and only a few missing threads. Each amulet was mounted on cardboard, most probably in the late 19th, early 20th century. The visual examination of the linen amulets using a textile magnifier and Dino-Lite microscope enabled the recording several characteristics, which can be found in Table 1.

TABLE 1: PRINCIPAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE THREE LINEN AMULETS.

Linien Amulet	<i>Ntr</i> (ABDUA: 84210)	Nut (ABDUA: 84209)	Shu (ABDUA: 23241)
Size (cm)	11.4 x 11.6	10.5 x 20.0	12.5 x 20.3
Weave pattern	Tabby	Tabby	Tabby
Thread structure	S-spun	S-spun	S-spun
Warp/Weft per cm	30/14	36/14	38/15
Stains	No	About five darker dots near knees and left hand, possibly resin. Slightly darker linen in front of Nut's upper body	Slightly on the bottom, around the feet and in the upper right corner
Cut/torn	Cut on the left and bottom edges, partially on the right edge	Probably all four cut edges	Possibly torn
Fraying threads	On the top, right and bottom edges	No	The four edges

The size and shape of linen amulets indicate a different use and function of the textile compared to the well-known long and narrow strips of linen. It is highly likely that the primary purpose of these linen amulets was not for wrapping the body, as they are not suitable for that purpose. Rather, it seems that these linen pieces were added as amulets during the mummification process. The threads of the three linen amulets are twisted in an anti-clockwise direction (S-spun), which is the common direction of spinning in ancient Egypt (Hall 1986: 12). The form of weaving is tabby (also known as plain weave), which consists of passing each weft thread over and under the warp threads. This is also the most basic and widespread form found in other Egyptian contexts (Vogelsang-Eastwood 2000: 274). Therefore, the production technique for spinning and weaving the linen amulets does not differ from the technique used for plain mummy wrappings. Additionally, the thread count of the three amulets is comparable to finer ancient Egyptian textiles. This can suggest that the textile structure chosen for linen amulets was not different from plain wrappings (e.g. there are no differences in fibre processing or weave pattern) but fine textiles were selected when used as a linen amulet. Although the number of weft and warp per centimetre is not spectacularly high, the linen amulets are made with fine linen fibres, harvested early in the spring (Verdon 2018: 8). Such fineness is not comparable with royal linen,<sup>1</sup> but they are fine enough to suggest that linen amulets were reserved for the wealthier, who could afford this excellent quality of linen material and display their status (Verdon 2018: 8).

The examination of the fibres under a Dino-Lite microscope revealed that some edges had been cut. This could mean that the linen was cut with a sharp implement, such as scissors. Additionally, some edges could also have been torn by hand. No irregularities or faults were recorded during the examination of the amulets under the microscope, which demonstrates the skill of the weavers who produced the textiles. Also, there are no signs of repairs (mends or patches) that could have indicated a longer duration of use or re-use. This highlights the possibility of a selection process for good-quality textiles, free from weaving faults, tears, or holes, to bear the outline of the deity.

Interestingly, the holes on the linen amulet depicting Shu were already present when the textile was glued onto cardboard, which resulted in making the alignment of the deity's left arm more challenging. Indeed, the line used to draw Shu's left arm and hand is not aligned and shifts slightly downwards. This indicates that the already damaged linen amulet was mounted on the board to provide support and possibly to aid display and handling during public talks by the collector or museum curators. If the textile had been obtained complete and the holes were due to bad preservation while stuck on the board, the arm and hand would still be aligned today. It is highly likely that the drawing was made on a complete textile, which deteriorated later, possibly during the unwrapping or during further manipulation before being mounted on the cardboard.

#### *Multispectral imaging*

During the research, infrared and ultraviolet photography was also employed. The examination of the textiles with the infrared camera revealed no traces of additional pigments, paint, or marks that were not visible under visible light. However, when examined under ultraviolet light, additional stains were visible on the textile depicting Nut (Figure 10). The stains, possibly wax, appear to be organic and located on the surface of the textile. It could be resin used during the mummification process or modern glue used to attach the fragment to the cardboard. Further scientific examination would, however, be required to determine the nature of the stains.

<sup>1</sup> 'Royal linen', those of highest quality, were exceptionally fine. For example, one of the folded sheets found in the Tomb of Hatnefer and Ramose in Thebes was woven with superfine threads, with a thread count of 46 warps x 30 wefts per cm (Metropolitan Museum of Art, Accession Number 36.3.111).



Figure 10. Comparison between visible light (left) and ultraviolet photography (right). The stains only visible under ultraviolet are highlighted with red arrows (ABDUA: 84209).

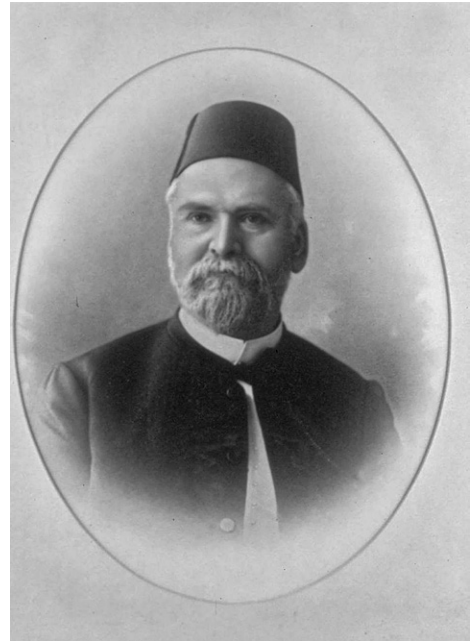


Figure 11. Portrait of James Grant Bey (ABDUA: 63605) (© University of Aberdeen).

### **Provenance research – From Egypt to Aberdeen**

#### *In the storeroom: tracing the acquisition of linen amulets with archival research*

Archival research was conducted to identify the collector of the linen amulets and to gather additional information as to how the textiles arrived in Aberdeen. Importantly, the early inventories of Marischal Museum do not individually record the three linen amulets studied here. Only some ancient Egyptian textiles with distinct motifs were documented, reflecting common Western museum practices of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. After reviewing several handwritten catalogues, it was determined with a degree of certainty that the linen amulets studied here are part of a larger group recorded as ‘Strip of mummy cloth with figures of gods, etc.’. These textiles were donated by James Grant Bey in 1896, according to the inventory conducted by the Scottish Egyptologist Nora Griffith (known by the current curators as the Nora MacDonald Catalogue) (Macdonald 1906 and 1896-1910).

Dr James Andrew Sandilands Grant Bey was a Scottish doctor and Egyptologist who studied at the University of Aberdeen and worked in Cairo until his death in 1896 (Figure 11). Along with his medical responsibilities, Grant Bey was known for his interest in ancient Egypt and his extensive collection of antiquities. His ‘museum’ was open for study to anyone ‘interested in archaeology and Egyptology’ (Smith 1897: 114). After his death, the Aberdeen graduate generously bequeathed over 2000 objects to the University. This large collection, which arrived in Aberdeen in 1897, represents a significant portion of the university’s current collection of ancient Egyptian antiquities and ‘the largest number of objects attributed to a single collector in Scotland’ (Potter 2020: 21).

#### *Revealing the nṯr linen amulet in 19th-century publications*

The earliest publication of the nṯr linen amulet found dates to 1893, when it was published by the Aberdeen Philosophical Society (Grant Bey 1893: 15). The paper, published a second time in the Society’s



*Transactions* in 1900 (Grant Bey 1900: 1), is entitled 'An Introduction to Ancient Egyptian History'. Written by Grant Bey, the essay is a revised version of a lecture the doctor gave to the Society in Aberdeen three years earlier. In the article, Grant Bey included a drawing of the *ntr* linen amulet and described it as 'an ancient Egyptian mummy bandage' from his personal collection in Cairo (Figure 12).

This essay provides evidence that Grant Bey obtained the *ntr* linen amulet before 1892, the year 'his [manuscript] and drawings have just been received' (Aberdeen Philosophical Society 1892: xvii). Moreover, the linen amulet could well have already been in his collection when he visited Aberdeen in 1890. Indeed, Grant Bey was known for 'illustrat[ing] his lectures by means of the specimens he had collected (Aberdeen Press and Journal 1890: 6). As a 'large quantity of Egyptian curiosities and antiquities were [temporarily] exhibited in the lecture hall' as part of his lecture (Aberdeen Press and Journal 1890: 6), it is possible that the textile amulet was presented and later published for the members of the society.

At that time, collecting artefacts from antique dealers without proper provenance was a common practice, which seems to be the case for the linen amulets. Despite being able to trace the *ntr* linen amulet to Grant Bey, there is no additional information about the context of its acquisition, such as a specific burial or archaeological site, or whether it was purchased from a dealer or given to him by an archaeologist.

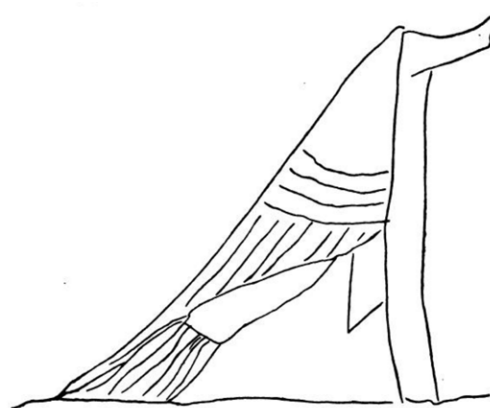
Grant Bey was certainly well acquainted with many Egyptologists at the time, including Petrie, who visited him in Cairo regularly, sometimes offering him artefacts and participating in his weekly soirées. Petrie, for example, would give lectures about his current research, such as his excavations in Gurob in 1889 (Petrie 1888-1889: 155). Interestingly, a linen amulet, today at the Penn Museum, Philadelphia, was acquired by Petrie during these excavations (Silverman and Brovanski 1997: 260). This demonstrates that several linen amulets were acquired and distributed in the late 19th century, and it is possible that Grant Bey obtained the linen amulets directly from Petrie, other archaeologists, or antique dealers.

## Final thoughts about linen amulets

### *Possible chronology and geographical framework*

Without any clear provenance of the textiles, suggesting where and when the linen amulets originate is challenging. The iconographic comparison in other museums is also arduous, because in museums, ancient Egyptian textiles were often bought or donated with no provenance or information about their archaeological contexts.

The comparison with the linen amulets depicting the body of a falcon on a standard in three other museums demonstrated that this symbol was reproduced several times and was slightly modified. This variety could be due to the different choices of the artists or workshops or could be attributed to regional or chronological differences. Other than the origin of the *ntr* hieroglyphic symbol, an ancient sign that



13. Dual God—father and son forming one god.  
(From an ancient Egyptian mummy bandage in Dr. Grant Bey's Museum.)

Figure 12. Earliest publication of the linen amulet ABDUA: 84210 in Grant Bey's *An Introduction to Ancient Egyptian History* (1893).



Figure 13. Amulet depicting Shu kneeling with arms raised recalling creation when he raised the sky to separate it from the earth (ABDUA: 22633) (© University of Aberdeen).

dates to the earliest time of Pharaonic Egypt (Wilkinson 2003: 27), and the datation of the linen amulets themselves, thought to range between the Late to Ptolemaic periods (Kockelmann 2008: 310), the iconographic, material and historical research have not been sufficient to indicate a finer temporal and geographical origin of the *nṯr* amulet.

Iconographical and material similarities between the linen amulet of Nut and Shu were observed during this study. The two amulets are close in terms of size, thread count, colour, fineness, and weave pattern. The similarity in textile production and iconographic style could indicate that the two linen amulets were made at the same time, or even in the same workshop, possibly by the same artist. It has also been questioned whether they were placed on the same individual

(Kockelmann 2008: 317). Although there is no definite evidence of their relation, the additional visual and technical examinations, as well as provenance research, support this suggestion.

### **Origin of the development of linen amulets**

How, then, can one explain the reason for developing this type of amulet in the Late Period? Deities represented on textiles also exist as three-dimensional objects made of other materials, such as the amulet of Shu in faience (Figure 13). From the Late Period, there is evidence that both small objects and funerary linen amulets were found on the body and between the bandages to transfer their powers directly to the deceased. The juxtaposition of both types of amulets was recorded on the mummified remains of *T3-kr-hb* and *Dd-ḥr* (Kockelmann 2003: 239).

One could interpret the development of linen amulets as a further pursuit to invoke the deity's powers in case other and possibly more valuable amulets were stolen after burial. Indeed, the deceased would still be protected by the inscribed textiles placed between the bandages even if the three-dimensional artefacts could no longer perform their functions. However, it is difficult to solely justify the development of linen amulets as a response to looting. Indeed, the Late Period is, in general, a golden age for funerary amulets, and several new types of amulets appear alongside the textile ones, such as the two-finger amulet, often made of obsidian and sometimes gilded (Stünkel 2019). A linen amulet should, therefore, not be seen as a simple substitute for three-dimensional amulets but as an example of the continual development of new types of funerary amulets that occurred during the Late Period.

### **Conclusion**

This research focused on three linen amulets, which had never been extensively studied before. Using scientific and historical approaches, the study aimed to shed light on this lesser-known part of the collection through three complementary lines of research: iconography, materiality, and historical evidence. Visual and microscopic examination revealed that the linen amulets were fine textiles made with the most common S-spun threads in a warp-faced tabby weave. As such, their quality is similar to plain wrappings, but attention seems to have been taken to select a fine new or well-preserved textile, without stains or signs of repairs. The iconographical study enabled us to distinguish linen amulets

from other inscribed textiles. Rather than being purely decorative, *ntr*, Shu, and Nut served a protective function for the deceased during the journey to the afterlife. Finally, historical research demonstrated the significance of James Grant Bey in the development of the University of Aberdeen's ancient Egyptian collection. It is most likely that the doctor donated the three linen amulets as part of a larger group of 'mummy cloth[s] inscribed with figures of gods' in 1897.

While the linen amulets' specific time and geographical context remains unclear, this collection-based research highlights the history and significance of ancient Egyptian funerary textiles within the University of Aberdeen Museums Collection. This analysis serves as a first step in developing a deeper understanding of this particular type of amulet, which has been generally overlooked and occasionally misidentified within museum collections.

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# Collective Remembrance in the Necropolis of Qubbet el-Hawa (Aswan, Egypt): The Case of Tomb QH35p

Ana Díaz Blanco

## Abstract

This contribution presents data and ideas concerning the construction of collective remembrance through archaeological material, mainly pottery, documented in the external chambers of tomb QH35p in the necropolis of Qubbet el-Hawa (Aswan, Egypt). Collective remembrance is a type of memory defined as an active and collective act made by a group to project present identities through past events. These events are recognised and shared by all members of the group. Therefore, as Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945) proposed, memory is a collective social action. It holds to historical and cultural parameters that adapt to a specific temporal context and play an essential role in constructing the identities of the present active members of a group.

Finally, presenting several pottery studies and archaeological interpretation made in this tomb, the aim is to reflect on the construction of collective remembrance, investigating the role of archaeological material in this whole process, and how can we trace it in tomb QH35p.

## Keywords

Collective Remembrance, Tomb QH35p, Pottery, Offerings, Lady Sattjeni, Middle Kingdom

## Introduction

This contribution seeks to explore the construction of collective remembrance and how it is possible to evaluate this in archaeological contexts. In this case, tomb QH35p reveals itself as an interesting example to test. The external chambers unveil a chronologically prolonged usage as offering spaces given the vast accumulation of material, especially pottery. Based on these data, an attempt is made here to answer the following questions:

1. What information is available based on the study of the materials of the external chambers of tomb QH35p?
2. How do these data relate to other contexts of the tomb?
3. Is it possible to trace collective remembrance through material culture? If so, how?
4. What is the difference between collective memory and collective remembrance? Is one of them able to help interpret the archaeological evidence of tomb QH35p?

## Construction of memory: Collective versus Cultural Memory

‘Collective memory’ was first proposed by French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1925; 1950) becoming a very popular term after World War II and the Holocaust. It was used to examine the horrors and problems that occurred then. Since that time, it has become part of the analysis of ‘memory studies’, but due to its application in various branches of social studies (Wertsch and Roediger III 2008: 318), there has not been a unified definition for it.

### ***The French School of Sociology: Maurice Halbwachs' approach to collective memory***

Memory is the act of remembrance of events of the past, which grants it continuity in time that helps shape the present. In Sociology, this definition is a direct opposition of the vision people have of their present, in which the heterogenic character of life and identities seem to clash with the idea of a fixed and continuous form of an absent past (Sabourin 1997: 139). Even with this apparent disparity, Sociology has traced this duality and how this shifts over time. Maurice Halbwachs' work was based on the study of how socialisation is grounded in this opposition of memory and oblivion. Both of these concepts are the result of a conscious practice made by social groups to construct a vision of their own existence (Sabourin 1997: 140). Therefore, for Halbwachs, memory could not exist without society. It is there that individuals are capable of remembering and recognising the elements used to build that memory (Halbwachs 1950: 38).

Halbwachs shows the clear influence of the ideas of his mentor Émile Durkheim in one of his last works, *Représentations individuelles et représentations collectives* (Díaz 2013: 11). In it, he establishes that the categories of knowledge are a product of individual experience and that these were an external showing of the individual itself. Therefore, knowledge was not something innate to the human being, but rather had a social origin (Díaz 2013: 14). Society, the individual that takes part in it, the experiences that he/she/they live, shapes the categories on which the social reality is built. These categories are a way of helping people create a structure, a social structure, with which they can interact. This base was used by Halbwachs (1925). In his thesis, he remarks on the minor importance of the chronological order of the memories as they had happened in the past, stressing the importance of the present times and the experiences we share with other members of society. This is what will eventually help the individual to shape their memory of the past (Halbwachs 1925: 170).

Later, in Halbwach's work *The Legendary Topography of the Holy Land* (1941), as Olick (2008: 7) points out, he further discusses the opposition between collective memory and history, and the role of the present as a motor for an active construction of the past. All this comes to mean that individual memory is already organised by a collective memory, which in the end is a social context, a sentiment of belonging to a group and being able to recognise yourself as part of it (Díaz 2013: 20). However, in this collective there are certain social frameworks in which there are existing types of memories: collective family memory, religious collective memory, and collective memory of social classes. It is in these subcategories that diverse groups of identities are forged, responding to specific interests of each category, and they may all coexist in society at the same time. But there are certain elements or 'tools' used by each category that are common to all: language, time, and space (Díaz 2013: 21). Therefore, these social frameworks and their construction of memories are, in some way, bound to a specific chronology and place, and they become permeable to them.

### ***Defining the memory of the collective: opposite terms raise questions of the process of memory construction***

Wertsch and Roediger III (2008) suggested an appealing method to help understand in which fields the term collective memory is discussed. They did so by contrasting, *a priori*, opposing terms that are sometimes used indistinctly. In their discussion, terminologies such as 'collective memory' versus 'collective remembering', 'history' versus 'collective remembering', or 'individual' versus 'collective remembering', are tested to analyse how they develop against each other. It seems that somehow it is narrowed down to two simple concepts: static shared knowledge versus the active process and a debate on the construction of knowledge. Therefore, terms such as 'collective memory' or 'history' will be viewed as conflicting, due to their almost universal status, with acts of remembrance shared and constructed by individuals or a group (Wertsch and Roediger III 2008: 320-321). Along with this, this

opposition also highlights the agency whereby the past is represented: universals as static and accurate forms of the past versus self-construction involving group identities. In this particular conflict, another actor comes into play: the role that the present has in the construction of the past. While history is a product of facts, remembrance is a construction made by people of the present, and it embodies part of their own identities based on a selection of events from the past. Assmann (2011: 14, 20-24) raises a very interesting notion linked to this particular debate, i.e. the shift that collective recalling takes when opposed to history. In this case, collective remembering is shaped by individuals and therefore serves a story that justifies and legitimises a discourse. This means that it is a one-way narrative in the sense that it is resistant to any notion that might oppose it. While history, on the other hand, as an objective and factual notion, does not bend into individual discourses, it shifts when new information and facts are discovered. It also serves no moral high ground but rather acknowledges the complex nature of human behaviour and how this has performed in past scenarios. Therefore, it does not judge; it is an account of the past.

#### *The individual as an agent of remembrance*

Individuals, as social actors, use elements embedded in their groups in the process of remembering. These 'cultural tools', as Wertsch and Roediger III (2008: 322) have proposed to label them, are the key to this process, being shared by a collective in a specific historical and cultural context. The term 'shared' is key here in granting this remembrance collective status due to the ability of every actor to recognise them as such. Language has been recognised to be one of these tools (Wertsch and Roediger III 2008: 322-324) and also to be an actor in the shaping of remembrance in the form of a narrative. Michaelian and Stutton (2017: 141-142) propose that in collective remembering there are several stages in which individuals interact and participate in the process, i.e. encoding, consolidation, storage, and retrieval. By being active, they ensure that remembrance becomes a 'collective' effort. The higher the level of interaction between individuals, the stronger the shared memory will be. However, even if not often discussed enough, this collaborative view is not always cooperative and there is the possibility that reaching a consensus is not always a possibility (Michaelian and Stutton 2017: 147-148). Within a society, even at an individual level, once the collaborative process is overcome, studies reflect on the nature of the possible conflicts in the consensus of reaching a collective remembering. In essence, these conflicts may appear if there are different groups leading and competing for the establishment of their own shared remembrance, and see which will finally prevail.

This is an argument that Salem (2014) and Assmann (1999, 2011) discuss by analysing texts from ancient Egyptian literature. Salem (2014: 193-194) proposes the link between the act of remembering and a text. In this case, she focuses her attention on the Westcar Papyrus and its impact on 12th dynasty society. In her analysis, she proposes that written texts built a literary vision of the past that is transmitted through the text. Here, these written sources reconstruct the image of the 5th dynasty kings as having a divine origin, and how the present kings, in this case of the 12th dynasty, are related to them. We can say, therefore, that written language is a tool used to legitimise and construct the remembrance of a past that would suit the particular identity of a group, i.e. the royal family.

Throughout her study, Salem also mentions the concepts of 'future memory' (2014: 190-193) and 'cultural memory' (2012: 189-190). 'Cultural memory' is a term Assmann (1999; 2011) defined in order to explain a collective remembering that can transcend time, as a way of linking a distant past with the present. This is achieved through narrative or myths (Assman 2011: 27, 48-50; 1999: 26-29). Salem adds to this (2014: 191) by proposing the term 'future memory'. The differences are that the chronological lines from the myth and the present are intertwined. That is to say, the message of the myth is based on past events, but the narrator is not living these past events, but resides in the present. Therefore, remembrance is built on the past with the intention that it survives the present generation and anticipates a remote

future through a narrative agent, in this case, literacy texts. The differences between these terms are simply when they are to act: the present – cultural memory – or the future – future memory. However, both build remembrance through the tool of narrative.

Still, it is vital to state that, even though both imply it, but do not discuss it further, cultural or future memory are two examples of collective remembering. With the example of literature, they serve the purpose of constructing a past at the mercy of a particular group, to which they supposedly have access to recognise and share the ‘cultural tool’ used, in this case written texts, to collectivise this past. However, it should not be viewed as a form of universal or static knowledge, nor interpreted as a form of collective memory or historical fact.

### ***Material culture as a ‘cultural tool’ for collective remembering***

What if the written language was not the only tool to produce memory? What other languages can produce codes that act as ‘tools’ to help construct remembrance in a group? Although texts are the most visual and obvious answer to encode collective remembrance, there is a vast number of human groups that did not have the need to develop a written language, as their own relationship between members of their group and the objects they produced sufficed for the production of collective remembering. Material culture may have also intertwined with individuals to create practices that promote modes of remembrance (Jones 2007: 4); it is not only in the physical aspect of objects, but also in the materiality behind them. Of course, not all objects need to have some sort of intrinsic hidden message that must be read. But more so, the question remains on how we propose that objects may communicate remembrance (Jones 2007: 15). From its more basic stage, the production and the learning to produce an object is already an act of remembrance of a group. Through repetition, the craft is transmitted and the knowledge is then laid out and stored by the individuals involved. Production is not the only way to trace the stages of remembrance. The use and adjustments made to objects would evidence their complete history (Jones 2007: 21).

Nonetheless, returning to our earlier question: how can we trace past events through material culture without the use of a written text that narrates them? Jones (2007: 24-25) has suggested a thought-provoking notion of the perdurance or physical persistence of material culture. If we understand an object as an exemplar of past actions, there is a realisation that it does not preserve remembrance *per se*, but evokes it (Heersmink 2021: 12). Therefore, this suggests that the act of remembrance, again, is not an isolated process of the individual and his/her mind, but the product of interactions not only with other individuals but also with objects: ‘people do not remember in isolation, nor do objects’ (Jones 2007: 26). Hence, remembrance is an active process produced by individuals through continuous interaction within the world they inhabit, both the material and the environment.

Yet, it is important to determine the actual durability of the object. Are these evocations related to the preservation of the object itself? Does the remembrance generated by these experiences create a sufficiently prolonged remembering that it will outlive the objects’ life? (Berliner 2007: 88). Berliner (2007) in his fieldwork studying the Bulongic communities in Guinea reveals the relationship between the lacks of materiality of traditional and, nowadays, lost material culture of the *Mossolo Kombo* masks. They were produced by them during pre-Islamic times. The loss of this production is not the result of these communities having a ‘cultural void’, but rather the materiality and essence of these objects continue to be important pillars in the community, even for people who have not even experienced or seen them. This is because these masks were not just objects made of wood, but they acted as a spiritual agent. Even if the object has disappeared, the spirit – the ‘cultural tool’ – still lives.



### The case of tomb QH35p at Qubbet el-Hawa (Aswan, Egypt)

The necropolis of Qubbet el-Hawa is located on the western bank of the Nile, opposite the modern city of Aswan and the island of Elephantine. This site included the burial space for the governors and local elite of the ancient city of Elephantine, the capital of the First Nome of Upper Egypt, Ta-Sety. The first occupation of the cemetery dates to the Old Kingdom and continues until the late Middle Kingdom. However, there are later reoccupations of several tombs during later periods, normally during the New Kingdom and Late Period.

Tomb QH35p is located at the northern end of the site, adjacent to the monumental complex of tomb QH36 which belonged to Sarenputi I, the first governor of Elephantine, based on current evidence, during the 12th dynasty; he was to start a dynasty of high officials and governors that lasted throughout this period. Moreover, tomb QH35p was built near the funerary place of the greatest local ancestor, Heqaib the Deified (QH35d) (García González 2022: 294), a governor from the Old Kingdom, who was divinised and whose cult remained until the Second Intermediate Period. Therefore, the position of tomb QH35p in this specific area already denotes a special significance inside the necropolis.

It is difficult to say when this tomb was first documented. General Grenfell's team worked in Sarenputi I's tomb in 1886, but left no record or mention of the neighbouring tomb (Grenfell 1886). Probably, however, the area was cleaned and, at least, exposed. This would explain why in Jacques de Morgan's catalogue, published shortly after Grenfell's campaign, there is a hypogeum located approximately in the current position of tomb QH35p on his plan of the necropolis (de Morgan *et al.* 1894: 142). However, he offers no further details regarding either the dimensions or the exact position of this tomb. The work done later by Bonn University does not offer much more information, giving only short descriptions of the dimensions and the interior (Edel *et al.* 2008b: 965-966).

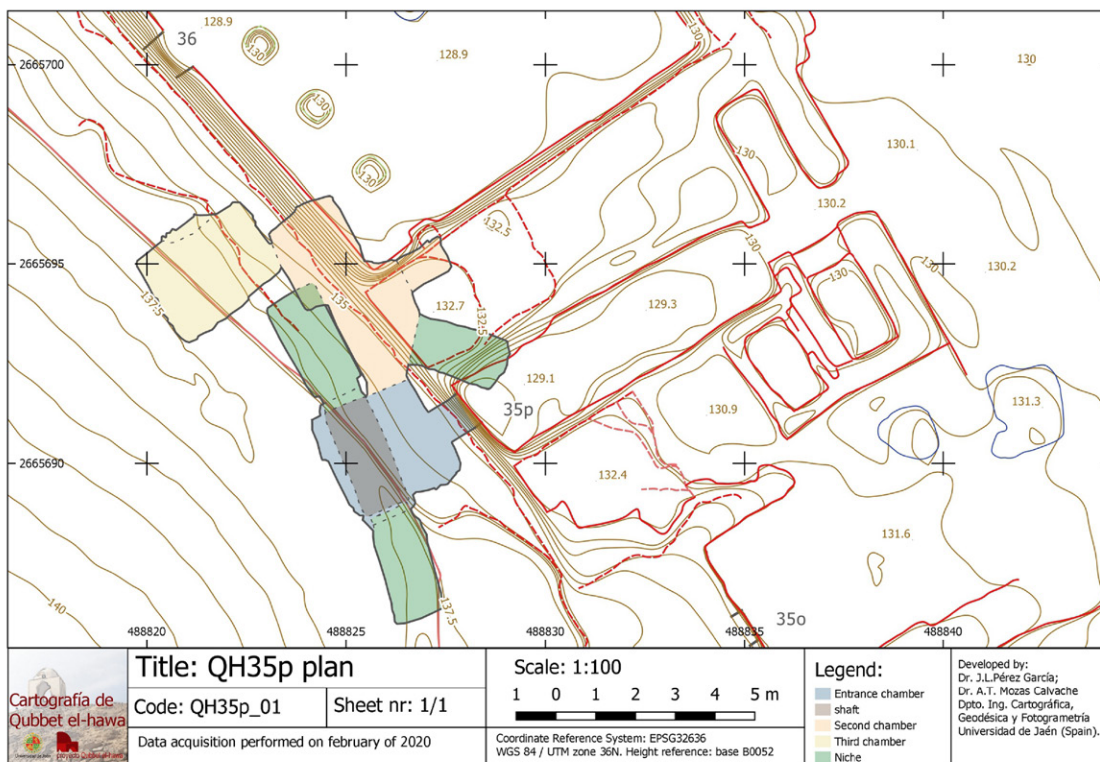


Figure 1. Plan of tomb QH35p (Dr José Luis Pérez García and Dr Antonio Tomás Mozas Calvache, © Proyecto Qubbet el-Hawa).

Systematic work at tomb QH35p began in earnest in 2015, conducted by the University of Jaén and led by Dr Luisa M. García González, deputy director of Project Qubbet el-Hawa (Jiménez Serrano *et al.* 2015). The excavation revealed a singular funerary complex with a closed chronological spectrum. Its use began at the end of the 11th dynasty and continued until the end of the 12th or early 13th dynasty. It was not reoccupied in later times, like most of the tombs at Qubbet el-Hawa. It is important to note that this chronology is preliminary until the processing and study of the material corpus is completed.

The general architecture of QH35p<sup>1</sup> (Figure 1) is divided into two spaces: the rock-cut hypogeum and the courtyard/external area. The excavations documented that the hypogeum was plundered already in antiquity and that the exterior's layout is in the shape of an inverted T. The entrance to the tomb is flanked by two domed chambers and a corridor then leads the way towards the hypogeum. This corridor, initially, would have been an open space, but it was closed with a mud-brick vault, which provided the area with a funerary use. Although the interior of the hypogeum had been robbed, seven intact burials were documented during the excavations elsewhere. As a final architectural addition, a third domed chamber was built on the southern platform, which also had a funerary use.

### **Archaeological evidence of the external domed chambers and the entrance to the corridor**

The external chambers present a mirrored stratigraphy and seem to have been used in a parallel manner. The excavation of the southern chamber (A4) began in 2016 (Jiménez Serrano *et al.* 2017: 46-47). It is a squared space, closed by a mud-brick dome. Once the dome was documented and removed, several disturbed burials were found. In the lower levels of the chamber, two stratigraphic units, SU 75 and SU 65, were documented. These were formed by a stratum, 15 cm deep, of pottery mixed with charcoal remains and ashes (Figures 2 and 3).



Figure 2. Offering level (SU76) in the southern chamber (A4) (Dr Luisa García González, © Proyecto Qubbet el-Hawa).



Figure 3. Section of the closing wall of the southern chamber (A4) with the offering layer (SU76) (Dr Luisa García González, © Proyecto Qubbet el-Hawa).

<sup>1</sup> For the complete analysis and excavation reports of the works done at tomb QH35p, see Jiménez *et al.* 2015, Jiménez *et al.* 2016, Jiménez *et al.* 2017, Jiménez *et al.* 2018.



Figure 4. Offering level (SU38) in the northern chamber (C4) (Dr Luisa García González, © Proyecto Qubbet el-Hawa).

levels revealed coffin remains and two disturbed burials. Below these was a level of sand and stone chips that covered a deep level filled with pottery remains (SU38) (Figure 4).

The corridor entrance is another area that presents an accumulation of material. This space is flanked by external chambers. The 2018 excavations (Jiménez Serrano *et al.* 2018: 55-57) documented a level (SU91), with the same altitude as levels 75 and 38 of the chambers, filled with pottery (Figure 5). This evidence shows that all of these three levels were equal and contemporaneous. SU91 is above a level of fine, reddish sand and was later sealed with five stones. With this sealing, the entrance of the corridor was widened.



Figure 5. Offering level (SU91) at the entrance of the corridor (B4) (Dr Luisa García González, © Proyecto Qubbet el-Hawa).

What is immediately apparent in these chambers is the depth of the archaeological levels at which this material was documented, i.e. 10-15 cm, full of archaeological material. If we compare the pottery to those documented in the burials, these areas have a much wider typological range. Even though a complete ceramic study is not concluded, and these data are purely preliminary, it is possible to divide the pottery into the following groups: open vessels (bowls, cups, plates, dishes) and closed vessels (bottles, *hs* jars), stands, and incense burners.

Of the open vessels, bowls are by far the most common type documented in both chambers and the entrance. Small hemispherical cups, commonly referred to as 'drinking cups', are very numerous in all of these contexts. They were documented as being individually placed or stacked on top of each other. This type of cup is very common in Middle Kingdom contexts. They were thoroughly studied by Arnold (1982; 1988) and Bietak (1984) in the Memphite-Fayoum and Delta areas, which viewed them within a properly standardised production during the Middle Kingdom – although there are earlier developments of such cups during the First Intermediate Period (Arnold 1982: 60-62; 1988: 140-141; Bietak 1984: 479-481). Thus, these cups are an excellent tool for dating archaeological contexts of this period. However, Seidlemayer (2005) had already proposed that, even if the said production of this type of cup is attested throughout Egypt, there is high regional variability in its production. Therefore, it is difficult to present a general and unified chronology based on statistics that could be applied everywhere.

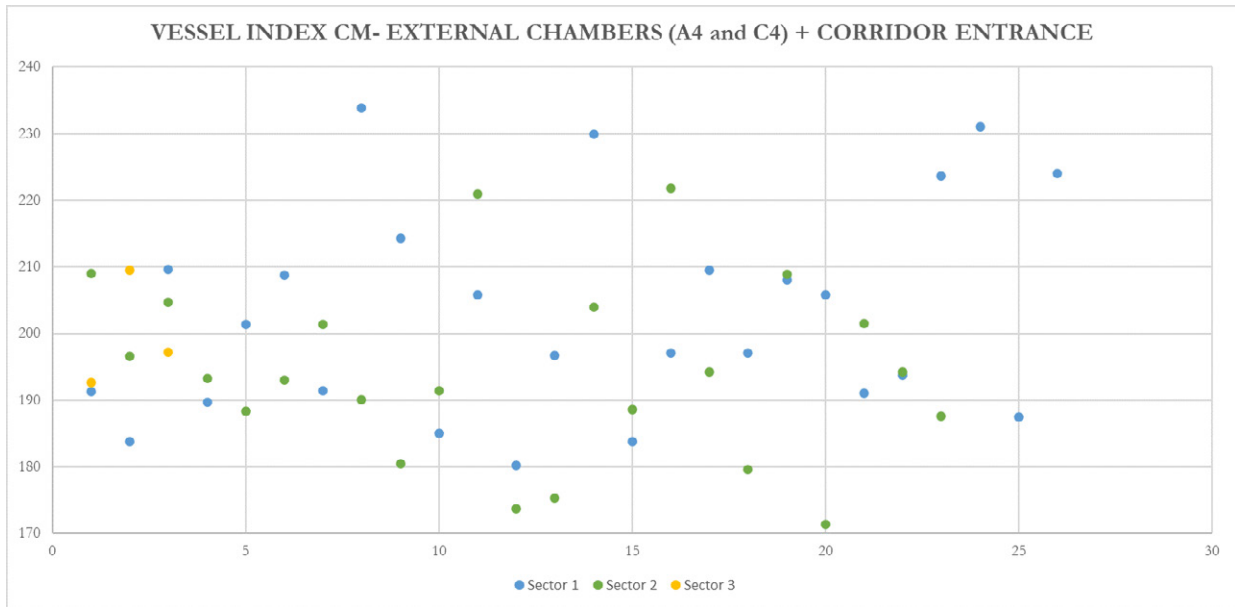


Figure 6. Dispersion statistic of the drinking cups from the external chambers and the entrance of the corridor. The x axis representing the vessel indices of the cups. Sector 1 groups the cups from the chamber A4, Sector 2, the ones from chamber C4, and Sector 3 from the entrance of the corridor B3. (Ana Díaz Blanco, © Proyecto Qubbet el-Hawa).

Calculating the vessel indices<sup>2</sup> (Figure 6) of complete examples documented in the chambers and the corridor entrance, a dispersion statistic was made to see how the use of these cups correlate in these contexts. It is observable that they share a similar tendency. It seems that the use of the southern chamber is slightly earlier than the northern one, but both see a high concentration of cups with indexes ranging from 210-190. Then, there is a minor presence of cups with lower indices, which could refer to the gradual abandonment of the use of these spaces as offering areas. If these data are compared to those presented by Rzeuska (2012) and Kopp (2019) from the indices of the same material in Elephantine, the highest peak of use of these cups in this space of QH35p would correspond to Phase 4 of Rzeuska (2012: 343) and to *Formenspektrum* 2 and 3 of Kopp's analysis (276-277; 290: Abb. 1; 292: Abb. 3. B08.01, B08.02, B08.03). Chronologically speaking, these would correspond to mid-12th dynasty phase 4 of Rzeuska and *Formenspektrum* 2 of Kopp, and late 12th dynasty/early 13th dynasty *Formenspektrum* 3 of Kopp.

Although fewer in number, impressive amounts of carinated small and medium bowls (Figure 7: d, e) were also found. There are mainly two types of these carinated bowls. They can be small carinated forms with a direct rim and flat base (Schiestl and Seiler, 2012: 236-242), comparable to other tombs at Qubbet el-Hawa (Edel *et al.* 2008b: 990, Fig. 9; 991, fig. 11), El-Kubaniya (Junker 1920: Blatt 13.6, type IV), and Elephantine (Pilgrim 1996: 347, Abb. 154e, 357, Abb.159m; Schiestl and Seiler 2012: 241, fig. 28). They can also have a ring base (Schiestl and Seiler 2012: 224-229). As above, they are quite common at most Ancient Egyptian sites, but the most equivalent parallels are found in other tombs of Qubbet el-Hawa (Schiestl and Seiler 2012: 228, fig. 20; Edel *et al.* 2008b: 991, fig. 12; 993, fig. 22) and El-Kubaniya (Junker 1920: Blatt 15.9, type VII, first on the left). Both of the aforementioned present difficulties to date with precision. They

<sup>2</sup> The vessel index is a calculation made by dividing the maximum diameter of the vessel by its maximum height and then multiplying the result by a hundred. This index helps to define more precisely the type of shape that a vessel belongs to. When calculated to a significant number of ceramics of the same type, it can also reflect a technical variability which would signify chronological sequence of the ceramic type. It was first approached in Egyptology by Nordström (1972: 71-72) but Arnold (1982; 1988) was one of the first to test this methodology with the hemispherical cups. The results suggested a direct relation between the variability of the vessel indices of these cups and their chronology. Therefore, they are a very useful ceramic type for dating.

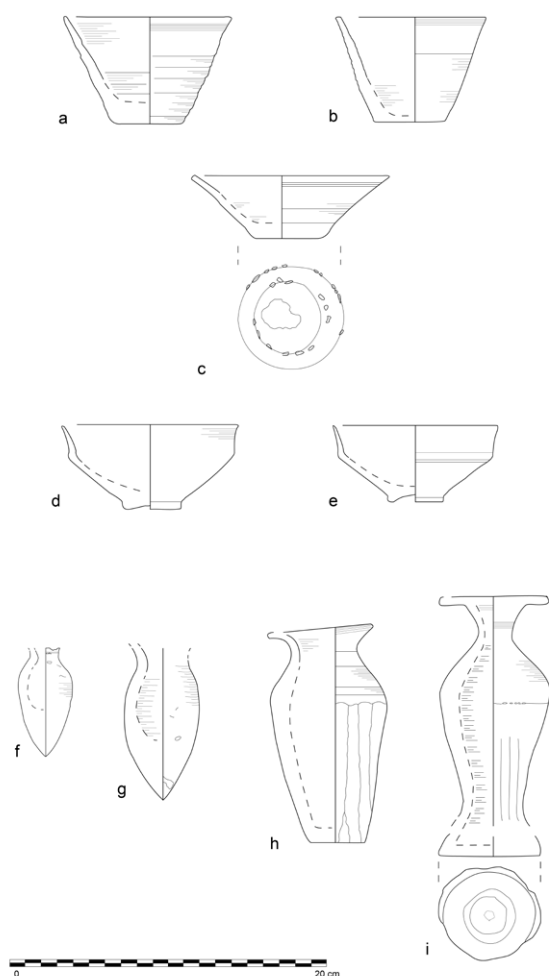


Figure 7. Main pottery typologies documented in the external chambers and the corridor entrance of the tomb QH 35p. (drawings: Ana Díaz Blanco, © Proyecto Qubbet el-Hawa).

important to highlight that examples of them are normally found in royal cemeteries or necropolises in Lower Egypt and they were possibly an imitation of the Old Kingdom Meidum Ware (Arnold 1982: 57). For the moment, the parallels that are comparable to the ones from QH35p are from Hawara (Senoussi 2012: 197, fig. 1. 56, 69, 71) from the SE cemetery of the pyramid complex of Amenemhat III and dated to the late 12th dynasty, and Dahshur (Arnold 1982: 30, Abb. 6.8) from pyramid complex 6 of Amenemhat III and dated to the middle of the reign of Amenemhat III or late 12th dynasty.

The last group of open vessels present in the chambers are plates and dishes (Figure 7: c). These shapes are not as numerous as bowls. Along with shallow and deep plates (Schiestl and Seiler 2012: 141-147), there are also some examples of small, flat-based hyperboloid dishes (Schiestl and Seiler 2012: 112, I.B.I.c). They are uncoated and are made of Nile B1 clay. These types of dishes are often depicted in funerary offering scenes. Therefore, their presence in the contexts of QH35p suggests that they were used for these types of activities. Some comparable parallels for them have been documented in Saqqara (Kawai, Takahashi, Yazawa 2012: 157, Fig. 8.6) and date to the late 12th dynasty.

range throughout 12th dynasty contexts, although they are more commonly dated to mid-/late 12th dynasty contexts. Finally, there are few examples of small uncoated carinated cups with a ring base and wavy-lined incised decoration, like the cases found in Elephantine (Pilgrim 1996: 337, Abb. 149f; Rzeuska 2012: 338, Fig. 2.19), which are dated to the late 12th dynasty.

It is important to mention the presence of thinly red-coated conical cups with flat base made in a fine Nile B1 (Figure 7: a, b). The ones documented at QH35p seem to resemble those flaring cups with a recessed or flat base of 'Pyramid Ware' (Arnold 1982: 57-58) or 'Queen's Ware' (Allen 1998), but without red polish. This type of cup is known to have a direct link with offering rituals in funerary contexts (Allen 2009: 332-334) and in funerary iconography (Allen 2012: 192-193). All this would explain its presence in the offering areas of QH35p, although they are very scarce in number if compared to other types of open vessels found here. Contrasted to the classic descriptions of the 'Pyramid Ware', the examples of QH35p seem to be perhaps an imitation of these, due to their technical and surface treatments. They seem to have been made with a mixed technique, and they are roughly smoothed, especially the coils from the base. The coating is thin and it seems to be covered with a very thin white wash. Even if this type is part of a classic Middle Kingdom funerary corpus, it is

Regarding closed vessels, much fewer than open vessels, the majority are bottles, and most are ovoid (Schiestl and Seiler 2012: 528). This type is made for funerary purposes, and it is a Lower Egyptian tradition. Most of the documented examples come from the Memphite-Fayoum area, especially related to funerary or royal funerary complexes. They are dated to mid Amenemhat III to the end of the first quarter of the 13th dynasty. Some parallels for this type are examples documented in Saqqara, in Teti's Pyramid complex (Schiestl and Seiler 2012: 529, 4), and in Harageh (Engelbach, 1923: pl. XXXVIII, 53L 2 and 53R). A pair of miniature ovoid bottles (Figure 6: f, g) with a pointed base was also documented in the southern chamber. Unfortunately, the necks and rim are not completely preserved but show an everted tendency. They are both uncoated and roughly smoothed, and made in Nile C clay. Such bottles are common in foundation deposits, as well as in both settlement and funerary contexts. It is difficult to find specific parallels to compare because of the preservation state of the rim and neck. But they are similar to the miniature ovoid bottles documented in the foundation deposits of the pyramid of Senwosret I in Lisht (Arnold 1988: 106, figs. 52, 11; 108, figs. 53, 13) and one example found at Lahun (Petrie 1923: 15 pl. LVI; 38A4 Mastaba 4) from mastaba 4 and dated to Senwosret II.

The other main closed vessel type is the Hs jars. For the moment, this type is not the most commonly documented in this area. The examples that have been studied show a variability in type. On the one hand there is a slender type (Figure 7: i) in which the shoulders are lower and more pronounced. Its neck is very slim and flares into a disc-shaped rim. The base is slightly flared and flat. On the other hand, there is a sturdier type (Figure 7: h) with rounded shoulders as well, although much more softly shaped. The neck is thicker and also flares to form a disc-shaped rim. In one of the cases of the sturdier type, as a decorative style, a finger or a spatula-type of tool was used to drag fresh clay downwards, and later roughly smoothed. The bases were cut with cord and scraped. They are also red-coated and the lower part of the body is coated with a very thin layer of white wash. Both types were made with Nile B2 clay. The few parallels found for the slender type are a combination of two examples documented in Thebes West (Seiler 2012: 307, fig. 8, 6; 310, fig. 11, 7) found in funerary contexts. They are dated to the early 12th dynasty, between the reigns of Amenemhat I and Senwosret I. For the sturdier type, there are also two possible parallels. One has been documented in Beni Hassan (Schiestl and Seiler 2012: 513, II.D.7.b.1) and the other from Elephantine, documented in a settlement context (Pilgrim 1996: 340; 341, Abb. 151.e). The Beni Hassan type seems to be slightly slenderer and has more rounded shoulders than the QH35p example, but this could be simply regional differences. However, the Elephantine jar bears the same type of decoration, although the rim and part of the neck are not preserved. There is a wider chronological range for these two parallels. They are dated to the late 11th dynasty /early 12th dynasty (Beni Hassan) to late 12th dynasty (Elephantine).

Finally, for the pottery stands and incense burners, it is important to note that the latter have remains of secondary firing in them that evidence their use in the offering activities in this area. For the moment, two types have been identified. There are closed stemmed bases with fragmented remains of a bowl (Schiestl and Seiler 2012: 358, I.H.4). There is one possible parallel for the QH35p case in Thebes-West (Seiler 2012: fig. 8.5) but it is much taller in comparison with the one from Qubbet el-Hawa. It is dated to the early 12th dynasty, between the reigns of Amenemhat I and Senwosret I. Additionally, there are a few carinated bowls with modelled rims, which would have been attached to a closed stem (Schiestl and Seiler 2012: 364), but unfortunately they are not preserved in the examples from QH35p. There are parallels for these in Aniba (Steindorff 1937: Taf. 62.7b) and Buhen (Schiestl and Seiler 2012: 366, fig. 6), which are dated to the end of the 12th dynasty/early 13th dynasty.

In addition to pottery, other materials were identified, such as ceramic offering trays, levels of charcoal and ashes, and cereal seeds. In the northern chamber there were even locks of hair documented. All of this evidence, along with the compact and dense texture of the sand of these areas, suggests that there were recurrent libation and purification activities, all related to offering rituals.



Figure 8. Stela of Lady Sattjeni (Patricia Mora Riudavets, © Proyecto Qubbet el-Hawa).

#### **Material evidence of other funerary contexts from tomb QH35p: the burial of Lady Sattjeni**

The archaeological evidence presented from the exterior chambers of QH35p suggests that there were recurrent offering activities to honour the deceased buried in the tomb. However, there might be a shift in the interpretation of these rituals if other material data are taken into account. As mentioned above, the corridor was closed with a mud-brick vault to enable this space to feature as a new funerary area of the tomb. From the sources of these burials interesting information was highlighted regarding the interpretation of the external chambers, and we refer here to the burial of Lady Sattjeni.

Sattjeni's burial was first documented in 2015 (Jiménez Serrano *et al.* 2015: 52-54); it was located in the north-eastern corner of the corridor, right next to the entrance. Recently, a detailed analysis of the burial has been published, along with a discussion of the finds related to it (García González, 2021), therefore this present contribution will not offer an exhaustive account of it. However, we may deal with some points, already highlighted in García González's work, regarding the stela (Figure 8) and the pottery associated with this burial (Figure 9). Based on the palaeography and iconography, García González (2021: 147-152) suggests that its production would correspond to the late 11th and early 12th dynasties. She also insisted on the importance of the local etymology of the name Sattjeni, which references the local deity Heqaib, mentioned earlier (García González 2021: 160). Nevertheless, this stela also proposed a parentage rank, possibly relating Sattjeni as a family member of Sarenputi I, who was buried in the neighbouring QH36 (García González 2021: 165-167). Furthermore, she mentions the interesting detail

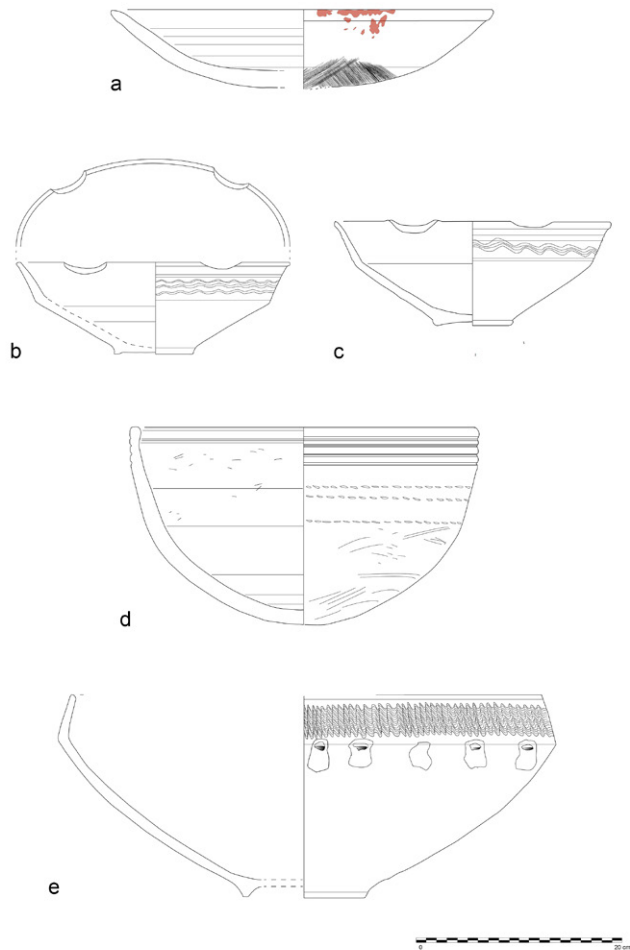


Figure 9. Pottery assemblage from the burial of Lady Sattjeni (drawings: Ana Díaz Blanco, © Proyecto Qubbet el-Hawa).

of the mortar remains at the back of the stela, which could suggest that the original burial would have been elsewhere (García González 2021: 164), most likely, in the urban cemetery of Elephantine, as she recently proposed in her PhD Thesis (García González 2022: 230-233). The burial goods already give us an idea of the social importance and rank this lady had, given the richness of the materials used to produce these objects (González García 2021: 152-159). The luxurious finds (a small stone jar of calcite alabaster and steatite; a wooden cosmetic box made with ivory and ebony inlays; the carnelian, faience and feldspar jewellery; the silver amulet) present an image of a wealthy woman of a certain social rank.

The pottery assemblage associated with it also correlates to this interpretation. Most of the vessels are open, with the exception of a fragment of a possible large bottle or jar; due to its state of conservation, very little information can be drawn from it. As for the other finds, a hemispherical cup with an index of 206 would correspond to Phase 3 of Rzeuska's analysis (2012: 343), dated to the mid-12th dynasty, and to a broader 12th dynasty chronology according to Kopp (2019: 276).

Then, there are two examples of carinated bowls with a ring base, wavy or folded rims, and incised straight and wavy decorations (Figure 9: b, c). Both have a red coat on the interior and the exterior, and are made of Nile B2 clay. The literature describes these types of rims as wavy, however a type of folded rim seems more applicable, based on the four small inward folds they present. There are also differences between their wavy incisions: one example features a single row of three waves; another has three rows of a single incised wave in each row. It has been challenging to find a parallel for these bowls. There are similar shapes documented from both Elephantine (Rzeuska, 2012: 348, fig. 7.50), dated to the late 12th dynasty, and Qubbet el-Hawa (Schiestl and Seiler 2012: 241, fig. 25), dated to the mid-12th dynasty, between the reigns of Senwosret I and II, but they have a flat base, the rim is direct, and they are undecorated. However, the everted or almost flared tendency of the bowls of QH35p seem to correspond more with these examples, and their carination points are low as in the parallels.

A fine example is the Marl A3 carinated bowl with a ring base and incised wavy-lined and applied decoration (Figure 9: e). It is very finely smoothed. The heavy, pre-fired wavy incised pattern is composed of seven very close waves made with a very fine comb, probably a fish bone (Rzeuska 2010). Its close position grants a very heavy and saturated visual effect. There are six preserved, hand-modelled roll-type decorations. They are irregular and ample and were applied and smoothed into the carination point while the clay was still fresh. The surface was left uncoated. There is a very similar parallel for this example documented at El-Kubaniya (Junker 1919: 181, Abb. 83. II), and an almost exact shape, with a different incised decoration and no applied decoration, was documented from Elephantine (Rzeuska 2012: 358, fig. 12.75), and dated to the early 13th dynasty.

The finds also included a large restricted bowl with a modelled rim and rounded base (Figure 9: d). It has four deep, incised lines on the rim, covered with a very roughly applied red slip. The base has traces of scraping on the exterior and the interior is red-coated. It was made with Nile B2 clay. These types of bowl are very common in Middle Kingdom funerary contexts, although they are also documented from settlements, e.g. Elephantine (Rzeuska 2012: 345). They are interpreted as cooking ware by Rzeuska (2012: 345; 350, fig. 8), and they were probably reused in funerary contexts for food offerings. They are also quite common at Qubbet el-Hawa, where there are various parallels to the finds from QH35p (Edel *et al.* 2008c: 1405, fig. 12; 1427, figs. 56-58). They are dated to the late 12th dynasty.

Finally, a large shallow dish was also documented in association with the burial (Figure 9: a). It has a rounded, almost flattened base and a direct rim, with scraping marks on its base. It also has some splashes of red slip on the external rim, and is red-coated inside. It is made with Nile B2 clay. These types of dishes are also quite common in funerary contexts throughout Egypt: there are parallels at Dahshur



(Schiestl and Seiler 2012: 145, 15), Thebes-West (Schiestl and Seiler 2012: 146, fig. 20), and Qubbet el-Hawa (Edel *et al.* 2008a: 384, fig. 76). All are dated between late 12th dynasty and early 13th dynasty.

## Discussion

The data from tomb QH35p points to the tracing of several stages of funerary cult, leading towards, in all likelihood, an ancestor cult. Ancestors have been an important element in human groups, and their practices are varied worldwide. This does not mean that they normally generate important links with the present. If they have recently passed, they are still remembered as close family members and their presence could still be somehow very present in the everyday lives of their kin. However, once time and generations pass, these ancestors are not individuals, but they are a generic entity whose families are certain of their relationship and linkage to them, thanks to a collective effort of a group, in this case a family, to create an identity that will link the current members with the past ones. This effort could be made for several reasons, as has been discussed, but sometimes, the linkage may be used as a tool for discourses, like political or social legitimacy.

Archaeological evidence in the contexts of QH35p suggests that these were active places of mortuary and offering activities. If the external chambers and the entrance of the corridor are representative of a ritual, it is a clear offering area. Taking into consideration the typology of the vessels, they are all linked to libation, purification, or presentation of liquids or food offerings. Hs jars and incense burners, with remains of secondary firing, reveal that these ceramics not only represent symbolic forms of this activity but also the actual practices that were probably taking place here, as the evidence of ashes, seeds, and the compact texture of the sand confirms. The presence of other types of wares, like the small conical cups similar to the Pyramid Ware, or the miniature ovoid bottles with a pointed base, are very clearly classic Middle Kingdom funerary ceramics, although they are also quite common in iconographical representations of offering scenes (Allen 2009; 2011), or contexts with deep symbolic meaning, like foundation deposits (Arnold 1988), in the case of the small ovoid bottles. However, it is impossible to ignore that most of the ceramic finds from these chambers are small hemispherical cups, 'drinking cups', and small carinated cups. Although the latter may not be as numerically present, they are both examples of small portable vessels to transport or consume liquids, both in the everyday life and in funerary rites or banquets. The finding of stacked hemispherical cups is already evidence of a constant flow of people depositing vessels here continuously over a prolonged period of time.

Even if the study of these vessels is not yet complete, there are some conclusions that may be drawn, i.e. the dispersion statistics from the vessel indices of the hemispherical cups. As mentioned earlier, it seems that these cups were deposited in this space from the late 11th dynasty to the very late 12th/early 13th dynasty. They are common to both chambers, although it does seem that the earliest examples come from the southern chamber. In the graph, it is observable that there is a high accumulation of this material corresponding to the mid-12th dynasty to late 12th/early 13th dynasty. This could be evidence that there was a sudden peak of activity using these cups during that time. Then there was a gradual reduction in use of this space as an offering area, and it was transformed into closed chambers for their use as a funerary space. The rest of the ceramic material seems to also confirm this. There are a great number of vessels that date, like the cups, from the late 11th/early 12th dynasty. Although it is very preliminary to say, there is a significant number of them that date to the mid-/second half of the 12th dynasty.

Taking a closer look at Lady Sattjeni's burial, there also seem to be two chronologically distinctive groups of material. First, there is the stela that García González (2021) has dated to early 12th dynasty. Second, we have the ceramics placed as her burial goods. Most of these, as described above, have quite a late chronology, ranging across the 12th dynasty. An important detail that perhaps is key here is the

remains of mortar found on the back of the stela. Given that there is no evidence of the use of this kind of mortar anywhere else in tomb QH35p, it seems that the original resting place of this stela was elsewhere, perhaps in the urban cemetery of Elephantine, and it was later transported and deposited inside the corridor of QH35p. As García Gonzalez has recently interpreted in her thesis, Sattjeni was part of a greater 'burial relocation' commissioned by Sarenputi II, the grandson of Sarenputi I, who lived during the reigns of Senwosret II and Senwosret III in the mid-12th Dynasty. She has identified the individuals buried in the corridor as the ancestors of Sarenputi I and Sarenputi II. According to other evidence, these ancestors were originally buried in a different place, most likely the urban cemetery at Elephantine (García González 2022: 230-235, 255). Following Jiménez Serrano and Sánchez León's conclusions of an existing lineage crisis after the death of Sarenputi I's male children (Jiménez Serrano and Sánchez León 2015; Sánchez León and Jiménez Serrano 2016), García González suggests that his grandson, Sarenputi II, had to deal with a tense situation and reinforce his position within the local power structure of Elephantine. To do so, he commissioned the relocation of the burial of his ancestors to the necropolis on the West Bank, where the ancient local elites had been buried since the late Old Kingdom. That resting place was much more appropriate for those who actually belonged to the ruling family, and this 'relocation' served as a legitimization strategy. In addition, the location of tomb QH35p is also key here, not only because of its closeness to Sarenputi I's funerary complex (QH36) but also its proximity to that of the great local ancestor, the deified Heqaib (QH35d), thus helping to reinforce even more strongly the position of Sarenputi II's household. With this propagandistic act, the collective remembrance of this kin group is reinforced and fixed to that location (García González 2022: 299-301 and 393-394), as has been confirmed by the materials found in the outer offering area.

In the case of QH35p, it is possible to trace several stages of this collective remembrance as it developed:

1. The use of the external part of the tomb as offering areas, where activities and rituals are played out from at least the end of the 11th dynasty.
2. The continuity of this use up to the late 12th/early 13th dynasty. At the same time the offering activities occur, there is a change in the architectural space of the tomb, i.e. the closing of the corridor and where the burials were arranged. Therefore, this space, perhaps around middle of the 12th dynasty, starts to have a funerary use. This change also matches the peak of activity in both external chambers.
3. The external offering areas are transformed into chambers to be used as a funerary space and closed with mud-brick domes.

These steps reflect the active intentionality of a group of people to rearrange the funerary space meant for members of their family. Although the offering activity traced in these chambers is perhaps the most obvious evidence of it, it is the combination of a lot of factors that contributes to this collective effort. Then, there is the material evidence: the accumulation of pottery, the changes in the funerary assemblages, the stela, and the epigraphic evidence of a link to a socially relevant family. The time prolongation is also a factor, i.e. the span between the middle of the 12th and the early 13th dynasty – almost a century, and at least three generations. The fact that people continued to visit this spot for that period of time is a result of the successful effort to create a focus of common remembrance for a group of people who felt sufficiently strongly linked to it, to perpetuate it across several generations. All of this also materialises with the moving of burials from one place to another. The calculated intention and the regrouping of these deceased individuals within one space is a significant message that encodes the collective remembrance of this group. This was not done intentionally for their own group only, but also for others visiting the necropolis at that time.

## Conclusion

The preliminary results of the study of the external chambers of tomb QH35p have revealed an exciting context that prolongs its use throughout the 12th dynasty. The large accumulation of a variety of ceramic materials suggests the active use of this space during offering rituals for the deceased buried in the tomb. However, thanks to the research done in one of these burials, Lady Sattjeni's, another possible hypothesis is proposed to better understand the different uses of all these spaces during the Middle Kingdom. The epigraphical and iconographical work undertaken on the stela documented in this burial linked this woman with a politically important family of the region. There is also material evidence that revealed that Qh35p was not where she might originally have been buried. The idea of the possible moving of people to regroup them in one single space already speaks of a desire to establish not only a link between the deceased and those who carried out the move, but also to code this relationship in the necropolis. This transferral seems to have coincided with the peak use of the external offering chamber (mid-/second half of the 12th dynasty), which speaks of an increase of activity in them as a way of reflecting the move of these burials to the corridor. The possible ancestor links present in QH35p represent a 'cultural tool' used by a group to build a collective remembrance that spoke about its identity and its wish for it to be perpetuated through time.

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# Evidence for the Cult of Osiris at Karnak during the Greco-Roman Period: The Excavations in front of the 1st Pylon

Amira Fawzy Ali

## Abstract

The excavations carried out in front of the 1st pylon of Karnak Temple revealed a great embankment of sandstone blocks, public and private Ptolemaic baths, as well as a large bath complex that has been dated to the Roman era. Many mud-brick structures were found north and south of the Ptolemaic bath. This excavation (2011-2013) brought to light a large number of objects which were preserved in the local temple storeroom at Karnak, including a reused limestone funerary stela which discovered inside one of the rooms north of the Roman bath; one of the registers on this shows the owner burning incense in front of the god Osiris, Lord of Eternity. Other finds included bronze statues and faience amulets of Osiris, representing the god in his standard iconography with a mummified form, standing or seated, wearing a false beard and the *atef*-crown. These were found in domestic contexts assigned to the Greco-Roman Period and may have been used for votive practices inside these houses by their owners. These finds can be considered as important evidence confirming the continuation of the existence of popular cults of Osiris at this period. This contribution seeks to present valuable insights into the cult of Osiris and to investigate the everyday religious beliefs and practices of ordinary people associated with his cult in Greco-Roman Period in this area.

## Keywords

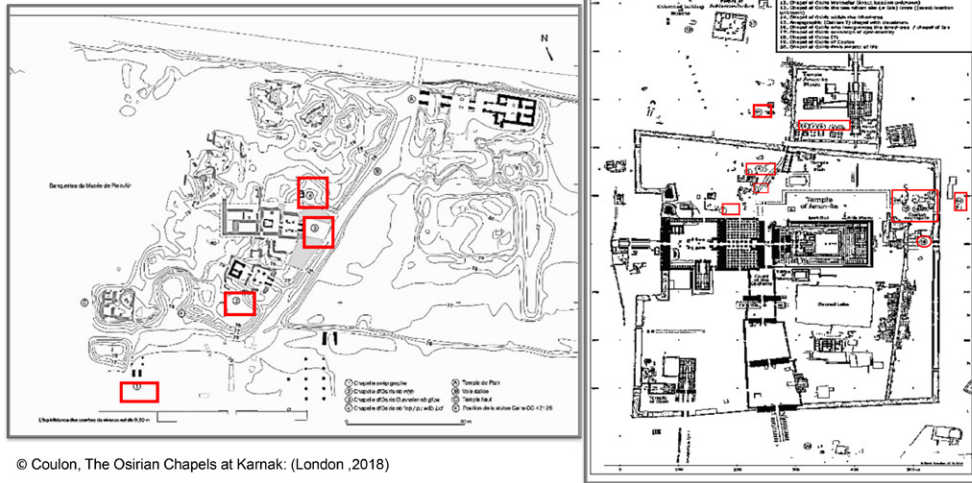
Karnak temples, Osiris, Greco-Roman Period, Excavations, Bronze statues, Religious beliefs, Households

## Introduction: Osiris at Karnak, an overview

The cult of Osiris was most widespread in Thebes during the 1st millennium BC, especially in the 25th and 26th dynasties. This was probably due to the religious transformations that took place at that time (Coulon 2010: 16-17; Leclant 1965: 266). Popular cults of Osiris at Karnak continued to be very important in the 3rd Intermediate Period and later, as witnessed by the increasing number of small chapels built to the north and northeast of the temple of Amun, dating back to the 25th and 26th dynasties (Jurman 2006: 107-130; Coulon 2010: 14-16) and dedicated to different forms of the god, including, e.g., chapels constructed for: *wsir di 'nh* (Osiris the giver of life) (Porter and Moss 1972: 5-6, 17-19; Leclant 1995: 91-93, 99-105); *wsir nb 'nh di hb sd* (Osiris the lord of life who grants jubilees) (Porter and Moss 1972: 13-14; Leclant 1995: 94); *wsir hq3 dt* (Osiris ruler of eternity) (Porter and Moss 1972: 204-206; Fazzini 2007: 446-447); *Wsir Wnn-nfr nb df3w* (lord of sustenance) (Porter and Moss 1972: 193-194; Coulon and Defernez 1995: 41-47).

The most important structure dedicated to the god of the underworld was the 'Osiris catacomb' complex, which was located in the north-eastern part of the temple of Amon-Ra, built by Ptolemy IV Philopator. The catacombs consist of vaulted brick corridors housing alignments of small individual niches designed for small *khoiak*-figurines of the god Osiris and decorated with painted scenes, following the Ptolemaic artistic style and representing the Egyptian mythology of the resurrection of Osiris and the running of the Apis bull (Leclère 2010: 239-268; Coulon *et al.* 1995: 205-226).

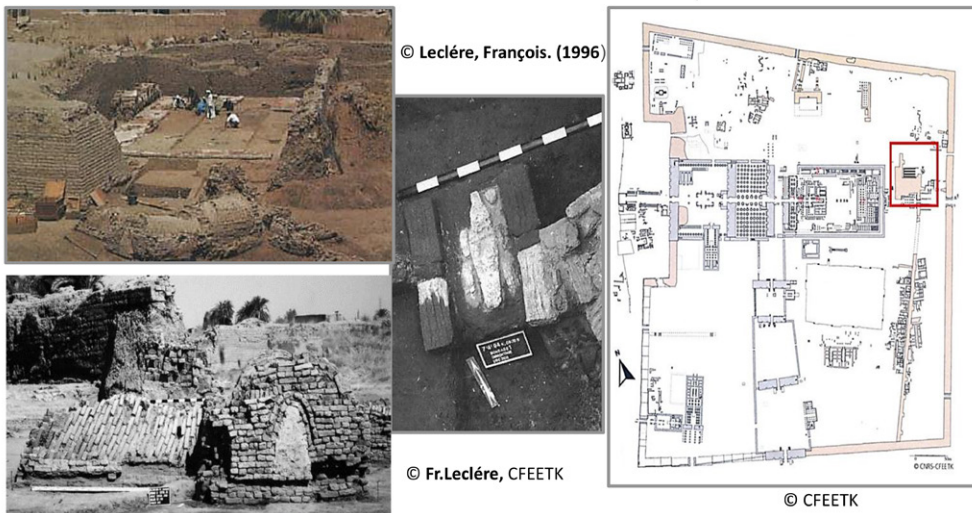
**The Osiris chapels at Karnak temples in the Third Intermediate Period and later.**



© Coulon, The Osirian Chapels at Karnak: (London, 2018)

Figure 1. The Osiris chapels at the Karnak Temples in the 3rd Intermediate Period and later (Coulon 2018).

**Osirian catacombs at Karnak temples**



© Leclère, François. (1996)

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Figure 2. The Osirian catacombs at Karnak (© Fr. Leclère, 1996, © Fr. Leclère/CFEETK, © CFEETK).

His cult was very active in the temples of Karnak during Greco-Roman Period. According to some texts, Osiris was born in the temple of Opet,<sup>1</sup> to the west of the Khonsu temple at Karnak, and was dedicated to the goddess Ipet by Ptolemy the 8th (Euergetes 2nd). In this place, the goddess Nut is supposed to have appeared in Thebes in the form of the goddess Opet and gave birth to Osiris in the temple, after which he ruled over Karnak as the heir of Amun (Laroze 2010: 219; Klotz 2012: 186-194).

<sup>1</sup> The evidence indicates that Osiris was born in the *ipt* temple, i.e. the stela discovered at the temple (dating to the 25th dynasty and dedicated to *wsir wnn-nfr*, mentioning that Osiris was born in the Opet temple (see Coulon and Gabolde 2004: 1-21). The Vatican papyrus displayed in the Louvre refers to the Khoiak festivals celebrated at the temple on the 18th day of this month and to a wabt room at the *ipt* temple that became connected to the cult of Osiris as a solar god. The festival celebrations are connected with the rebirth of Osiris at *Ipt* (see, e.g., Bonneau 1964: 252, 368; Coppens 2009: 39; Dunand and Zivie-Coche 1991: 311-312; Rossini and Anteleme 1992: 147; Wilkinson 2000: 122).



The Osiris legend is widely represented in the Opet temple. For example, in a well-known representation in the northern crypt, mainly in the second register of the north wall, Osiris appears lying on a lion couch between Isis and Nephthys, as Amun hovers above him in the form of an ithyphallic human-headed bird (Degardin 2007: 283; De Witt 1958: 4, 61-63, 118-121). The text under the bed reads: ‘... Nout gave birth to Osiris inside *Pr-ipt-wrt*, on the western side of the house of Khonsu’ (Degardin 2007: 283; De Wit 1968: 63 B). This scene was a celebration of the resurrection of Osiris, which focuses on the rebirth of the victorious god.

One of the most important sources of information about the increase of the popular devotion to the god at this time is the corpus of graffiti<sup>2</sup> left by visitors on the walls of the temple. For example, we can mention the graffito carved on the first register of the northern part of the exterior side of Thutmose III, the east enclosure walls. It depicts Osiris of Coptos carved in raised relief in his traditional form, standing in front of an offering table with a depiction of Osiris’s symbolic tomb with his name, as well as the *išd* tree growing on top of his grave (Coulon *et al.* 1995: 221-223). There are also two figurative graffiti on the outer north wall of the hypostyle hall depicting Osiris in his traditional form, standing toward the west.

The figures of the gods are surrounded by rectangular drill holes: two at the top and two at the level of their feet. These graffiti may indicate that Osiris was worshipped along this road and that those who follow it will eventually reach the Osiris catacombs.

Among the other indications that also point to the rise of the Osiris cult in Karnak at that time is the large number of votive bronze figurines (Coulon 2010: 13-14) that were deposited in sanctuaries dedicated to him, and found by CFEETK archaeologists in the temple of Ptah in December 2014 (Charloux *et al.* 2017: 1189-1202; Charloux, Thiers 2019). A nearby cellar contained further finds, 38 objects made of different materials such as, greywacke, wood, copper and faience (Charloux *et al.* 2017: 1192). Other finds included fourteen statuettes and figures of Osiris, discovered where they were used in religious rituals and dated to the second half of the Ptolemaic period, c. 2nd to the middle of the 1st century BC.

### ***Introduction to the Karnak excavations***

Since 2007, a Supreme Council of Antiquities team has carried out salvage excavations in front of the 1st pylon at the Karnak temples. These operations have revealed a great embankment made of sandstone blocks, constructed to protect the temples from the dangers of the Nile’s floods (Boraik 2010; Boraik *et al.* 2013). Three bath complexes were also brought to light, two dating to the Ptolemaic period and the other Roman. The three baths are located to the north of the tribune of the temple (Boraik *et al.* 2013: 47-77).

The Ptolemaic public bath at Karnak bath was directly built on top of the last course of the embankment during the second half of the 2nd century BC; it was only in use for a very short period. The Roman baths found north of the Ptolemaic bath contained many well-preserved architectural features, such as bathing pools. It was built and used for a long period, probably during the 3rd century AD (Boraik *et al.* 2017: 241).

The private bath was found between the Ptolemaic and Roman baths and was built of fired-brick coated with plaster. The building is heavily damaged in several parts; the bath consists of two sets and three

<sup>2</sup> More than 600 graffiti were engraved on the Khonsu roof by *w<sup>bt</sup>* priests, etc. Some of these graffiti represent figures related to the lunar cult of Osiris, i.e., crescent, baboon with lunar disk, leg of Osiris, boats of Khonsu, etc., these figures confirm the lunar Osiris ritual performed on the roof (see, e.g., Degardin 2010: 227-241).

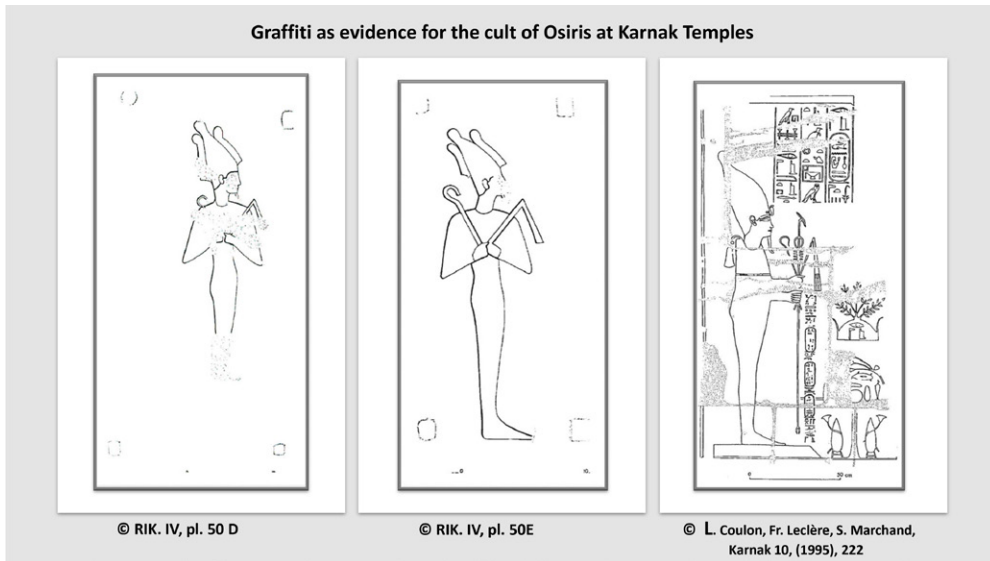
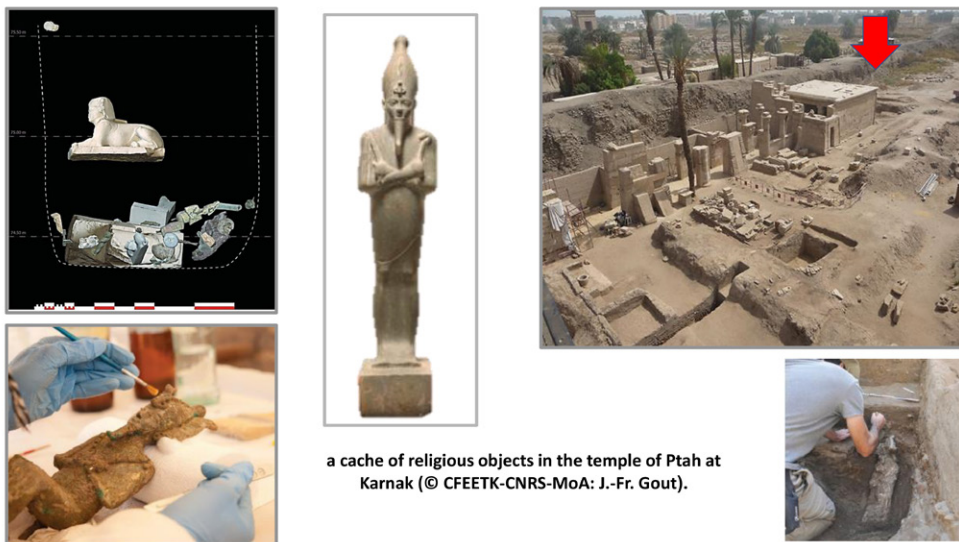


Figure 3. Graffiti evidencing the cult of Osiris at the Karnak temples (© L. Coulon, Fr. Leclère, S. Marchand, Karnak 10 (1995), 222; © RIK. IV, pl. 50 E, D).



a cache of religious objects in the temple of Ptah at Karnak (© CFEETK-CNRS-MoA: J.-Fr. Gout).

Figure 4. Reconstructed cross-section of the cellar looking south (© CFEETK, CNRS-MoA).

rooms. The initial study of the pottery found suggests that the private bath in front of the Karnak temple should be dated to the late 2nd or early 1st century BC (Boraik 2020: 257-260).

The 2012-2013 excavation season unearthed a large habitation area dating to the late Ptolemaic period and the 4th century AD; it is located to the north and south of the Roman baths and includes two unusual areas:

#### Site H

Site H lies south of the Roman bath. There, one of the Ptolemaic houses (20 m north of the public Ptolemaic bath and attached to a private bath) was comprehensively excavated. Made of mud-brick,

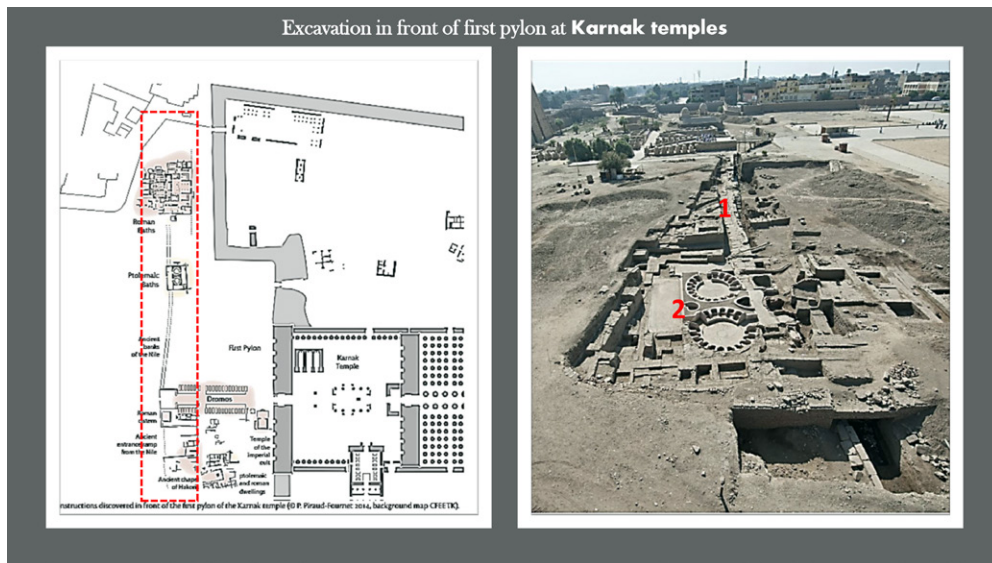


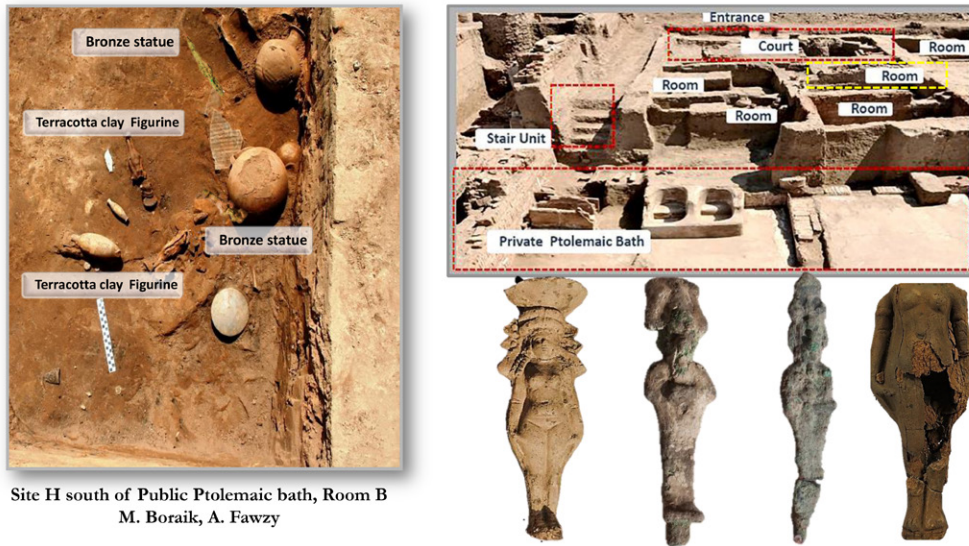
Figure 5. Excavations in front of 1st pylon at the Karnak temples (© CFEETK, CNRS-SCA).

the house featured an entrance, located on the east side, leading into a central courtyard, around which a number of rooms were arranged. The house also had a stair unit that led to the upper floors. This large Ptolemaic house is dated to the late 2nd/early 1st century BC and most likely belonged to a high-ranking person of the Ptolemaic era (Boraik 2020: 257).

### Settlement I

The second area excavated is referred to as Settlement I, north of the Roman bath. There, the residential buildings were built of mud-bricks, as well as some made of red bricks. There was a water well, with pipes supplying the houses. These houses have the same architectural design as the one located to the north of the Roman bath. On the other side, the southern house, which has an entrance located on its east side, seems to have been once covered by a wooden roof, which appears to have been destroyed by fire at the beginning of the Roman period (Boraik 2020: 255). The walls of room DE show traces of burning and evidence of wooden beams is clearly visible on the ground. According to the archaeological context, it seems it was an accidental fire that caused the roof collapse and the abandonment this structure (Boraik and Naguib 2013: 165). Although almost everything was found *in situ*, including various types of cooking pots, trays, dishes, coins, grinding stones and other implements of daily life.

There are two theories regarding the function of the buildings. Field director Dr Mansour Boraik has suggested that one of the units was a potter's workshop, with unit DE being the main room used to display the pottery for sale on shelves; the accidental fire brought down all the merchandise in the middle of this room. Dr Boraik supports his view based on the specific archaeological evidence, i.e. finds of white sand, the grinding stone, some stone fragments, and the possible remains of a kiln. The other theory is proposed by the ceramist Dr Mohamed Naguib, who suggests that room DE functioned as a kitchen. His suggestion is based on contextual evidence, including the different pottery types, covered by a red and grey layer of ash, and the further presence of various dishes, cups, jars, plates, cooking pots, and a fire-dog within the same closed area. The excavations in this residential area recovered many different objects dating to the Greco-Roman period, i.e. terracotta figurines, coins, glass bracelets, grinding stones, and many small faience beads from various contexts. In additions to the small finds, objects such as amulets, clay moulds, reused inscribed blocks, much assorted pottery (vessels, jars, bowls, oil lamps, etc.), as well as bronze statues of Osiris.



Site H south of Public Ptolemaic bath, Room B  
M. Boraik, A. Fawzy

Figure 6. Site H, south of the Ptolemaic public bath, room B (© SCA).

Settlement I north of Roman Bath

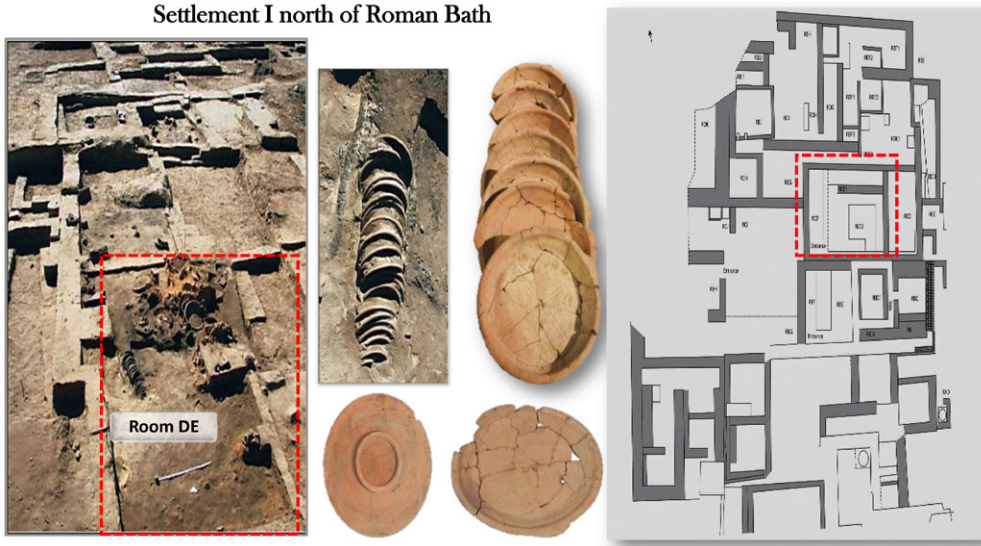


Figure 7. Settlement I, north of the Roman bath complex (© SCA).

**Osiris bronze statues**

At least seven small Osiris bronze statuettes were discovered in association with a number of Isis and Hippocrates Terracotta clay figurines and other faience amulets of Taweret and Bes at site H and settlement I, and were preserved in the local storeroom of the Karnak temples. These included: three complete standing statues; two standing statues missing heads and feet; one seated statue missing both legs; and one statue head, broken at the neck. They were made using the solid lost-wax method, with heights range from 3.9 cm to 14.2 cm.

Most of these statues represent Osiris in his standing iconography with a mummified shape (Hill 2001) and feature the solar disc on the *atef*-crown with a central *uraeus*. Two of the figurines differ: one wears the *atef*-crown without a sun disc, and another wears only the white crown of Upper Egypt.



Figure 8. Bronze statues of Osiris (© SCA).

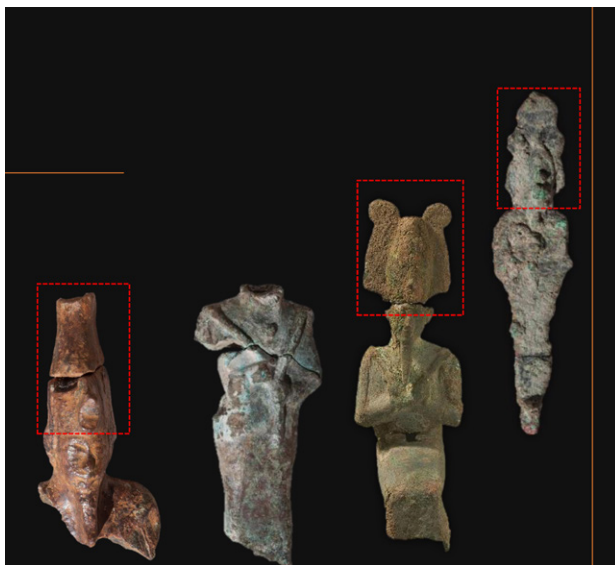


Figure 9. Statues of Osiris in different styles from the Karnak excavations (© SCA).

The position of the arms varies substantially among bronze Osiris figures, apparently often linked to regional traditions (Odgen 2000: 148-176). Figures of Osiris in Upper Egypt usually show the arms crossed over each other (Scott and Dodd 2002: 333-345; Gravett 2011); in Middle Egypt, the god is depicted with both arms at the same level; and in Lower Egypt one arm is on the chest and the other on the stomach (Wilkinson 1999; Griffiths 1980; Gravett 2011).

Applying these regional variances to our Osiris statuette indicates that two equate to the Upper Egyptian style, the rest fitting the Lower Egyptian model. However, we have to keep in mind the potential movement of craftsmen from one region to another in Egypt (Grajetzki 2006), some bringing specific local styles with them. Among other details, we note that not all the

figurines had loops on the back at neck level, and only two had tongues for fixing to a wooden base<sup>3</sup>.

As one of the most important gods, bronze statues of Osiris are found in many houses during the Late Period and Greco-Roman Period. We can assume, therefore, that the majority of the bronzes from late Ptolemaic Karnak residential areas were used as part of domestic religious practices, as votive offerings in thanks for answered prayers or requests for good health, long life, as well as to guarantee procreation and the stability of the family. Thus the residents maintained their connection with the beloved god Osiris, who mediated within their homes. Most houses in Greco-Roman Period had specific

<sup>3</sup> This type of Karnak statue with loop is similar to those from 'Ayn Manawîr; the Serapeum Osiris statuettes have a loop on the base at the foot of the figure. The most feasible explanation is that these loops relate to gestures during rituals. The loops have previously been interpreted as possibly being used to fix textiles onto the statue. See, e.g., Koemoth 1993: 172; Gombert 2019: 201-205; Hill 2007: 87-88; Charloux, Thiers 2019: 127-128.

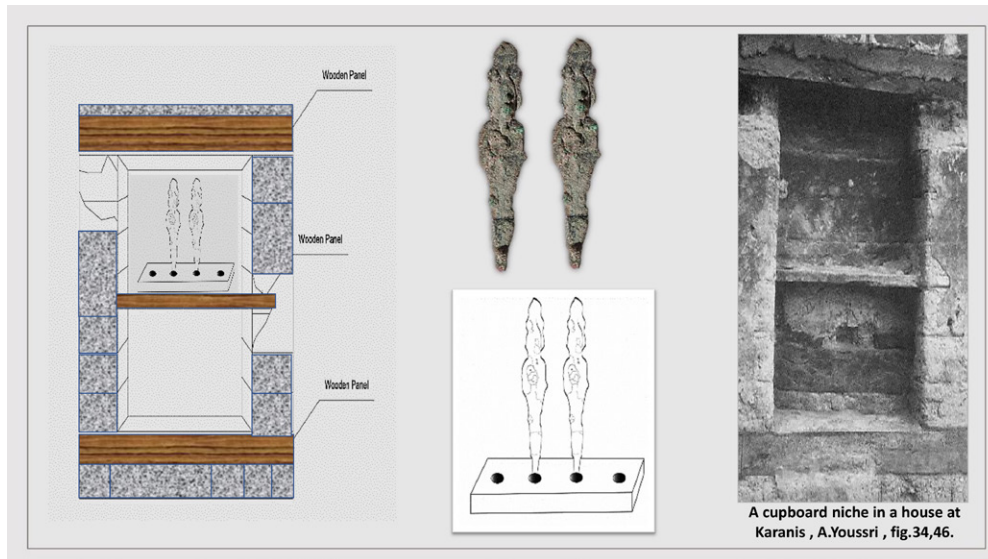


Figure 10. Reconstruction of a niche for a small bronze statue (A. Fawzy).

places dedicated to the gods, i.e. paintings, reliefs, wall niches,<sup>4</sup> or small shrines where statuettes and cultic objects were usually displayed. As noted above, the Karnak bronze statues have tongs that enable them to stand on wooden bases inside small niches, such as those found inside houses in Karanis at Fayoum (Gazda 1983: 25-26.); it is possible that these wooden bases could accommodate several statues). It seems, therefore, that residents sought to recreate and imitate the religious and spiritual atmosphere of their temples within their domestic setting, believing that the bronze figurines of Osiris would protect them as they practised the popular cult indoors.

### *The private funerary stela*

Many reused blocks from the Pharaonic period were discovered in the excavations in front of the Karnak temples. Among the finds was a private funerary stela uncovered inside one of the rooms adjacent to the north side of the Roman bath. Although dated to the late Ptolemaic period, the style and design of this stela roughly points the possibility of a late Ramesside date.

The limestone stele, with no trace of colour and generally in poor condition, was found with its inscribed surface sloping down and is currently preserved in the local Elsheik-Labib storeroom in the Karnak temples, with registration number RB95. It measures 51 cm (high) x 27 cm (wide) x 10 cm (thick). It is a rectangular funerary stela with a round top and is damaged in several parts. It is carved in three registers divided by a double horizontal line. The rounded upper part is decorated in sunk relief and shows boat of the sun god and two baboons praising the sun disk (Boraik 2013b: 93). The first register contains a scene representing the owner of the stela burning incense; behind him is another figure, perhaps his son, but this part is badly damaged. In front of them the god Osiris sits on his throne, while

<sup>4</sup> The religious role of the house is confirmed by the presence of terracotta figurines of Greco-Roman and Egyptian deities and wall niches serving as domestic shrines. The niches of the houses in Karanis provide the best, if not the only surviving examples. They have been divided into two types: cupboard niches and domestic shrines. Cupboard niches are usually found on the first floor of the house below the windows, with their sloping sills in most cases. They measure 1 m in height and are located c. 1 m above floor level. They often have shelves for keeping small portable objects and holding lamps, as indicated by carbon deposits on the niche walls and sills. The domestic shrines were probably used to display the small figurines of deities and were once decorated with paintings of religious themes. Domestic mud-brick shrines also took the form of temple gateways.

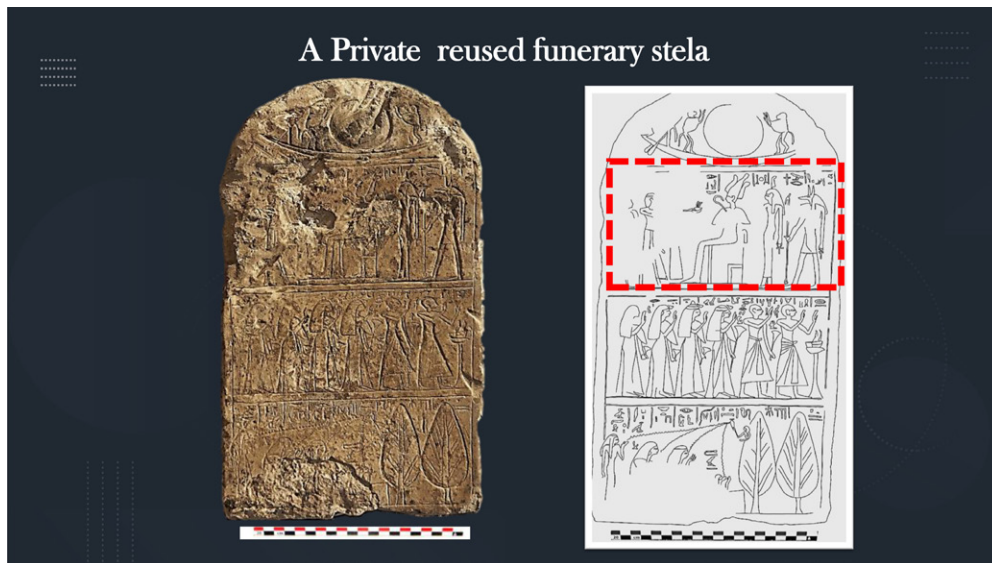


Figure 11. Photograph and drawing of the Ramesside stela (after Boraik 2013b: Figs 9, 10, 97-98).

behind him stands the goddess Maat, followed by the god Anubis. Above this register is a text in bad condition. We can read its remains: *wsir nb nḥḥ... wr inpw*. The second register features six figures (two men and four women), shown as adorants, who most likely represent the family of the deceased. The third register depicts two trees, one of them figuring the goddess Nut, who appears to be purifying with water flowing towards four women, three kneeling and one standing (Boraik 2013b: 93-96). It is difficult to ascertain the exact purpose of this reused stela, but we can suppose that it was used for domestic worship practices addressed to divinities in the household; it could have been placed in a niche or on an altar. However, we lack the archaeological evidence and associated materials to support this.

### Amulet

Among the amulets found in the Karnak excavation, one was discovered while surface cleaning the area of settlement I, north of the Roman bath; it dates to late Ptolemaic Period. This small amulet represents the upper part of Osiris in his most common form, with a white crown, and has a horizontal suspension loop at the top of the crown. The amulet is made of Egyptian green faience, a colour associated with vegetation and natural regeneration. It is 1.8 cm high, 1.5 cm wide, and 0.5 cm thick; there are no inscriptions.

We can suppose that this amulet was used in healing rituals and for protection, Osiris being, in the Late and Ptolemaic periods, a god people could turn to for help in Period of trouble as Osiris the Savior, with the title *p3 wšb i3d* (Who Answers The Needy) in the chapel, and *Wsir nb nḥ* (Lord of Life) in the north Karnak temple. This being the same title Amun held in the Luxor Temple (Amun-Opet – Who Answers The Needy)<sup>5</sup> (Brand 2006: 59-60). Moreover, Osiris in the Late period and Greco-Roman Period was considered as the god who rescues his servant in the underworld – *šd ḥm.f m dw3t* (Graefe and Wassef 1979: 104-107). Note that this epithet is also linked with Khonsu.

<sup>5</sup> The conception of Osiris as savior in time of need arose in the Late period and Greco-Roman Period as result of his association with Amun. We can see Amun holding the titles *p3 wšb i3d* (LGG II, 592b, also for Amun), the helper of the needy in the New Kingdom. Osiris also held the same title – *wsir nb nḥ*. The oldest Greece document comes from Saqqara (4th century BC) records a complaint made to Osiris by a women called Artemisia against her father, an Egyptian, who robbed her funerary gifts. She beseeches the god to assist her see (Wilcken 1927: 97-104; Smith 2017: 407-408).



Figure 12. The Osiris amulet (© SCA).

## Conclusion

During Greco-Roman Period the god Osiris continued to play a prominent role in the official and domestic cults at the Karnak temple site. This was confirmed by the recent excavations carried out in front of the temples, bringing to light valuable material evidence (bronze statues, amulets, reused limestone stele) pointing to the presence of the Osiris cult in domestic settings. Almost all the houses in this time contained shrines or niches for statues dedicated to specific gods. It seems the finds of the small statues of Osiris and the stela were placed in specific places within the house, in the belief they would protect the inhabitants from the risks of everyday life and also in the underworld. These finds thus reflect the continuation of the popular cult of Osiris and the domestic rituals performed inside the dwellings of this area during the Greco-Roman period.

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# The One She-Cat of Pakhet: Towards a New Type of Animal Cult?

Romain Ferreres

## Abstract

During the 3rd century BC, Padikem of Tuna el-Gebel was 'Priest of the Living She-Cat of the Temple of Pakhet', suggesting that such a cat had her cult around the Speos Artemidos, the cliff-temple of the lion-headed goddess Pakhet. The thousands of cat mummies scavenged next to the temple at the end of the 18th century and turned into powder to make fertiliser for British fields already demonstrated that a cult of cats existed in this area. However, this is only a testimony of the 'cult of the many', the offering of animals mummified for this sole purpose. At the same time, the title of Padikem implies a 'cult to the one', as known for the bulls Apis, Mnevis, or Buchis. However, other indices scattered through Egypt can provide a new hint of a peculiar cult, a hybrid between 'cult of the many' and 'cult of the one'.

## Keywords

Animal cult, Pakhet, Speos Artemidos, Sacred animal, Animal mummies

## Introduction

The cult of animals is a well-known element of the ancient Egyptian religion, even if it suffers from clichés which are a source of jokes and amusement. We can distinguish two main types of animal cults in Ancient Egypt, the 'cult of the one' and the 'cult of the many' (Dunand, Lichtenberg 2005: 227; Ikram 2015: 5-15).

The great bulls of Egypt illustrate best the first type of animal cult: Apis for Ptah in Memphis, Mnevis for Ra in Heliopolis, and Buchis for Montu in Armant. The divine essence of the future sacred bull appears through physical characteristics, such as its coat, and enables its identification. Once found, it comes to the temple, passes through different rites and then lives in a particular paddock, where it will receive care and offerings, and participate in processions and other cult practices. Therefore, we can consider this animal a living statue of the related god. When it dies, the body is treated with care, being mummified and buried in an individual tomb, and continues to be worshipped with the offering of steles. Therefore, only one individual exists per cult, which is why we call them 'one' or 'unique'.

In the second type, every animal presenting proximity with the iconography or the mythology of a god can become a suitable offering, provided it goes through the rite of mummification. However, due to the length of the process, pilgrims could not always come with their own victim to mummify, so the temples prepared mummies in advance to be offered to the pilgrims. Therefore, 'fake' mummies appeared to meet the demand, containing only parts of an animal, the wrong species, or were simply empty, but with an aspect fitting the right animal. Consequently, more than one mummified animal can exist in one particular cult, thus the general denomination as 'many'.

In both types of cult, the critical point is that the chosen animal must become a *ntr*, not in the sense of 'god', but as a 'ritualised being or object' (Meeks 1988: 430, 437). With this status, the living animal or

the dead and mummified one accesses a new state, enters the world of the gods and can therefore serve as a medium between humans and deities (Charron 2014: 277).

### The cult practices for Pakhet

The Wadi Batn el-Baqara – the Belly of the Cow – is a dry tributary on the east bank of the Nile set in Middle Egypt, 15 km north of Hermopolis. This valley is famous for its main monument, the Speos Artemidos, a rock-cut temple dedicated to the lion-headed goddess Pakhet, excavated by Hatshepsut and Thutmose III and later enlarged by Seti I. However, the speos is not the only monument of the wadi, although the most known. Indeed, a small niche from the reign of Hatshepsut called Speos Batn el-Baqara stands far away at the end of the valley, at an uncertain location (Fakhry 1939: 709-723). Then, the cliffs of the wadi opening present numerous tombs dating back to the 5th-6th dynasties for the southern lip (Garstang 1907: 30-35) and from the 20th-30th dynasties in the northern lip (Garstang 1907: 200-209). Finally, another group of rock-cut chambers forms a line east of the Speos Artemidos. Unexplored and undocumented, these hypogea have sculpted door-lintels with cavetto cornices.

Alongside these excavations, Champollion (1868: 69-70) described the existence of countless cat mummies in three different locations (Figure 1):

‘[Le temple] est cerné par divers hypogées de chats sacrés (l’animal de Bubastis); quelques-uns sont creusés dans le roc, un, entre autres, construit sous le règne d’Alexandre, fils d’Alexandre le Grand. Devant le temple, sous le sable, est un grand banc de momies de chats pliés dans les nattes et entremêlés de chiens; plus loin, entre la vallée et le Nil, dans la plaine déserte, sont deux très-grands entrepôts de momies de chats en paquets, et recouverts de deux pieds de sable.’

The first spot refers to the rock-cut chambers east of the Speos Artemidos. Indeed, among these hypogea is a particular room with a more elaborate lintel (Figure 2). Like the others, it has a cavetto cornice carved with a frieze of cartouches of Alexander Aigos (323-309 BC) on both sides of a solar disc,

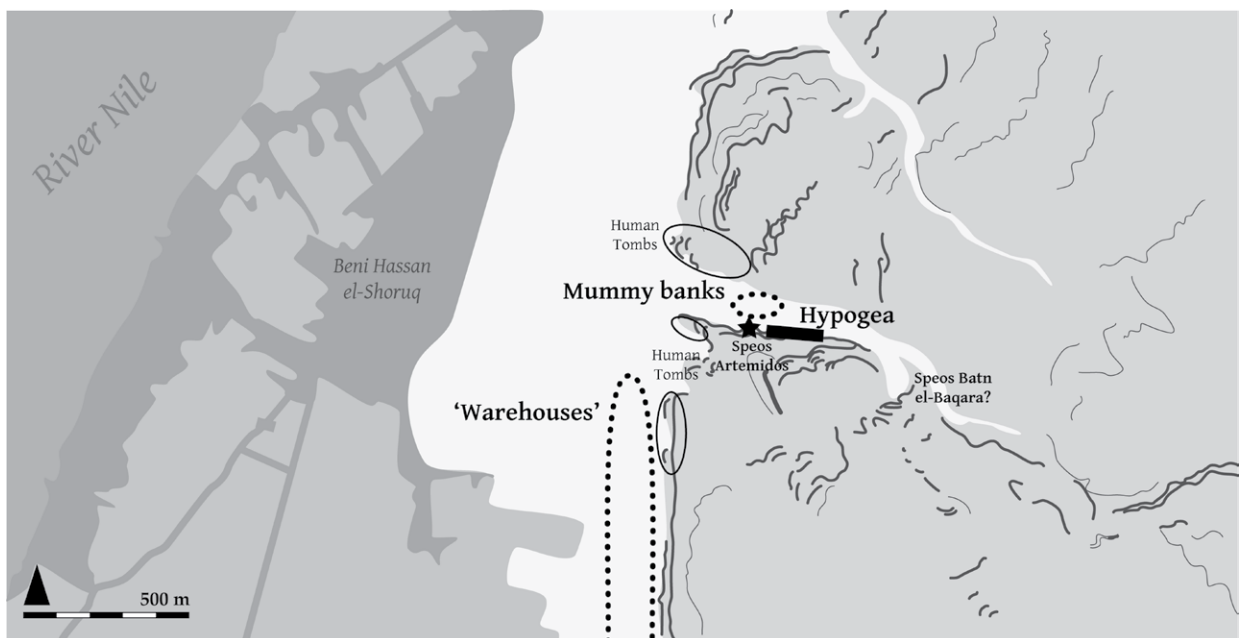


Figure 1. Map of the Wadi Batn el-Baqara region with position of cat necropoleis (© Romain Ferreres).

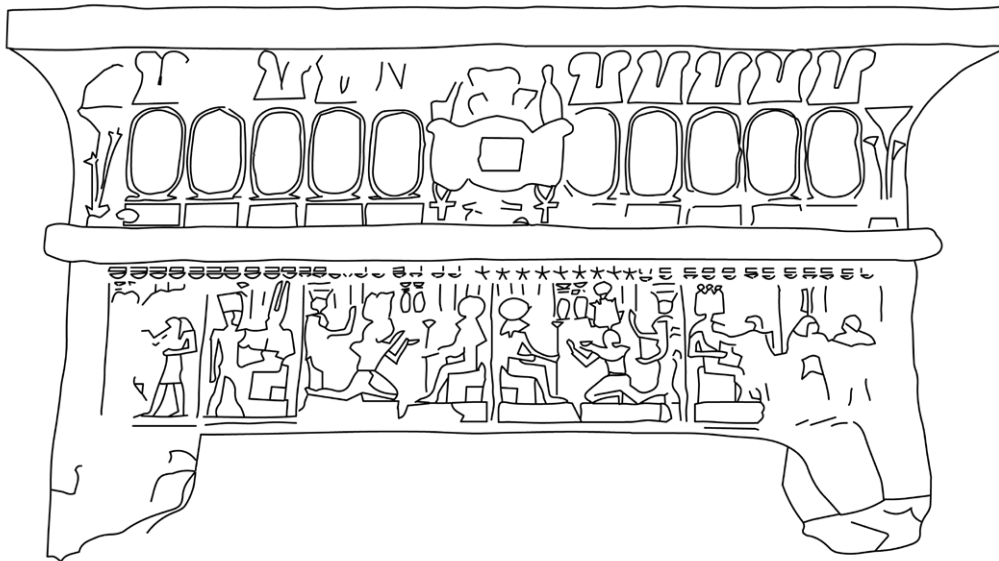


Figure 2. Drawing of the Alexander Aigos speos lintel (© Romain Ferreres).

flanked with two *uraei* in metal and now lost; all that remains are its imprint and mortise. Under the cornice, a small register of six symmetrical scenes shows the king being brought before a lion-headed goddess, Pakhet, to present her offerings. This decoration leads us to consider this chamber a small temple, a new speos dedicated to the local goddess. However, the general aspect of the lintel, identical to the other hypogea, except for the decoration, implies that it is a tomb consecrated to a more special occupant (Ferreres 2017a: 119-120).


The second and third locations, the banks buried in the ground a few metres below the temple entrance and the two enormous warehouses dug up outside the Wadi Batn el-Baqara, south of its mouth, are irremediably lost. On these last warehouses, a commentary of Maspero (1890: 723) talks about a bank, 2 km long, dating to the Saite-Persian period (Figure 1).

The mummies stored in these places had a sad fate: at the end of the 19th century, two cargo ships delivered 180,000 of them at Liverpool. They were plundered from the Speos region and sold for a fair price to be pulverised and spread as fertiliser on British crops (Cooke 2015: 51). As a result, only a few mummies remain in different museums worldwide for study. We can classify them into two types according to their appearance. In the first, the cat's limbs are distinct from the rest of the body, and the mummy kept the original form of the animal; in the second, the mummy takes the form of a bowling pin with its straight forelegs wrapped along the body and its bent hind legs and tail pulled up under the pelvis.

These cat necropoleis must be the result of the cult of the many, due to the large number of bodies they contained: bred cats were killed and mummified to be 'sold' to pilgrims coming to make offerings to their goddess. The British painter Edwin Longsden Long (Bills 1998: 153) depicted a romantic vision of this breeding of cats, not knowing that those poor creatures would have their necks broken when they were about sixteen months old (Armitage, Clutton-Brock 1981: 194).

### The One She-Cat of Pakhet and other living animals

Not far from the Speos Artemidos, at Tuna el-Gebel, stands the tomb of Padikem, near the famous tomb of Petosiris (Gabra 1941: 11). Padikem's most important titles are related to the temple of Thot

at Hermopolis and his position as a scribe. However, Padikem's most important title for this present contribution is  *hm-nṯr n(y) T3 Mjw.t nḥ.t n(y.t) ḥw.t-nṯr Ph.t* 'priest of The Living She-Cat<sup>1</sup> of the temple of Pakhet' (Gabra 1941: 16-17, 23, 25; Ferreres 2017b: 221-222, 282-283). This title is evidence of the existence of a cult of the one in the same temple of Speos Artemidos, for it insists on two points. First, the definite singular feminine article stresses the unique and female aspects of the animal. Second, the adjective 'living' focuses on its alive and fully functional state, therefore not being a mummy.

This adjective is quite common for sacred animals' epithets. For example, the Apis-bull can receive the appellation *Ḥp nḥ* 'living Apis' (LGG V, 117a-c), while the dead ones are *Wsjr-Ḥp* 'Osiris-Apis' (LGG II, 554a-555b). In the same way, the Mnevis-bull bears the title of *Wḥm-nḥ n(y) R<sup>c</sup>* 'living herald of Re' (LGG II, 520a). However, contrary to Apis, Mnevis or Buchis, the three great bulls of Egypt, this female cat does not seem to have a proper name, for she has the mere definition of 'living one she-cat'. It implies a cultural tradition related to the great bull cults, although distinct and different.

It becomes exciting when we look around and find that other denominations of sacred animal exist under the form 'definite singular article + animal name + "living"' or similar ones that concern animals other than the cat (Figure 3):

- Some steles represent Ptolemaic kings making land donations to a lion. The stele 7772 from the Allard Pierson Museum in Amsterdam names this lion *P3 Rw nḥ* 'The Living Lion'. A single Greek inscription mentions OIKIA THΣ TAΦΗΣ ΤΩΝ ΛΕΟΝΤΩΝ ΙΕΡΑ 'the sacred house of the tomb of the lions' (Meeks 1979: 675-686).
- In the round top of the stele of the lector-priest of Thutmose II, Amenhotep (Cairo CG 34152; Lacau 1909-1957: 198, pl. LXI) stands an ovine figure captioned *Rhn nḥ n(y) Jmn* 'Living Barbary sheep of Amun', missing the definite article. It otherwise appears on the left side of the ram statue base of Amenhotep II (Cairo CG 42078; Legrain 1906-1925: 45, pl. XLVIII), where the animal has the name *Jmn-R<sup>c</sup> p3 rhny nfr nṯr šps* 'Amun-Ra the perfect, divine and august Barbary sheep'.
- The Mendes stele (Cairo CG 22181; Kamal 1905: 159-168, pl. LIV-LV; Thiers 2007: 185-195) relates the death and discovery of a new ram for the cult of Banebdjed during the reign of

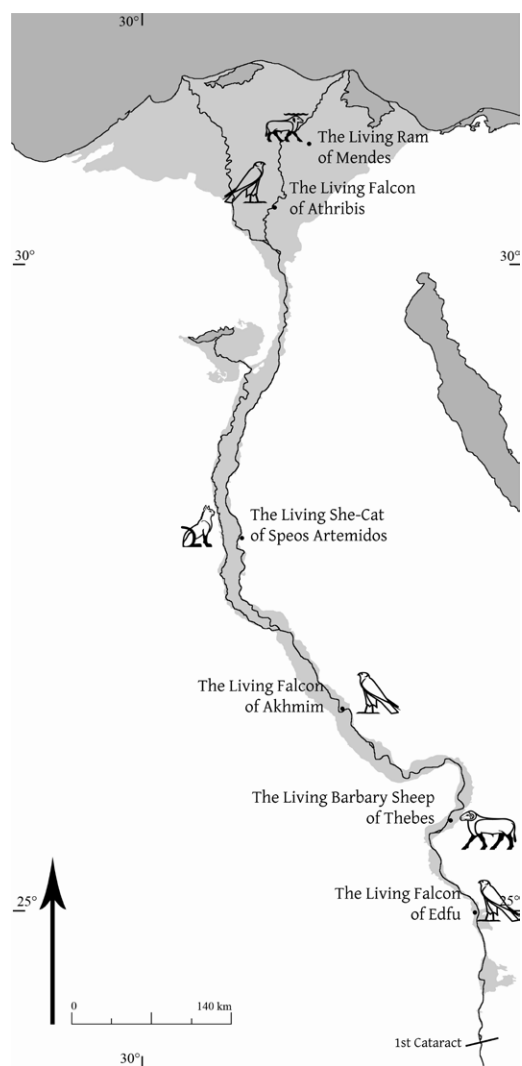


Figure 3. Map of 'The Living Animals' cult places (© Romain Ferreres).

<sup>1</sup> The absence of gender in English grammar hardens the translation of the Egyptian feminine word *mjw.t*. The compound name 'she-cat', rather than the expression 'female cat', allows us to use just one word that better corresponds to the French feminine word 'chatte' primarily used (Ferreres 2017a: 273). I thank Islam Alwakeel for pointing out this particular problem during my presentation.

Ptolemy II Philadelphus. According to the text, the king enthroned the animal himself (line 7; Kamal 1905: 162; Sethe 1904: 37, 4): *šḥn Ḥm-f b3 'nh m sp* 'His Majesty enthroned the living ram at once'. Here again, the definite article is missing, and the text talks about a cult closer to the great bulls' one, with a new ram found on a farm after the death of the current incarnation of Banebdjed.

- Three living falcons are also present in Athribis, Akhmim, and Edfu. The last two cases are called *p3 bjk 'nh* and the first one *n3 bjk.w 'nh.w* in the plural.

These last birds deserve a greater focus. Indeed, the evidence of the cult of unique falcons is the most important because they are not just titles of individuals but are also present through texts which allow us to understand the treatment of such animals and their role in cultural practices. It must be kept in mind that we have here three place cults, quite distant from each other, and that the elements each one gives might come from very different customs. Nevertheless, on the other hand, we have three cults of the same animal taxon, the falcon, which needs specific treatment and, thus, a similarity in its handling.

### **First Case: The Living Falcon of Akhmim**

The offering table of Horashaukhet from Akhmim (Cairo CG 23160) dates to the Ptolemaic period. The owner bore on this object the titles of *mn'/mn(jw) n(y) p3 bjk 'nh wnw-3 n(y) Pr Mnw nb Jpw* 'breeder/guardian of The Living Falcon and doorkeeper of the House of Min, lord of Ipu (Akhmim)'. Some difficulty lies in the first and most important title for us, for its writing only consists of three signs: the draught-board (Gardiner Y5), the ripple of water (Gardiner N35), and the forearm (Gardiner D36). While the first two signs give the reading *mn*, the last one can be the phonogram ' or writing for the forearm with the hand holding a stick (Gardiner D40). In the first case, we read *mn'*, the masculine counterpart of the *mn't* 'nurse', while in the second, just *mn* with a determinative, maybe with some vowel to replace, *mn(jw)* being a guess. However, the correct writing of the forearm with hand holding stick just two cadrats further on shows that the first reading is to be preferred. This title of 'nurse', or 'breeder' of The Living Falcon, shows that these sacred birds are not wild animals captured to become sacred but domesticated or instead tame animals. Except for falconry, a practice unattested until now in ancient Egypt, and eventually for keeping as pets, which is not very common, there was no use for raptors and so no economic reason to breed them. This title, if read correctly, seems to suggest the existence of aviaries specifically destined to produce birds, at least for the different cults of falcons. It is necessary to note here the association of the functions of sacred falcon breeder and doorkeeper that will appear later on.

### **Second Case: The Living Falcon of Athribis**

Djedhor of Athribis, better known as Djedhor the Saviour, lived from the end of the 30th dynasty to the beginning of the Ptolemaic period, mainly during the Second Egyptian Satrapy. Although his celebrity mostly comes from his famous healing statue from Cairo (JE 46341; Jelínková-Reymond 1968), he also owned a second statue, only known through its socle now in the Oriental Institute of Chicago (OIM 10589; Sherman 1981) and a few years older than the Cairo statue. Both statue socles bear an autobiographical text of Djedhor and recount his functions as a priest of The Living Falcon of Athribis. Both texts are similar in structure and content, but the Cairo socle is more extensive and detailed and contains information absent in the Chicago text. Nevertheless, five points are instructive in both of them.

First, Djedhor bears the titles of *ḥry jry.w-3 n(y) Ḥr Ḥnty-ḥty ḥry s3(w).w n(y) P3 Bjk m ḥ.t=f nb.t* 'superior of the doorkeepers of Horus Khenty-Khety and superior of the guardians of The Falcon in all its things' (Jelínková-Reymond 1968: 86-87, 91, l. 7-8; Sherman 1981: 86, 90, F8-9). This sequence is reminiscent

of the titles seen before for Horashaukhet from Akhmim, where the functions of falcon guardian and doorkeeper are associated.

Second, the first statement of the autobiography gives a concise summary of Djedhor's career alongside the sacred falcon (Jelínková-Reymond 1968: 93-94, 91, l. 9-11; Sherman 1981: 86, 90, F10-13):

*J nbꜣj Ḥnty-ḥty nb Km-wr ḥry nṯr.w nb mꜣꜥ.t ḥḥꜣfjmꜣs rꜥ-nb šsm(w) jb n(y) nṯr.w rmt šsmꜣk jbꜣj r jr.(t) šḥrw n(y) Pꜣ Bjk m-ḥnw Jꜣ.t-Mꜣ.t m-ḥt wn~nꜣj ḥr sms Pꜣ Bjk m rnp.wt ḥꜣꜣ.wt*

‘O my lord Khenty-Khety lord of the Great Black Bull province, superior of the gods, lord of *maat* who lives thanks to it daily and leads the heart of gods and men, you lead my heart to realise the design of The Falcon who resides in Iat-Mat after I was at the service of The Falcon for many years’.

Djedhor does not spell out his activities in the sacred falcon temple, here called Iat-Mat, but it is possible to deduce the last part of his career further in the text.

Third, the shorter text on the Chicago statue base reduces the work of Djedhor in provisioning Iat-Mat in food with the sentence *jr~nꜣj ḥr(y).w Nꜣ Bjk.w ḥḥ.w jm(y).w tꜣ pn* ‘I made the provisions of The Living Falcons who are in this country’ (Sherman 1981: 87, 90, L5). Here is the denomination, in the plural, built on the model ‘Definite article + Animal name + “Living”’, as seen for the cat of Pakhet and previous animals.

Fourth, in his new function, Djedhor built a new *wabet*, an embalming structure for the falcons because the previous one was abandoned and squatted by soldiers. Contrary to the Chicago statue base, the Cairo text takes many columns to describe the said building (Jelínková-Reymond 1968: 96-108, l. 15-38; compare with Sherman 1981: 88, 90, B2-8). Without getting too much into detail, Djedhor explains that the *wabet* stands as a separate building from Iat-Mat, the temple itself, which has its enclosure, gardens, and well. We also learn that Iat-Mat stands apart from the actual temple of Horus Khenty-Khety, the god that the sacred falcon of Athribis embodies. Therefore, the enclosure wall of Iat-Mat also contains the *wabet* (see the schematic plan by Jelínková-Reymond 1968: 100, n. 10).

Finally, the text deals with the mummification of the sacred falcon (Jelínková-Reymond 1968: 109-111, l. 38-44; Sherman 1981: 88, 90, B8-11). Djedhor proceeded to the mummification and burial of the sacred falcon of his time. Here, the Cairo statue states:

*Gm~nꜣw bjk.w ḥꜣꜣ.w m-ḥnw n(y) ḥ.t 70 jwty(.w) qrs(.t). Rd(~nꜣj) ḥq nꜣsn r tꜣ wꜣb.t rd(~nꜣj) qrs nꜣsn m mrḥ.t tn ḥbsw nfrw nt(y).t m wꜣb.t rd(~nꜣj) ḥq nꜣsn r pr r(ꜣ)-stꜣw.*

‘Numerous falcons were discovered inside the Chamber of Seventy (left) without burial. I made access for them in the *wabet*; I made embalming for them with this oil, the perfect wrapping and what is in the *wabet*; I made access for them in the house of the necropolis’.

Therefore, the birds Djedhor found were already dead, and he proceeded with the burial rites as he did before for the current sacred falcon. The number ‘70’ is reminiscent of the 70 days of mummification. The presence of those mistreated sacred birds may be due to the period of the Second Egyptian Satrapy when the Persian authorities neglected the local cults.

The case of the Living Falcon of Athribis teaches us that there were priests designated to organise the inhumation of the sacred animals and that they could be the same as those who bred them in the first place. However, this sole text cannot determine whether one person can simultaneously bear the two functions. Then we see that Djedhor, like Horashaukhet from Akhmim, bears a title which links the



care of sacred birds and the gates of the temple of Horus. The temple of the falcon, Iat-Mat and its *wabet*, constitutes a separate enclosure which may stand near the entrance of the main temple. The following case of the sacred falcon will explain this situation. Finally, we can see here the importance of the definite article in the denomination of the sacred animal. Indeed, both texts are void of any article except when it comes to naming the sacred bird: *P3 Bjk* ‘The Falcon’ in the singular and *N3 Bjk.w nḥ.w* ‘The Living Falcons’ in the plural. This particular use shows that they are not simple determiners but are part of the name-title of the animal. The plural form also induces the simultaneous existence of several sacred living birds, with only one as the unique sacred bird named with the singular form, as we will see now.

### *Third Case: The Living Falcon of Edfu*

The ritual text of *H<sup>c</sup>(.t) n(y)-sw.t* ‘the Crowning of the king’ (Alliot 1949-1954: 561-676; Van den Hoven 2015: 185-198) from the Edfu temple appears on the first two registers on the inner side of the outer wall’s north part. The eight symmetrical scenes tell the ceremony through which the sacred falcon becomes the new hypostasis, the new living statue of Horus of Edfu.

Once a year on the 1st Tybi – the first month of Emergence (Alliot 1949-1954: 561) – a ceremony brings out the divine statue of Horus with his court in a quest for a new heir, a new incarnation of the god. The procession walks through the pylon to the enclosure main gate, in the south wall, and heads for *Pr Bjk* ‘the House of the Falcon’ (Alliot 1949-1954: 565-566).

This text is the only source concerning this building with its scant details, perhaps along with a remaining archaeological vestige. Indeed, there are two enclosures at Edfu, the main temple one, with a south-north axis, and the mammisi one, with an east-west axis. Both joined the mammisi at the south of the temple and west of its main southern gate. In front of the mammisi, east of the central axis of the temple of Horus, stands a small masonry block, 2 m long, 1 m wide and 1.5 m high (Chassinat 1939: III, 220, pl. LVI, LX). The decoration of this block shows scenes of adoration or offerings to the sacred bird, which allow us to suppose that this altar is part of the House of the Falcon mentioned above. The building itself is still probably under the actual town of Edfu, but the Crowning text states that it has at least a *sb3*-gate, a *wsh.t*-room and a *sšd n(y) ḥ<sup>c</sup>(.t)*, a ‘Window of Appearance’ (Alliot 1949-1954: 566-568). The remaining small altar itself may be merely a sacred bark stand.

Brought to the House of the Falcon, the divine members of Horus’ suite present themselves as the new heirs, but Horus rejects them all. So then, the priest called *ḥm-gmḥsw*, ‘the servant of the raptor’, heads for the *wsh.t*-room of the falcon temple to present the living birds one by one on individual perches (Alliot 1949-1954: 566-568). These birds may even have been bred in the very House of the Falcon.

The next step in the description is: *spr=fm ḥtp ḥr b3=f ḥtp=f jr=f ḥr smn jw<sup>c</sup>.t=f* ‘he (= Horus) reaches his *ba* in peace and stops towards it, establishing his heritage’ (Alliot 1949-1954: 565, 568). The described ritual is reminiscent of an oracular procedure, where the god ‘chooses’ the answer; here, he elects or recognises the bird. On the practical side, the bird’s election was either a hazardous choice or a selection made beforehand by the priests of the best candidate. The criteria may be due to its physical aspect or healthy state.

In any event, the chosen falcon is placed on a *serekh*-shaped sedan chair, stressing the royal aspect of the said bird, and the priests present it at the Window of Appearance (Alliot 1949-1954: 568-569). This event means this ritual had an audience of unknown composition. Then, the god’s statue and the falcon return to the temple of Horus, where they meet with Hathor, Horus’s *paredra*. During this meeting, the

priests perform different rituals, mainly for protection; the return to the temple and the protection rituals appear on the two outer scenes of the first register (Alliot 1949-1954: 568-632).

The culmination of the 'Crowning of the King' takes place directly in the sanctuary of the temple of Edfu. While Horus and Hathor take their place at the back of the room, the bird and the priests face the divine couple and perform different offerings linked with the sun's course; this appears in the central scenes of the first register. The position of the sacred falcon in front of Horus, among the ritualists, states that the bird is still part of the mortal world. However, when, in the four scenes of the second register, the same falcon stands alongside Horus and Hathor, facing in the same direction as the gods, it means that it has now gained the status of a *nṯr* (Chassinat 1960: pl. CXLIX, CLIV). Henceforth, it can receive the last rites, first of protection, then meat offerings (Alliot 1949-1954: 632-664).

The sacred falcon is not supposed to live in the sanctuary. Once the last rituals end, it returns in procession to the House of the Falcon, concluding the ceremony. However, just like some other rituals in Edfu, the 'Crowning of the King' took place for five days in a row (Alliot 1949-1954: 665-668).

To summarise, the 'Crowning of the King' presents two main events: the election of the sacred falcon and its ritualisation, making him a *nṯr*. The first part of the ceremony takes place in a separate building near the entrance of the main temple, the 'House of the Falcon', which served as an aviary, procession station and acclamation ritual. The bird's election presents several similarities with a royal crowning, as suggests the rite title. The bird stands on a sedan chair shaped like a palace façade and receives acclamation from a Window of Appearance. Once ritualised, the bird returns to the House of the Falcon, where it will spend the rest of the year.

This case reveals many things concerning a sacred animal's election ritual. However, as a ceremonial text, it contains many questions that still need answers, mainly regarding the frequency of the rite and the changing of the bird. Indeed, the 'Crowning of the King' supposedly takes place yearly, between the 1st and 5th of the month of Tybi. So, either the same bird participates in each repetition for the five days, which implies a previous selection, or a new animal may take its place.

The same problem arises from one year to the other, for nothing indicates that the sacred bird holds this position for life. Therefore, the ceremony could occur with the same bird until its death or with a new falcon elected each time. In this case, what happens to the preceding year's bird? We can only make propositions; for example, the priests could merely release him through an unknown ritual. Nevertheless, they also could kill and mummify it (Alliot 1949-1954: 674-675), and the mummy may receive a special burial as a sacred animal or become a votive mummy, integrated into the circuit of the cult of the many. A final proposition concerns the simple turnover of the birds in the House of the Falcon. Thus, each one had a chance of being chosen later.

However, it is possible that the sacred falcon could keep its status until it died, and a new 'Crowning of the King' ceremony did not occur every year but only when needed, with perhaps a time lapse of a maximum of one year until the following year's 1st Tybi. Finally, the last and most crucial question concerns this sacred falcon's role in the temple's liturgical calendar outside this election ritual. Living in a separate enclosure, it could, like the Apis, receive visits or offerings from people, but no further indication of this appears in any other text at Edfu.

### Similarities and differences

It is necessary to summarise all the gathered information concerning the cult of all these animals: they bear a name-title under the form 'Definite Article + Animal Name + "Living"'. They constitute a stock, bred and kept in a dedicated and separate structure built outside but next to the main god's temple. At

least concerning falcons, we can suggest that this place, called ‘House of the Falcon’ at Edfu and Iat-Mat at Athribis, stands near the main enclosure entrance. This location could explain why the staff in charge of the sacred animal often bear titles related to keeping the temple gates. The priests who constitute these attendants intervene in all the steps of a sacred animal’s life. Breeders maintain and tend the stock, ritualists participate in the election rituals and any other rite requiring the sacred animal, and embalmers take care of the mummification and burial of the dead individuals. These categories may form three different corps of priests; it is also possible that there was only one group of priests in the animal temple and that they were elevated through the different posts in a sort of promotion, as happened to Djedhor of Athribis. Otherwise, Padikem of Tuna, the ‘priest of The Living She-Cat of Pakhet’s temple’, was presumably part of the second category, the ritualists; he may have started as a breeder and only indicated the higher level of priest hierarchy he reached.

As mentioned above, the sacred animal plays a role in a definite ritual in which the god’s statue ‘elects’ or ‘recognises’ its future incarnation, which is then enthroned as The Living Animal in the singular and therefore accesses the required status of *ntr*. However, we know little about the animal’s ritual life outside this enthronement, the frequency of which is unfortunately unknown, and induces many unsolved questions. Finally, the sacred animal is mummified and buried in a dedicated structure next to the breeding place when they die. In the Wadi Batn el-Baqara, the so-called speos of Alexander Aigos may have been only that, a warehouse for sacred cat mummies dedicated expressly to The Living She-Cats of Pakhet, half tomb, half temple.

We can then reconstitute almost the whole life cycle of an ‘elected unique’ and compare it to an ‘authentic unique’ like the Apis bull (Figure 4). Both cycles start differently. Indeed, an ‘authentic unique’ birth is random and can occur everywhere in Egypt, while the ‘elected unique’ breeding implies its birth occurs in the temple. Then comes the recognition of the animal by the priests who went in search of it, or directly by the god during a ritual reminiscent of oracle procedures. Once identified, the animal is not a *ntr*, a sacred animal yet, for it must first pass through a sequence of rites to gain this special status, which presents similarities with a king’s coronation. The sacred animal will henceforth live in

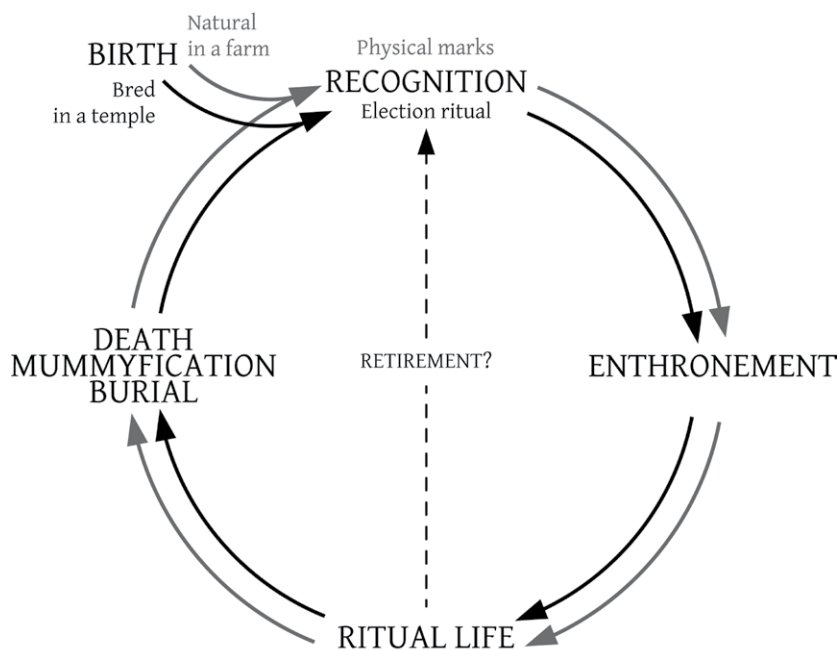


Figure 4. Chart of the compared life-cycles of an ‘authentic unique’ (in grey) and an ‘elected unique’ (in black) (© Romain Ferreres).

its temple and may receive offerings and visits from pilgrims and participate in processions for some time. Indeed, the routes diverge here because of a lack of information concerning the ‘elected unique’. For the ‘authentic unique’, the animal lives its life to its natural end and then is mummified and buried like a king. It might be the same for an ‘elected unique’; however, it is also possible that such an animal passes through one or several phases of election-retirement during its life, according to the temple’s ritual, before it dies. After that, its treatment is the same as for an ‘authentic unique’: mummification and burial. A new cycle begins with the death of the sacred animal and the recognition of a new one.

Thus, the cult of ‘elected uniques’ is close to that of the great bulls, where an animal undergoes a ritual, making it a *ntr* and able to receive proofs of worship. It serves as a medium between men and gods but is closer to people than a cult statue would be, being a living image of the deity. However, a few differences show an adaptation, a sort of improvement and, therefore, posteriority from the cult of an ‘authentic unique’. First, the chosen animal taxon is close to the related god’s iconography, as with the cult of the many. On the contrary, the unique bulls Apis, Mnevis, or Buchis convey the deity’s mighty, combative and fertile characteristics, far from its original image: human for Ptah, falcon for Ra and Montu. Second, there is tighter control over the ‘production’ of the sacred animal. If we stand by the life-cycle of an ‘authentic unique’, many years can occur before the birth of a calf with suitable marks. In the case of an election, there is no such constraint, for the breeding of the animals directly in or near the temple obviates the need to quest for it: it lives next door. Finally, the eventual rite renewal every year suggests the retirement and changing of the animal. This treatment constitutes the main difference between the two types or sub-types of cults of the unique. There can be several explanations for the introduction of such a practice. Indeed, compared to a bull, we are dealing here with short-lived animals; replacing the unique before its death maintains the image of an eternal living being. In the same way, it prevents the periods mentioned above of an absence of the sacred animal – between its death and the finding of two successive animals.

## Conclusion

Here we have seen the characteristics of this new type of animal cult induced by Padikem’s title of ‘priest of The Living She-Cat’: the existence of a group of animals in the temple, one of which is chosen to be the living vessel of the deity, at least for a year. Contrary to Apis, Mnevis, or Buchis, they were not destined to live this life until they died, but to face replacement. However, due to their past status, when they died they received the treatment of a *ntr*, being mummified and buried in a special chamber.

Nevertheless, aside from those questions concerning the frequency, replacement and retirement of the animal already mentioned, several others remain. First, what happens to the animals which are never elected if they exist in the case of a hazardous divine election? Second, is it possible that in one temple for the same god, a cult of the one, an ‘elected unique’, existed simultaneously with a cult of the many? This suggestion relies on the case of the female cat of Pakhet, where the necropoleis show the existence of votive mummies, while Padikem’s title testifies to the cult of the one. Third, if both practices could co-occur, do the animals come from the same stock, with an initial human selection for suitable ‘eligible ones’ and the others doomed to mummification? Fourth, are there differences between the lives of an ‘authentic unique’ and an ‘elected one’, other than the election principle and eventual retirement? This question concerns especially the types of rituals in which each type might be involved. Fifth, what are the origins of the cult of the ‘elected unique’: a development from the cult of the great bulls, with adaptations due to the types of animals? Finally, what about other animal taxa otherwise known through the cult of the many, such as crocodiles, ibises, dogs, ichneumons, fish, shrews, beetles, snakes, or monkeys?

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# Champollion, Lepsius, and Borchardt – The (Re)discovery of Egyptian Columns

Jessica Jancziak

## Abstract

What do Jean-François Champollion, Karl Richard Lepsius, and Ludwig Borchardt all have in common, besides being distinguished personalities and pioneers of early Egyptology? They all had a particular interest in Egyptian columns.

Champollion introduced the term ‘protodoric’ column in 1833 after he saw the fluted columns in Beni Hasan, comparing them to the Greek Doric column. Lepsius published two longer essays in 1837 and 1871 describing and differentiating between two Egyptian column types: geometrical and floral. Borchardt published the first monograph on Egyptian plant columns in 1897 before he excavated the earliest stone columns of three well-known types (palm, papyrus, and with cylindrical shaft) in the pyramid complex of Sahura in Abusir some ten years later.

The impact of these three pioneers in terms of ancient Egyptian columns was immense. The term ‘protodoric’ is still commonly used today in describing fluted Egyptian columns. Lepsius used copies of Egyptian columns in the 1850 partly opened Neues Museum on the Museum Island, Berlin. Borchardt can yet be seen as the scholar with the biggest impact on the research of Egyptian columns, and his monograph was long the only one dealing with this topic alone.

Besides the focus on the three described personalities and their impact to this day on the research of Egyptian columns, another focus of this contribution will be on the columns housed in the Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung Berlin and their future display in the Fourth Wing of the Pergamonmuseum.

## Keywords

Jean-François Champollion, Karl Richard Lepsius, Ludwig Borchardt, Columns, Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung Berlin

## Introduction

What do Jean-François Champollion, Karl Richard Lepsius, and Ludwig Borchardt all have in common besides being distinguished personalities and pioneers of early Egyptology? You might not know but they all had a particular interest in Egyptian columns. Therefore, this contribution focuses on these three personalities and their impact to this day on the research of Egyptian columns. Another focus will be on the columns in the Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung Berlin, which came from Borchardt’s excavations in the pyramid complexes in Abusir, and their future display in the Fourth Wing of the Pergamonmuseum.

## Jean-François Champollion and the term 'protodoric' column

Jean-François Champollion introduced the term 'colonnes proto-doriques' (Champollion 1833: 75) after he saw the octagonal, polygonal, and fluted columns in the tombs of Beni Hasan when he travelled to Egypt in 1828-1829 (Bierbrier 2019: 97). He obviously compared them to the Greek Doric column and thought them to be the predecessors of the later. In the 'sixième lettre' of his travels to Egypt and Nubia, published in 1833, Champollion describes the tombs of Beni Hasan and notices the similarity between their columns and the Greek Doric columns of Sicily and southern Italy, and writes 'nous y avons tous vu le véritable type du vieux *doriques grec*, et je l'affirme sans craindre d'établir mon opinion sur des monuments du temps romain, car ces deux hypogées' (Champollion 1833: 75).

A new term was thus born and it is still commonly used today. For example, it is always referred to the 'protodoric' column wherever polygonal or fluted columns are mentioned in literature dealing with ancient Egyptian architecture and columns (e.g. in monographs on Egyptian columns (Philipps 2002: 6-7), lexica (Arnold 1994: 120), or even excavation reports (Wegner 2007: 125).

When looking at fluted Egyptian and Greek Doric columns in comparison you might recognise some similarities, but with a closer look you can clearly see the immense differences between these two types of columns (Figures 1 and 2). There is also a huge time gap between the first appearances of them. While the Egyptian type was introduced by Senwosret I in his pyramid temple in Lisht for the first time (Arnold 1988: 41, 54), the Doric column did not appear before the late 7th century BC in the temple of Artemis in Korkyra (Corfu) (Höcker 2004: 208). And it is highly unlikely that the Egyptian column types influenced the Greek ones.

### Greek Doric vs Egyptian 'protodoric' column (Figures 1 and 2)

The Greek Doric column was mainly used in mainland Greece as well as Sicily and southern Italy. The characteristics of the Doric order are as follows: the Doric column stands directly on the *stylobate* without having a base, its shaft often has a slight swelling, the *entasis*, and is optically divided lengthwise by vertical flutes called *cannelures*. The majority of the columns consist of individual interconnected column drums and are not monolithic. The number of *cannelures* is initially 16, then 20, rarely 18 or 24. The upper part of the shaft, the *hypotrachelion*, is marked by three rings, *anuli*, as the place of the column where the actual column shaft ends and the capital begins. The latter consists of the arched bulge or pillow-like *echnius* and the square abacus. Finally, the architrave rests on it (Höcker 2004: 208; Schollmeyer 2013: 24, 32).

The Egyptian fluted column is always resting on a base. Its shaft has no *entasis* but like the Greek one tapers slightly to the top. The shaft comprises of 16, 18, 20, 22, 24, 26, or 32 flutes and can have on one, two, or even four sides an even surface for a hieroglyphic inscription parallel to one of the longitudinal sides of the abacus. It has no *anuli* and no capital but a square abacus. The diameter of the abacus

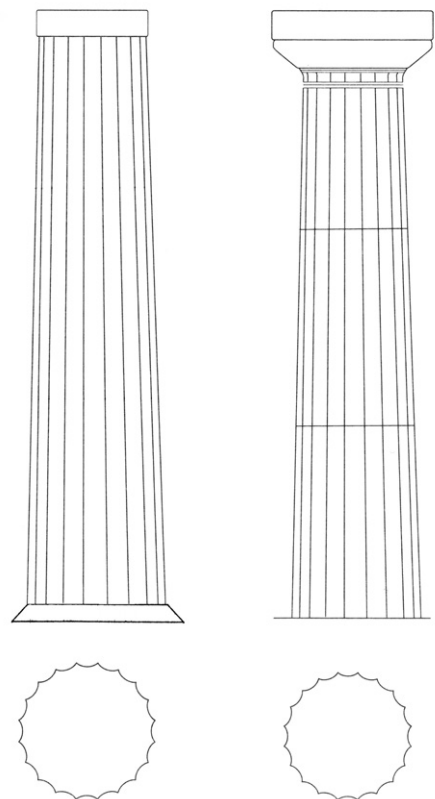


Figure 1. Stylised Egyptian fluted column (© Drawing J. Jancziak).

Figure 2. Stylised Greek Doric column (© Drawing J. Jancziak).



of the Doric column is much bigger than its shaft but in the case of the Egyptian fluted column the length of the abacus corresponds to the upper diameter of the shaft. In general the Egyptian examples of this column type are more compact than their Greek counterparts. They can be monolithic, even carved, with the base in one piece, or since the mid 12th dynasty built out of single column drums (Jancziak 2012: 71-81; Jánosi and Arnold 1984: 343-344; Phillips 2002: 6-7).

So there are a lot of differences when having a closer look at the so-called Egyptian 'protodoric' column and the Greek Doric column – not even taking the different materials and contexts of installations into consideration here. Nevertheless, Egyptian fluted columns are still referred to as 'protodoric' columns today, and most probably will be also in the future.

### **Karl Richard Lepsius – The Prussian Expedition and essays**

Karl Richard Lepsius, the founder of German Egyptology (Bierbrier 2019: 277), is well known for the Prussian Expedition from 1842 to 1845, and the publication 'Denkmäler aus Aegypten und Aethiopien' following it (Lepsius 1849-1859). But Lepsius also published two longer essays on the topic of ancient Egyptian columns (Lepsius 1837; 1871).

In both essays he describes and differentiates between two Egyptian column types referring to stone columns: the geometrical and the floral (Lepsius 1837: 81; 1871: 13). The first column form originates in his opinion from rock structures and shows columns with a polygonal or fluted shaft that tapers slightly to the top and without having a swelling at its lower end. The geometrical columns can appear with or without a base, have no capital, no lacing, and no decoration besides one or up to four columns of hieroglyphic inscription on the shaft; they have an abacus and are monolithic (Lepsius 1837: 80-81; 1871: 13). The second column form originates from domestic building structures. Its shaft is never fluted



Figure 3. *Egyptian Court in the Neues Museum Berlin*, a watercolour by Eduard Gaertner, 1850 (© Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz – Photoarchiv).



Figure 4. Campaniform papyrus and papyrus-bud column from the hypostyle of the Ramesseum, antetypes of the columns in the Egyptian court and hypostyle in the Neues Museum Berlin (Lepsius 1849-1859: Division I, Plate 90).

### **Lepsius' impact on the Neues Museum, Berlin**

In 1850, the Egyptian Collection opened as one of the first departments in the Neues Museum, Berlin, occupying the entire north wing on the ground floor of Friedrich August Stüler's building on the Museum Island. Even before detailed planning of the Neues Museum began, and without an official order, Karl Richard Lepsius authorised in 1841 the production of plaster replicas of objects in the Museo Egizio Turin, as well as the British Museum, London and the Musée du Louvre, Paris (Mehlitz 2010: 256). Lepsius was also involved in the first designs for the museum. Likewise in 1841 he submitted detailed proposals for the interior decoration of the rooms of the Egyptian Collection to Ignaz von Olfers, the General Director of the Royal Museums in Berlin. During the Prussian Expedition Lepsius constantly exchanged letters with von Olfers in which he gave e.g. detailed measurements, descriptions, and even drawings of the offering chapels he discovered in Gizeh, to enable them to be included in the display in the Neues Museum (Mehlitz 2010: 259). In his letter of 11 July 1845, Lepsius sketches a detailed concept for the rooms of the Egyptian department and describes in detail a pictorial and decorative program for them. When Lepsius arrived back in Berlin from his Egyptian expedition in early 1846 the rooms of the Egyptian department had been already plastered, but were still undecorated so that the wall paintings

and forms a trunk that can be smooth or represent a bundle of stems and has a swelling at its lower end. The floral columns have a five-layer lacing, a flower bud capital, a narrow thick base, and represent a bundle of papyrus or lotus stalks tied together underneath the buds;<sup>1</sup> they have an abacus and can be monolithic or consist of drums (Lepsius 1837: 81; 1871: 13).

Lepsius also made some suggestions about the origin of the stone columns. In his opinion it would be going too far if one wanted to assume that, for example, papyrus stalks, combined in bundles were used as supports which were then reproduced in wood and stone. Apparently even the lightest load could not be supported by flower stems. In fact, the floral column was, after Lepsius, not gradually incorporated into the architectural symbolism but rather as a whole. Lepsius also states that only the base and abacus are revealed as pure architectural elements between which the actual column was inserted as a pleasing natural form (Lepsius 1871: 25-26).

<sup>1</sup> In Lepsius' time there was no clear differentiation between papyrus and lotus columns (see below and Borchartd 1897: 30).

could be applied and the furnishing with the objects and plaster replicas could begin according to Lepsius' design (Mehlitz 2010: 259).

Three rooms of the Egyptian department in the Neues Museum showed columns that were built after Egyptian role models. The so-called Historical Hall, for example, received fluted columns that divided the space into three naves. They were made from sandstone monoliths that were only given a piece of coloured coating and were transferred to the museum as workpieces. In appearance, they corresponded to their models in the tombs of Beni Hasan. In 1843, the building documents first referred to the room as the Beni Hasan Hall (Messling 1997: 79; Figure 4).

The so-called Egyptian Court (Figure 3), which was covered with a glass roof, together with the rooms adjoining it to the north, the hypostyle, and the sanctuary, corresponded to the characteristic sequence of rooms in Egyptian temples. In contrast to the Historical Hall, the columns in the courtyard and hypostyle were built of brickwork and were only to be given their final shape after being covered with stucco. The papyrus columns with open capitals (so-called campaniform) in the courtyard were designed after a model from the Ramesseum, namely the columns in the elevated central aisle of the hypostyle (Figure 4). The smaller papyrus-bud columns with closed capitals from the same room in the Ramesseum, on the other hand, seem to have served as models for the columns of the hypostyle (Messling 1997: 80-81).

In the above-mentioned letter of July 1845, Lepsius emphasised the need to illustrate 'die in den verschiedenen Zeiten charakteristischen Baustyle, namentlich Säulenordnungen, in ihrer geschichtlichen Reihenfolge' in the Neues Museum (Messling 1997: 81). Lepsius had truly put his stamp on the look of the Egyptian department that opened in 1850, including the two column forms that he characterised in his aforementioned essays.

### **Ludwig Borchardt – First monograph on Egyptian columns**

Ludwig Borchardt, the German architect and Egyptologist who discovered the famous bust of Queen Nefertiti and founded the German Archaeological Institute in Cairo, published the first monograph on Egyptian plant columns, entitled 'Die Aegyptische Pflanzensäule. Ein Kapitel zur Geschichte des Pflanzenornaments', in 1897 (Borchardt 1897).

In his book Borchardt records the individual column shapes deriving from plants by first giving a description of the plant in question, then sketching the depiction of the plant in Egyptian art, and finally describing the column type itself using examples from various epochs. He tries to consider all the evidence available to him, but, as he himself must admit, he fails in doing so for every column type due to the abundance of the material (Borchardt 1897: 31). In his investigation Borchardt does not distinguish between depictions and three-dimensional columns nor does he take the use of different materials into account, and columns from the Late Period and beyond are only marginally included in the description (Borchardt 1897: 1).

The treatise on the plant columns represented a milestone in dealing with Egyptian columns, especially since the difference between papyrus and lotus columns was postulated here for the first time (Borchardt 1897: 17, 30). Borchardt also thought that the Egyptian plant column owes its origin to a purely decorative idea and that the construction, the load bearing, is not expressed in it at all, but that the Egyptians imagined them to be free standing (Borchardt 1897: 58). A matter that was often discussed after its postulation.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See Köster 1901; Wilcken 1901; Borchardt 1902.

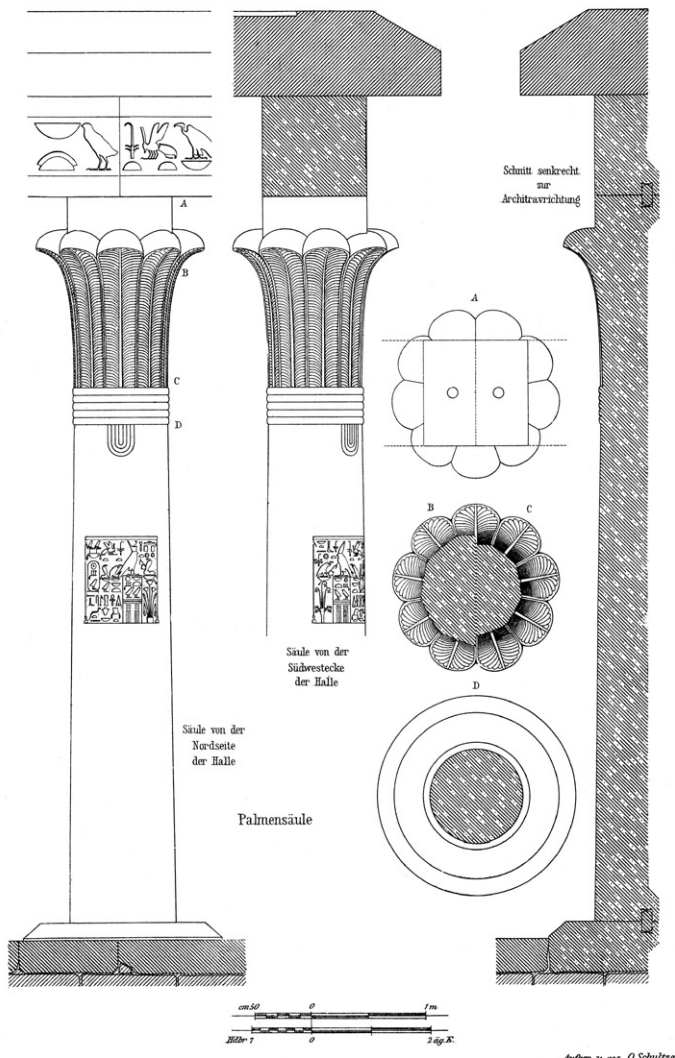


Figure 5. Drawing with sections and details of a palm column from the open court in the funerary temple of Sahura at Abusir (Borchardt 1910: Plate 9).

do so later at Tell el-Amarna. While excavating, however, Borchardt regularly published shorter reports in the *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft* (e.g. Borchardt 1903). The work at Abusir was progressing well and the outcome was tremendous. Borchardt's descriptions of the columns and their archaeological surroundings were done room-by-room, putting all the archaeological evidence, objects, and wall decorations in context to each other without overinterpretation.

### **Borchardt's Abusir columns around the world**

Some of the stone columns were restored and re-erected in their original place in the pyramid complexes at Abusir (e.g. in the court of the funerary temple of Sahura; see Brinkmann 2010: figure on 6-7). However, many of them found their way to museum collections around the world (Table 1).

### **Ludwig Borchardt in Abusir**

From 1902 to 1908 Borchardt was excavating in Abusir. He excavated the pyramid complexes of the 5th dynasty kings Niuserra, Sahura, and Neferirkara, and found the so far earliest secure proofs of stone columns of Ancient Egypt of three well known types: palm, papyrus, and columns with cylindrical shaft, as well as evidence of wooden lotus columns. The earliest dated complex, that of Sahura, revealed in its valley temple palm and columns with cylindrical shafts, and in the funerary temple palm, papyrus-bud, and columns with cylindrical shaft, all made of red granite (Borchardt 1910: 9-11, 18-19, 24-25, 43-45). Niuserra used only papyrus-bud columns in his pyramid complex, also made from red granite (Borchardt 1907: 10, 12, 15, 54-55, 59, 66-68). Standing in the Neferirkara funerary temple were wooden lotus-bud columns, covered with plaster and resting on limestone bases (Borchardt 1909: 6, 12, 19-22).

Ludwig Borchardt published his results very soon after the excavations in the book series of the *Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft* (e.g. Figure 5), which was under the direction of James Simon – who had financed Borchardt's work in Abusir, and would

TABLE 1: DATA ON THE COLUMNS FROM THE PYRAMID COMPLEXES OF SAHURA, NEFERIRKARA, AND NIUSERRA AT ABUSIR, EXCAVATED BY LUDWIG BORCHARDT.

Dating	Site/Findspot	Column type	Number	Material	Museum
Sahura	Pyramid complex of Sahura, valley temple, eastern portico	Palm or columns with cylindrical shaft?	2 × 4 (8)	Red granite	n/a
Sahura	Pyramid complex of Sahura, valley temple, inner room/portico	Palm or columns with cylindrical shaft?	1 × 2 (2)	Red granite	n/a
Sahura	Pyramid complex of Sahura, valley temple, southern portico	Columns with cylindrical shaft	1 × 4 (4)	Red granite	1 ÄMP, ÄM 31606
Sahura	Pyramid complex of Sahura, funerary temple, open court	Palm columns	16	Red granite	5 + 1 capital ÄMP, ÄM 31605/01-06; 2 EMC, JE 39537, 39539; 1 MMA, 10.175.137
Sahura	Pyramid complex of Sahura, funerary temple, transverse corridor, northern and southern niches	Papyrus-bud columns with closed capital	In each 1 (2)	Red granite	1 ÄMP, inventory number unknown; 1 EMC, JE 39530
Sahura	Pyramid complex of Sahura, funerary temple, southern side entrance, portico	Columns with cylindrical shaft	1 × 2 (2)	Red granite	n/a
Niuserra	Pyramid complex of Neferirkara, funerary temple, portico	Lotus-bud columns with closed capital	1 × 4 (4)	Wood, covered with plaster, limestone bases	n/a
Niuserra	Pyramid complex of Neferirkara, funerary temple, entrance corridor	Lotus-bud columns with closed capital and columns with cylindrical shaft	2 × 6 (12)	Wood, covered with plaster, limestone bases	n/a
Niuserra	Pyramid complex of Neferirkara, funerary temple, open court	Lotus-bud columns with closed capital	37	Wood, covered with plaster, limestone bases	n/a
Niuserra	Pyramid complex of Neferirkara, funerary temple, connecting corridor	n/a	1 × 6 (6)	Wood, covered with plaster, limestone bases	n/a
Niuserra	Pyramid complex of Niuserra, valley temple, eastern portico	Papyrus-bud columns with closed capital	2 × 4 (8)	Red granite	n/a

Niuserra	Pyramid complex of Niuserra, valley temple, western portico	Papyrus-bud columns with closed capital?	1 × 4 (4)	Red granite?	n/a
Niuserra	Pyramid complex of Niuserra, funerary temple, open court	Papyrus-bud columns with closed capital	16	Red granite	Several fragments ÄMP, ÄM 16000/01-05, 36120-36122; 1 EMC, JE 38664; 1 Albertinum, inventory number unknown
Niuserra	Pyramid complex of Niuserra, funerary temple, <i>antichambre carrée</i>	Papyrus-bud column with closed capital?	1	Limestone?	n/a

From the pyramid complex of Sahura two palm columns of the courtyard went to the Egyptian Museum, Cairo (EMC), one to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (MMA), and five whole columns and one capital to the Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung, Berlin (ÄMP). In addition, Cairo received one papyrus- bud column, as did Berlin. Furthermore, Berlin also received a column with cylindrical shaft from the side entrance of the valley temple.

Of the little evidence we have of the lotus-bud columns in the funerary temple of Neferirkara, nothing was moved to museums, and it is to be guessed that they were left in their findspots or have been buried nearby. From the courtyard of the Niuserra funerary temple one papyrus-bud column was moved to the EMC, one to the Albertinum in Dresden, and several (of which today only fragments have survived) to the ÄMP: these are currently stored in storerooms at Hohenschönhausen and Friedrichshagen.<sup>3</sup> Many of the columns found at Abusir came to the museum in Berlin; surprisingly, they are not on display in the Neues Museum.

### Abusir columns in the Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung Berlin

When the columns and other architectural elements from Abusir arrived in Berlin they could not be integrated into the exhibition of the Egyptian Collection in the Neues Museum designed by Lepsius. Heinrich Schäfer planned a new building in front of the Neues Museum for the faithful recreation of the architectural parts, but this never came to fruition, the same being true for the later plans (1940) of Günther Roeder. Thus the columns remained in the storage shed behind the Gipsformerei in Charlottenburg. During the Second World War almost all the red granite architectural elements were badly damaged after the storage sheds were hit by incendiary bombs and the monolithic columns burst into thousands of fragments during the firefighting operations. After the war, small parts of those columns that had remained largely undamaged, as well as larger, restored, parts of the Sahura columns, could be shown in the so-called Eastern Stüler Building of the Schloss Charlottenburg (Zorn 2002: 34-35).

In 1972 the Marstall was added as an exhibition area, which finally created the conditions for exhibiting the entire existing objects of, at least, the mortuary temple of Sahura. Schäfer's plans to present

<sup>3</sup> It will be a future aim of the author to analyse these fragments in detail and verify, together with the museum's archival material, what exactly came to the ÄMP after Borchardt's excavation and what is still preserved today. Unfortunately, the columns suffered great damage during the Second World War.

the open court of the funerary temple true to the original were implemented. The restored columns were in their original form, correctly spaced, and placed within the complex, giving the visitor an idea of the scale of the open court. When the Berlin Wall fell on 9 November 1989 the construction phase of the columned courtyard was being carried out at great expense. Since in the initial euphoria of reunification it was believed that the two Egyptian Collections could also be brought together in one place in a very short time, namely on the Museum Island, the effort involved in further building the columned courtyard was considered too great and expensive, and construction was abruptly stopped on 10 November 1989 (Zorn 2002: 35-36). Nevertheless work continued on the columns and they were housed for nearly twenty years in the Marstall before undergoing final conservation for their new, and hopefully final, exhibition place in the Fourth Wing of the Pergamonmuseum.

But what happened to the Niuserra columns? One papyrus-bud column (ÄM 16000) was exhibited in the Egyptian Court of the Neues Museum after arriving in Berlin (Figure 6; Jancziak 2014), but now all are in storage and in need of thorough restoration before they can be exhibited or sent out as loans.

#### ***Future display in the Fourth Wing of the Pergamonmuseum***

The future of the Sahura columns lies in a display in the still uncompleted Fourth Wing of the Pergamonmuseum. There they will be part of the so-called 'Ancient Architectures Tour'. Via the new entrance building, the James Simon Gallery, visitors can access the Museum Island and the Ancient Architectures Tour in the Pergamonmuseum. They begin their walk along the processional way from Babylon, passing the Ishtar Gate, and on to the Market Gate from Miletus and the Pergamon Altar. The facade of the early Islamic desert palace of Mschatta welcomes visitors in the North Wing. The end of the tour will be formed by the ancient Egyptian temple gate of Kalabscha, the open court of the funerary temple of Sahura, and the large statues of gods from the rulers' palace of Tell Halaf. They will be exhibited in the new Fourth Wing (Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz 2016). Thus, hopefully, more than 100 years after Borchardt's excavations, at least some of the columns from Abusir will be on show within Berlin's Museum Island and give visitors a thrilling experience of the scale of an ancient Egyptian pyramid temple.

#### **Impact of the (re)discovery of Egyptian columns**

To sum up, what is now the impact of the (re)discovery of Egyptian columns by Champollion, Lepsius, and Borchardt?

Champollion, after seeing the columns in the tombs of Beni Hasan, introduced the term 'protodoric', being reminded of the Greek Doric column. This term is still commonly used today, even though the differences between Egyptian and Doric columns are clear and the term is misleading.

Lepsius wrote two longer essays on the topic of ancient Egyptian columns, dividing them into two types, floral and geometrical, and trying to reach conclusions on their origins. During and after the Prussian Expedition, he was included in the design planning for the interior of the Egyptian Collection in the partly opened Neues Museum in 1850. He designed three rooms featuring Egyptian columns, thus



*Figure 6. Papyrus-bud column (ÄM 16000) from the funerary temple of Niuserra at Abusir on show in the Egyptian Court of the Neues Museum, Berlin (© Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz - Photoarchiv).*

recreating in Berlin something of what he saw during his expedition to Egypt for the instruction of the general public.

The impact of Ludwig Borchardt on the research of ancient Egyptian columns was immense. Not only did he publish the first monograph on the topic but he also excavated the thus far earliest examples of three well-known column types in stone from the pyramid complex of Sahura at Abusir. His monograph was for a long time the only one dealing solely with the topic and presenting thorough research. It followed another article on 'Die Cyperussäule' in 1902 (Borchardt 1902), before he had even started his excavations at Abusir, on which the publications of the three excavated complexes followed almost immediately. To this day his monograph, as well as his excavation publications, are still to be highly recommended in terms of research on ancient Egyptian columns.

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# Repeating Texts on Wooden Coffins of the Late Period

Kea Johnston

## Abstract

The Nubian and Saite periods saw the increasing use of text as a decorative element on the anthropoid coffins of the Egyptian elite. In the case of the highest elite at Thebes, this text was extracted from newly redacted funerary books, reimagined, and adapted for use on mummiform bivalve coffins. However, a large number of heavily textualised coffins do not feature these specialised funerary texts at all but are rather covered in repeating formulae. There seems to have been a relationship between social status and choice of text on coffins during this period, especially at Thebes. Additionally, the flexibility of the texts and the ease of reproducing them may also have played a role in their selection. Coffins with repetitive texts were probably not understood to be functionally deficient. In fact, it seems as if repetitive texts were thought to be valid functional substitutes for more specialised funerary texts. Additionally, coffin styles like the 'Eleven-eleven' style have layers of meaning. Some of these were more meaningful to some audiences than others. The repetitive texts may have served to foreground mechanisms for rebirth that did not require literacy or familiarity with elite funerary literature.

## Keywords

26th dynasty, Anthropoid Coffins, *Book of the Dead*, Hour Vigil, Texts on Coffins, Offering Formulae

During Egypt's Nubian and Saite Periods, art and texts from particularly powerful periods of Egypt's long history were revived, copied, reinterpreted, and adapted for new ritual contexts. A new redaction of the *Book of the Dead* appeared on papyri and tomb walls, where it mingled with revived excerpts of *Pyramid* and *Coffin Texts*. The anthropoid coffin, which had been the central element of burial equipment for elite Egyptians since the fall of the New Kingdom, also underwent a redesign as part of this Nubian/Saite revival. At most sites in Egypt, the decoration of the ideal coffin set of the Third Intermediate Period had been dominantly pictorial. Texts, when they occurred, were usually limited to offering formulae and captions in vignettes which indicated that a particular deity was speaking. While the name of the deity was given, the contents of the actual speeches were usually left unwritten. At the end of the Third Intermediate Period, the form of the innermost coffin in the set changed: the ideal coffin of dynasties 25th and 26th was a carved wooden bivalve coffin rather than the shell-like cartonnage which had been popular in the Third Intermediate period. The amount of the surface area devoted to text increased in proportion to that devoted to vignettes. On some coffins, vignettes were reduced to small square images embedded in text.

It would be logical to assume that these texts, which consumed such a large percentage of the available surface area of the coffin, were comprised of the newly redacted excerpts from the *Coffin Texts*, *Book of the Dead*, and *Pyramid Texts*. Instead, the texts on many coffins consist of short phrases and offering formulae which repeat over the surface of the coffin. These vary only in the names and epithets of the deities invoked, in the titles of the deceased, and in the family members who are listed in the genealogy of the deceased. Such 'banal' texts have long been considered an indicator of lower status on

the part of the coffin owner (Taylor 2018: 350). However, several coffins from wealthy families feature these repeating texts, hinting that the socioeconomic explanation for their use is but part of a more complicated picture. Using a well-defined coffin type as a starting point for discussion, this present contribution explores why a coffin-buyer may have chosen to have their coffin inscribed with repetitive texts, and what funeral-goers may have believed about how these texts functioned for the deceased.

Increasing textualisation of coffins occurred throughout Egypt in the Late Period, but coffin styles could vary over time, region, and demographic. While the phenomenon of repeating texts occurs on many coffin styles, the function of the texts on a specific style depends on how the texts interact with the vignettes and the layout of the coffin surface, and how the entire decorative programme incorporates the body of the deceased inside the coffin. Since repeating texts may have had different interpretations depending on the layout of the coffin and selection of vignettes, it is necessary to compare coffins with repeating texts to others with the same layout and vignettes.

A group of coffins with well-defined features and a layout with well-understood symbolism is the so-called ‘Eleven-eleven’ style (Elias *et al.* 2014: 130-133). The term ‘Eleven-eleven’ is a bit of a misnomer – it refers to the eleven deities who are depicted symmetrically on each side of the coffin lid, but most coffins depict fewer than eleven gods. The type is called ‘Eleven-eleven’ here because it is memorable, but the terms ‘25th and 26th dynasty Lid Design 3’ (Taylor 2003: 114) and ‘Presentation Modes IV and V’ (Elias 1993: 510-511) refer to the same group of coffins.

The ‘Eleven-eleven’ style appeared in the 26th dynasty and seems to have been popular throughout Upper Egypt, with examples from Thebes, Akhmim, and Edfu. It is characterised by the depiction of up to eleven gods, arranged on either side of the lid from the abdomen to the ankles. These gods are best viewed from the side of the coffin while it is laying on its back, because they are rotated so that they are perpendicular to the vertical axis of the coffin lid. Isis and Nephthys are painted at the top of the head and bottom of the pedestal respectively and are also meant to be viewed when the coffin is lying flat.

This type of coffin was also meant to be viewed as it was standing on its pedestal. The lid of the coffin depicts the deceased as a divinised mummy, specifically as Osiris. The deceased wears a large broad-collar and a stripped headcloth or tripartite wig. Below the collar, the goddess Nut kneels, spreading her wings across the chest. The text around her can be one of the Nut Utterances derived from the *Pyramid Texts*, or a spell dealing with the ability of the deceased to breathe. To either side of her are symmetrical rams on standards. Below Nut is often a long, narrow strip of a vignette, showing the deceased led before Osiris and his entourage. This vignette alludes to the moment of judgement as described in *Book of the Dead* 125. There is a second vignette on the chest, which takes the form of a square pectoral in which the mummified deceased rests on a lion-headed bier. Often, his ba-spirit hovers above him. This vignette refers to *Book of the Dead* Spell 89, Enabling a Ba Spirit to Rest on its Corpse (Elias *et al.* 2014: 130), which is sometimes written in the tall block of columns stretching down the front of the body from the belly to the toes. It can also refer to the vignette for Spell 151 because it is a depiction of the deceased as Osiris in the centre of a three-dimensional tableau featuring Isis and Nephthys and the encircling canopic gods.

The design as a whole has been interpreted as an allusion to the hourly vigil (*Stundenwachen*) over the body of Osiris in the place of embalming (Elias *et al.* 2014: 130-131; Taylor 2003: 114), the ritual of the Awakening of Osiris (Sheikholeslami 2014: 114-115), or *Book of the Dead* Spell 151 (Elias 1993: 707-708). All three of these sources deal with the rebirth of Osiris during the embalming ritual. In all of them, the deity is mourned by Isis and Nephthys, who stand at the head and foot. The body is surrounded by the sons of Horus who guard his body and aid the embalmers in making Osiris whole. In the Hourly Vigil and Awakening of Osiris, the Four Sons of Horus are joined by a host of other gods, who are associated with the hours of the day and night. Thus, in some ways, the coffin layout with its up to eleven deities



Figure 1. The coffin of Irethoreru, EA 20745 © The Trustees of the British Museum.

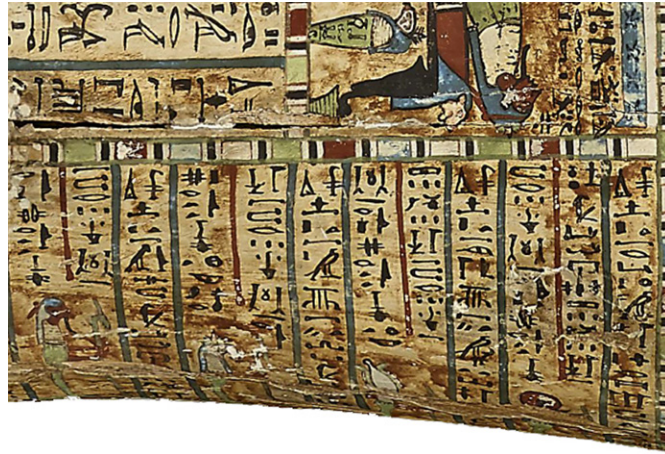


Figure 2. Detail of repeating formulae on Irethoreru's coffin © The Trustees of the British Museum.

resembles these compositions more than Spell 151. The texts around these gods and around Isis and Nephthys, while highly variable and sometimes unparalleled, often draw heavily from Spell 151 and a Hacking of the Earth Liturgy sometimes called Naville's *Book of the Dead* Spell 169 (Elias 1993: 505, 514-515; Quirke 2013: 419).

The coffin of Irethoreru (British Museum EA20745) exemplifies the layout and vignette selection of the 'Eleven-eleven' style, but most of the texts on the coffin consist of repeating formulae (Figure 1).

Instead of eleven deities on each side of the central column, there are nine. These mummiform deities are differentiated by their crowns and theriomorphic heads but are otherwise drawn with attenuated features. They face the head end of the coffin; clutching *Was* sceptres in the arms that emerge from their shrouds. The back of the coffin is dominated by a *Djed* pillar painted on a carved projecting column aligned with the spine of Irethoreru's body. All figural decoration on the coffin is surrounded by columns of text written in black cursive hieroglyphs on a beige background. The dividing lines between columns and rows are either blue or red. The handwriting is neatly and clearly written in cursive hieroglyphs using black paint.

A few of the texts on the coffin of Irethoreru are excerpts from funerary books: the top of the head contains a speech of Nephthys excerpted from Spell 151 of the *Book of the Dead*. The foot is inscribed with a corresponding speech by Isis from the same source. This utterance starts on the bottom of the pedestal and wraps around the top of the foot on the right and left sides, showing the scribe's concern for including as much of the spell as possible in the limited available space. Close parallels to these spells can be found on coffins and papyri dating back to the New Kingdom (Lüscher 1998: 251-254). On the chest appears a long frieze in which Irethoreru is presented to Osiris, having passed the judgement. Beneath this runs a line of text from a 'Hacking of the Earth Liturgy,' sometimes known as Naville's *Book of the Dead* Spell 169 (Elias 1993: 622; Quirke 2013: 419). The goddess Nut's caption announces that she has come before the deceased before being summarily cut off by the edge of the decoration. This may have been intended to be the beginning of a longer text. Aside from these spells, the rest of the coffin is inscribed with the same offering formula, repeated over and over, but with the names and epithets

of different gods, and with a variable amount of detail about Irethoreru's titles and ancestry. The deity mentioned in the formula always corresponds to the subject of an adjacent vignette. The longest version of this offering formula is written on the back and is reproduced below. Other iterations are truncated in various places in the text depending on the space which was available to the scribe (Figure 2).

*ḥtp di nsw.t n* [Deity name and epithets] *diš pr.t-ḥrw ḥnq.t t k3.w 3pd.w sntr mnḥ.t-sšr.w irp irṯ.t ḥ.t nb(.t) nfr(.t) w<sup>c</sup>b(.t) ḥ.t nb(.t) nfr(.t) ndm(.t) bnr(.t) ḥn ntr im ḥtp.w nb d<sup>f</sup>.w nb (n) im3ḥ.w ḥr wsir*  
 [Deceased's name and titles] *m3<sup>c</sup>-ḥrw s3* [Genealogy]

Royal offerings of [Deity name and epithets], may he give a voice offering of  
 beer and bread,  
 beef and poultry,  
 incense and linen clothing,  
 wine and milk,  
 everything good and pure,  
 and everything sweet and delicious upon which a god lives  
 – all offerings and all provisions (for) the revered one of Osiris, [NN], the justified, son of  
 [Genealogy].

The use of repeating generic formulae is common on coffins of the 'Eleven-eleven' style, occurring on nearly half of the surveyed examples (Table 1).

TABLE 1: OCCURRENCES OF REPEATING TEXTS ON 'ELEVEN-ELEVEN' COFFINS © AUTHOR.

Accession Numbers	Museum Info	Origin	Owner's Name	Owner Gender	Owner Titles	Has Repetitive Texts	Repetitive Text Description	Repetitive Text Location
EA22814	British Museum, London	Thebes	Shepenmut	Female	<i>nb.t pr, šps.t</i>	x	Offering formulae in central columns and flanking surrounding gods. Gods are named.	All Texts.
EA29781	British Museum, London	Thebes	Irtysenu	Female	<i>nb.t pr, šps.t</i>	x	All texts are offering formulae.	All texts.
EA20650	British Museum London	Akhmim	Djedhor	Male	<i>ḥry rh.tiw n pr mnw</i>	x	Recitation by [GN], Oh, Osiris [NN]	On right side of central column.
MPM A10264	Milwaukee Public Museum, USA	Akhmim	Djedhor	Male	<i>rh.ty n pr mnw</i>			
EA20745	British Museum, London	Akhmim	Irethoreru	Male	<i>sm3.ty ipw, ḥm-ntr</i>	x	Offering formulae in all places but below chest vignette, head, and foot.	Perpendicular gods, around Nut figure.
EA22940	British Museum, London	Thebes	Besenmut	Male	<i>sm3.ty w3s.t, ḥm-ntr mnṯ</i>			

Accession Numbers	Museum Info	Origin	Owner's Name	Owner Gender	Owner Titles	Has Repetitive Texts	Repetitive Text Description	Repetitive Text Location
25.3.202a, b	Metropolitan Museum, NYC	Thebes	Ankhshepewepet	Female	<i>ḥsy.t m-ḥnw pr Imn, nb.t pr</i>	x	Offering formulae	All texts
O.C.22a, b	Metropolitan Museum, NYC	Thebes	Wedjarenes	Female	<i>nb.t pr</i>			
N 2564, 2630	Louvre, Paris	Unknown	Itnedjes(?)	Male	Info unavailable.	x	Offering formulae	All texts
E 13024	Louvre, Paris, on loan to Lyon	Thebes	Ptahirdis	Male	None	x	Offering formulae, I am your son whom you love, I exist as your protection.	All texts
E 13019	Louvre, Paris, on loan to Lyon	Unknown	Horsaaset/Harsiese	Male	Info unavailable	x	Offering formulae	All texts
N 2566	Louvre, Paris	Unknown	Khaahapy	Female	<i>nb.t pr</i>	x	Offering formulae	All texts
Cat. 2231/01	Museo Egizio, Turin	Thebes	Renpetneferet	Female	<i>nb.t pr</i>	x	Offering formulae	All texts
S. 5219	Museo Egizio, Turin	Thebes	Montuirdis	Male	<i>ḥry ḥw.ty sšn n pr imn</i>	x	Offering formulae, "I am come as your protection."	All of back, head, and pedestal.
S. 5238	Museo Egizio, Turin	Thebes	Irethoreru	Male	None	x	Offering formulae.	All texts
CG 41044	Egyptian Museum, Cairo	Thebes	Nesamun	Male	<i>ḥm ntr mnt</i>			
CG 41047	Egyptian Museum, Cairo	Thebes	Besenmut	Male	<i>ḥm ntr mnt</i>			
CG 41048	Egyptian Museum, Cairo	Thebes	Ankhefenkhonsu	Male	<i>ḥm ntr mnt</i>			
CG 41150	Egyptian Museum, Cairo	Thebes	Nakhtbase-teteru	Female	<i>nb.t pr, šps.t</i>	x	Offering formulae, "I am your son, who you love"	Lateral, head and pedestal bottom, Back
CG 41051	Egyptian Museum, Cairo	Thebes	Harsiese	Male	<i>ḥm ntr mnt</i>	x	Offering formulae	Back column only.
CG 41056	Egyptian Museum, Cairo	Thebes	Wennefer	Male	<i>ḥm ntr mnt</i>			
CG 41057	Egyptian Museum, Cairo	Thebes	Pdiamun	Male	<i>ḥm ntr mnt</i>			

## REPEATING TEXTS ON WOODEN COFFINS

Accession Numbers	Museum Info	Origin	Owner's Name	Owner Gender	Owner Titles	Has Repetitive Texts	Repetitive Text Description	Repetitive Text Location
CG 41062	Egyptian Museum, Cairo	Thebes	Hor	Male	<i>hm ntr mnt</i>			
CG 41064	Egyptian Museum, Cairo	Thebes	Hathat	Male	<i>hm ntr mnt</i>			
CG 41065	Egyptian Museum, Cairo	Thebes	Tashere-tenaset	Female	<i>nb.t pr</i>			
CG 41068	Egyptian Museum, Cairo	Thebes	Khaemhor	Male	<i>hm ntr mnt</i>			
CG 41071	Egyptian Museum, Cairo	Thebes	Tdiamun	Female	<i>nb.t pr</i>			
K 1205	Rätische Museum, Chur, Switzerland	Thebes	Tadiaset	Female	<i>nb.t pr</i>	x	Offering formulae	Only on the back flanking the Djed pillar.
89.1.3	Kelsey Museum, Ann Arbor, Michigan	Nag el-Hassiya (Edfu)	Djehuty-mose	Male	<i>hm hr, hm nbw.t</i>			
24.11.81.5 a(i)	World Museum, Liverpool	Thebes	Ditamun-paseneb	Female	<i>nb.t pr</i>			
2159	National Archaeological Museum, Florence	Thebes	Tjesaset-peret	Female	Information not available.			
EA6671	British Museum, London	Thebes	Pesenbes	Male	<i>ʕ n b3st.t hry-ib w3s.t</i>			
AEG 10	Oberösterreichischen Landesmuseum, Linz	Akhmim	Paenbes	Male	<i>hm ntr ʕprt 3s.t, sm3.ty mnw</i>	x	Offering formulae	On perpendicular deities

While some coffins are completely covered with repeating formulae, others only use repeating formulae in place of the specific pledges of protection surrounding the perpendicular gods on the lid, or in the space to either side of the *Djed* pillar on the back of the coffin.

The texts themselves are usually offering formulae. The opening phrases 'Recitation by' (*dd md.w in*) and 'Royal Offerings' (*hṭp di nsw.t*) seem to have been considered as interchangeable ways to begin the same formula. On a few coffins, the repeating text in front of the lateral deities on the sides of the coffin lid consists of a short phrase excerpted from the speeches of the Four Sons of Horus in Spell 151, which is combined with the genealogy of the deceased to form a complete utterance. In comparison, in the full versions of the texts from Spell 151, the Four Sons of Horus identify themselves and pledge

to perform a specific act to ensure the bodily integrity of Osiris. On coffins with repeating formulae, the utterance is placed in the mouths of a host of deities who identify themselves as sons of Osiris (regardless of their gender or relationship to the god) and pledge generic protection to the deceased, as in this example from the coffin of Renpetneferet (Turin Cat. 2231/01). In each iteration of the formula, emphasis is placed on the titles and genealogy of the deceased, and his or her association with Osiris via the god in question (Figure 3).

*ḏd md.w in [Deity Name] Ink s3=k hr mr=k wnn=(i) m s3h=k r' nb n wsir [NN]  
s3.t [Genealogy]*

Recitation by [Deity Name]: I am your son whom you love. I exist as your protection every day <for> the Osiris of [NN] daughter of [Genealogy].

The formulae on many coffins with repeating text are like those on Renpetneferet and Irethoreru in that they name the god in the adjacent vignette, linking the vignette with the text. However, a handful of coffins, such as that of Lady of the House Kaahapy (Louvre N2566), show no apparent link between the texts and vignettes. The coffin of Kaahapy is simply covered in solicitations for offerings from Re or Osiris, whose epithets alternate between iterations of the text.

Why did some Egyptians choose to cover their coffins in repeating formulae while others utilised a full complement of carefully positioned texts derived from funerary literature and Osirian ritual? When this question is addressed in the literature, the repeating texts are characterised as ‘generic’ or ‘banal’ and their use in combination with simple and quickly-painted vignettes is seen as an indicator of the lower relative social status of the coffin-owner (Cooney 2014; Elias 1993: 850-852; Taylor 2018). The argument is that buyers who were educated and had access to fine texts used their coffins to demonstrate their learning and the power that their families held relative to their peers. Coffin buyers who were ranked lower in the temple and government hierarchies had to satisfy themselves with the more generic images and texts to which they had access. (Cooney 2014, 47). In his study of social patterning on 25th and 26th dynasty Theban coffins, which includes some ‘Eleven-eleven’ coffins, Taylor notes that ‘high’ and ‘low quality’ features sometimes occur on the same coffin. He also observes variation of quality of text and vignette selection among peers of the same social group (Taylor 2018: 351). Taylor and Cooney explain the heterogeneity of these features as symptomatic of a series of trade-offs between what the buyer could afford or access versus the ideal coffin that members of the buyer’s social group wanted (Cooney 2007: 256-258; Taylor 2018: 374-376). Each feature of the resulting coffin can be seen as the result of this negotiation. A coffin may have fine vignettes and repetitive text because the buyer chose to put their limited resources into the vignettes instead (Taylor 2018: 349-351, 368).

There does indeed seem to be a correlation between rank and use of repetitive texts among coffins of the ‘Eleven-eleven’ type, at least at Thebes. Nearly all the coffins of the members of the families of the priests of Montu feature the full programme of funerary literature and the individualised recitations of the perpendicular gods. The priests of Montu were highly placed within the temple hierarchy at Thebes during the 25th and 26th dynasties and had connections to the ruling families of the previous period (Sheikholeslami 2014: 112-113). Their coffins have similar selection and placement of texts to the sarcophagi of Aspelta and Anlamani, members of the ruling family of Kush with whom the priests



Figure 3. Inner coffin of Renpetneferet, Cat. 2231/01  
© Museo Egizio, Turin.



with ‘Eleven-eleven’ coffins were roughly contemporary (Doll 1978: 368-369). In contrast, the Theban ‘Eleven-eleven’ coffins with extensive repeating texts tend to belong to people whose rank is relatively low or unclear. For example, Renpetneferet, whose coffin is in Turin (Cat. 2231/01), was the daughter of a ‘God’s Father of Amun,’ a fairly low rank in the temple hierarchy at Thebes. Paenbes, whose coffin is in the British Museum (EA 6671), was a ‘Doorkeeper of Bastet Who Resides in Thebes,’ also a bureaucrat of middling rank.

However, the relationship between use of repetitive texts and social status is not as straightforward as it first appears. Several people from wealthy, well-connected families have coffins with repeating formulae. Nakhtbasteteru was the daughter of the priest of Montu, Ankhefenkhonsu, but despite the power and prestige of her family, her coffin is covered in repeating offering formulae and the same indiscriminately applied pledges of protection which were inscribed on the coffin of Renpetneferet (Gauthier 1913: 169-193). The coffins of the ‘Singers of the Interior’ are another anomaly. One might expect these women to have prestige and access because they served as staff to the God’s Wife of Amun, but their coffins tend to be inscribed with repeating formulae (Elias 1993: 88), as illustrated by the ‘Eleven-eleven’ style coffin of Ankhehepenwepet (Metropolitan Museum, New York 25.3.202a, b). Is the modern scholar to consider these individuals to have somehow fallen short of the standards of their social group, or to have lacked access even to *Book of the Dead* texts?

Outside of Thebes, the link between status and text selection is even less clear. Of the ‘Eleven-eleven’ coffins thought to be from Akhmim, only one has the full complement of texts seen on the coffins of the Priests of Montu. This coffin is that of the ‘Washerman of the House of Min’ Djedhor, who got a promotion to ‘Overseer of the Washermen of the House of Min,’ and apparently purchased a new coffin. Ironically, his older coffin on which he is given the lower rank has the individualised speeches of the perpendicular gods, while the coffin on which he has the higher rank mixes some individual speeches with repeating formulae (Elias *et al.* 2014: 131-132; Johnston 2022: 400-402). Finally, Irethoreru, whose coffin was discussed in detail above, belonged to one of the most powerful families in Akhmim. His father and nephew were both the second highest priest of Min at the local temple (Johnston 2022: 404, note 798). His family’s wealth is attested by the gilded mask in which he was buried. If obtaining a coffin with the full complement of texts was a function of wealth, status, and access, Irethoreru should have had a coffin with a similar text selection to those of the Priests of Montu at Thebes. The fact that he did not suggests that we should consider explanations for the use of repetitive texts other than the purely economic. One of these might be that the repeating texts were more expedient to write. Another might be that the repeating texts were believed to function for the deceased as well as the more prestigious funerary book excerpts.

One practical reason for the use of repetitive texts, perhaps related to their lower cost, is that these texts were flexible and quick to inscribe. Repeating texts were usually composed of a combination of lists and several shorter units of text: the beginning of a Son of Horus recitation from Spell 151, the god’s epithets and names, the deceased’s genealogy, the list of offerings, and the opening of the formula. These recitations could be truncated while maintaining grammatical coherence. The lists of formulae and epithets could also be expanded or contracted so that the texts fit in the allotted columns, which varied in size depending on where they were located on the coffin. This occurs on the coffin of Irethoreru, where all of the formulae on the front of the coffin are contracted and truncated versions of the long formula which occurs on either side of the *Djed* pillar on the back of the coffin. This long text on the back gives the most complete titulary and genealogy for the deceased.

In addition to their flexibility, repeating texts were probably faster to write than texts which had to be copied. Excerpts from funerary books were probably copied onto the surface of the coffin from model texts on ostraca or papyrus. Such documents most likely came from a temple archive (Niwinski 1989:



Figure 4. Pseudoglyphic coffin inscription. Note that the first two characters of the offering formula are readable, along with the name of Osiris © Drawing by author after Botti 1958: Plate XLVII.

23-26), and access to them may have been restricted to certain groups of people within the temple hierarchy. On the other hand, offering formulae and other short formulae could probably be written from the scribe's memory. We have little direct evidence for how coffin scribes were trained, but memorisation of the appearance of words seems to have played an important role in the training of scribes in the New Kingdom (Jurjens 2021). A further hint that offering formulae were memorised can be seen on several coffins with inscriptions in pseudoglyphs, which were certainly written by illiterate scribes (Figure 4).

On these pieces, the first few characters of the offering formula and some names of deities are usually recognisable, even if the subsequent text is not. Some characters in pseudoglyphic coffin inscriptions have unorthodox forms or orientations, as if the scribe knew what a symbol represented but did not have an actual example before him and did not quite remember how it was supposed to look. Two coffins illustrative of this phenomenon are the coffin of an anonymous person in Florence 10626 (Botti 1958: 147-148, Plate XLVII) and the coffin of an anonymous child SMB 85313 at the *Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung Staatliche Museen zu Berlin*. Even illiterate funerary artists probably would have known how to write an offering formula from memory. Choosing to inscribe coffins with repeating text allowed for quick completion and broadened the pool of potential scribes to include scribes without access to temple archives and scribes who were only partially literate. Speed may have been necessary in the decoration of a coffin. It is not known whether coffins were purchased by the intended owner before death or by the family afterwards. Some coffins from the 25th and 26th dynasty seem to have been at least partially decorated while the occupant was inside (Leospo 1986: 32-33; Hunkeler 2020:60-61). If a coffin was purchased for an individual after his or her death, the coffin decorators may have had to work under a tight deadline as burial became increasingly imminent.

Though a member of the coffin-buying elite might have forgone funerary literature for reasons of expediency, convenience, or cost, this does not mean that coffins with repeating texts were thought of as magically deficient. These coffins must have still been considered functional. The question is how the repeating texts were thought to aid in the protection or rebirth of the deceased. The contents of the repeating texts themselves

do not explicitly tell us, but their context can help. The coffin's 'mechanism' was dependant on the decorative programme of the coffin as a whole, which included the texts and vignettes selected for inclusion, as well as their placement within an overall layout. Not all the possible design programmes described in typologies are well understood. Fortunately, the 'Eleven-eleven' style is, thanks to the predilection for these coffins among the highest and most literate Theban nobility.

Attending the funeral of one of the Theban literati, a literate friend or relative would have seen the coffin laying on its back and been reminded of the funeral wake of Osiris, noting that the coffin allowed the deceased to stand in place of the God. The funeral-goer would have observed the deceased at the centre of a protective circle of canopic deities, who recited ancient speeches designed to gather and revivify the limbs of Osiris and protect him in his vulnerability as the hours of the night before burial passed. The attendee might have appreciated the long pedigree of these speeches on coffins: vignettes

and textual excerpts from Spells 151 and 169 were used on coffins starting the Middle Kingdom and continued on both the coffins of the nobility and the sarcophagi of New Kingdom royalty (Lüscher 1998: 109-129; Hayes 1935: 84-85, 92). The funeral attendee would have noticed the goddesses at the head and pedestal of the coffin, positioned at the head and foot of Osiris, and thought of their role as mourners who revivify the dead god. He would have seen the vignette of the deceased on a bier on the chest and thought of the Ba spell. Perhaps his mind would have turned again to Osiris at the centre of his protective vigil since the representation of the bier was at the middle of the circle of painted gods. He would have seen the vignette and text associated with Nut on the chest of the coffin and recognised the spells for breathing or the excerpt from the *Pyramid Texts* where Nut envelops the deceased. He would have appreciated the texts as ancient and rare, eternally narrating rituals recited at the funeral or filling the gaps of what was left unsaid. He may have left the funeral with a sense of awe and admiration for the taste and learning of the deceased and his family.

Some ‘Eleven-eleven’ coffins with repeating text were meant to be interpreted in the same way as those of the Theban priests of Montu, though they might have elicited a little less awe from literate audiences. An example of a coffin where repeating texts are meant to stand in as one-to-one substitutes for a full recitation is the coffin of Djedhor (EA 20650). On this coffin, full speeches of the perpendicular gods are inscribed next to their respective vignettes for the gods on the abdomen, but as the available space decreases towards the foot on each side, repetitive formulae with the name of each god are used instead. On this coffin, it is clear that the repetitive texts were considered functionally equivalent to the specific utterances and were supposed to be interpreted by the viewer in the same way that a viewer might interpret the coffins of the Theban Priests of Montu. Likewise, though the coffin of Nakhtbasteteru was completely inscribed with repeating text, the fact that the deceased was buried in Thebes, and the attendees at her funeral would have been members of the families of the Montu priests argues for an interpretation of the repeating texts on her coffin as functional substitutes for the more specific texts.

However, the context and the intended audience of the coffin was important. The ‘Eleven-eleven’ coffin has multiple layers of meaning, and we should not interpret the beliefs of the literate Theban priesthood to be representative of how Egyptians from other regions, circles, or social strata interpreted the design of the coffin. Taylor points out that different social strata may have had different ideas of how the coffin was meant to ‘work’ for the deceased (Taylor 2018: 382). This may have been the case for some provincial nobility as well. In the case of Irethoreru, the scribe who wrote the text clearly had access to spells 151 and 169 but chose not to use the Sons of Horus utterances from them. That the excerpts from 151 were associated only with Isis and Nephthys may have served to highlight and emphasise the role of the goddesses in the rebirth of the deceased. Perhaps the specific roles of the perpendicular canopic gods and the way that their speeches referenced New Kingdom royal funerary art was lost on Irethoreru’s social circle at Akhmim, who were more familiar with the role of the goddesses, given Isis’ prominence at the site. Of the Akhmim coffins with perpendicular deities on the sides of the lid,<sup>1</sup> only the two coffins belonging to Djedhor reproduce the associated canopic texts for the gods on the sides of the lid.

Finally, a partially literate or illiterate audience may still have derived meaning from the texts and believed them effective for the rebirth of the deceased. We can only speculate as to how they might have interpreted the ‘Eleven-eleven’ style, but the repeating texts may have been recognised and touched on concepts familiar to them. First, the images of gods in box-shaped spaces surrounded by columns of repeating familiar (but to some, illegible) offering formulae may have reminded some audiences

<sup>1</sup> Two more Akhmim coffins have the perpendicular deities with surrounding text but have features which do not conform to the ‘Eleven-eleven’ type as defined by Elias and Taylor. One is the coffin of Nespaqaishuty, son of Pamiw (Michael C. Carlos Museum, Atlanta 1999.001.009A), which is covered in alternating offering formulae to Re and Osiris. The other is the coffin of Nespaqaishuty, son of Nespanebmetja (Penn Museum, Philadelphia E883 a-c), on which the Book of the Dead Spells 22, 23, and 24 are reproduced in the columns next to the canopic deities (see Johnston 2022: 338-339, 351-353).

of monumental temple or funerary architecture. Sheikholeslami notes that the columned layout on contemporary box-shaped *qrsw* coffins is meant to remind the viewer of a building: the embalming pavilion of Osiris (Sheikholeslami 2014: 114). The lateral gods on the sides of the anthropoid ‘Eleven-eleven’ coffins have a very similar arrangement in small, door-like squares, as if the ‘Eleven-eleven’ pattern may have been intended to also invoke the walls of a shrine, though on the ‘Eleven-eleven’ coffins, the motif is projected onto a curved coffin lid. The sight of temple facades and ancient tombs may have been part of the daily experience and landscape of ordinary Egyptians. They may have associated such architecture with sacred space and the protection of the gods and the dead. Partially literate audiences may have recognised the gods and their names as inscribed on the coffin as characters in the oral funerary liturgy read at the funeral. They may have appreciated the way the texts and images surrounded the body in a protective circle like an inscribed amulet or bandage. The magical protection conferred by the action of encircling in Egyptian religion is well studied (Ritner 1993: 57, note 266). They may have even noticed the repetition itself and seen it as amplifying and reinforcing the protection provided by the images and inscription. Even the ‘Eleven-eleven’ coffins with no association between the inscriptions and the adjacent vignettes featured repeating formulae which associated the deceased with Re and Osiris. These could have been written by a partially literate scribe and appreciated by a partially literate audience as labels applied directly to a surrogate for the body of the deceased, creating the association between the coffin owner and the two regenerating gods necessary for rebirth.

In conclusion, the Nubian and Saite periods saw the increasing use of text as a decorative element on the anthropoid coffins of the Egyptian elite. In the case of the highest elite at Thebes, this text was extracted from newly redacted funerary books, reimagined, and adapted for use on mummiform bivalve coffins. However, a large number of heavily textualised coffins do not feature these specialised funerary texts at all but are rather covered in repeating formulae. There seems to have been a relationship between social status and choice of text on coffins during this period, especially at Thebes. However, the flexibility of the texts and the ease of reproducing them may also have played a role in their selection. Coffins with repetitive texts were probably not understood to be functionally deficient. In fact, it seems as if repetitive texts were thought to be valid functional substitutes for more specialised funerary texts. Additionally, coffin styles like the ‘Eleven-eleven’ style have layers of meaning. Some of these were more meaningful to some audiences than others. The repetitive texts may have served to foreground mechanisms for rebirth that did not require literacy or familiarity with elite funerary literature.

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# Editing Mariette's Letters: Sharing the Archives of Egyptology

Thomas Lebéé

## Abstract

Auguste Mariette is an outstanding figure among the pioneers of Egyptology. Discoverer of the Serapeum of Memphis, founder of the Antiquities Service, and the Boulaq Museum, he also wrote the intrigue of *Aïda*. Designing the Egyptian pavilions of the World Fairs of his time, he worked in exciting times for Egyptology, one generation after Champollion, when the discipline was gradually becoming institutionalised and developing its methods.

The best material to study his legacy is the contemporary documents in which the peculiar world of 19th-century Egyptian archaeology still appears vividly to us. Among them, the letters are of the utmost importance: they give us a discourse often immediately contemporary to the facts, with little distance or reinterpretation. The writer also uses his own voice in them, obviously adapted to the issue at stake, which is not without interest. Nevertheless, scholarly discussions often compile the same sources since Mariette's death, while many other documents lie in the archives or have been discovered since that time.

However, we are now benefiting from the willingness of most institutions to open their archives, and from the new publishing and sharing possibilities offered by digital technology. In the wake of Auguste Mariette's bicentenary, we have set up an ongoing free digital edition of his letters. The paper will present this project; we also hope to attract the interest of all those who wish to share historical documents and to present our methodology and the tools we have used for this purpose.

## Keywords

Archives, Antiquities Service, Digital Humanities, History of Egyptology, Latex, Mariette, XML-TEI

## Introduction

This contribution intends to introduce an ongoing project of a free digital edition of Auguste Mariette's letters. It will offer a practical account of the considerations and choices made at the beginning of this endeavour in 2020. It uses few illustrations, but we encourage readers to visit our project website with its associated data.<sup>1</sup> We hope that anyone wanting to share unpublished sources and facing the same questions may find these considerations useful, at least as an overview of methodological and technical issues that may arise at some point.

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<sup>1</sup> <<https://thlebee.github.io/CoEg/>>; <<https://github.com/ThLebee/CoEg>>

## Mariette's letters

### *Our main protagonist*

Auguste Mariette Pasha (1821-1881) is one of the forefathers of our discipline (for reference accounts of his life, see Wallon 1883; Maspero 1904; David 1994). Originating from Boulogne-sur-Mer, in the north of France, he left high-school to work briefly in England, and then came back to Boulogne, where he ran a local newspaper and took on the responsibility of teaching a class at the town's middle school. Meanwhile, inspired by papers inherited from his distant relation, Nestor L'Hôte, he was also learning Egyptology by himself, studying Champollion and any books he could access from Boulogne; he even petitioned the Public Education ministry to be sent to Egypt. After a few years, he left his modest but secure position and went to Paris, where he was hired in the Egyptian section of the Louvre in 1848.

He finally succeeded in obtaining an official mission to Egypt from the government in 1850, being primarily tasked with collecting Coptic manuscripts, and, if he had enough time and money, to organise some excavations (a secondary objective that he was actually reluctant to take on, fearing it might prevent him from fulfilling his main mission). In Egypt, he realised the Coptic libraries were now wary of foreign collectors, and so, deciding to allocate all his remaining resources to excavating, he began to explore around Giza and Saqqara, with no previous field experience.

It is well known that he was notably lucky in his venture: recognising the head of a sphinx emerging from the sands as an element in a series he had seen elsewhere in the Alexandria and Cairo collections. Remembering Strabo's account of such a buried sphinx on the way to the fabled Serapeum of Memphis, Mariette started to dig up the *dromos* and follow it westwards, until finally he reached the remains of the temple and its subterranean necropolis. For four years, and through many difficulties, he kept digging and studying his findings there, until all was settled with the Egyptian government and he could go back to France. From there, it seemed that his natural path would be to study further the history of Apis and the Serapeum, and to make an uneventful career in the Louvre.

Mariette was not, however, inclined to armchair scholarship. In 1857, he went back to Egypt, this time with the exciting prospect of designing an administration responsible for the management of archaeology in the country. Entering the service of the Egyptian Viceroy, he thus founded the Antiquities Service and the Cairo Museum, originally located in Boulaq. Devoting the rest of his life to his career as an Egyptian civil servant, he lobbied to guarantee as best he could the exclusive ownership of the country's archaeological resource for the state (against the interest of many dealers and European governments). Navigating through the schemes and deceptions of the Egyptian Court, under several reigns and crises, he was successively nominated Bey then Pasha. His official position also led him to design Egyptian pavilions in several World Exhibitions, to write history handbooks for Egyptian schools, and a few works to be translated into Arabic for the Egyptian visitors of the museum; he even found time to work on the story of the opera *Aïda*. Having managed to publish major sites – Dendera, Karnak, Deir el-Bahari, Abydos – Mariette is credited for coining the terms 'mastaba' and 'serdab' into the archaeological vocabulary, and for guiding Gaston Maspero's first steps. He is undoubtedly a colourful figure who worked in interesting times. As we will see, his travels and responsibilities led him to produce a vast number of letters throughout his active years.

### *Writing letters as an expatriate 19th-century Egyptologist*

Written correspondence was then, ever more than nowadays, the best way to formally convey important information between administrations, colleagues, peers, scholars, friends, and family. Writing letters was obviously not only a leisure activity, despite its appeal, but a necessity, imposing

many contingencies, such as the time needed to write (composing or copying it properly), the material conditions to produce a clean and well-written document, and ultimately the efficiency of the postal system that carried letters with varying speed and frequency, depending on where they were sent from and to whom. Mariette makes reference to all of these factors in his letters, complaining that he is often deprived of enough comfort, peace of mind, and above all time to write to his correspondents as he would have liked (which was certainly not always a mere epistolary commonplace).

Mariette was, most inconveniently for him but luckily for us, often far away from the people he wanted to inform of his works. Some of the most intense periods of his career were indeed spent as a lone forerunner or an envoy abroad. It is in such a position that he carried out the first Serapeum excavations (1850-1854), isolated in the desert and threatened on all sides, but nevertheless in communication with the French diplomatic agency and his colleagues from the Louvre. Later, back in Egypt in 1857-1858, while he was touring the country to set up an administration to supervise future excavations, he sent frequent reports to his contacts in Cairo. During the following years, as director of the Egyptian Antiquities Service, he kept regular epistolary contacts with his colleagues and Cairo relations, as well as with peers, friends, and family in Europe, all the while he was working in the field, or following the Egyptian Court, when sent to various World Exhibitions to represent Egypt, or when he was taking leave overseas to care for his family and his relatively poor health.

This unstable situation, which also reflects the uncertainty of his career, caused him to write extensively throughout his life. Letters are usually quite ephemeral, and most end up being casually discarded soon after being read, or a few years later during some careless tidying up.

However, a significant number of his letters were kept by several administrations and far-sighted colleagues. By searching the archives of many institutions, it is possible to locate several hundreds of his letters, retained by their recipients as official documents or private correspondence. Moreover, Mariette's own archives contain many drafts or copies he kept for himself as reminders of resolved and current matters. We estimate that more than 450 letters have been identified so far, stretching over thirty-five busy years. They encompass both private messages and official communications, while Mariette was in France and in Egypt, working successively for both governments, and addressed to relatives, friends, colleagues, fellow scholars, and officials on many subjects. Almost all aspects of his eventful life are alluded to or described in detail in those letters. We are thus in the fortunate position of being able to gather a rich corpus of material that may serve as a source for Mariette's life, and more generally as a wide gateway to the history of Egyptology.

### ***Correspondence as a source for the history of Egyptology***

Letters offer many features that make them a source of choice for historians. It is not surprising that they have long been a favoured means of engaging with historical figures, especially in the field of humanities. Published volumes of letters structure our knowledge of countless writers, scientists, statesmen, etc. The list is endless of course: Charles Baudelaire, Napoléon Bonaparte, Charles Darwin, Ernest Hemingway, Gustave Flaubert, Victor Hugo, J.R.R. Tolkien, Vincent Van Gogh, Voltaire, Marguerite Yourcenar... A few Egyptological examples can also be cited, starting with the letters of Champollion le Jeune himself (see Champollion 1833 and 1909), that were published very early to present study material related to his works. It was already recognised that letters were a perfect way to explore 19th-century Egyptology (Maspero 1915: 224 - 'une époque où l'égyptologie élaborait sa doctrine par lettres privées plus encore peut-être que par ouvrages imprimés'). More recent publications of this kind include Maspero (2003) and Petrie (2004).



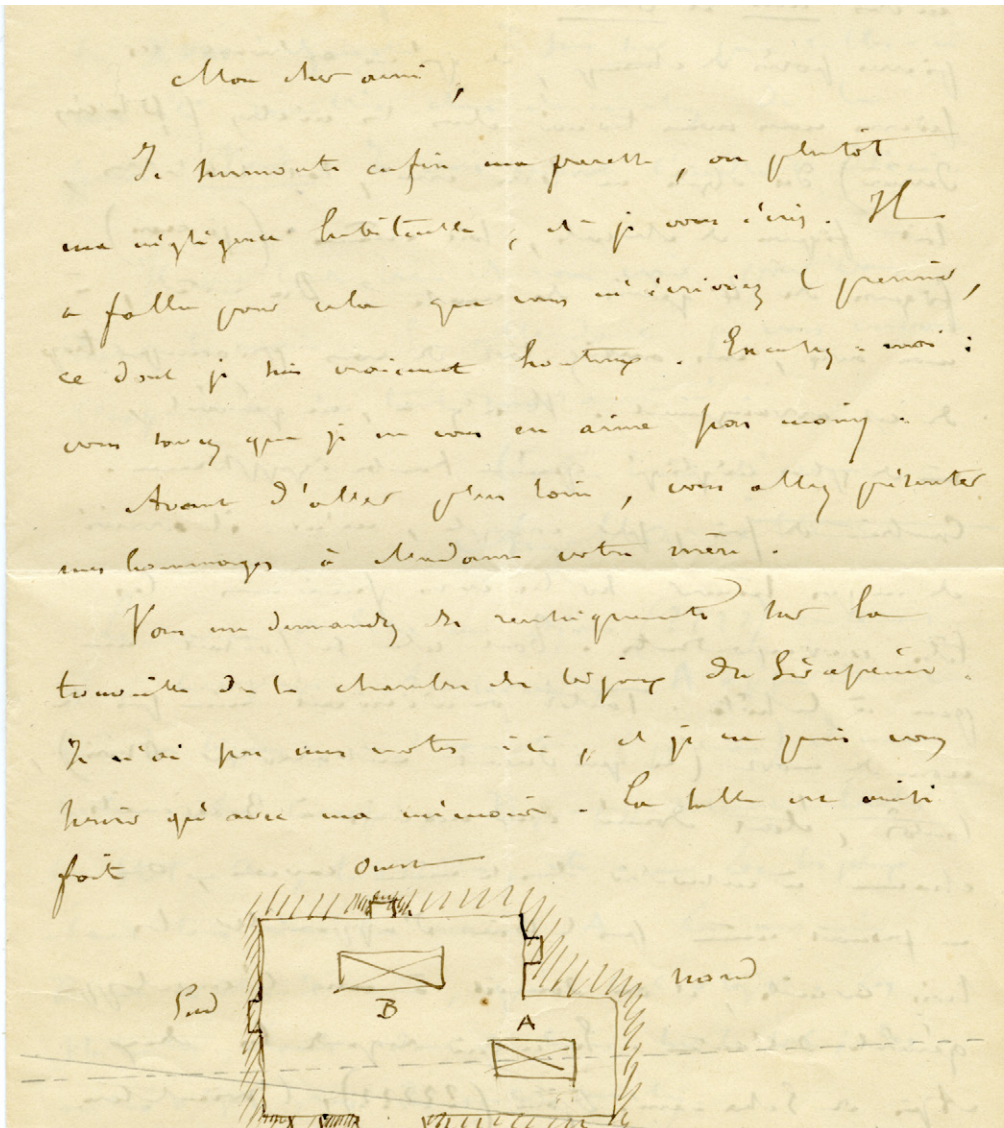


Figure 1. Letter dated 31 March 1867, from Auteuil, from Mariette to Devéria (musée du Louvre, département des antiquités égyptiennes, BCMN ms. 245.2)

Letters are indeed very convenient documents to work with. Most, of course, are precisely located in time, with a clear addressee, private or official. Their contents, naturally, are not always trustworthy *per se*, but they often provide a specific context for evaluating their sincerity.

These insightful documents remain, however, difficult to use for various reasons. Mariette's notoriously idiosyncratic handwriting (Figure 1) is the first obstacle, being compared by his colleagues to Demotic script (Horrack 1907: XXXVI). This can be further complicated by the current physical state of the documents, especially with drafts or copies kept for private usage and sometimes unexpectedly exposed to severe conditions (Mariette's own papers were rescued from a dramatic flood in 1878). Being scattered around many institutions, where they are not always publicly identified, is another considerable difficulty to be overcome. Moreover, the meaning can often be allusive, depending on current events well known by the parties and detailed in previous (possibly lost) exchanges. It is thus quite helpful to analyse these letters as part of an extensive corpus to recreate a context that would be difficult to grasp otherwise.

As for our project, when preparing a paper on the Boulaq Museum, in the context of the celebration of Mariette's bicentennial in 2021 (see Devauchelle and Podvin, in press), we intended to collate as many of Mariette's letters as we could find. While we were progressing with this considerable task, we thought that all this documentation might be useful to many others, and that we ourselves would understand it much better if we processed it more systematically.

Such an attempt to make available Mariette's correspondence is not the first (see Bruwier 1985), nor certainly the last; but we hope this present one will make the best use of currently available methods, technologies and infrastructures. We are quite aware that the field of digital humanities is constantly evolving, and our intent is not to reach a definitive edition, but to provide, at least, a convenient tool for the time being and a potential reusable basis for further works. We aim to share in this contribution how we are trying to do this.

## Chosen examples

### *Entering the Serapeum*

Before delving into technical considerations, we wanted to share a few select examples of the correspondence, e.g. the first account of the opening of the Serapeum, written down by Mariette just two days after the event and immediately sent to Paris. Apart from its emotional value, it is very interesting to compare the text with the account published by Mariette much later, which is also striking but inevitably less vivid and accurate.

‘Vous dire l’émotion dont je fus saisi à cet instant suprême est impossible. Après une année et douze jours de travail ; j’arrivais enfin à mon but. Ce but, je l’avais poursuivi à travers des empêchements de toute sorte [*sic*], à travers les maladies, les luttes que m’ont suscitées la jalousie des uns et la cupidité des autres. Privé d’argent depuis six mois, manquant de tout, vivant seul au milieu des morts dans un horrible désert, je n’avais jamais reculé, certain que la grandeur des résultats, serait, tôt ou tard, la récompense de mes fatigues. Maintenant qu’allais-je trouver derrière cette porte à peine entrouverte ? Champollion qui m’avait enseigné à lire sur chaque pierre de temple le nom du bœuf divin de Memphis ne m’avait-il pas trompé, et devrais-je avoir assez foi dans sa méthode si souvent attaquée pour risquer, sur la lecture seule de quelques hiéroglyphes, une année entière de recherches pénibles et l’avenir de toute la mission qu’au mois d’août 1850 le gouvernement français m’avait confiée ? En outre ce que j’allais découvrir ne pouvait-il pas, (si un seul de mes arabes venait, pour quelques piastres, à en dévoiler le secret) ne pouvait-il pas [*sic*] d’autant plus encourager Abbas-Pacha dans sa résolution que les objets précieux à prendre devenaient plus nombreux.

Mais comment résister ? Je me laissai donc aller à ma curiosité, et, la tête la première, je m’enfonçai dans l’ouverture.

Pendant cinq minutes environ, j’eus à ramper, le ventre sur le sable et le dos appuyé littéralement sur la voûte. J’avais une bougie d’une main et une boîte d’allumettes de l’autre et je n’avançais qu’en m’aidant des genoux et des coudes. Enfin le conduit devint graduellement plus large et j’arrivai à un endroit où je pouvais me tenir debout. Là je m’orientai un instant. A droite et à gauche je reconnus des chambres taillées dans le roc au milieu desquelles s’élèvent de gigantesques sarcophages, et je vis devant moi des galeries qui paraissaient s’enfoncer dans la montagne à des profondeurs inconnues.

Je m’avançai résolument. Jamais, Monsieur le Ministre, je n’oublierai le trouble dont j’étais saisi en parcourant ces couloirs, ces chambres, ces souterrains de mille sortes qui font de la tombe d’Apis toute une ville taillée dans le roc.

Je reconnus ainsi 28 sarcophages, tous en granit, tous monolithes, tous de dimensions colossales. Je n'en mesurai qu'un, et je lui trouvai de onze à douze pieds de hauteur sur dix-sept ou dix-huit de largeur. Malheureusement je ne pus rester dans ces galeries aussi longtemps [sic] que je l'eusse voulu. L'air que je respirais n'avait pas été renouvelé depuis des siècles et je voyais à la difficulté qu'avait ma lumière à brûler qu'il était prudent de sortir.'

(Mariette 2020, 14 November 1851, to the Minister of the Interior: Archives nationales, 20144775/8; translated in annex 1.)

This striking episode was only known through a very succinct narrative (Maspero 1882: 44-45); this account was written only two days after the events and sent to the Minister of the Interior who was subsidising Mariette's mission.

### ***Nominating the first reis***

Another example of valuable information is the nomination of the first *reis* of the Antiquities Service, whose name would be almost unknown otherwise. There are few details known of the Service's earliest activities in the field in the published material (see for example Dewachter 1985) and any detail on this matter is extremely valuable. A few lists of sites where Mariette led the first official government excavations are known, but the letters written in the first years of the Service (created in 1858) are even more evocative of his plans for his new administration, and of his many ambitions that, unfortunately, could not be supported by the Egyptian budget during difficult years.

The first *reis* nominated were:

- 18 December 1858 (Mariette 2020: École pratique des hautes études, Centre Wladimir Golénischeff, box 44, document 39):
  - Mit Rahineh: Ibrahim Abu Hagazeh
  - Saqqarah:
    - Khamsawi Abu Rubi
    - Aly Abu Safar
    - Rubi Abu Khamsawi
  - Pyramids of Gizah: Atush Abu Faid
- 24 January 1859 (Mariette 2020: École pratique des hautes études, Centre Wladimir Golénischeff, box 44, document 43)
  - Karnak:
    - Muhammad Demarany
    - Diab ben Timsah
  - Qurnah:
    - Awad
    - Aly

The approximate transcriptions of Arabic names adopted by Mariette have been slightly altered here to follow the English usage. These few nominations are centred around major sites, with an idea of the expected future activity to be undertaken at each, according to the allocated manpower. It is not surprising that Saqqarah features so prominently, given that it was here that Mariette had dug for four

years less than a decade earlier. These nominations were circumscribed to one *mudiriyah* each, and we lack the corresponding designations for other provinces, even if the Memphite and Theban areas were undoubtedly the first priority for the newly founded administration. We can also recognise in the local first *reis* Mariette's previous associates, such as the multi-generational Rubi and Khamsawi family, who were to work within the Antiquities Service for many years more.

### ***Hiring Ahmad Kamal***

Of note is also the hiring of Ahmad Kamal (Bierbrier 2019: 246), one of the first Egyptian Egyptologists (the Coptic Marc Kabis had acted as assistant curator in the Antiquities Service earlier, c. 1863).

It is not without interest to see that Mariette specifically requested him and formally acknowledged his expertise, whereas it is commonly said that Mariette actively opposed the progress of Egyptian students (this opinion originating from late comments by Brugsch (1894: 282); to our knowledge, it is not supported by contemporary documents).

'Excellence,

Malgré toute la bonne volonté que j'y mets, il m'est impossible de ne pas reconnaître que Mohammed effendi Sadeh, le secrétaire interprète arabe du Musée, est devenu complètement insuffisant pour les fonctions qu'il doit remplir dans l'Administration que j'ai l'honneur de diriger. Nous avons beaucoup de comptes à tenir, toute une série de correspondances à mettre au courant. Or les devoirs que tout cela impose à Mohammed effendi sont pour lui comme s'ils n'existaient pas, au point que depuis quatre jours Mohammed effendi n'a pas paru au Musée.

Dans ces circonstances, je demande à Votre Excellence de vouloir bien procéder au remplacement de Mohammed effendi, et de désigner pour ces fonctions Ahmed Kemal effendi, qui se présente pour les remplir. Ahmed Kemal effendi réunit toutes les qualités requises pour cet emploi. Il est ancien élève de l'Ecole d'Égyptologie dirigée au Caire par S. E. Brugsch-Bey. Il parle et écrit le turc, l'arabe, et le français. Sans parler de son aptitude à nous venir en aide dans les affaires administratives du Musée, il peut aussi nous rendre des services, par sa connaissance de l'archéologie égyptienne, au point de vue scientifique.'

(*Mariette 2020: 25 ; February 1880, to the Minister of Public Works; EPHE, Centre Wladimir Golénischeff, box 44, document 122; translated in annex 2.*)

This letter, lost in the middle of many seemingly mundane little administrative errands, is nonetheless an important document that testifies to the recognition by Mariette of the merits of his putative colleague, and of their previous relations, that have never been investigated to our knowledge.

## **Method, principles, and tools**

### ***Defining the project's parameters***

We had many options to define the framework of our work. The first priority was to set the scope of the project and define criteria to circumscribe our corpus. Considering Mariette's epistolary activity, should we include received letters or only sent ones? What to do with drafts of letters that may not have been sent? Should we also include letters already published, in Mariette's time or later?

We chose to keep only the letters written by Mariette and not their replies, which would have represented too large a documentation, would have continually shifted the focus of the text, and in most cases were missing anyway. We decided nevertheless to remain quite liberal in defining Mariette's letters,

i.e. including drafts, already published letters and articles, or texts written following the epistolary style (such as a large report of forty pages addressed to the Minister of Public Education; see Mariette 2020: letter from the 1st April 1857, Archives nationales, F/17/2988/1).

Once we settled to a linear sequence of letters that could be read from a single file, rather than a dynamic database, for practical reasons covered below, another issue was how to structure and order the letters. At least two ways could be considered: ordering the letters by addressee, allowing a more coherent reading of Mariette's communications, like as many virtually uninterrupted dialogues; or following a strict chronological order, keeping the historical sequence of writing in Mariette's life. In both cases, however, we would have to deal with letters lacking the essential information, either addressee or date. The chronological approach was favoured, with undated letters gathered at the end of the sequence.

Desiring to share these documents, we tried to take inspiration from the FAIR principles (findability, accessibility, interoperability, and reuse of digital assets: Wilkinson *et al.* 2016) from the very conception of the project. This implied, naturally, choosing an open license for all the project's data to facilitate their reuse as much as possible.

Before putting ourselves to work, however, we also had to ponder some technicalities. Within French law, under which most of the owner institutions of our corpus so far are bound, these texts are 'works of the mind' ('œuvres de l'esprit'); they belong in the public domain because Mariette died more than seventy years ago (French intellectual property law code, art. L123-1), but as they are yet unpublished, they generate 25 years of exploitation exclusivity to their owners from the date of their first publishing (art. L123-4).

It is therefore no mere courtesy but mandatory to obtain formal authorisation from the various owners, mostly archival centres, libraries, and museums, explicitly stating our intention to publish a transcription of their letters under open license. This proved fortunately easier than we anticipated, and so far, each institution providing access to its documents to the public has allowed us to work on them and to put transcriptions online. If in the future an owner would deny us such an authorisation, we still have the possibility to include in our corpus only the basic descriptive data of the letters (date, place, addressee, and index entries) that are not covered by intellectual property and would provide the essential elements of the content of the text.

### ***Encoding the text: XML-TEI and Latex***

Our underlying aim is to reproduce faithfully the documents in form and content, allowing anyone to easily check the original letters, for example to correct our reading if need be. On a more practical level, as we were looking for a way to make these letters easily available, we had to choose a format that could be read and reused without restriction of software licence or version. In this matter, simple character chains that form a code containing the relevant information is the most reliable medium to date. We found a toolbox already designed for this end: XML-TEI.

XML is a language used to encode and structure digital data with markups (the acronym stands for 'extended markup language'). According to the XML principles (see World Wide Web Consortium 2008; a practical example is shown below), the elements are the categories into which text and its description may be segmented: title, note, paragraph, table, author, dateline, deleted text, gap, etc. The character chains are segmented by 'tags' formed by the standard designation for a type of element (such as 'title') written between chevrons and sometimes a slash: they can be used as opening tag ('<title>'), closing tag ('</title>') and empty-element tag ('<space/>'). More information can be added to elements by attributes that follow their name in opening, or autonomous tags (e.g. '<persName type="familyName">Mariette</

persName>’ signifies that the character chain ‘Mariette’ belongs, among personal names, to the type ‘familyName’).

TEI (‘text encoding initiative’) is a sublanguage of XML developed by scholars to encode texts and their descriptions. It offers both a lexicon of elements and a syntax to organise them (see The TEI Consortium 2022). Rules of TEI are quite flexible and allow each project to use them according to its particularities; for example, many elements are defined, but their use depends on the aims of each project; it is possible to segment each words and characters or glyphs, or only to focus on the text macrostructure. The system still offers new developments as it is implemented on every inscribed document possible, including paper sheets and stage plays. A working group is currently proposing to include the particularities of correspondence metadata in the core schema options of TEI (Stadler *et al.* 2017).

The following lines (Mariette 2020: letter dated 10 September 1863 to Kabis, Archives nationales, AB/XIX/4195, folder 1, doc. 5) are encoded below using the XML-TEI elements <p> (paragraph), <lb/> (line beginning), <rs> (reference string) and <placeName> (geographical name):

Mon cher Kabis,  
Votre station à Saqqarah a été assez  
longue, et je vous prie de revenir au Caire.

```
<p rend="indent"><lb/><rs sameAs="https://thlebee.github.io/CoEg/doc/CoEg_Index.xml#CoEg_pers_00000428">Mon cher Kabis</rs>,</p>
```

```
<p><lb/>Votre station à <placeName sameAs="https://thlebee.github.io/CoEg/doc/CoEg_Index.xml#CoEg_place_00000001">Saqqarah</placeName> a été assez
```

```
<lb/>longue, et je vous prie de revenir au <placeName sameAs="https://thlebee.github.io/CoEg/doc/CoEg_Mariette.xml#CoEg_place_00000010">Caire</placeName>.</p>
```

In this case, we have added to the transcription of the manuscript a few indications of the display of the text, by delimitating paragraphs and line, or we mark special features, i.e. the use of underlined or crossed out text. We also characterised here the names and expressions that are referring to places and people, with a URL address pointing to our index, which we will describe below.

Such code is intellectually satisfying, but obviously not very convenient for the human eye, so we needed a way to process the text to obtain a file that can be read comfortably; experience of digital formats also made us hope to use hyperlinks and automated indices if possible.

The free software Latex proved useful to this end. It has been designed to produce complex text files, such as papers, dissertations, etc. We are mainly using it for its capacity to include advanced functions, i.e. hyperlinks, multiples indices, and precise inclusion of figures. Latex uses a different language than XML, but the information is similarly segmented, so it is not too bothersome to shift from one to another. The Latex code of the example given above could be:

```
\hspace{1cm}Mon cher Kabis\gls{CoEg_pers_00000428},\
```

```
\indent Votre station à Saqqarah\gls{CoEg_place_00000001} a été assez\
```

```
longue, et je vous prie de revenir au Caire\gls{CoEg_place_00000010}.\
```

This code appears simpler, and it is, providing only the information needed to display the text, with indentations of various magnitude (`\hspace{1cm}`, `\indent`), lines ends (`\`) and index references (the `\gls` followed by an identifier). This passage is, however, less informative: indices entries are not categorised as person or place names. If Latex gives convenient and easily readable PDF files, its data are not as precise as XML-TEI, and the gap is even more significant with the critical apparatus.

### ***Display, metadata and indices: modelling information***

While choosing our tools, our main preparatory work was to define which features we wanted to include in our edition and how to translate them into XML and Latex codes, and ultimately how to display them visually on a page.

Our dilemma was to process all those unique documents and submit them in some sort of standardisation process; the most obvious way is to convert handwriting into typographical characters, but similar transformations may occur to the disposition of paragraphs and page layouts. The challenge is to identify which nuances are significant enough to be reproduced, and which are just accidental. Our intention is not to produce a facsimile, and we used printing conventions (e.g. italics for underlined text).

For the text itself, we selected a concise set of metadata to describe unequivocally each letter and ease the navigation within the corpus. Those metadata were based on XML-TEI elements and transcribed into the final PDF generated with Latex. Each letter is thus accompanied by a title which states, whenever possible, its date, place of writing and addressee; the other metadata include the institution where the document is kept, its reference, a short description of its material support, the associated keywords, and any necessary notes (i.e. subsequent marking, clarifications on the situation described in the text and the mention of draft and copies, if known).

All the letters are gathered into a single file, at the beginning of which a short introduction describes our project and our editorial conventions. It is followed by a succinct description of our corpus, ordered by institution, with the details of their archival history, before the main part of the work, formed by the chronological sequence of letters and completed by several indices. Ultimately, even if this edition makes use of digital technologies and semantic web tools, it is quite similar in structure, appearance and transcription practice to traditional published text editions (it is the reason why we chose to imitate the visual style of Maspero's *Bibliothèque égyptologique*, as an auspicious patronage).

All of this leads to a pretty simple workflow of sorts, with the letters first transcribed in a regular text editor, then completed with XML elements, later replaced by their Latex counterpart to obtain a readable PDF file, with both XML and PDF files being available at the end. Letters are processed by groups corresponding to their current gatherings in archives and our progressive collation of them in various institutions.

Indexing is another way to ease the comprehension and exploration of the documents. In this area, we had to choose what to index and how to describe it in the appendices, trying to guess what types of entities may be searched for in our documents by others. TEI elements were again a good basis and provided data models for almost anything, allowing us to define simply each entry and to link them with web authorities such as Geonames, Wikidata, Trismegistos, etc. All are listed in a separate index file, with appropriate descriptive data for any person, ship, place, organisation, published work, and object that Mariette may mention. (Curiously, there is no data model to describe ships in TEI and we had to determine whether, from the perspective of our project, a ship was more akin to a person, a place, an organisation, or a museum artefact; we settled for the first option, not for poetic reasons but because ships may be described similarly to individuals, with names and dates of existence, whereas geolocation

data and artefact properties were not relevant.) We also made complementary indices for the letters' keywords, rare terms, abbreviations, and Middle Egyptian glossary entries.

Our letters occasionally include hieroglyphic citations. Our reflection on how to process them can be shortly expanded here, and may be of interest to anyone wanting to similarly share archaeological material. XML encoding is based on character chains, but it can be adapted to carry most relevant information about an inscription. There already exists a specific declination of XML applied to epigraphic material, i.e. Epidoc (see Elliott *et al.* 2006), and a TEI metadata model for Egyptian texts (see Coulon *et al.* 2015), however most of the ongoing projects in this domain are working on word level, often dealing only with transliteration. In our case, we wanted to transcribe the signs written by Mariette, not only the words they form (partly at least because his reading may be outdated, and because our own reading of his hieroglyphic quotes is sometimes conjectural). We adapted accordingly the code to include a picture of standardised signs (made with free hieroglyphics editor Jshesh), a code following the *Manuel de codage* principles (Buurman *et al.* 1988), a transliteration indexed on a suitable glossary, and a French translation. We believe that this expedient is, for now, a satisfactory way to preserve all relevant information around these fragments of text. As a warning, we should add that although it is working for our purposes, and we believe it may similarly be implemented in other projects, it remains a time-consuming and tedious process.

### ***Online: sharing the project***

To make this work in progress available, the project currently uses three platforms. All the data are uploaded on a Github repository (<<https://github.com/ThLebee/CoEg>>), which provides also the website of the project (<<https://thlebee.github.io/CoEg/>>), whereas more in-depth commentaries on each new letters collections are posted on our research blog (<<https://hef.hypotheses.org/>>).

Quite early on in the project, we identified GitHub as a convenient tool to make our raw data and files easily accessible. This free platform has been designed for sharing codes between programmers, and besides many functionalities that go well beyond our skills and needs, it allows users to share files, providing a stable URL to read them, while keeping track of any modification made by the project members. (As a side note, we are currently working alone on the *Correspondances égyptologiques* project, but it could be extended in scope and personnel, and this structure would remain relevant for a team working together.)

We also used Jeekyll, a functionality deployed by the platform to add to our data repository a whole website that is more welcoming to browse. A few tries were necessary to fully understand the architecture of this tool, but once mastered it allows for a good-looking 'front-office' interface, deliberately kept as simple as possible but leaving room for future developments if need arises. At every update of the project, we only update the project core files on the GitHub repository; the file names and address remain the same and any link keeps working. At the same time, we upload each new set of data files as an archive version of the project in another branch of the repository. This procedure is currently very satisfactory for light maintenance of the data without needing too much time or care.

Another objective was to use the potential of the semantic web by attempting a synergy with other online tools and improved navigation and indexing: by having our files online and directly readable, it is possible to use the hyperlinks set within our code to jump between the various files (between the text and index of the XML files, or inside the Latex PDF file), and, more interestingly, from our index entries to external authorities such as Trismegistos, Geonames, Wikidata, etc.



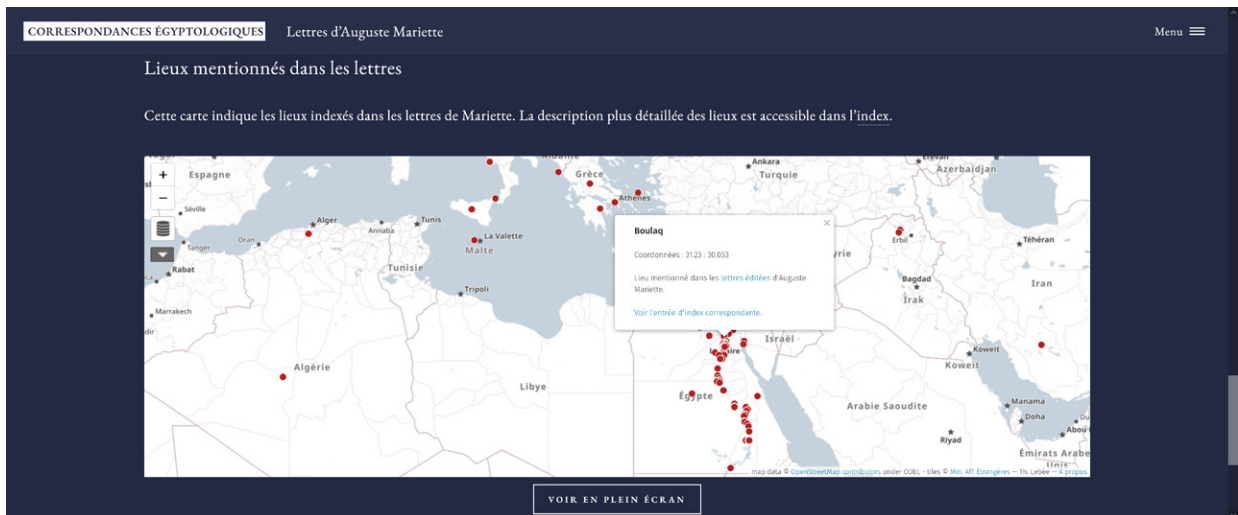


Figure 2. A map of the place names referenced in the letters. Th. Lebée (CC-BY).

We have also been able to experiment with data visualisation and include dynamic maps and timelines to offer other ways to explore our data and ease any research focusing on specific locations or times in Mariette's life. While being a nice way to see the places quoted in the letters, it is also a good incentive for us to keep our geolocation data clean and regularly checked (Figure 2).

Another facet of the semantic web is to enable our data to be part of other projects. We tried our best to make our data usable; we do not know yet of any use of the encoded letters of Mariette, but any such initiative would be most welcome, and feedback would allow us to improve our project. To give the project a better visibility among similar editions, we produced metadata files targeted by the `correspSearch` platform (<<https://correspsearch.net/en/home.html>>), which operates as a search engine for XML-encoded correspondence.

Finally, an obvious factor of accessibility is the language used; while we try to translate in English most of the posts published on our research blog, since this project revolves around a documentation in French, we are not convinced of the interest of translating the critical apparatus, deeming it necessary to engage directly with the source material in any event. A translation of the whole corpus, on the other hand, would be quite another project, and on a scale beyond our reach.

### ***A low-tech digital project?***

This project began as an experiment; we were neither sure about the technical possibility to deliver something usable at the end, nor even of the willingness of institutions to let us use their collections. Had any major institution holding Mariette's letters refused, the project would have met a severe drawback and its very purpose would have needed to be re-evaluated.

This probably explains why the editorial chain was, from the beginning, designed to be very light: since we are working on this project in our free time and without institutional support, our practical concern was to avoid costs and reduce the time of maintenance of the project. We also wanted to be able to publish the letters gradually, as soon as a new collection is processed. This has allowed us to share quickly some letters, in the hope that we could gather advice and improve the project thank to feedback. It was also useful, when asking institutions their authorisation to publish our transcription of their letters, to show a convincing if incomplete glance at the expected result, in which more and more institutions were appearing.

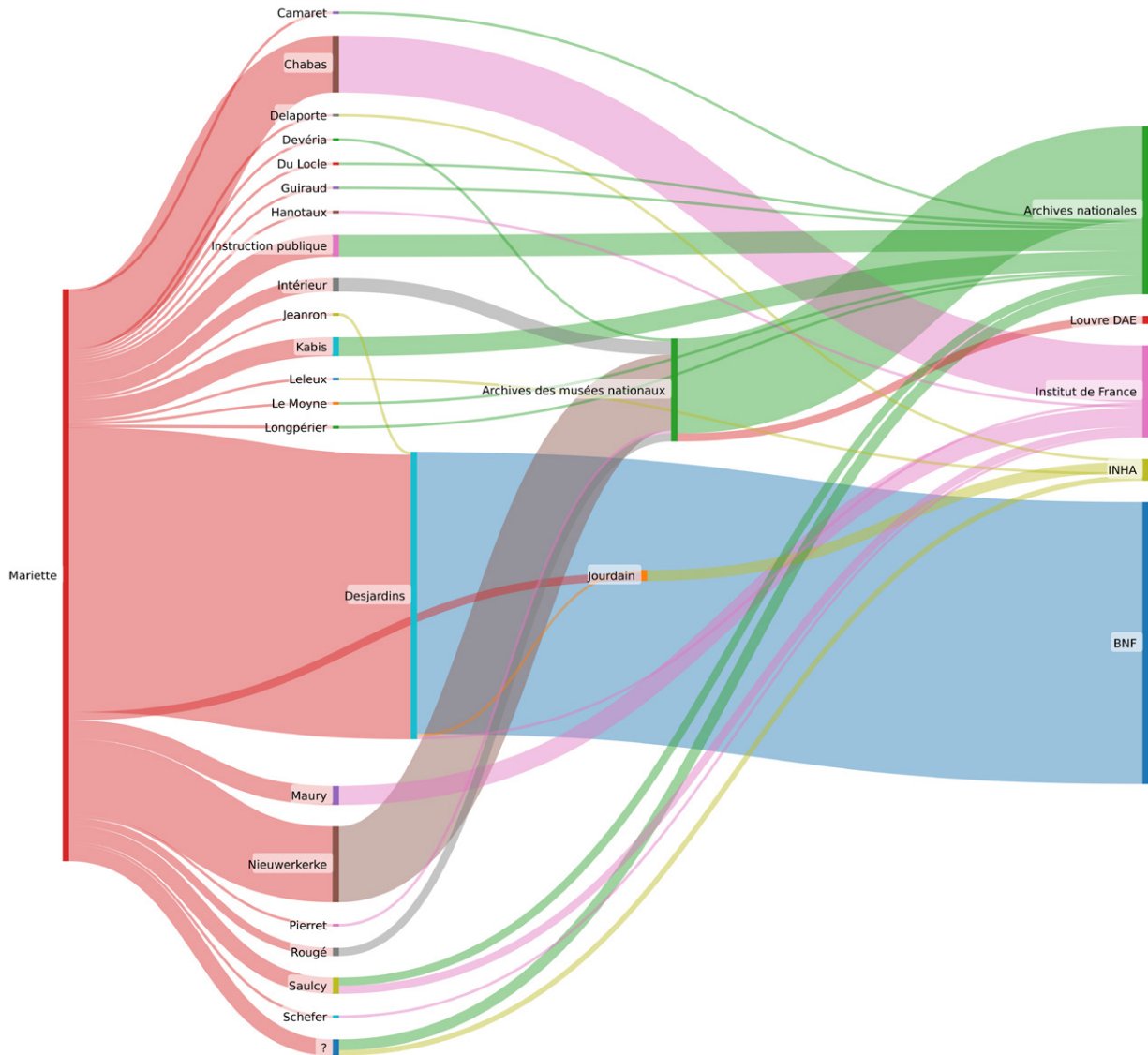


Figure 3. Letter trajectories, from Mariette to their current repositories (219 letters published, July 2022). Th. Lebée (CC-BY).

Given these circumstances, we sought to decrease the time of the update process as much as possible, without reducing quality controls and proofreading. It is the reason why, for example, we have chosen not to display photographs of the letters next to their transcriptions (apart from copyright complications), nor to design a fully dynamic database online, preferring instead a single file. The result may be a little ‘bland’ compared to more complex projects, but remains easier to maintain.

The modest technical resources, a necessity caused partly by our independent status for this project and partly by the limitation of our skills in these matters, was embraced as a feature of the experiment. All our needs were covered by free and often open software and tools: LibreOffice as text editor and spreadsheet program; Notepad++ and Atom as code editors; Jshesh as hieroglyphics editor; some free fonts; Latex as document preparation system; and GitHub as data repository and publishing platform.

It made us realise the extent of the possibilities offered by many tools freely available, and we are eager to encourage anyone wanting to share unknown materials to try, and not feel restricted by a lack of

financial, material, or technical support. We hope that our project is proof of concept that 'handmade' digital ventures can be successful and offer useful resources available to anyone, provided they are reasonably scaled.

### The project now and in the near future

Our investigation is still ongoing. At the beginning of 2023, the project covers 260 letters and we hope to include a few hundreds more from France and abroad, as well as beginning a more in-depth exploitation of their contents by dedicated papers.

The slow process of editing Mariette's letters also drives us to investigate around the many entities mentioned in the text, in order to get clean and proper indices. It is a salutary incentive to broaden our understanding of the documents' context. Another domain of research that has become more and more apparent in our investigation was the later institutional gathering of the documents, as we were simultaneously looking for known letters, and hunting for other potential repositories (Figure 3).

On a wider scale, this also helps us to apprehend his communication network, by investigating around his correspondents and the dynamics of their exchanges through Mariette's life. We started to ponder more closely the context of each document: what information did Mariette choose to disclose, or not reveal, how did he comment on things, what did he need from his correspondent, etc. Our extensive investigation allowed us to develop a general understanding of Mariette's letter-writing activities, which reflected most aspects of his life, in his simultaneous personal, professional, administrative, and scholarly development.

Overall, the seemingly slow endeavour to carefully process many documents is a rewarding opportunity to engage with their subjects, and greatly improve our understanding of them. The time needed to set up such a project and organise the documentation is not to be underestimated, but it does not require much more: with time to try and to learn, free digital tools can help with almost anything, even with very basic resources, as we hope to have demonstrated.

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## Annex 1

Translation of Mariette's letter of 4 November 1851 to the Minister of the Interior (Archives nationales, 20144775/8)

'It is impossible to tell you the emotion with which I was seized at that supreme moment. After a year and twelve days of work; I had finally reached my goal. I had pursued this goal through all sorts of obstacles, through illnesses, through the struggles that the jealousy of some and the greed of others had caused me. Deprived of money for six months, lacking everything, living alone among the dead in a horrible desert, I had never backed down, certain that the greatness of the results would, sooner or later, be the reward for my efforts. Now what was I going to find behind this door that was barely ajar? Had not Champollion, who had taught me to read on each temple stone the name of the divine ox of Memphis, deceived me, and should I have enough faith in his method, so often attacked, to risk, on the reading of a few hieroglyphs alone, a whole year of painful research and the future of the whole mission that in August 1850 the French government had entrusted to me? Moreover (if only one of my Arabs were to reveal the secret for a few piasters), could not what I was about to discover encourage Abbas-Pasha in his decision [to close the French excavation] as the precious objects to loot became more numerous?

But how could I resist? So I gave in to my curiosity, and, head first, I plunged into the opening.

For about five minutes I had to crawl, my stomach on the sand and my back literally against the arch. I had a candle in one hand and a box of matches in the other, and I only moved forward with the help of my knees and elbows.

At last the shaft gradually became wider and I reached a place where I could stand. There I orientated myself for a moment. To the right and left I recognised chambers cut into the rock, in the middle of which rose gigantic sarcophagi, and I saw before me galleries that seemed to go down into the mountain to unknown depths.

I went forward resolutely. Never, Mr Minister, will I forget the turmoil I felt as I walked through these corridors, these chambers, and these subterranean passages of a thousand kinds that make the tomb of Apis a whole city carved out of the rock.

I thus recognised twenty-eight sarcophagi, all of them of granite, all of them monolithic, all of them of colossal dimensions. I measured only one of them, and I found it to be eleven to twelve feet high and seventeen or eighteen feet wide. Unfortunately, I could not stay in these galleries as long as I would have liked. The air I breathed had not been renewed for centuries and I could see from the difficulty my light had in burning that it was prudent to leave.'

## Annex 2

Translation of Mariette's letter of 25 February 1880 to the Minister of Public Works (EPHE, Centre Wladimir Golénischeff, box 44, document 122)

'Excellency,

In spite of all the goodwill I put into it, I cannot fail to recognise that Mohammed effendi Sadeh, the Museum's Arabic interpreter-secretary, has become completely inadequate for the functions he has to fulfil in the Administration I have the honour of directing. We have many accounts to keep, a whole series of correspondences to bring up to date. Now the duties that all this imposes on Mohammed effendi are for him as if they did not exist, to the point that for four days Mohammed effendi has not appeared at the Museum.

I ask Your Excellency to proceed to the replacement of Mohammed effendi, and to designate for these functions Ahmed Kemal effendi, who presents himself to fulfil them. Ahmed Kemal effendi has all the required qualities for this position. He is a former student of the Egyptology school run in Cairo by H. E. Brugsch-Bey. He speaks and writes Turkish, Arabic and French. In addition to his ability to assist us in the administrative affairs of the Museum, he can also be of service to us with his knowledge of Egyptian archaeology from a scientific point of view.'

# Knowledgeable Men in Position of Power: the Case of King's Scribes during the 18th Dynasty

Baudouin Luzianovich

## Abstract

Although 'king's scribes' were amongst the most prominent and well-known New Kingdom officials, and despite its apparent transparency, the significance of this office remains not fully understood. King's scribes were important civil servants involved in several scholarly activities, according to their monumental discourse. They are defined by their relation to the king and displayed a predilection and even a virtuosity in writing, epistemic erudition, rituals, etc. Therefore, they can be seen as an ongoing formalisation of a power-knowledge nexus during the New Kingdom. This contribution offers an overview of the author's doctoral research. First, the object of research and methodology is defined. Then, three main approaches are presented: analysis of titles, study of self-presentation strategies, and examination of how these scribes processed knowledge through their monuments.

## Keywords

King's scribes, New Kingdom, Knowledge/Power, History of knowledge, Titles, Self-presentation

## Introduction

The title *sš nsw*, 'king's scribe', seems explicit: it indicates a writing specialist in the context of restricted manuscript literacy, working for the king, as a personal secretary, penning all kinds of documents for him (Hannig 1995: 760, 2003: 1231). For some scholars, such an ancillary role would imply it was quite a minor title (Murnane 2001: 184), whereas others saw it as a generic status for literate royal attendants serving in the administration and as some kind of 'academic rank' (Helck 1958: 107-108; Helck 1984: 147. See also Varille 1968: 128). The paradox between the modern comprehension of the title as a minor one and the fact it is ostentatiously exhibited on monuments of some major officials should be addressed in order to elaborate a more accurate understanding of this title. This present contribution gives a short overview at a doctoral research whose purpose is to study king's scribes as knowledgeable men in a position of power.

The first attestations of the title might be from the Predynastic Period (Piacentini 2002: 47). It is documented for the Old Kingdom (Jones 2000: 3148, 3149) and Middle Kingdom to a much lesser extent if at all (see maybe Ward 1982: 1392, 1393). Overall, its occurrences are quite scarce before the New Kingdom and its holders did not appear amongst the prominent officials. On the contrary, several *mdhw sšw nsw* ('overseer of king's scribes': Jones 2000: 1739; Piacentini 2002: 92) were prominent officials during the 3rd and 4th dynasties, such as Hesyre, or king's sons Hemiunu or Duaenre (see Piacentini 2002: 54-55, 77, 91-92, 102-103, 105-106, 110, 129-130). An important shift occurs during the 18th dynasty, especially from Hatshepsut's reign, when the title *sš nsw* reappears in records (Onasch 1998). From then on, and during all New Kingdom, occurrences spread, providing much more data for a study, and a possible chronological starting point for it. The title was therefore held by some of the most prominent officials, including the last three kings of the 18th dynasty, before they ascend to kingship. Such a striking shift, correlated to a reappearance in the records, points towards a redefinition of the title. For now, at least

103 king's scribes were identified for the 18th dynasty, and twice that number may be found for the Ramesside Period.

## **Toward a preliminary definition and the constitution of a composite methodology**

### ***The resurgence of the title in its context***

Such reappearance happened in a time of administrative reorganisation which saw the creation of various offices and ranks, induced by the transformation of Egypt into an empire and by the constant need to negotiate the support of the elites (Shirley 2013; 2014). The title might have been primarily reintroduced to label a specific kind of skilled literate servant within the royal administration. Moreover, this reappearance occurred as elites manifested a strong interest and expertise in literacy and written culture in their monumental discourse (Ragazzoli 2016; 2019: 449-455). The title *sš* was more and more used without any institutional affiliation before officials' names, as an epithet (e.g. on the statue Bologna 1822: Pernigotti 1980: n° 8, pl. VII, XLI-XLIII). In addition, several boastful epithets constructed on that word appeared on monuments (e.g. on Djehuty's biographical stela (TT11): *sš iqr irw m 'wyꜣf*, 'excellent scribe who acts with his arms' (Sethe 1906: 427,12).

Writing skills, textual erudition and knowledgeability in general were often blatantly exhibited in officials' textual self-presentation, and were thus valued qualities amongst competing elites. One can draw the hypothesis that the king would have put this interest to his own advantage, by creating some forms of royal recognition of scribal or literate proficiency. The title *sš nsw* would have been a way to promote highly educated men as king's knowledgeable servants, thus reinforcing the king's role as an arbiter of the social competition between elites. Indeed, offices related to the king's service induced proximity with him and can be seen as a tool to dent their ambitions and manage the balance of power between him and them, and within them, as in many court societies (Raedler 2006; Morris 2021: 149-152).

### ***King's scribes in Egyptological literature***

That said, the title *sš nsw* may have not been an administrative function, but a rank presumably created to provide some royal acknowledgement of an extensive scribal skill, that is to say, to create some kind of literate official status. W. Helck first interpreted this title as an 'academic rank' (Helck 1984: 147) and as a recruitment branch for administrators (Helck 1958: 61, 107-108). Raedler develops quite a similar view, writing that the title was a rank reflecting one's educational success at the Ramesside court (Raedler 2009: 147). Onasch (1998: 343, *passim*) suggested that the *sš nsw* title was an *Ämterrangstitel*, indicating a management expertise and distinguishing their holders from their colleagues holding the same functional titles. It would thereby be seen as an administrative rank, which, moreover, would have facilitated the appointment at the head of administrative institutions dealing with material goods and the management of people.

### ***King's scribes as learned specialists evolving at court***

King's scribes tend to present themselves as learned courtiers. The biography of Nefersekheru at Zawyet Sultan (early 19th dynasty) offers a striking illustration. It narrates the official's successful path through various educational institutions at the palace (Ragazzoli 2019: 459-460). First, he received some kind of elementary education in the 'chamber of teaching' (*t-sbꜣt*). Then he got more advanced learning in the palatial 'mansion of life' (*hwt-nh*), where, as he stated, he 'purified' himself. At last, he attained the 'pure place of the slaughter house' (*wꜣbt m šꜣꜣ ꜣht*), where he gained specific restricted knowledge for he was

initiated – *bs.kw* (on the meaning of that verb, see Krüchten 1989: 147-204), leading him to be appointed ‘king’s scribe of king’s breakfast in his retinue’ (*sš nsw ḳw-r3 nsw m šmwt=f*) by the pharaoh himself.

A king’s scribe could be assigned to tasks linked with the realisation of rites. Moreover, Nefersekeru’s inscription shows the title was given by the king, presumably after a recognition of the awardee’s knowledgeability. This assumption is greatly implied by the rhetoric of the inscription, which sets the appointment as the term of the educational process. Though nomination by the king himself is a *topos* in biographical texts, one can think that an office directly related to the king, as its very name suggests, was conferred by the king himself.

Under Ramesses II, king’s scribe Saroy, owner of TT233, was also assigned to the ‘king’s breakfast’, and has other attributions: *sš nsw ḥwt iryw nt nb t3wy* (‘king’s scribe of the house of rituals documents of the Lord of the Two Lands’), *sš nsw sm3y n nb t3wy* (‘king’s scribe of the archives of the Lord of the Two Lands’), *sš nsw wdḥw* (‘king’s scribe of the offering table’) (Binder 2010: 9-10): so rites, amongst other things such as the conservation of documents, were a field Ramesside king’s scribes could be specialised in.

Thus, defining the *sš nsw* as an office rather than a pure rank might be a preferred option (Baud 1999: 236-245). Nevertheless, each title refers to a more or less institutionalised role and a set of prerogatives, such as the access to the king or to restricted knowledge for instance. Given the specificity of the title *sš nsw*, the term ‘office’ appears to be the most convenient choice, for it is associated with a set of concrete and symbolic attributions.

### ***King’s scribes as actors in the ‘chaîne opératoire’ of royal documents***

An other potential attribution might have been the participation to the penning of royal documents inside the palace. Some donation acts transposed on private monuments indicate they were penned in presence of the king, with king’s scribes as witnesses (e.g. on the statue of the royal barber Sabastet or the statue of Neferperet: Bryan 2006: 88). Once written, the document was transported to the *rwy* by king’s scribes so that it could be delivered. King’s scribes may have perhaps been writers of these kind of documents, but since the king has to be their author, the identity of the real scriptor(s) remains undetermined. They were at least involved in their making and delivering process. Iconography stands for this affirmation: on the walls of Nebamon’s tomb (TT90) a scene shows the transmission of royal orders to the aforementioned in a cylindrical case by the king’s scribe Iuni (De Garis Davies and De Garis Davies 1923: 35, pl. XXVI). So king’s scribes appear to work as an intermediary between the king and the outside when it comes to documents, actualising a traditional role of the courtier (see Coulon 2002: 11-12).

### ***King’s scribes as scholars***

As Nefersekeru’s inscription suggests, the title appears to be linked with some scholarly deeds. King’s scribes were eager to display on their monuments their mastery of different kinds of knowledge, especially their scribal proficiency. On the stela Louvre C65 (mid. 18th dynasty) dedicated to his grandfather at Abydos, Paser used ‘enigmatic writing’ to script an appeal to the livings, in an attempt to catch the literate visitor’s eye, thus demonstrating his own virtuosity (Espinel 2020: 106-108). It must be added that he holds the title ‘master of secrets in the house of books’ (*ḥry-sšt3 m pr-md3t*), reflecting his mastery of bookish restricted knowledge. ‘Enigmatic writing’ was also used by several other scribes, including Khaemhat (TT57), ‘overseer of the Double-Granary’ (*imy-r3 šnwtj*) and ‘master of secrets inside the chest of Anubis’ (*ḥry-sšt3 m hn n Inpw*), who used it in his funerary chapel (Espinel 2020: 104-105).



King's scribes could also directly display their knowledge on the walls of their tombs, used as a medium for its ritual actualisation and its transmission and fixation, and by extension, as a showcase of a scholarly identity (Ragazzoli 2016; Kahl 2021). The aforementioned Saroy turned his tomb into a realisation of what is supposed to happen in the netherworld through the spatialisation of funerary texts and their layout, thus creating quite a unique repository of the ritual texts he might have used or even composed as a 'king's scribe of the house of rituals documents of the Lord of the Two Lands' (Ockinga 2019).

Something similar might be at stake for the several versions of the 'Opening of the Mouth' displayed on some Theban Tombs during the New Kingdom. They show various steps of the ritual, visually presenting gestures and instruments, with written captions (Serrano 2014; Quack 2022). Each selection is unique, and the most complete versions are to be seen inside king's scribes' chapels (e.g. TT127, Senemiah = c. 20 steps; TT78, Horemheb = c. 20; TT80 Djehutynefer = c. 10; TT48, Amenemhat Surer = more than 20; TT100, Rekhmire (possibly a king's scribe) = 52). Such depictions are quite unusual and put a stress on the different gestures performed and the various instruments used, while providing a global and progressive view of the process. Thus, this ritual (or actually, chosen steps of it), which aims at activating the statues and images (including the image of the statue of the deceased on the tomb wall), is perpetually iterated. But this device also reflects a detailed attention to the gestures, instruments and position of the ritualists. Such attention, coupled with variation between every selection, might be symptomatic of a clear investment in that specific field of knowledge, and suggestive of an attempt to offer a comprehensive visualisation. This trend was not limited to king's scribes, but they definitely demonstrate a tendency to display their knowledge and their knowledgeability in the most striking and elaborate manner.

### ***Preliminary definition***

From these elements, we can suggest a preliminary definition of the king's scribe during the New Kingdom. The title *sš nsw* would have drawn a segment inside the social world of *literati*, through the creation of an institutionalised knowledgeable elite by the pharaoh, an elite engaged actively in various scholarly achievements. The status linked to this title would have been indexed on knowledge and scribal skills, and also on proximity to the king. Moreover, as Onasch (1998: *passim*) highlighted, the exercise of important administrative charges dealing with management was an important part of this status.

### ***Studying a knowledge-power nexus***

These three core characteristics are deeply intertwined throughout New Kingdom. King's scribes then offer an opportunity to study knowledge in its social setting and its different incarnations such as places, practices, objects, groups and individuals, following an approach that has seen major developments in history in the last decades (on history of knowledge, see Burke 2016; Van Damme 2020; Jacob 2022). For applications in Egyptology, see, e.g., Ragazzoli 2019; Cancik-Kirschbaum *et al.* 2021). This field of research has been greatly influenced by sociology of knowledge, which is interested in how knowledge shapes societies and social groups, and then, by anthropology of knowledge, mostly focused on its uses and effects, on practices and on material mediations (Adell 2011; Bert and Lamy 2021), and by the *spatial turn* in Humanities and Social Sciences (Jacob 2014).

King's scribes could be studied as a formalisation of a dialectic between knowledge and power: they defined themselves as learned men who attained positions of power thanks to their knowledgeability and their relationship with the king, enabling them in return to set about high-flying epistemic propositions. On a broad level, this nexus would be symptomatic of a new relationship to knowledge, especially written one, in an epistemic context characterised by social restriction (Baines 1990). In

the last part of this dialectic, king's scribes operated through their monuments, but they surely would have used other media (manuscripts, gestures, oral performances, etc.), unfortunately unrecorded or perishable. As a consequence, sources for such a study belong mostly to the monumental discourse.

Such a study first requires to better situate kings' scribes positions in institutions and at court. This could be done through the identification and analyse of their various titles and social bonds through a prosopographical approach (for some insightful prosopographical studies, see Baud 1999; Eichler 2000; Payraudeau 2014; Dalino 2021). Then, the display of knowledge on their monument has to be addressed. The focus won't be that much on the content itself, but on its integration in the monumental discourse. What I call 'displayed knowledge' include various formalisations of knowledge, depictions of learned practices and claims to master some kind of expertise (both forward and subtle). The very idea of displayed knowledge is partially reliant on that of monumental discourse. Displayed knowledge can be seen as a component of one's self-presentation (on this notion and its uses, see Bassir 2019), and a ritual device. Then, adding to the prosopographical approach, two others can be followed: analysing kings' scribes self-presentation as learned men, and then discerning how they shape knowledge, especially on behalf of the king and themselves.

### Observations on the title *sš nsw*

To better discern king's scribes roles and positions within hierarchies and social networks, prosopography is a much needed approach. First, the titles of king's scribes must be analysed to ascertain what the title *sš nsw* itself signified, how it was used, who its bearers were, what their other titles were, and if there is some connection with them. One could also study their social background through the study of their social bonds, and engage the question of the social reproduction and of king's scribes networks. This present contribution focuses only on the *sš nsw* title and its variations, as well as some recurrent regular titles (Quirke 1986) associated with it.

### Variations of the title *sš nsw*

Variations of the title *sš nsw* are very instructive concerning its value and signification. Several forms are known from the reign of Thutmose III, the main ones being: *sš nsw*, 'king's scribe' (Taylor 2001: 2071; Al-Ayedi 2006: 1816), *sš nsw m3ʿ*, 'true king's scribe' (Taylor 2001: 2077; Al-Ayedi 2006: 1823), *sš nsw m3ʿ mryʿf*, 'true king's scribe whom he loves' (Taylor 2001: 2078). Clearly, these variations provide no specifications about the roles they cover, but they stress the authenticity and existence of a privileged bond with the king. Other minor, and eloquent, variations include: *sš nsw m3ʿ n nbʿf*, 'true king's scribe of his Lord' (Taylor 2001: 2079), *sš nsw mryʿf*, 'king's scribe whom he loves' (Taylor 2001: 2080), *sš nsw n nb t3wy*, 'king's scribe of the Lord of the Double Land' (Taylor 2001: 2082; Al-Ayedi 2006: 1834). Such variations are strong proof that the title *sš nsw* was a status and not a true occupational title.

On the one hand, it seems that this status needs to be presented as true. This need of authenticity might reflect a need for distinction and could be seen as a way to construct a hierarchy between the holders of the title *sš nsw*, or it could be interpreted as a mark of legitimacy for the status. These variations appeared quickly after the reappearance of the title *sš nsw*, under Thutmose III, and persisted all through the New Kingdom.

On the other hand, the adjunction of *mryʿf* highlights the bond between the official and the king, showing the former as a most favoured official, but also as a direct subaltern of the king. Indeed, *mryʿf* can be used across a wide range of relationships characterised by hierarchy and subordination of the patient to the subject (i.e. from a parent to offspring, from master to servant, from a patron to a client) (Nyord 2021: 18. On *mryʿf* as an expression of relatedness, see Jansen-Winkel 2002). Yet the adjunction of *mryʿf* is quite

unusual for a title: it is, indeed, found more in epithets, raising again the question of the nature of the title *sš nsw*. Moreover, this adjunction specifically sets the king's scribes as members of his household (on patronage as a model for social authority, see Olabarria 2020: 158-166). Thus king's scribes were termed and perceived, at least, as private servants of the king, which is not really surprising considering the nature of the Egyptian State and its patrimonial organisation of power (on royal bureaucracy as a symbolic family, see Moreno Garcia 2010: 28-31; on Egyptian state, see Moreno Garcia 2020; on the use of the family as a model for distribution of power during Old Kingdom, see Baud 1999).

A few other variations may be added, e.g. *sš nsw ḥry-tp*, 'king's scribe in chief' (Eichler 2001: 243), *sš nsw nfrw*, 'king's scribe of recruits' (Taylor 2001: 2083; Al-Ayedi 2006: 1833), or *sš nsw wdḥw*, 'king's scribe of the offering table' (Binder 2010: 3-5). The first title might reflect a need for distinction while the two others provide some specifications about the field of activity of their holder: the management of recruits for the former, and the offering table of the king for the latter. This extension could have resulted in a contraction or two titles sharing the term *sš*, or it could indicate a specialisation of the office of *sš nsw*. During the Ramesside period, more specialisations are attested. For instance, the aforementioned Nefersekheru and Saroy were 'king's scribes of the king's breakfast', and Tjay (TT23, fl. Merenptah) was a *sš nsw n š't n nb t3wy*, 'king's scribe of the letters of the Lord of the Two Lands' (Kitchen 1982: 107.5; 107.10; 107.12(?); 109.9; 110.11; 110.13; 111.1; 111.5(?); 111.13(?); 112.1). This title seems a fusion of two separate titles he bears somewhere else in his tomb: *sš nsw (m3' mry=f)* and *sš š't n nb t3wy* (Kitchen 1982: 113.14). When the two titles are mentioned separately, the suffixal adjunction *m3' mry=f* occurs after *sš nsw*. Moreover, the fusion of the two titles is far more attested: so the latter was the most usual configuration, testifying to a mutation of the title *sš nsw*, towards a more functional sense.

To finish, some variations include suffixal additions introduced by the preposition *m* or *n*, indicating the institution of affiliation or an area: *sš nsw n pr-ḥnty*, 'king's scribe for the harem' (Taylor 2001: 2076), *sš nsw n pr-ḥnty m Mr-Wr*, 'king's scribe for the harem in Mer-Ur' (Al-Ayedi 2006: 1832), *sš nsw n pr-msw nsw*, 'king's scribe in the house of the king's children' (Taylor 2001: 2074), *sš nsw m pr-md3t*, 'king's scribe in the house of books' (Taylor 2001: 2075 = on the papyrus of Nebqed (Louvre N3068, N3113), perhaps to assert the ritual expertise of the utterer).

### **Links with other titles**

It was previously suggested that the title *sš nsw* could have covered the office of a private secretary of the king, but many of its holders appear to have other occupational titles. Onasch (1998) noted the title was often associated with specific functional titles dealing mainly with management of goods during the 18th dynasty. King's scribes were often major royal servants at the head of institutions dealing mostly with grains, cattle and precious materials, e.g. *imy-r3 šnwtj*, 'overseer of the Double Granary', *imy-r3 pr(wy)-ḥd (nbw)*, 'overseer of the (Double) House of silver (and gold)', or *imy-r3 iḥw n Imn*, 'overseer of the cattle of Amun'. They worked at various levels of the king's administration and of the Domain of Amun. They could also serve as the logistic and executive head of military troops, as *sš mš'*, 'scribe of the army', *imy-r3 mš'*, 'overseer of the army', or *sš nfrw*, 'scribe of recruits', a tendency which began under Thutmose III and persists throughout the New Kingdom. Their third main occupational field is the stewardship of the estates of the king or Amun (see Eichler 2001: 369).

These three different fields often overlapped in one's career, and there is no systematicity regarding the association of the title *sš nsw* with some regular titles. For instance, few overseers of the Double Granary of Higher and Lower Egypt were not kings' scribes, but the head of this new institution created under Thutmose III was often one, e.g. Nakhtmin (TT87, Bohleke 1991: 108-146; Eichler 2000: 299-300, no. 389), Iamunedjeh (TT84, Sethe 1909: 960-961 Bryan 2006: 84) and then Menkheperreseneb (TT79, Eichler 2000: 280, no. 264; Bryan 2006: 84-85; Der Manuelian 1987: 142). So it seems plausible to recognise a proximity

between being a king's scribe and heading parts of the administrative apparatus, apparently in sectors dealing mostly with precious goods, grains and agricultural products, and workforce management.

Onasch (1998: 342-343) suggested that this association could be explained by the fact the title *sš nsw* was a way to operate a distinction between holders of the same titles based on expertise. The title *sš nsw* is indeed often associated with specific kinds of functional titles whose holders are not necessarily king's scribes. I would suggest that these scribes constituted a kind of pool of potential administrators, nominated at the king's discretion in specific domains pertaining to royal policies. A statistical analysis of regular titles held by king's scribes will make it possible to discern more titles associations, and it would also be useful to give an estimation of the proportion of king's scribe for each regular title through times to verify this hypothesis.

### ***A strong status-defining dimension***

To assess the importance given to the title *sš nsw* in the making of an individual's identity, the order inside titles sequences is to be considered. This approach was followed by Onasch (1998: 335-337), who observed that the title *sš nsw* often precedes the name of the official. Moreover, this title is often used solely with its holder's name. It is a striking proof that this title was preferred amongst others to assert one's status. For instance, on the statue of Minmosis from Medamud, the offering formula is addressed to 'the *ka* of the hereditary prince, the sole companion, the Great one of the King of Upper-Egypt, the Great one of the King of Lower-Egypt, the governor, the overseer of the priests of Montu, Lord of Thebes, overseer of works in every gods temples in Upper and Lower-Egypt, the king's scribe, Minmosis' (Helck 1956, 1441). Thus the *sš nsw* title has a strong status-defining dimension.

Yet, a difficulty might be encountered, for various sequences could be found for a unique individual, and it can include the title *sš nsw* or not. This variation must be understood as the result of self-presentation strategy and must be studied by taking into account the image, the spatial configuration of the inscription, and the nature of the monument. Further research will follow along these lines, but such an approach calls for a more meticulous study of the sequence of titles, which takes into account the context and collocation of the title *sš nsw*.

### **King's scribes and self-presentation**

A second fundamental approach is to analyse the way king's scribes shaped their identity through their 'self-presentation' on their monuments, such as tombs, statues, stela but also every kind of support of monumental discourse, such as objects inscribed with titles in hieroglyphic script (on self-presentation/*Selbstthematisierung*, see Assmann 1987; Bassir 2019; 2021. See also Goffman 1959 for an interactionist approach).

Monumental self-presentation in Egypt is defined as a written or visual discourse displayed on a monument and incarnated by it, crafted by its owner in regard to socially accepted values, such as loyalty to the king, family affiliation, hierarchy, occupation, piety, etc. (see Navratilova 2019), so that he presents himself as an exemplary individual, worth of remembrance and partaking to the realisation of Maat for eternity. For that reason, self-presentation has a strong normative dimension. Moreover, each monument could provide a different self-definition, according to the owner's desiderata.

Thus, self-presentation provides a gateway to study representations, norms and cultural values of the elites, but its dynamic aspects shouldn't be dismissed: through choices from a common repertoire or radical innovation, through variations and evolution in the course of an individual trajectory or an eventful period, self-presentation becomes a mechanism by which cultural values and social definitions,

such as the definition of ‘king’s scribe’, are shaped and negotiated, mostly by those who fall into these categories. Studying king’s scribes self-presentation is the key to identify social dispositions potentially shared by king’s scribes, that is to say a habitus that is structured by them, and structuring their representations and practices (Bourdieu 1980: 88-89).

### *Scribal Items as a status symbol and a clue of a (claimed) habitus*

A core disposition one might expect from king’s scribes is obviously the display of writing skills. This is best rendered by the figuration of a writing kit or writing palette in the hand of the official or under his chair. On the north section of the east wall of the transverse hall of his chapel, Menkheperreseneb (TT79) is inspecting agricultural products, presented in three registers before him (Guksch 1995: 149-150, pl. 29-30). He presents himself as the ‘enduring of love in the royal palace, possessor of favour amongst the courtiers, true king’s scribe whom He loves, overseer of the Double Granaries of the Lord of the Two Lands, praised by the perfect god, *wab*-priest of Amun at *Heneqet-ankh* (Thutmosis III temple), Menkheper, true-of-voice’. The official chose to display a title sequence reflecting the peak of his career, including epithets showing his prominent position at the royal court and his main occupations, notably that of ‘overseer of the Double Granaries of the Lord of the Two Lands’. Under his chair appears a writing kit, including a palette and a case for scrolls, signifying his engagement in manuscript literacy.

This scene reflects Menkheper’s idealisation of himself, notably as a courtier and an overseer of the Double Granaries, and the integration of a writing palette might be interpreted as a component of it, highlighting his writing skills without displaying him using them according to *decorum* (see Allon 2019: 74-85). The writing kit is here integrated as a status symbol, defining the official as a literate person in the context of what seems to be professional activities. This status symbol resonates with the title *sš nsw*, which appears just before his title of ‘overseer of the Double Granaries’, probably because these two titles might be related in Menkheper’s career. Manuscript literacy appears to be a disposition promoted by Menkheper as a definitory element of his status, echoing the presence of the title *sš nsw* in the title sequence.

A proof that a writing palette could be considered as a status symbol is given by the fact that ‘real’ palettes could be inscribed with titles. For instance, a palette owned by Amenhotep (London BM EA 12786), Menkheperre’s brother, was adorned with his titles sequence with an indication of his ascendancy:

*sš nsw ḥry-ḥ3wt rmn(w) m ḥ3t Imn Imn-ḥtp ir.n sš nsw imy-r3 šnwti imy-r3 st n ʿt irp Nḥt-Mnw m3-ḥrw*

‘King’s scribe, superior of the altar, bearer (of the sacred bark?) the front of Amon, Amenhotep, made by the king’s scribe, overseer of the Double Granaries, overseer of the place of the wine storeroom, Nakhtmin, true-of-voice’ (Helck 1956: 1374, 17-18).

Traces of paint and stains show that the palette was used and the name ‘Amun’ was defaced from it, indicating it was accessible during Akhenaten’s reign (Glanville 1932: 55-56), maybe placed as a monument in a temple or in a chapel (it would explain the atonist expurgation).

These two brothers bearing the title *sš nsw* chose to present themselves as proficient literate, like their father, another king’s scribe named Nakhtmin, owner of two ‘scribes statues’ (Baltimore WAG 22.230 & Turin Cat. 3027). All these elements can be perceived as symbols of a status grounded in literacy. They also illustrate a familial habitus which incorporated writing, Nevertheless, inscribed writing palettes and figured writing kits are definitely not the monopoly of king’s scribes, and these two elements does not characterise the nature of this literacy (concerning inscribed palette, e.g. Russo 2012: 32-36; palette

Louvre N 3023, Glanville 1932. Concerning writing kit motif in tomb's iconography, see Allon 2019: 86-88).

### *The use of textual self-presentation: the case of career narratives*

Career narratives from monumental written self-presentation give much information concerning identity and how elite members perceived themselves in relation to the king, the gods and other social competitors (on 'biographies', see Frood 2007: 1-35; 2020: 463-476. See also Frood, Stauder, Stauder-Porchet 2020). Such narratives are useful for understanding their owner's social dispositions and roles, and, sometimes, to reconstruct their career path. They provide a situated definition of what a king's scribe is, reflecting one's social setting, trajectory, interests and values. The inscription on the *Grande statue biographique* of Amenhotep, son of Hapu (Cairo CG 583: Varille 1968: 32-45; Helck 1957: 1813-1826) offer an instructive example. In the final part (Helck 1957: 1820-1823), Amenhotep emphasises three highlights in his career: he first became king's scribe and servant (*ss nsw hry-tp*). Then the king 'renewed' (*whm*) his favours appointing him king's scribe at the head of recruits. Ultimately, the king 'trebled' (*hmty*) them, and made Amenhotep overseer of works. This succession may be indicative that becoming a king's scribe usually happened in the beginning of one's career.

Nevertheless, career narratives are not necessarily chronological: they are rhetorical constructions primarily aiming at 'asserting the official's action within the framework formed by the royal order and subsequent praise' (Stauder-Porchet 2017: 225-273. For 18th dynasty trends: Navratilova 2019: 146-148). They consist of sequences of selected events, resulting from conscious strategies regarding the construction of the self (see Baines 2020: 52-77, esp. 58-66). As a temple statue erected in a liminal and a possibly accessible area of Karnak temple at the end of Amenhotep III reign (the area of the 3rd pylon. See Salvador 2022: 96), Cairo CG 583 and its inscription build a specific image of its owner, visible to the gods, mainly Amun, and to the potential visitor.

The first section of the final part of the inscription (Helck 1957: 1820, 5-15) starts giving several justifications for his first nomination and may help identify what is expected to become a king's scribe. Amenhotep begins his speech by presenting himself as a prominent and leading member of the court and as a *wh<sup>c</sup>-ib m md.wt-ntr m sh-ib mdd shr.w nsw*, 'clever one in divine speeches thanks to the 'counsel of the heart' (his reflection?), one who presses on with the king's designs'. These abilities resulted in his appointment and subsequently (*grt*: Oréal 2011: 477-479) in his *bs.t*-initiation into the secrets of the divine book, enabling him to study Thoth's *akhu*-formulas and to become a recognised expert in them. If we compare all this with Nefersekeru's biography, a pattern can be identified: both of them were courtiers distinguished by the king because of their intellectual abilities or education, who claimed to have access to restricted knowledge related to divine speeches.

Yet Amenhotep and Nefersekeru followed different paths, for the former became a king's scribe at the head of recruits and worked in the king's army (Helck 1957: 1820,16-1822,6). This segment of his career and the dispositions he demonstrates can be compared with other king's scribes of recruits, like Tjanuni (TT74. See below). As a king's scribe of recruits, Amenhotep oversaw and registered the levy of troops, stating that 'my reed counted the quantity of millions' (Helck 1957: 1821,1), hyperbolically insisting on the use of writing as a tool to act efficiently. He also ensured the renewal of military personnel and counted the spoils of war. Whereas the inscription states he led the troops in various operations against desert dwellers and foreigners, the qualities extolled are not those of a warrior but of an accountant, a manager and a commander, with a strong emphasis on his efficiency to follow the king's plans (Helck 1957: 1820,8; 1821,18; 1822,4-5) and to act on his own within the frame of these plans (Helck 1957: 1821,15: 'but I was the one who conducted their (the troops) itineraries'; Helck 1957: 1823,2-3: 'But I was the one who counted the convoy of the spoils of the victories of His Person, while being at

their head.’). The inscription ends with the depiction of Amenhotep’s deeds and qualities as an overseer of work, but he is no more presented as a king’s scribe.

On this statue, Amenhotep’s self-presentation tends to show him as a competent, knowledgeable and dutiful king’s servant, promoted by the latter thanks to his own intellectual merits, not because of his pedigree (Vernus 1970: 41-44). Other scribes used to exalt their own writing skills and performances on their monuments, according to their own views, providing various definitions of what a king’s scribe is.

Understanding these definitions is complexified by the fact that king’s scribes held regular titles. On his statue, Amenhotep, son of Hapu depicts his roles as a king’s scribe, a king’s scribe of recruits and then an overseer of work. But very often, lines are blurred. Tjanuni’s tomb (TT74) offers an illustrative example. When he depicts himself registering (*snhi*) recruits and instructing the soldiers, he presents himself as a ‘king’s scribe whom He loves’ and as a ‘military scribe’ (Brack and Brack 1977: 40-41, pl. 28a; Allon and Navratilova 2017: 48; Allon 2019: 48-49). Tjanuni formalised a slightly different definition of being a king’s scribe, since he associated it mostly with being a military scribe. He also presents himself as the ‘embodiment of the king’s archive’ (Allon 2019: 45-54), in the etymological sense of the word, through the use of a most singular epithet, *hn n nsw hr šhrw t3wy*, ‘the chest holding the plans of the Two-Lands’ (Rickal 2005: 666), defining Tjanuni as the keeper of all records concerning the government of the kingdom. Tjanuni conceived his writing skills, the act of recording and the conservation of writing as a tool to control and exert power on behalf of the king, and crafted a definition which better suited him. Amenhotep defined himself mostly as an erudite and an intellectual while Tjanuni perceived himself as an omniscient administrator, whose knowledge and literacy served the successes of Thutmose III.

There are potentially as many definitions as there were different trajectories, but still common dispositions can be found, such as the literate service to the king, the display of literacy skills and an interest in knowledge, constituting the main trends of a habitus. Further work will have to identify more trends and take into consideration how king’s scribes self-presentation, in its diversity and mutability, contributes in shaping it through time.

### ***The display of a literate practice: the case of ‘scribe statues’***

King’s scribes expertise in writing and written culture can be presented in quite a different light through ‘scribe statues’ placed within temple precincts. So-called ‘scribe statues’ depict a seated man manipulating a scroll he can be either reading or writing. First attestations appeared during the 4th dynasty, perhaps even the 3rd, but the *floruit* of this statuary type is to be located during the New Kingdom (for a corpus: Scott 1989). Through these statues, officials objectified themselves as writing or reading men, and they could have different cultural significations, depending on their context (Allon 2019: 102-128). There may be an affinity between holding the title *sš nsw* and being depicted in such a way, but not every scribe statue’s owner was a king’s scribe, and not every king’s scribe adopted this statuary type. Nevertheless, some of the most elaborate statues were owned by them (see Delvaux 1992).

A specific kind of inscription can sometimes be read on the manuscript of the statue. It is often oriented towards the seated man, as if he were writing or reading it. This inscription consists of a succession of ‘absolute infinitives’ followed by the mention of the agent, providing a caption of the depicted practice (Allon 2019: 109-114). This kind of inscription first occurred on the manuscripts of the statues of Mentuhotep’s scribes (Scott 1989: 129-136) and those of the reign of Sesostris I, however most attestations date back to the 18th dynasty. Thus, these inscriptions are symptomatic of 18th dynasty monumental discourses: literate officials drew inspiration from the 12th dynasty to craft their own self-presentation. At the end of the first half of the 18th dynasty, namely between the beginning of the Coregency and the end of Amenhotep III’s reign, precisely when the title *sš nsw* reappeared and gained

unprecedented importance, eight of the 14 king’s scribe statues displayed this kind of inscription on their manuscripts (Table 1).

TABLE 1: OVERVIEW OF THE LITERACY OF SOME 18TH-DYNASTY KING’S SCRIBES THROUGH THEIR SCRIBAL STATUES.

Statue	Dat.	Action (statue)	Action (caption)	Agent
Baltimore WAG 22.230	Th. III	Reading	<i>smnt hpw, irt m3't rdt rh s nb izwwt=f m hwt-ntr lmn m lpt-swt</i>	<i>sš nsw Mnw-nht</i>
Turin Cat. 3021	Th. III	Reading	<i>irt hpw smnt tp-rd rdt rh izwt nbt iryyw=sn m hwt-ntr (...)</i>	<i>sš nsw m3' mry=f imy-r3 šnwty hsb it n Šm'w-Mhw Mnw-nht</i>
London BM 69863	Th. III	Writing	<i>ip b3kw šsp inw inw n b3kw hm=f(...)</i>	<i>imy-r3 '3 n h3swt mhtwt sš nsw Dhwty</i>
Cairo CG 1138	A. II	Writing	<i>irt hpw smnt m3't (...)</i>	<i>iry-p't h3ty-<sup>c</sup> htnty-bity smr w'ty sš nsw imy-r3 prwy-<sup>hd</sup> Dhwty-msw</i>
Paris Louvre E11154	A. III	Reading	<i>irt hpw smnt tp-rd rdt rh izwt nbt n pr nb t3wy</i>	<i>sš nsw m3' mry=f sš m3' m pr-lmn hry-hb hry-tp Nb-mrwt=f</i>
Cairo CG 42129	Tut.	Writing	<i>dw3 (...)</i>	<i>[...] t3y-hw hr wnm nsw imy-r3 mš<sup>c</sup> wr [sš nsw (?)] Hr-m-hb</i>
New York MMA 23.10.1	Tut.	Writing	<i>dw3 (...)</i>	<i>iry-p't h3ty-<sup>c</sup> t3y-hw hr wnm nsw imy-r3 mš<sup>c</sup> sš nsw Hr-m-hb</i>
Berlin ÄM	Akh.-Tut.	Writing	<i>dw3 (...)</i>	<i>sš nsw wdhw H'y</i>

On most statues (Table 1), one can read actions relating to the establishment of laws (*hpw*), regulations (*tp-rd*), and *maat*. On four statues, writing or reading is linked with the application of *maat*. Realisation of *maat* is well attested in private biographies since the Old Kingdom (Stauder-Porchet 2017: 193-198). What is remarkable here is the direct link set between some actions revolving around the enunciation and enforcement of norms and the acts of writing and reading. On a few statues, the character is ‘instructing about every office’ (*rd rh izwt nbwt*). Instructing subordinates is not uncommon in official self-presentation. For instance, a 13th-dynasty general named Senbebu claimed on his statue at Elephantine that he used to direct craftsmen and servants (Franke 1994: 53). Under Hatshepsut, in the biography of the director of the double house of silver (the so-called ‘Northampton Stela’), Djehuty states that he instructed craftsmen on various building sites he oversaw (see above).

Private statues placed inside temple precincts were a *ka* and *ba* repository for their owner, thus an idealised and everlasting extension of himself, and a distribution of personhood, set in a temple so that he could benefit from the offerings (Kjølby 2009: 35-42). They are not mere representations, but actual ‘social beings’ integrated to the space they invested (Connor 2002: 55). Thus, they provide a privileged support for self-presentation, and publicised a ‘social definition’ of their owner (Delvaux 1996: 44, 48). In their own definition, some king’s scribes linked their literacy with the act of the application of norms, the management of the workforce. or the exaltation of a deity. Others, like Djehuty, administrator of the conquered Asiatic territories under Thutmose III, chose to show himself ‘counting the *baku*’, which were to be sent to Egypt, on his statue possibly set at Byblos (Yoyotte 1981: 48). Thus, he chose to be lithified doing an action often performed by anonymous scribes on the monumental discourse of private tombs, an action which is at the very centre of scribal activity (Ragazzoli 2019: 406-411). Meanwhile, others chose to qualify their act as a way of praising a particular god. In this case, a short hymn follows the infinitive and its agent, as on Horemheb’s statue (New York MET 23.10.1: Allon and Navratilova 2017: 83-84). These statues responded to different self-presentation strategies which have in common to be constructed features revolving around writing (see Allon 2019: 109).



## Processing knowledge through monuments: the case of hymns

### *Hymns as epistemic knowledge and learned performance*

A third core approach is to focus on the way king's scribes processed knowledge, i.e. how they performed, shaped, and mediated it. I will limit myself to one significant case: hymns or prayers addressed to gods written on monuments. Such texts can be seen as elements of *epistemic knowledge* (Kahl 2022: 84), for they are a medium of theology (Assmann 1996: 329-334), and, ultimately, as fragments of political theology (Assmann 2000; 2006).

A prayer is basically a written or uttered composition addressed to one divinity, or more, by a devotee to ask for something (*Bittgebet*) or to exalt them (*Loblied*) (Assmann 1999). They appeared during the Middle Kingdom on private monuments (Franke 2003) and became quite usual in the monumental private discourse during the New Kingdom. The progressive multiplication of their attestations is seen as symptomatic of the rise of 'personal piety' (*Persönliche Frömmigkeit*) or 'closeness to a deity' (*Gottesnähe*), or 'personal religion' which flourished during the Ramesside era (for an overview, see Luiselli 2014. For theories related to personal piety, see Luiselli 2011. For a long-term study, see Luiselli 2008).

When studying hymns or prayers, focusing on the social and pragmatic background of the text is as important as analysing the content in order to understand how religious knowledge and social groups shaped each other. Marcel Mauss' definition of prayer could provide a useful perspective (Mauss 2019: 113-119; see also Bert 2021: 99-118). For this anthropologist, a prayer is primarily a ritually effective act, operating through prescribed words, corporal techniques, inflections of the voice and the manipulation of specific objects, in order to influence or exalt a deity. For Mauss, a prayer is mainly an oral act, and it was probably the same in Ancient Egypt, although we mainly have written material (Luiselli 2014: 106), inscribed in monumental script so that they can be perpetually iterated (Vernus 1990: 42-43; 2017: 478-480; 2020: 26-27), or written on papyrus for preservation. Yet orality was a fundamental component of hymn performance (Assmann 1999: 63-69; Weiss 2014), and inscribed hymns on monuments are to be seen as monumentalised acts of speech.

The main input from Mauss' perspective is that praying is foremost perceived as a social phenomenon (Mauss 2019: 74-85). Prayers are done on the basis of socially shared contents and forms, and they can vary according to the social morphology of the population performing them. King's scribes were obviously not the only ones to display hymns on their monuments (see e.g. the elaborated hymn to Amun-Ra on the stela of Suti and Hor: Varille 1942). But following Mauss' conceptualisation, one might expect that king's scribes had specific ways to pray and conceptualise the divinity they addressed, which, I suggest, reflect their status as knowledgeable men in positions of power.

### *Exalting one another: king's scribes' self-praise through the celebration of Thoth*

Kings' scribes often exalted Thoth, the lunar god of writing and lieutenant of Amon-Re, the sovereign solar god, during the New Kingdom (Kurth 1986: 499-500, 505; Leitz 2002: 641-642; Rose 2006; Stadler 2009: 370-380; Stadler 2012: 9-10). Indeed, Thoth was often praised for his scribal attributions during the New Kingdom (Ragazzoli 2019: 474-489), and so did king's scribes on some compositions written on their monuments. For instance, the prayer addressed by Cheruef on one of his statues (Berlin ÄM 2293: Helck 1957: 1874-1876) defines Thoth as the lord of divine speeches, the keeper of mysteries, the one who gave writing and speech to humanity, who ensures the good management of estates and temples, who instructs everyone about their office and makes known the cadastre (The Epigraphic Survey 1980: 20-21).

This short prayer evokes divine attributes revolving on knowledgeability, mastery of secrets pertaining to divine speeches, and efficiency in managing the estate and subordinates. These attributes recall kings' scribes dispositions as they appear in their self-presentation. Thoth is here exalted by a king's scribe as a divine counterpart to identify with, as an archetype and a divine patron. On top of the altar, held by the official, a rebus reads in both directions: 'Thoth loved by Nebmaatre' and 'Nebmaatre loved by Thoth'. Thoth is figured as a baboon whose head is topped by the moon, and the king Nebmaatre (Amenhotep III), as a combination of a seated divine man (A40) whose head is topped by the sun (N5), holding Maat's feather (H6) (Erman 1891: 125). First, the figuration of the king through a 'monogram' on a private monument is noteworthy. Second, as puzzling as it is to admit a god could be 'loved' by a king (on *mry*, see above), the two figures are represented frontally, providing no indication concerning the sense of reading, resulting in a room for interpretation. Cheruef was without a doubt conscious of that fuzziness and was certainly willing to play on it, arguably to convey the ambiguity of the relation between the king, here figured as a solar entity, and the lunar god Thoth, as an archetype of himself (he is precisely defined as such in the text on the altar). Under Amenhotep III, the cult and theology of Thoth were particularly favoured by the regime, notably through monumental projects at Hermopolis and the development of the use of the baboon as his main hypostase in association with royal solar theology (Larcher 2016). Did Cheruef played a part in this theological actualisation of the deity? At least he took it into account in his monumental discourse to express a dialectical relation between the lunar scribe god and the sovereign solar god, in quite a singular and maybe hubristic manner.

Other kings' scribes displayed hymns to Thoth on their monuments, i.e. Nebmerutef (Delange 1996) and Horemheb (Stela: London BM EA551; scribal statue: New York MET 23.10.1). On his scribal statue, the latter performs through hand-writing one of the most elaborated hymn to Thoth known (Rose 2006), whereas on his stela from his Memphite tomb, he is depicted exalting the god in the conventional gesture, i.e. raising his arms (see Dominicus 1994: 28-36). Thus, kings' scribes displayed specific ways to pray to Thoth, and more than that, they partook in the actualisation of its attributions, so as to turn it into an archetype of themselves, and not only a divine patron. Thus, they shaped the theology of that god, resulting in the formalisation of a proper ideology on their behalf, and ultimately, in the legitimation of their own position as king's scribe in the social world. A question remains: to what extent their agency was (un)restrained?

### ***Kings' scribes and their tombs as components of an epistemic economy***

King's scribe's prayers on their monuments can also reflect their role in an *economy of knowledge* (see Kahl 2022: 85-86) or an *epistemic environment* (in French, *milieu de savoir*, see Dumas-Primbault, Tortosa and Vailly 2021: 5-13). It could be defined as a fluid system of sites, actors, objects, and practices, through which epistemic knowledge, here mostly textual, is created, used, stored, copied, transmitted. We will focus on the case of the hymns to the Aten authorised by the king Akhenaton (Assmann 1999: 214-223; Grandet 1995). Here, the main concern is not the identity of its claimed composer nor how they were composed, or their actual contents, but how they were used and displayed in the Amarna necropolis, i.e. inside tombs which are then to be considered as epistemic sites (that is to say, area polarising knowledge processes: Kahl 2021).

In Amarna necropoleis, the Great Hymn was inscribed on the right side of the entrance of Ay's tomb, and the Short Hymn was copied inside the tombs of Meryre, Tutu, Mahu, Apy, and Any, in a similar spot. Ay, Apy, and Any were kings' scribes, whereas Meryre was high-priest of the Aton, Tutu, chamberlain, and Mahu, chief of Medjays at Akhetaton. In Ay's inscriptions, his main title, 'god's father' (*it ntr*), is often preceded by the title *sš nsw m3' mryšf*, meaning the latter was of most importance for him (Sandman 1938: 87.13-16). Any was also a *sš nsw m3' mryšf*, and a steward of the Lord of the Double Land (*imy-r3 pr n nb t3wy*), as well as a scribe of the Offerings Table of the Lord of the Double Land (*sš*

*wḥw n nb tꜣwy*) (Sandman 1938: 64-65). His title sequences usually begin with his *sš nsw* title, and his subordinates' stelae placed inside his tomb identify him mostly as a king's scribe (Murnane 1995: 123-125; Sandman 1938: 67-68). Apy is a mere king's scribe, and a steward in Memphis (Murnane 1995: 126-128; Sandman 1938: 55). So half of the dignitaries who had the privilege to display a copy of any version of the royal hymn were king's scribes and certainly perceived as such by their contemporaries.

These hymns are often displayed at the entrance, next to a kneeling depiction of the tomb's owner, performing the act of adoration (De Garies Davies 1903: pl. XXXVII; 1906: 13, 20, pl. XXIX; 1908a: 7; 1908b: 18-19, pl. XVI, XXVII), and near a scene showing the royal couple presenting offerings to the Aten. Thus, the decoration of the tomb show its owner assisting the king, partaking of his religious and ideological order through the recitation of an hymn composed by the king himself. This arrangement manifested the official's commitment to the cult of the Aten, as prescribed (probably) by the king's teachings, which are often referred to by Amarna private inscriptions (see Kemp 2012: 29-30). Hymns to the Aten might fall into these royal teachings, especially those composed by the king himself. The figure of the king as a teacher for his courtiers is not unusual in royal narratives (*Königsnovellen*). One of them, inscribed on a bloc reused in the 10th pylon at Karnak, stages Amenhotep IV envisioning a solar creator god, certainly the Aten, or a prefiguration of it, through scholarly activities, and then, teaching his courtiers about what he learnt (see Darnell 2022). Then the king could have instructed some of his closest officials about theological aspects of the god. In that respect, a handle of officials could have been granted the privilege to recite hymns, perhaps during religious celebrations at Amarna, or at least on the walls of their tomb. If such a gratification was to exist, it might have been a privilege dependent on one's abilities related to religious textuality and ritual recitations, two domains in which king's scribes could be expert in as seen before.

The tombs inside which authorised hymns were inscribed are not necessarily the most spacious nor the most architecturally dispendious, but they all display uniqueness, reflecting the strive for distinction between officials of the inner elite. Ay's unfinished chapel contains an impressive, pillared hall which looks like a forest of narrowed white columns set in three rows (De Garies Davies 1908b: 16-23). Merire is the owner of a complex composed of two halls – one pillared – whose walls were inscribed by many prayers to the Aten (De Garies Davies 1903: 7-17, pl. I-II). Tutu's house of eternity follows the usual cross-corridor pattern, with a pillared hall with two rows of columns, but displaying bold and unique scenes (De Garies Davies 1908b: 7-15, pl. XI). Any's and Apy's tombs were much smaller and did not feature pillared halls. Any's tomb takes the form of a long corridor and is characterised by the presence of a portico at the entrance (De Garies Davies 1908a: 6-8, pl. VIII). As for Apy's tomb, it was left unfinished (De Garies Davies 1906: 19, pl. XXX). Mahu's grave is also quite a small one, and it follows a cross-corridor pattern, yet the decoration advocates for his eminent position as chief of Amarna police (De Garies Davies 1906: 12-18). The conclusion of this overview is that the display of an authorised hymn is not necessarily linked to the most elaborate tombs, meaning that some lower status officials from the inner circle, like Apy for instance, could benefit from this highly restricted privilege. The most plausible explanation is that the attribution of that epistemic privilege did not follow the distribution of wealth and power reflected by the forms of the tomb, and could have followed the royal recognition of some ability in textual and ritual scholarship. Nevertheless, some of the most powerful Amarna officials – Ay, Meryre, Tutu – were also awarded this privilege.

To better situate the role of king's scribes in Amarnian *economy of knowledge*, an inscription on the south wall thickness inside Tutu's tomb is of great interest (Murnane 1995:192; Sandman 1938: 77-78). After a few hymns addressed to the Aten and a 'loyalist' self-praise presenting Tutu as one 'straightforward and true to the knowledge of the king' (*ink mtr mꜣ' m rḥ n nsw*), pointing to his conformity and adherence to the king's teachings, a very unusual appeal to the living can be read. It is addressed to 'all king's scribes who know their business, whose hearts are skilled in serviceable things', asking them to pronounce a short

prayer. The latter incorporates the main theological propositions expressed in the Short Hymn, in quite the same order: 1) the Aten created himself; 2) his perpetual cycle ensures continuity; 3) he provides the living breeze through which one lives; 4) the king is his necessary intermediary (Grandet 1995: 77-78).

First, this appeal mobilises and simplifies theological statements developed in text belonging to the restricted knowledge of that time, which was also copied on the wall of Tutu's tomb. Second, the appeal is addressed to all king's scribes and not all scribes and lector priests, who are usually the addressees of appeals. This could be explained by king's scribes' place in Amarna *economy of knowledge*, as educated people versed in the 'divine speeches': they were able to decipher and understand on a deeper level theological statements coined by the king or the inner circle (to which some belonged), and were presumably able to explain them to visitors. King's scribes would have been the ones to read and interpret the texts for their fellow officials, on account of their training, as Tutu's inscription suggests: they would have mediated restricted knowledge, whose fundamental characteristic is not so much about secrecy, but the distinctiveness it provides to its possessor. This position as a mediator, even as a gatekeeper, would have ensured their role as patented scholars in the Akhetaton epistemic *milieu*, evolving at the King's House and committed to the new order Akhenaton wanted to create (Kemp 1989: 315; 2012: 231-235).

In the Amarna necropolis, at least eight king's scribes are buried, but only three of them were granted with the privilege to get one copy of the Great or the Short Hymn. Yet 'unauthorised' hymns to the Aten were often inscribed on the wall of their tombs, testifying for a circulation of theological knowledge inside Akhetaton's *epistemic economy*. In that respect, more work has to be done to better understand the distribution of hymns in their tombs and in the necropoleis. On the basis of what has been said, I suggest that king's scribes could have evolved in the microcosm of the King's House and its departments in Akhetaton, where they could probably have been involved in the activity of the house of life (on the spatial organisation of the palatial complex, see Kemp 1989: 271, 287-294; 2012: 123-137). Alongside officials like Tutu and the high-priest Meryre, some king's scribes were members of the inner elite and surely could have partaken in the definition of atonist political theology and were in return distinguished by the privilege to display highly symbolic knowledge. It would be appealing to see these officials as members of literate circles, possibly animated by the king himself, and from which the Great and the Short Hymns might have emanated. Such circles devoted to political and theological knowledge might have a similar functioning than those of the court society revolving around the emperor at Byzantium during the 10-11th centuries AD. There, *literati* tried to get imperial favours through intellectual endeavours, such as the compilation of texts from the past and the writing of monographies on multiple domains, such as the art of war and polioretics. Scholar endeavours in this specific and highly symbolical technical knowledge was then a way to gain intellectual capital by officials from various backgrounds (see Giros 2009 and McGeer 1995: 191-195).

Although Akhenaton's successors put an end to the Amarna experience and its epistemic *milieu*, king's scribes may have played a prominent role in various similar ones during the New Kingdom, as suggested by the records used in this paper.

### **Final thoughts: knowledgeability without autonomy and the impossibility of a *literati* class**

Ultimately, king's scribes were some of the most high-ranking royal servants because they were scholars. But they were also some of the most high-flying scholars because they were royal servants, providing them access to facilities (like royal libraries). Thus, they remained dependent on the king, and fundamentally, to the 'patrimonial' structure of the Egyptian state. This dependency was one of their fundamental characteristics, as they were precisely defined by their relation to the king. This observation prevents us from considering king's scribes as a bureaucratic or mandarin group, for they

lacked autonomy, and perhaps lacked consciousness as a collective (Moreno Garcia 2020: 75-76). In that respect, Weber's notions of patrimonial domination and patrimonial servants may still have some relevance (Weber 1978). The king's scribe, therefore, would formalise a knowledge/power configuration characterised by patrimonial domination.

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# Life and Works of Fr. Luigi Maria Ungarelli: Egyptologist and First Curator of the Gregorian Egyptian Museum

Camilla Persi

## Abstract

Luigi Maria Ungarelli was a distinguished Barnabite priest and a scholar of philology, theology, and the humanities in the early 19th century. Around the time of the discovery of the Egyptian language, he also devoted himself to the study of Ancient Egypt and became the first professional Egyptologist based in Rome. Among his most significant achievements are the translation of the inscriptions on the obelisks in Rome and the organisation and direction of the Gregorian Egyptian Museum. Although Ungarelli's name is well known among Italian Egyptologists, his life and works remain less recognised abroad. His disappearance from international records must be interpreted as the result of a series of events and controversies, which also involved his close friend Ippolito Rosellini. A major goal of this study is to reintroduce Ungarelli to an international audience, as well as to reconsider him in light of his largely unpublished papers kept at the *Centro Studi Storici PP. Barnabiti* in Rome. Furthermore, this contribution offers an overview of his career and achievements, while also clarifying his involvement in the controversial accusations made against him by J.J. Champollion Figeac.

## Keywords

Luigi Maria Ungarelli, History of Egyptology, Italian Egyptology, Gregorian Egyptian Museum, Obelisks

## Introduction

Luigi Maria Ungarelli lived at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries: one of the most turbulent times in the history of the Italian Peninsula. It was not a unified country back then, but an agglomeration of different sovereign states, many of which merged formally with the proclamation of the Kingdom of Italy in 1861. However, before this so-called Italian *Risorgimento* and the Independence Wars against the Habsburg Monarchy (1848-1859), part of the Italian Peninsula was a subject of Napoleon's authority, known as the Napoleonic Kingdom of Italy (1805-1814). This kingdom was the result of previous short-lived Napoleonic dependent states, respectively the Cispadane (1796-1797) and the Cisalpine (1797-1802) Republics, followed by the Republic of Italy (1802-1805). Ungarelli was born in Bologna on 15 February 1779. In 1805, after successfully completing his studies at the local Barnabite Institute, he was welcomed into the Barnabite Order as a brother. Thanks to his notable teaching skills, he was also appointed professor of Humanities at the same institute. As a result of its geographical location and political position, Bologna was always in the middle of the aforementioned developments, with the consequences that followed. Among these, the Napoleonic suppression of religious orders in 1809 (Reinerman 1971: 290-297) was the one with the most negative implications for Ungarelli. This outcome did not only force him to interrupt his early career as Professor of Humanities but led him also to a nervous breakdown and a severe inner crisis that had lifelong consequences for his health (Levati and Calzia 1935: 124; Visconti 1846: 4-5). In spite of numerous efforts by his bourgeois Bolognese family to bring him back to their residence, Ungarelli chose instead to spend this time of confinement with his confrères in the corporation of San Luigi. There, they were forced to live undercover, but their existence as a simple community was not prosecutable. It was during these difficult years that Ungarelli devoted

himself to intensive study of theology and ancient languages, becoming highly proficient in Hebrew and Aramaic (Boffitto and Abbiati 1937: 91-108).

### **The relationship with Ippolito Rosellini and the first steps in Egyptology**

Following the end of the Napoleonic Kingdom of Italy, exciting new opportunities opened up for Ungarelli as a result of the restoration of religious orders and the re-annexation of Bologna to the Papal States. In 1814, he was appointed Professor of Theology at the Barnabite Institute in Rome at the request of several Barnabite cardinals, including Francesco Fontana (1750-1822). There, he was also responsible for teaching Humanities to the novices, but these responsibilities did not prevent him from advancing in the study of Coptic and Arabic. With this purpose in mind, Ungarelli joined the circle of Giuseppe Mezzofanti (1774-1849), a highly renowned linguist teaching in Bologna, whose public lectures and private gatherings were attended by the most promising scholars of that time. In this circle, Ungarelli had the chance to meet Ippolito Rosellini (1800-1843), who was a student at Mezzofanti's school from 1821 to 1824. Rosellini later moved from Bologna to teach Arabic and Hebrew at the University of Pisa (Amaldi 1982; Vivian 1982), where in 1825 he was also appointed Professor of Egyptology. Because of their reciprocal appointments, Ungarelli and Rosellini did not meet in person again, only on a few brief occasions.

In spite of their geographic distance, age gap, and personality differences, they built a strong academic relationship as well as a life-long friendship, which is exemplified today by their vast, mostly published correspondence (Gabrieli 1926). Presently preserved in the archives of the Barnabite Institute in Rome, these letters record intense debates about academic matters as well as family, personal, and health issues. At the beginning, their connecting point was a shared passion for the Hebrew language. Nevertheless, Rosellini had extensive knowledge of Arabic and Indian languages and cultures, which were of significant interest to the Barnabite priest too. Even so, a great turning point in their correspondence and relationship is exemplified by a letter to Ungarelli dated Friday, 27 August 1825, in which Rosellini describes meeting Jean-François Champollion (1790-1832) for the first time (Gabrieli 1926: 10). It was at this moment that Egyptology became their main topic of discussion, alongside the publication of Champollion's significant discoveries that provided the key to deciphering the hieroglyphic writing.

In the summer of 1826, Rosellini and Champollion visited Rome. There, Pope Pius VIII had commissioned the French Egyptologist to compile and publish a descriptive study of the Egyptian obelisks in town. These had already been the subject of several works, including those by Georg Zoëga (1755-1809) (Ciampini 2015; Zoëga 1797). Prior to him, Athanasius Kircher (1602-1680) worked on the obelisks as well (Kircher 1650; Schulz 2018: 60-69), but despite some interesting conclusions, he did not succeed in translating their inscriptions. The visit to Rome of the French Egyptologist ended up being a success, and among institutional duties, Rosellini had also managed to schedule an official meeting between him and Ungarelli.<sup>1</sup> Following this enlightening experience, Ungarelli decided to devote himself to Egyptology with the same enthusiasm that brought him to study sacred scriptures and theology. It was indeed not long before he would surround himself with some of the most influential publications of his time, and deeply enjoyed reading about the latest discoveries through the letters of Rosellini. However, as a consequence of Rosellini and Champollion's preparation for the Franco-Tuscan Expedition in Egypt (1828-1830), the correspondence between Ungarelli and Rosellini slowed down. The exchange of post did not improve during the course of the archaeological expedition, and a few letters from both sides

<sup>1</sup> 27 letters, exchanged between Champollion and Ungarelli, are kept in the *Centro Studi Storici* of the Barnabite Institute in Rome (under the provisional no. 16.5.8). In preparation for an extensive publication on the Barnabite priest, further research on and transcriptions of these letters is currently being undertaken.

got lost on their way to and from Egypt.<sup>2</sup> Still, his early Egyptological notebooks (under the provisional no. 16.5.3), mostly philological and historical in nature, highlight the progress he made while unable to communicate regularly with Rosellini. In letter no. 27, written to the latter, and dated Tuesday, 9 February 1830, Ungarelli wrote:

‘I do not yet possess a complete understanding of this beautiful branch of knowledge, but I closely follow each and every development of it. Nevertheless, I read whatever might occasionally pass through my hands, beside collecting, for my own satisfaction, the hieroglyphic inscriptions which I encounter among the lesser-known monuments of Rome (...).’<sup>3</sup>

Private correspondence, diaries, and academic notebooks of Ungarelli overall also reflect his personal nature. This was characterised by a deep sense of humility and a certain amount of insecurity when it came to Egyptology. On the other hand, in most of his theological production, no signs of self-doubt can be found; he shows, in fact, complete confidence while writing down sermons or religious reflections: an intellectual thought forged by a solid scholarly formation. Approaching Egyptology, a relatively new subject at the time, and in his late thirties, would have possibly seemed like a significant undertaking for an established clergyman, so that nowadays, his hesitations would likely be interpreted as ‘Impostor Syndrome’. Despite this stubborn and life-long lack of confidence, Ungarelli developed full and impressive competence in Egyptology, thanks also to incessant encouragement from Rosellini, who saw in his philological skills an extraordinary potential.

### ***The beginning of the decipherment of the obelisks***

As previously mentioned, in 1826, Pope Pius VIII commissioned Champollion to work on the obelisks in Rome. Yet, this assignment took an unexpected and complex turn, culminating in some lengthy dynamics as well. At the beginning, Champollion took multiple notes and corrected the preparatory etching tables based on epigraphical surveys of the obelisks, later stored at the Papal States Typography. The two obelisks in Benevento, which he had drawn himself, were also meant to be included in the final work. Though these preliminary actions were promising, the French Egyptologist eventually put the project on hold due to a number of factors. Rosellini would explain later that Champollion had repeatedly assured him he was well underway with the publication, but that he also knew that this was not true. Indeed, as Rosellini reports in letter no. 183 (Gabrieli 1926: 40), it was in his colleague’s nature to sometimes pick up assignments but not to follow up on them. About the one concerning the obelisks in particular, Rosellini also believed that the main explanation lay in the lack of complete knowledge of the hieroglyphs at that time. It must be acknowledged, however, that Champollion was also overwhelmed by the amount of data collected on the Franco-Tuscan Expedition, as well as by the preparation of the *Grammaire Égyptienne*. Therefore, after his death, the obelisks project was abandoned and forgotten until 1833, when Cardinal Luigi Lambruschini (1776-1854), Secretary of State for the new Pope Gregory XVI, decided it was time to finally realise it. In support of this idea was also Carlo Fea (1753-1836), a distinguished lawyer, classical archaeologist, and inspector of antiquities in Rome. The opportunity presented itself in October of the same year, when Rosellini returned to Rome, particularly

<sup>2</sup> This information is reported on the only letter of Ungarelli missing from the Rosellini-Ungarelli correspondence at the Barnabites Archives of Rome, and presently in the archives of the University of Pisa (BUP 294.2.55), viewed 22 January 2023 <<https://www.internetculturale.it/>>, identification number: IT-PI112\_MRC.294.2.55.1. I would like to thank Prof. Marilina Betrò (University of Pisa) for the information she provided me regarding this document.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Io non professo già questo bellissimo ramo di erudizione, ma tengo conto di ogni notizia che gli appartiene e leggo quanto mi può capitare nelle mani di analogo, e raccolgo per mio diletto i segni geroglifici che vado incontrando sui monumenti di Roma meno osservati’. All unpublished and published passages taken from the Ungarelli-Rosellini correspondence, and quoted in this contribution, are translated from Italian by the author.

to visit Ungarelli, whom he had not seen since 1826. On this occasion, the professor also met Carlo Fea a number of times, by whom he was repeatedly asked to take over the publication on the obelisks. At that time, Rosellini was deeply involved in the making of *Monuments de l'Égypte et Nubie* and because of this he had to decline this offer. Yet, he suggested that Fea entrust Ungarelli with the assignment, saying that no one else could handle it better and that he would also support him throughout (Bracco 1941: 65). In response to the announcement of the plan, Ungarelli vehemently protested, so much so that Cardinal Lambruschini was forced to convene a resolution meeting, which included Rosellini and Fea. As a part of it, the Cardinal stressed the significance of this work for Biblical studies in general. Additionally, he believed that its completion was entirely justified in light of the significant and substantiated language discoveries made by Champollion (Bracco 1941: 66). Given the unanimous agreement, Ungarelli was unable to decline the assignment. In this connection, an enthusiastic announcement of the news, accompanied by an overview of the vicissitudes, was published by the inspector of antiquities in Rome (Fea 1836: 21–23), on 10 November 1833:

‘To the admirers of Egyptian antiquities, particularly of those highly prestigious examples in Rome. (...) This is the piece of work that will emerge not so long from now and become so significant for the study of ancient literature and the Old Testament, too. (...) Consequently, this announcement has been made to the public today to let everyone know that such a closely studied and anticipated project had to be put on hold due to the aforementioned reasons only. Such a proclamation was also needed to inform everyone that Italy, and Rome in particular, (...) appreciates and cultivates this emerging field of scholarship [Egyptology], and that scholars, here, do support, and are equally convinced by, the only way to interpret hieroglyphic writing.’<sup>4</sup>

With the Cardinal’s consent, Ungarelli discussed how to proceed with Rosellini, who recommended returning to the preparatory etching tables of the obelisks, long forgotten in the Papal States Typography. Meanwhile, further volumes of *Monuments de l'Égypte et Nubie*, along with the highly anticipated publication of *Grammaire Égyptienne*, were forthcoming. Considering the importance of the content of these publications for a full and comprehensive interpretation of the obelisks, Ungarelli did not want to rush the completion of the tables. Nevertheless, he moved to the Barnabite Institute in Parma at the end of 1833, where he also remained for a couple of years due to institutional reasons. While chairing the college, he drafted the first version of the interpretation of the obelisks’ history and inscriptions. This manuscript would consist of two notebooks of 480 and 160 pages respectively, now kept in the archives of the Barnabite Institute in Rome (under the provisional no. 16.5.7). Aside from being dense with notes and corrections, they demonstrate the originality of his work. As we will see in the following paragraphs, perhaps Jacques-Joseph Champollion-Figeac (1778–1867) would not have brought the same accusations to Ungarelli if the existence of this document had been made public during their lifetime.

### ***The ‘Elementa Linguae Aegyptiacae Vulgo Copticae’ and the accusations of plagiarism***

Ever since he began his Egyptological studies, Ungarelli was fascinated by the key role played by the Coptic language in the process of interpreting hieroglyphs. Yet, like Champollion before, he considered the primary publications for the study of this language to be insufficient in light of the linguistic developments and discoveries that lay ahead (Bracco 1941: 69). In this respect, in his correspondence

<sup>4</sup> ‘Agli amatori delle antichità Egiziane, e di quelle più in ispecie più insigni, che si hanno a Roma. (...) Questa è l’opera, che vedrà fra non molto la luce: opera, che sarà sommamente luminosa, e utile alla letteratura antica e non solo. (...) Oggi, pertanto, se ne porge la notizia al pubblico; perché si sappia, che l’opera tanto studiata e desiderata, non fu sospesa se non che per la detta ragione; e che la Italia, e Roma singolarmente, (...) apprezza, e coltiva questa nuova scienza: ed altresì, che i suoi cultori, hanno un’intima e piena convinzione della verità intorno a quest’unico modo di leggere, ed interpretare le scritture geroglifiche.’. This extract from the announcement was translated from Italian by the author.

with Rosellini, he referred to this issue frequently, emphasising the negative impact it had on the progress of the obelisks' work too. Upon returning to Rome from Parma in the summer of 1835, Ungarelli was informed by Rosellini that he would be provided with a copy of the Coptic language handbook his students had been using (Gabrieli 1926: 29). This was written by Rosellini himself, incorporating notes he had taken while attending Champollion's lectures in Paris. Ungarelli regarded this work as an excellent source and recommended its publication to the professor, who, after a lot of pressure, accepted it under certain conditions. He first claimed that Ungarelli, the chosen editor, should clearly state in the foreword that the idea of publishing came from him. Also, how the professor resisted but nevertheless agreed to publish only with proper references to Champollion, whom he actually considered to be the real author of the whole work (Gabrieli 1926: 31). He concluded by giving clear indications for the title, which translated from Latin sounds as follows: *Elements of the Egyptian language, commonly known as Coptic, which Ippolito Rosellini, Professor of Ancient History and Archaeology, delivered to his audience in the department of Oriental Languages in Pisa*. His requests were granted by Ungarelli, who also provided him with useful contacts in Rome, in order to find sponsors who could easily cover publication and editing costs.

In his role as editor, Ungarelli revised the completed manuscript as well as translated it into Latin. A number of additional examples from the Holy Scriptures were provided too, including some taken from a Theban papyrus fragment (Pap. Vat. copt. 1; Rosellini 1837: 128-135) acquired by the Vatican Library at his recommendation (Bracco 1941: 71). As soon as the book was published in 1837, it received immediate approval from the scholarly community. Due to the clear statements made in the preface, nobody complained about their work at the beginning. The situation did not change until Figeac, Champollion's brother, entered the scene. It should be mentioned that another fight was happening at the same time between Rosellini and Figeac. There was a dispute over two hundred drawings produced by the Italian professor for the *Monuments de l'Égypte et Nubie*, which Figeac refused to return after the death of his brother in 1832. As a result of serious pressure, Rosellini eventually managed to regain possession of them (Gabrieli 1925: 29). Yet, their conflict moved to another level when Figeac started to repeatedly discredit and accuse each upcoming volume of *Monuments de l'Égypte et Nubie* of plagiarism (Bracco 1941: 72). A significant point to be noted is that Figeac was so distressed by the whole affair (Thompson 2015: 174-175) surrounding Francesco Salvolini (1810-1838), that he would not hesitate to accuse Rosellini too. Accordingly, Figeac formally charged Salvolini with robbery and plagiarism in 1842 (Champollion-Figeac 1842b). The *Lexicon Linguae Copticae* of Amedeo Peyròn (1785-1870), as well as the work of Ungarelli and Rosellini were also accused shortly thereafter (Champollion-Figeac 1842a). Five years had passed since the publication of the *Elementa Linguae Aegyptiacae*, but such a delay could be explained by the clamour unleashed by his previous accusation to Salvolini, which created a favourable environment. A conversation between Peyròn and Ungarelli in Rome in the summer of 1839 provides more information regarding the background of these public accusations. In fact, the Barnabite had already been condemned by Figeac as Rosellini's accomplice in his private correspondence with Peyròn. More information about their discussion is provided by Ungarelli in letter no. 182 to Rosellini (Gabrieli 1926: 39-40):

'(...) Peyròn then answered him (Figeac), emphasising his mistake for failing to read the preface: "But don't be surprised ..." he continued to me "... the French don't understand Latin anymore!"<sup>5</sup>

Still in support of the work by Rosellini and Ungarelli, Peyròn noted in the foreword (Peyròn 1841: 13) of his *Grammatica Linguae Copticae*:

<sup>5</sup> 'Peyron allora gli rispose, mostrandogli il torto che quegli aveva, non avendo letta la prefazione: "Ma non vi meravigliate..." continuò poi "...i Francesi non intendono più il Latino".'

‘In the preface, the editor strongly credited Champollion in all his words and attributed him as the author of the handbook; so that if anyone accuses the Italians of plagiarism, he must be said not to have read the preface of the book at all.’<sup>6</sup>

In accordance with the accusations contained in the *Notice* (Champollion-Figeac 1842a), the praise in the foreword was not appropriate since the whole published material was copied. In Figeac’s view, Rosellini would formulate the handbook using original theories, carefully copied from Champollion while in Paris, and publish it later in Rome thanks to Ungarelli (Champollion-Figeac 1842a: 10). Rosellini refused to defend himself against someone who repeatedly declined to listen to him (Gabrieli 1926: 47). To demonstrate their good intentions, Ungarelli decided to write a letter to Figeac. As part of this lengthy communication, he demonstrated how he himself contributed to the handbook by implementing, correcting, and modifying it (Bracco 1941: 74). Despite these attempts, Figeac never provided him with an answer.

From a modern perspective, the publication of *Elementa Linguae Aegyptiacae* appears problematic. It can be said that Rosellini and Ungarelli reworked, amplified, and produced a completely different work. Yet, in light of the fact that this production was originally intended as notes taken during Champollion’s lesson, the authorship issue should have been discussed with his descendants. It should also be remarked that Rosellini was opposed to the publication of the book from the very beginning. He eventually fell under the pressure of Ungarelli, who, brimming with confidence in him and acting in the highest interest of the subject, apparently thought their huge praise for the French professor would have prevented all criticism. In spite of their efforts and the controversy that followed, the *Elementa Linguae Aegyptiacae* is not generally regarded nowadays as being a turning point in the study of the Coptic language. Rather, a significant impact was made in those years by the studies of Amedeo Peyròn, Tommaso Valperga di Caluso (1737-1815), and Henry Tattam (1789-1868).

### ***The publication of the ‘Interpretatio Obeliscorum Urbis’ and its consequences***

In accordance with Pope Pius VIII’s instructions in 1825, the newly sponsored and comprehensive study of the obelisks should have focused exclusively on the inscribed ones. Indeed, nothing newer than what Zoëga had already published (Zoëga 1797) could have been said about those which carried no inscriptions. Accordingly, the obelisks chosen to be part of the publications were: the Laterano, the Flaminio, the Montecitorio, the Agonale (or *Pamphili*), the Sallustiano, the Pinciano (or *Barberini*), the Macuteo (or *obelisk of the Pantheon*), and the Minerva (or *Minerveo*) obelisk.<sup>7</sup> As previously mentioned, the two obelisks that Champollion observed and drew in Benevento, a city in the northeast of Naples, were also incorporated. Although these drawings were only preliminary sketches that the French Egyptologist sent to Rome in 1927, they still represent an extremely significant element of the story, since they would have later provided evidence to support further charges by Figeac.

Between 1833 and 1842, when Ungarelli was working on the project, Egyptology studies were constantly and significantly improving as a result of a number of groundbreaking publications coming out during the decade. In response to these developments, at some point Ungarelli discussed with Fea a revised structure for the project (Bracco 1941: 76-78). Among the new sections he intended to include, in one he would have elaborated on some incoherent information concerning the obelisks found in Ammianus Marcellinus’ *Rerum gestarum*, specifically in chapter four of the seventh book. In light of his discoveries, the existing rumours about a forgotten obelisk in Rome’s underground would have gained credence. A

<sup>6</sup> ‘Editor fidem dedit atque in praefatione liberavit totis litteris Champollionii nomen describens, eique auctori grammaticam tribuens; ita ut, si quis Italos duumviros plagii incusaverit, ille dicendus sit libri praefationem minime legisse.’ This passage was translated from Latin by the author.

<sup>7</sup> It is now common practice to refer to obelisks in Rome by their historical or actual location within the city.



detailed study of the small obelisk in Urbino was also planned, along with a comparison between some fragments in Naples and the Obelisk of Titus Sextius Africanus in Munich. These three additional tasks proved to be too time-consuming and financially challenging, so, together with Carlo Fea, he eventually decided to discuss them only generally and sparsely in the publication's notes.

Since Ungarelli used to date and describe each phase of the work in his manuscript (under provisional no. 16.5.7), it is possible to track his progress chronologically. In terms of content production, it all began in 1834 with the translation and contextualisation of the Laterano and Flaminio obelisks, a process that took approximately two years. In order to compare and combine the two results, Ungarelli and Rosellini performed these tasks separately. Due to Rosellini's increasing commitments, Ungarelli was obliged to complete the translation of the remaining obelisks on his own, while still relying on Rosellini's final corrections. In total, the revisions of the two main obelisks, Laterano and Flaminio, including the remaining ones, took almost three more years, from 1836 to 1839. The final adjustments and additions were made between 1839 and 1841. On a technical level, a noteworthy feature is that the official language of the publication is Latin. Moreover, the translations of the obelisks, including each side and pyramidion, were given in both Coptic and Latin. For every obelisk, an historical and cultural analysis was also provided. In this regard, the *Elementa Linguae Aegyptiacae* and volumes of the *Monuments de l'Égypte et Nubie* greatly contributed to the development of the project. These publications served as a proper reference bibliography, in addition to works by Conradus Leemans (1809-1893), K. Richard Lepsius (1810-1884), as well as the *Grammaire Égyptienne* of Champollion. Besides the original manuscript, a number of documents pertaining to the publication of the obelisks, including more papers proving Rosellini's collaboration, are also preserved at the Vatican State Archives, according to Bracco (1941: 79-80). Thanks to Ungarelli's expenses accounts in the manuscript, we also know that the reproduction of the Benevento obelisks proved to be the most challenging and expensive. The sketches and notes provided by Champollion were insufficient, so that a professional epigraphic survey had to be commissioned, packed in two boxes, and then sent to Rome.

As a result of this meticulous and complex research effort, the *Interpretatio Obeliscorum Urbis* was published in 1842 in two volumes. The first book is exclusively concerned with historical-cultural digressions and translations of the inscriptions of the obelisks. The second book contains seven monumental tables (92 cm x 42 cm), which are appropriate for all the epigraphic surveys of the obelisks, including beautiful prints of their inscriptions. As well as providing an overview of the events that led to the publication of this book, the preface describes Champollion's contributions in detail (Ungarelli 1842: 1-11). Ungarelli highlighted that the French Egyptologist deserved full credit for the accuracy of the surveys, as well as partially for the work carried out on the obelisks in Benevento. He also elaborated further on his involvement, by explaining how Champollion had already begun preparing the descriptive part. However, he continued, that due to a number of political circumstances in France, and work commitments that completely occupied him, in the end Champollion 'did not have time to think about the obelisks anymore' (Ungarelli 1842: 6). Although without malice, the Barnabite also noted that what Champollion used to consider as an established process in 1827, was actually only the beginning of a research that would last for a very long time. These statements seem excessively strong in light of Ungarelli's character. There is a high probability that he felt extremely confident about the testimony given by Rosellini, which was previously mentioned (Gabrieli 1926: 40-41). Ungarelli concluded the introduction by reflecting on the toughness of the whole project and by thanking his friend Rosellini once more.

On a national and international level, at the beginning the *Interpretatio* was well received by the Egyptological community of that time, as well as by archaeology scholars. Figeac's response to this publication, in the form of a review, came shortly after (Champollion-Figeac 1842c). He begins by lamenting the fact that Egyptologists everywhere, but especially in Italy, consistently fail to acknowledge the influence of his brother in their works and that the *Interpretatio* was just one of them. In addition

to summarising the interpretation, he quotes several letters in his possession that were written by his brother. These would attest that Champollion had informed his Italian colleagues that the explicative text was already in his hands, and that he was just taking some time. Figeac continued to declare as offensive to his brother's memory the assertion that Champollion would have tended to consider something not finished as basically done. A comparison was then provided between a few passages of translations in the *Interpretatio* of the Laterano and Flaminio obelisks, and those supposedly derived from a manuscript belonging to Champollion (Champollion-Figeac 1842c: 660-661). Accordingly, Figeac did not hesitate to assert that the entire publication was written by his younger brother and that Rosellini had stolen the manuscript, subsequently assembled in Rome by Ungarelli. Furthermore, he reports the background facts in regard to the Benevento obelisks, claiming his brother was also responsible for the relative surveys. Despite all this, Champollion's manuscript of the obelisks was never made public by Figeac, even though a great many openly asked for it (Bracco 1941: 86-87). However, Rosellini was sure that those passages published by Figeac were simply taken from the original notes and early translations his younger brother made at the beginning of his work (Gabrieli 1926: 47-48). Therefore, the Italian professor continued to ignore Figeac's accusations, noting that he had become accustomed to the methods he used (Figure 1). Though he was aware that his silence may have been misinterpreted, in letter no. 226 he further comments:

‘(...) He sees but does not really want to see. He knows (and I am not talking about Egyptology) and does not want to know.’<sup>8</sup>

Still, he did not hesitate to suggest that Ungarelli should reply to Figeac by publishing or sending a formal response. In fact, Rosellini regarded those accusations towards the Barnabite as being much more serious allegations than the previous ones. It is likely that Ungarelli failed to follow his advice due to his previous unsuccessful attempts to contact Figeac. In spite of his doubts regarding the nature of translations published by the brother of Champollion (Figure 2), he might have opted for Rosellini's approach in the end.

These allegations turned out to be considered facts. It is undeniable that this specific attack and its consequences contributed greatly to the damage to Ungarelli's status in Egyptology and to his subsequent *damnatio memoriae*. While Rosellini did not share the same fate, his position was also affected in some way. Hartleben (1906: 52) attempted to exonerate Rosellini by describing Ungarelli as a shadowy mover in the background. She later described Figeac as a brave defender of his younger brother's memory, again putting all the blame on Ungarelli, who she defined as ‘der Hauptschuldige’ (Hartleben 1906: 560). Besides, very influential opinions were those of Adolf Erman (1854-1937) and Seymour de Ricci (1881-1942). Erman (1896: 150) primarily focused on the Benevento obelisks affair, giving Champollion full credit for them, while De Ricci (1922: 777-778) reports that the academic community generally agreed on the accusations towards Ungarelli. Giuseppe Gabrieli (1872-1942) was the first person to publicly stand on the side of the Barnabite, since he had the chance to examine his original papers, manuscripts, and notes left in the archives of the Barnabite Institute in Rome. By publishing the private correspondence between Ungarelli and Rosellini (Gabrieli 1929), he contributed greatly to the revaluation and rediscovery of Ungarelli's position in the whole scenario. Gabrieli's work was continued at a national level by the Barnabite Giovan Battista Bracco (1941), even though his Master's thesis was never published in full. The efforts of Gabrieli were not ignored by the international community (Lagier 1928), however no further publications on this topic exist.

<sup>8</sup> ‘(...) vede, ma non vuole vedere: sa (non dico di scienza egiziana), ma non vuole sapere.’

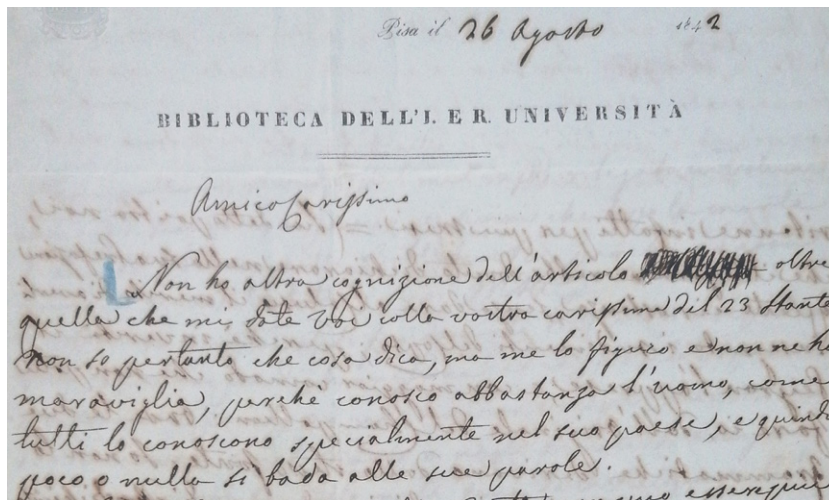


Figure 1. Preface of letter no. 223 to Ungarelli, in which Rosellini, in relation to the latest accusations (Champollion-Figeac 1842c), states to know no more than him. Despite this, he is aware of Figeac's manners, as is the rest of France, and can only imagine what kind of words he is spreading around. He claims, however, that no one takes him seriously (© Centro Studi Storici PP. Barnabiti).

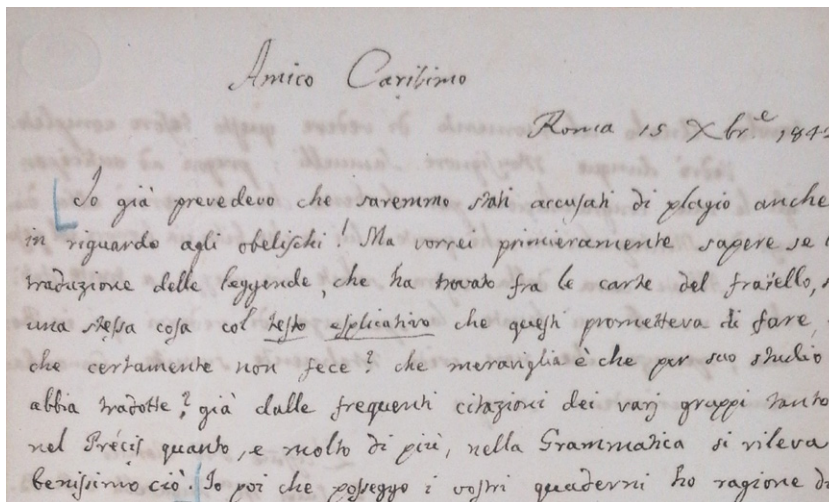


Figure 2. Preface of letter no. 227 to Rosellini, in which Ungarelli asserts that he foresaw the new plagiarism allegations towards the Interpretatio. Moreover, he questions the nature of those lines, provided by Figeac, that would indicate the existence of an obelisk manuscript by Champollion (© Centro Studi Storici PP. Barnabiti).

### The Gregorian-Egyptian Museum under the supervision of Ungarelli

Prior to its official inauguration in 1837, there were a number of factors that contributed to the establishment of the collection and opening to the public of the Gregorian Egyptian Museum. In this respect, the history of its foundation can be divided into two major periods: the time when Carlo Fea was most involved (1819-1833)<sup>9</sup> and when Ungarelli succeeded him (1833-1842). In 1833, Cardinal Luigi Lambruschini, on behalf of Gregory XVI, assigned Ungarelli the task of studying the obelisks, which officially marked the beginning of his involvement in Egyptology. Since Lambruschini had also established a friendly relationship with the Barnabite, he did not hesitate to consult him when acquiring

<sup>9</sup> A complete overview of facts and events that led to the foundation and establishment of the collection can be found in Lefevre 1941, Tulli 1941 and Liverani 1999.



Figure 3. Watercolour (14 cm x 9 cm) of the original exhibition at the Gregorian Egyptian Museum (room no. 3), found among Ungarelli's documents. The artist is unknown (© Centro Studi Storici PP. Barnabiti).

new objects for the Pope's private collections, as happened with the Theban papyrus fragment (Pap. Vat. copt. 1). Consequently, Ungarelli was disappointed when the Cardinal declined to purchase a large group of Egyptian antiquities that arrived in Rome in 1836 with the friendly approval of Muhammad Ali Pascià (1769-1849). This was largely due to the priority given to the acquisition of Etruscan antiques at that time (Bracco 1941: 93). Another opportunity presented itself in the same year, when Ungarelli learned about, and variously discussed, the so-called 'gold of Meroe' with his discoverer Giuseppe Ferlini (1797-1870), also from Bologna.<sup>10</sup> Due to unsuccessful negotiations, the treasure eventually ended up being divided between Munich and Berlin, even though Ungarelli deeply wished for it to remain in Italy, and specifically in Bologna (Cesaretti 1992; Piacentini 2021: 372-373). Despite this, Ungarelli still counted on Cardinal Lambruschini to exert pressure on Gregory XVI to acquire Egyptian antiquities. According to letter no. 163 from Ungarelli to Rosellini, the situation drastically changed in April 1838:

'As for what has been done and acquired for the collection, I will explain it to you at a later date. It would be too much for me to write! The most significant thing you should know now is that the Pope ordered the Camerlengato not to further purchase Etruscan, Greek, or Roman antiquities, but only Egyptian ones.'<sup>11</sup>

The antiquities commission met during the summer of the same year, sadly without Carlo Fea, who had passed away a couple of years before. Various acquisitions, location issues, and also resolutions were discussed, and the Gregorian Egyptian Museum began to take shape (Bracco 1941: 93-94). In fact, Gregory XVI gave permission to use a large wing on the first floor of the Belvedere Palace, where the Museum still stands today. Moreover, the first task assigned to Ungarelli was to assemble all the Egyptian antiquities already present in Rome but scattered throughout the city. In this connection, he started by putting together the ancient Egyptian artefacts kept at the Capitoline Museums, including original ones and Roman copies coming from Villa Adriana, the luxurious retreat of the Emperor Hadrian. Then he moved on to the gathering of the papyri kept at the Vatican Library, and also organised the removal of the Nectanebo Lions from the Fontana dell'Acqua Felice on the Quirinal Hill. Aside from collecting

<sup>10</sup> Their correspondence is kept in Bologna and can be found on the main website of the digital municipal archives, viewed 22 January 2023 <<https://www.cittadegliarchivi.it/>>. The source is accessible under the following identification number: IT-CPA-ST0021-0000021 ('Corrispondenza dei professori Ungarelli, Rosellini e Migliarini').

<sup>11</sup> 'Delle opere eseguite e degli aumenti del detto museo vi dirò un'altra volta, troppo avrei da scrivere; basti di sapere che il Papa ha ordinato al Camerlengato di non comperare più oggetti né etruschi, né greci, né romani, ma solo egizi.'




Figure 4. Preparatory study by Ungarelli for one of the frieze inscriptions, including cartouches with the name and epithet of Gregory XVI. An indication of the final carving location in the room precedes each line (© Centro Studi Storici PP. Barnabiti).

pieces from various religious institutes in Rome, he also assisted with managing donations from wealthy Romans, including those from the Verospi-Vitelleschi, the Albani, and the Torlonia families.

Installation works were carried out between August 1838 and January 1839, still under the supervision of Ungarelli. His expertise and dedication led Gregory XVI and Cardinal Lambruschini to think of him as responsible for curating and planning the display of the collection. In spite of the fact that he was in charge of everything, he never received an official nomination as curator. However, he was undoubtedly regarded as such at the time, just as he is today. Presently, the Egyptian collection occupies much more space in the Vatican Museums than it did originally. This is also due to the enlargement of the collection, which now also includes masterpieces from the Near East and Mesopotamia. Although the building has been through several restorations, modernisations, and curatorial renovations, Ungarelli's involvement can still be traced, especially in the first four rooms of the exhibition. Numerous notes and drawings among his written inheritance to the Barnabite Institute in Rome, which are not properly catalogued yet, document all his projects and ideas for the exhibition (Figure 3). Aside from dividing the rooms according to themes, ranging from writing, architecture, painting, and sculpture, he also designed the look of the entire architectural structure. Among some original designs still standing, even though fully restored or somehow modified, are the depiction of starry skies, temple-like gates with papyrus columns, thematic architraves, and Nilotic painted scenes. Perhaps the most striking evidence of Ungarelli's curatorial skill is the composition and placement of various hieroglyphic texts, which would ultimately be carved around the rooms' friezes (Figure 4). Currently, they remain visible in the first two rooms only, but they still commemorate, alongside a memorial plaque, the date of the inauguration of the collection. Furthermore, these texts praise Gregory XVI's efforts and willingness to open the museum to the public.

Something similar was already conceived in 1826 by Champollion, in honour of Leopold II, Grand Duke of Tuscany (1797-1870). A drawn reproduction of this inscription can be found in the portfolio of Ungarelli, indicating that he was aware of its existence (Figure 5). As regards the making of his original hieroglyphic inscriptions, a noteworthy feature is the transposition of Latin original texts into Egyptian, as well as various recognisable mixtures of these two languages. In one preparatory drawing (Figure 4), at the beginning of the first line, Ungarelli sketched the following hieroglyphs:

 which can tentatively be transcribed as *rnp.t-sp 9 hr 3-r-h3-y-<sup>c</sup>-r-i-w-s* '3 Regnal year nine under the High-Priest, the Great'. The expression *3-r-h3-y-<sup>c</sup>-r-i-w-s* is referring to the Ancient Greek word *ἀρχιερεύς* 'high priest', or *pontifex maximus* from the Latin

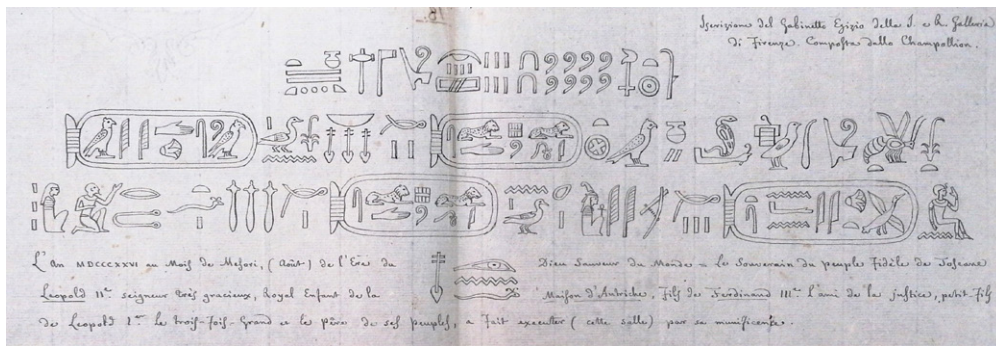


Figure 5. The inscription designed by Champollion in honour of Leopold II. The author is unknown (© Centro Studi Storici PP. Barnabiti).

perspective, used here as a designation for the Pope, whose Latin name, *Gregorius*, is also rendered in hieroglyphs in the following cartouche.

The official inauguration of the museum took place on 5 February 1839, along with the publication of a couple of brief descriptions of the collection (Ungarelli 1839a; 1839b). A week later, Ungarelli also drew a detailed but practical outline of the Gregorian Egyptian Museum for *L'Album di Roma*, one of the most popular local magazines of the time. In addition to a fine print of the entrance (Figure 6), this text was also intended as an accessible room-by-room guide and therefore as an invitation to visit it (Ungarelli 1839c).

He dedicated the rest of his life to the collection, starting a general catalogue of it while also keeping on promoting new acquisitions. His efforts eventually culminated in the organisation of the so-called *Spedizione Romana* to Egypt, from 1840 to 1841.<sup>12</sup> This was carried out under the blessing of Muhammad Ali Pascià (1769-1849), who wished to strengthen his relationship with Gregory XVI. Ungarelli did not travel but followed everything from Rome. Among other purposes, one of his letters to Rosellini (no. 146) confirms that there was the intention of bringing to Rome the obelisk of Senusret I in Heliopolis. Although this was not possible due to technical and financial constraints, the expedition was a success, and new purchases were made for the museum. As well as taking care of the full inventory and cataloguing of the collection, Ungarelli maintained a fairly active role in the scholarly community of Rome as well. In this connection, he became an esteemed member of the *Centro di Corrispondenza Archeologica*, which was the previous name of the *Deutsches Archäologisches Institut* in Rome. There, but also at the Pontifical Archaeological Institute (Ungarelli 1841, 1842b), he gave several lectures about the masterpieces in the Vatican Egyptian collection as an invited speaker (Gabrieli 1941: 96-97). Another significant activity of the Barnabite was the composition of special necrologies. Based on the number of these found among his portfolio, which are also uncatalogued as yet, the present author believes that he primarily composed them under commission for wealthy members of Rome's aristocracy. These papers contain elaborate projects of supposedly lapidarian inscriptions, mostly redacted in Latin or Ancient Greek, celebrating the lives and actions of several individuals. The skills that he possessed, as well as his Egyptological expertise, enabled him to obtain the commission of a special necrology in Egyptian hieroglyphs for the matriarch and patriarch of the Torlonia family. He also supervised their carving on a couple of obelisks built up for the occasion by the Torlonia heir prince. These were finally placed on their family estate known as Villa Torlonia, located on the east side of Rome. Today, this area is a public park, and the obelisks still stand, deceiving many visitors who assume them to be authentic Egyptian monuments.

<sup>12</sup> For an official report about this mission, see Ravioli 1840.



Figure 6. Black-and-white print from *L'Album di Roma* of the Gregorian Egyptian Museum (room no. 1) (Ungarelli 1839c: 399).

Ungarelli's correspondence with Rosellini ended with letter no. 237, written by Rosellini's wife, who reported the death of her husband in early June 1843. Despite being aware of his close friend's poor health, it was still a shock for Ungarelli to read the news. A short time later, the Barnabite answered her back, requesting to return to Rome all the letters and materials he had exchanged with her husband during their twenty-year friendship (Gabrieli 1926: 14, note no. 3). On 31 January 1844, Ungarelli survived a violent apoplexy, but his professional life had to be put on hold. He was transferred to the island of Ischia on the orders of his doctor. Following his return to Rome after a few months, he attempted to resume a normal life with his brothers at the Barnabite Institute, but he then passed away on 21 August 1845.

## Conclusions

Luigi Maria Ungarelli's life and works have always been marginally known internationally (Bierbrier 2019: 467). While it is clear that Figeac's plagiarism allegations played a significant role in his disappearance from the academic community, there were other contributing factors as well. The first obstacle to mention is the language barrier – most of the sources dealing with Ungarelli have been published only in Italian. Also, due to the lack of recent and focused research on this topic, detailed facts about him can mostly be found in publications from the 19th and early 20th centuries. Despite this, significant international publications covering the history of Egyptology did mention the Barnabite (Piacentini 2021: 374; Thompson 2015: 214). In light of the fact that most of his major publications are in Latin, even if they are open access, they still have largely been unnoticed by the academic community. There are also physical obstacles in addition to language barriers. In fact, his manuscripts are generally inaccessible to the public without special permission. These are carefully stored in several boxes and remain largely unexamined in the *Centro Studi Storici* of the Barnabite Institute in Rome. Although it is challenging to see them, it is equally difficult to interpret and contextualise them once in their presence, due also to their mostly uncatalogued state. Among the topics covered in these papers are theology, Egyptology, Italian and Latin literature, as well as private letters, sermons, diaries, and more. Overall,

it is also sometimes difficult to read the handwritings and 19th-century Italian. In spite of this, staff members of the *Centro Studi Storici* have recently begun working on the classification of the *Ungarelli Fund*, and a digitalisation effort is also scheduled for the near future.

Ungarelli's records at the Institute provide an objective reflection of his life and accomplishments. In addition to his role as a friend and mentor, Rosellini had a significant impact on Ungarelli's life and career development. Even when his stubbornness and humbleness seemed to prevail, Rosellini was able to counsel him and provide him with support, encouraging him to develop his interest in Ancient Egypt. As a result of his trust and regard for Rosellini, Ungarelli also made choices that would end up placing him in potentially problematic situations. In particular with regard to the editing of the *Elementa Linguae Aegyptiacae* and the initial stages of the *Interpretatio*, which both involved materials previously and variously connected to Champollion. His private papers provide tangible evidence of his goodwill and estrangement from Champollion Figeac's accusations, but they also describe a scholar who felt devastated by its unpredictable consequences. Despite being reserved, he nevertheless took the lead on multiple occasions and attempted to resolve or defend himself in this matter. As a result of these controversies, international scholars have not adequately acknowledged his work and side-lined him. It is different at the national level, where his expertise in ancient languages and curatorial skills were generally highly valued. Overall, his impact on the study and development of Egyptology in Rome is remarkable. Despite it being an innovative work in many ways, the *Interpretatio Obeliscorum Urbis* contains a number of inaccuracies, yet it remains a revolutionary publication that greatly engaged him mentally and physically. He was rewarded for his efforts with recognition, and the institution, design, and study of the Gregorian Egyptian Museum collection remains his greatest achievement.

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# Resiliency, Innovation, and Tradition: 22nd-Dynasty Official Discourse

Perrine Poiron

## Abstract

The political history of the Third Intermediate Period (TIP) is still difficult to understand, especially because of two main factors that limit its study. First, the chronology of the reigns, some of which took place simultaneously, complicates the understanding of the political context of their establishment. Second, the influence of the identity and ethnic prism that remains the framework within which most researchers set their research. The terms used to set these studies within the chronology of Pharaonic history imply that these events took place during a period of turmoil, of ‘chaos’ – ‘chaos’ caused by the presence of foreigners on the throne. However, we decided to base our research in continuity with a new approach that focuses its observations on the elements of continuity with the pharaonic tradition. The latter considers that the TIP is a post-imperial period which evolved by adapting to the socio-political context which it inherited at the end of the New Kingdom. At a time when political changes are frequent, the study of a stable phenomenon – the patronage of Bastet and its manifestation within official protocol – captures both the ideology and the history of this periods in an original perspective. Through this new prism, some of the ideological anchors on which power was based during this period are revealed, leading to a better understanding of the cultural identities of 22nd-dynasty kings. Our research shows that Bastet became a witness of the Pharaonic ideology’s resiliency in a context of political instability. Even more, she became a vector of innovation for power in search of balance.

## Keywords

22nd Dynasty, Bastet, Legitimacy, Identity, Pharaonic Ideology (Tradition), Innovation

## Introduction

The political history of the Third Intermediate Period (TIP) is still difficult to understand, especially because of two main factors that limit its study. First, the chronology of the reigns, some of which took place simultaneously, complicates the understanding of the political context of their establishment. Indeed, this period is marked by successive divisions and decentralisations of power, and by the presence of foreign dynasties in power, who sometimes ruled simultaneously. This is especially true during the last phase of the TIP, between 730-664 BC when Egypt is governed in a polarised way by several rulers, including kings, kinglets, and Libyan chieftains. Second, because of the influence of the identity and ethnic prism that remains the framework within which most researchers set their research (e.g. Becker 2012; Gomaà 1974; Ritner 2008; Ritner 2009a). The terms used to set these studies within the chronology of Pharaonic History imply that these events took place during a period of turmoil, of ‘chaos’ – ‘chaos’ caused by the presence of foreigners on the throne (e.g. Broekman 2010; Ritner 2009b).

Despite an opening of the thematic within the last decade, the postulate resulting from the various ideas issued by the ‘Birmingham school’ remains the one that predominates inside the literature (Payraudeau 2014: 9-26). The latter considers that Egypt’s political organisation during the TIP was modified, the unity of power divided, due to the ethnic and cultural identity of new rulers who implanted a territorial management based on a tribal/feudal conception of power (e.g. Broekman 2010; Eyre 2000;

Leahy 1985; 1990). The aim is then to be able to link the TIP rulers' ethnic and cultural identities to the form taken by the management of the state. This framework, whether conscious or not, has the consequence, in some cases, of producing a history that can be biased, where breaks with the pharaonic tradition are more observed, to the detriment of the elements that attest its continuity.

However, a new approach that focuses its observations on the elements of continuity with the pharaonic tradition emerged in the 2010s. The latter approach to the period, inspired by Kitchen (2009), considers that the TIP is a post-imperial period which evolved by adapting to the socio-political context it inherited at the end of the New Kingdom. By establishing the geostrategic importance of the cities of Heracleopolis and Hermopolis, strongpoint and border between the Delta and Thebes during the TIP, Meffre has demonstrated by extension that the geopolitical situation of Egypt is not *stricto sensu* an anarchic one (Meffre 2015: 327-381). Moreover, although the royal authority of the 22nd dynasties from Bubastis and Thebes did not stop being modified and contributed to the parallel emergence of local kingships in Middle Egypt and in the Delta, as well as to the establishment of various Libyan chieftaincies in the Eastern Delta, the administrative, economic, and religious management of the country remained active, organised, and stable (Payraudeau 2014: 293, 335-336).

The TIP can be divided into three main eras, i.e. the 21st dynasty, the 22nd dynasty, and the 25th dynasty with the polyarchy in the Delta (23rd and 24th dynasties). One should keep in mind that when the 25th dynasty began, the 22nd was already over (Figure 1). Furthermore, it is important to recall that the 22nd dynasty succeeded the 21st. It does not take possession of the power. It lays the foundations of a political system that is again strong and centralised, based on a return to traditional ideological norms (Poiron 2021: 26-28).

Through this contribution, I wish to share some of the conclusions of my doctoral research, entitled *Bastet et le pouvoir à la XXIIe dynastie: discours monarchique et patronage dynastique* (*Bastet and Power during the 22nd Dynasty: Royal Discourse and Dynastic Patronage*).

I have established elsewhere that we must consider the king's nomen as an element of the royal discourse instead of just a family name (Poiron 2019). Within the official protocol, this name was used to inscribe and legitimise kingly power in accordance with the state's political actuality (Poiron 2021: 42-49). During pharaonic Egypt, when the need to legitimise power was increased, new epithets were added inside the king's nomen. The addition of the 'Son of Bastet' epithet was one example of this phenomenon. I have also demonstrated that this epithet *z3-X* was in fact an archaism used during different reigns to amplify legitimacy, i.e. reigns such as Pepy I, Montuhotep II, and Thutmose III (Poiron 2019: 131-133; Poiron 2021: 363-368). What was new was the fact that Bastet was the goddess linked to this epithet *z3-X*. Usually, it was Atum, Hathor or later, during the 21st dynasty, Amun. Why was Bastet the one chosen to be added inside the official protocol and what can we understand about the nature and identity of power during the 22nd dynasty? Why did the authorities consider it appropriate to add 'Son of Bastet' and 'Son of Isis' epithets inside the nomen? What information on the political context of the 22nd dynasty does it bring to us?

### ***How were these epithets understood before?***

In 1951, Yoyotte noted that the last Sheshonquids, who reigned in the Theban region, shared a particularity: the presence in their *nomen* of the epithets *z3-3st mry-Imn* (Yoyotte 1951: 225). A little more than thirty years later, in 1987, according to the understanding of the sources at that time, Bonhême concluded that the epithet 'son of Bastet' was a local adaptation of the one of 'Son of Isis' and would have been known as early as the founding reign of Sheshonq I. She also explained that these two epithets are characteristics of locations of power: Bastet for the Delta and Isis for Thebes (Bonhême 1987b: 270-271).

22nd dynasty (Bubastite Branch)	22nd dynasty (Theban Branch)	23rd dynasty (Tanis)	25th dynasty	Delta Princedoms		
				Leotopolis	Heracleopolis	Hermopolis
<b>Sheshonq I</b> (943-922) <b>Osorkon I</b> (922-887) <b>Takelot I</b> (887-873) <b>Sheshonq II a</b> (873 - ?) <b>Sheshonq II b</b> (? - 865)						
<b>Osorkon II</b> (865- 830)	<b>Harsiese</b> (~850 ?) <b>Takelot II</b> (834-809) <b>Padibastet I</b> (822-799) <b>Yuput I</b> 809-798 <b>Sheshonq VI</b> (799-793)					
<b>Sheshonq III</b> (830-791)						
<b>Sheshonq IV</b> (791-778)	<b>Osorkon III</b> (791-764)					
<b>Pamy</b> (778-769)	<b>Takelot III</b> (768-756)					
<b>Sheshonq V</b> (769- 731)	<b>Roudamun</b> (756-750)					
	<b>Iny</b> (750- 743)		<b>Kashta</b> (?- 746)			
		<b>Padibastet II</b> (735-730) <b>Osorkon IV</b> (730-722)	<b>Piânkhy</b> (746- 722)	<b>Yuput II</b> (740 - 720)	<b>Peftjaouâouybastet</b> (730 - 720)	<b>Thotemhat</b> (~740) <b>Nimlot</b> (~720)

Figure 1. Horizontal chronology of the 22nd dynasty.

However, the epithet ‘son of Isis’, until recently (re)known by all as being the first to be integrated into the monarchic discourse of the pharaohs of the 22nd dynasty, turns out to be posterior to the epithet ‘son of Bastet’. Indeed, while the latter appeared inside Osorkon II’s protocol, the qualifier ‘son of Isis’

appeared only later, inside his grandson's name, Takelot II. Consequently, it is understandable that this misattribution may have induced consequent limits about interpretations of the ideological anchors on which the pharaohs of the 22nd dynasty relied. Furthermore, contrary to what is traditionally admitted, if the triad Osiris, Isis, and Horus is central to the foundations of pharaonic legitimacy, it is not the oldest to be the guarantor of a legitimate transmission of power. Indeed, we have been able to note that between the Predynastic period and the end of the Old Kingdom, Bastet played a fundamental role inside pharaonic ideology (Borrego-Gallardo 2011; Poiron 2021: 329-339). From the 2nd dynasty onwards, she seems to be the guarantor and protector of power, a counterpart of Hathor, of whom she is another face, daughter of the demiurge Ra, the *uraeus* standing proudly on her father's forehead to protect his power and that of her son, reigning on earth.

Like Yoyotte, we think that these epithets constitute traces, and are witnesses of a particular political reality, that they would have been intended to express by the mythological as well as the ideological foundations through which the kings of the 22nd dynasty related themselves within the framework of this political reality (Yoyotte 1989: 121). Nevertheless, although the distribution of epithets established by Bonhême has now been revised, the polarised observation of the presence of these epithets remains eminent. The bearers of 'son of Bastet' remain kings reputed to rule from Bubastis, while the bearers of 'son of Isis' are the Theban kings.

In 1998, when specialists were talking about the coexistence of two opposite dynasties, one Bubastite and the other Theban, Muhs suggested that Petubastis I and Yuput II should be linked to the 22nd Bubastite dynasty, one that was then an enemy of that of Takelot II 'son of Isis' (Muhs 1998). Beyond the observation of the geographical distribution of the use of these epithets, to which he does not really adhere, Muhs proposed to understand them as markers of dynastic belonging.

Thus, the qualifier *z3-B3stt* would be used to identify kings declaring themselves to belong to the 22nd Bubastite dynasty, while *z3-3st* would identify kings attached to the 23rd Theban dynasty. In fact, for Muhs the qualifiers 'son of Bastet', 'son of Isis', or even 'son of Neith', are markers of the dynastic bond, identifiable by the expression of the link of filiation of the various sovereigns to their dynastic patron, then tutelary god of the city where the power sits. Thus, the choice of Bastet (Bubastis) and Neith (Sais), is simply to be associated with the political capital of the 22nd and 26th dynasties (Muhs 1998: 221; El-Enany 2011).

However, his argument reaches its limits when he explains, in continuity with the above-mentioned observation, the association to be made with the link of filiation relating to Isis. He considers, following the example of Yoyotte (Yoyotte 1989: 124), that *z3-3st* evokes not the link with the goddess Isis, but directly a link with her son, Horus, whose name is simply omitted, but implicitly admitted. Thus, the king, as son of Osiris (since son of Isis), would express his legitimacy by assimilating his filiation with the latter. Accordingly, if the Egyptians had really wished to mention the king's attachment to Osiris, why in this case, not directly express the link of filiation by naming the king Takelot *z3-Wsir*? Moreover, on block 3 of Chapel J, erected at Karnak during the reign of Osorkon II by the high priest Takelot (F/G) – the future Takelot II – is a clear mention of Horus, son of Osiris (Perdu 2010: 111-112). This denomination is present during the 22nd dynasty and could have been integrated inside the protocol, if the filiation that the state and the priest-readers wished to see expressed had been this one. In addition, if it is proven that the cult of Osiris becomes popular during the 1st millennium, to reach its apogee during the Late period, under the reign of Takelot II, when the epithet 'son of Isis' appears inside king's *nomen*, Amun is still the patron god of Thebes. Let us recall to this effect that the priest-kings of the 21st dynasty, who had their seat of power in Thebes, had also integrated the qualifier 'son of Amun' within their *nomen* (Bonhême 1987a). Consequently, the postulate that the epithet 'son of Isis' within the protocol of the Theban kings results from the popularity of the cult of Osiris at Karnak during the 1st millennium B.C.

does not seem coherent, especially since it differs in the interpretation of the meaning it confers to ‘son of Bastet’ and ‘son of Neith’. In this precise situation, I consider that to reduce these expressions of filiations to elements of family regrouping deviates from the very meaning of the epithet z3-X, invoked, however, in the monarchic discourse since the Old Kingdom, often in cases where the need for justification is more prevalent, following the example of the case of Thutmose III. In addition, very early on, Yoyotte warned the scientific community that it was necessary to discard the interpretation of these epithets as ‘proofs of family membership’, particularly in relation to the later use of these epithets under the 25th, 26th, and 30th dynasties (Yoyotte 1989: 124).

Nonetheless, since then, this interpretation has been the one accepted by the community. The goddess is understood as the dynastic protector. For this present author, these epithets should be understood as testimonies of the resiliency of pharaonic ideology to structural transformations in the management of the state.

### ***The epithet ‘son of Bastet’ in the protocol of Osorkon II: a principal but not initial variant***

It is within Osorkon II’s official protocol (c. 865 to 830 BC), that the expression of filiation to the goddess Bastet appeared into the royal *nomen*. Our inventory allowed us to notice that the form of the *nomen* ‘Osorkon II, son of Bastet, beloved of Amun’ was also that which seems to be the most widespread. In fact, of the 53 sources retained for our study, a little less than half (23) were composed using this form. However, of the 32 official sources that compose our database, 17 had it, for a total of 66 *nomina* out of a total of 113 records (Figure 2).

Under Osorkon II, the epithet ‘son of Bastet’ is present on a national scale. Present in the majority of the 140 *nomina* that we have listed, this supported the initial consensus making the form ‘Osorkon, beloved of Amun, son of Bastet’ the standard form of his royal protocol. Yet, its absence on the inscriptions of his tomb, which I was able to verify *in situ*, raised two elements to our attention. First, that his tomb might have been completed before the insertion of the epithet inside the king’s protocol; second, it also confirmed that the link of filiation had been added during his reign.

### ***Nḥbt-protocol: a testimony of the resiliency of the pharaonic ideology to the socio-political context of the time***

The institutionalisation of ‘son of Bastet’ – in other words its definitive integration into the lexicon of the royal protocol – took place under Sheshonq III, where it is understood from our survey that it was attributed to him from the moment he was crowned (Poiron 2021: 173-181). If it appeared during Osorkon II’s reign, can we determine the moment when it would have appeared and observe what are the reasons for it?

The reign of Osorkon II is crucial for those who want to study the political history of the TIP. Indeed, his reign marks the end of a centralised mode of governance under the authority of a single ruler, a unity that will only be found later, during the Late period, with the establishment of the 26th dynasty. Osorkon II reigned for 30 years, 14 of which were spent alone. He ruled from Bubastis (Payraudeau 2020: 100-108). He shared his power with Harsiese, at Thebes until his year 12. Then, he ruled alone 14 years, to finally rule with his grandson from his year 26 until year 30.

By crossing the results of the sources (eponymous sources) with the knowledge of the history of the period, we were able to propose an appearance of the epithet to be located between years 12 and 16 of his reign. The earliest records of Osorkon II at Thebes date to year 12 of his reign, according to Nile Records 8 and 9 (Broekman 2002: 173; Jansen-Winkel 2008: 118; von Beckerath 1966: 49, n. 8-9). Those

Osorkon II											
T/D	Lieu	N/O	Praenomen	Variantes	N/O	Nomen	Variantes				
9	Tanis	22	12		5	42	28		2		
					5				1		
					5				1		
10	Bubastis	49	38		2	52	7		16 <sup>2</sup>		
					9				7		
1	Léontopolis	4	2		2		4		N/A		
0	Memphis	0	N/A		N/A		0	N/A		N/A	
1	Abydos	3		N/A		3		1		1	
				1							
9	Thèbes	7		1		6		1			
1	Éléphantine	1		N/A		2					
1	À l'étranger	4		N/A		4		1			
21	Sources Privées	23	18		2	27	18		9		
					3						
53		113				140					

Figure 2. Diachronic and geographic inventory of the cartouches of Osorkon II.

inscriptions present Osorkon's cartouche without the mention 'Son of Bastet'. Later, in year 16, the king appointed his son Nimlot at the head of the Theban clergy. The latter made a donation and named his father with a link of filiation to Bastet (Daressy 1915: 14-143; Jansen-Winkel 2008: 131-132; Meeks 1979: 667; Meffre 2015: 83-87). It is the first dated mention of this link. In our opinion, the addition of this expression of filiation inside Osorkon II's name represents the expression of the achievement of the takeover of the state by a single king.

Let us recall, though, that Osorkon II Neby's name also qualified him as a 'Horus son of Isis, who reunites the country and reigns as a worthy heir to his father on the throne'. It is possible that, to distinguish himself from Harsiese, whose name literally means 'Horus son of Isis', Osorkon II added the name of the dynastic patroness to his protocol.

At first sight, this interpretation seemed sufficient. However, it did not explain why, later, Takelot II, crowned so as to help the probably too old king (Payraudeau 2014: 61-62; 2020: 126-137), received in his *nomen*, the epithet of son of Isis. To answer this question, we have to return to the nature and importance of Bastet and Isis inside the Egyptian religion and mythology of power.

The oldest attestation of Bastet goes back to the 2nd dynasty, under the reign of Hetepsekhemouy (Lacau and Lauer 1959: 13, pl. XI, n. 58). She is one of the divine patrons of the monarchy, guardian



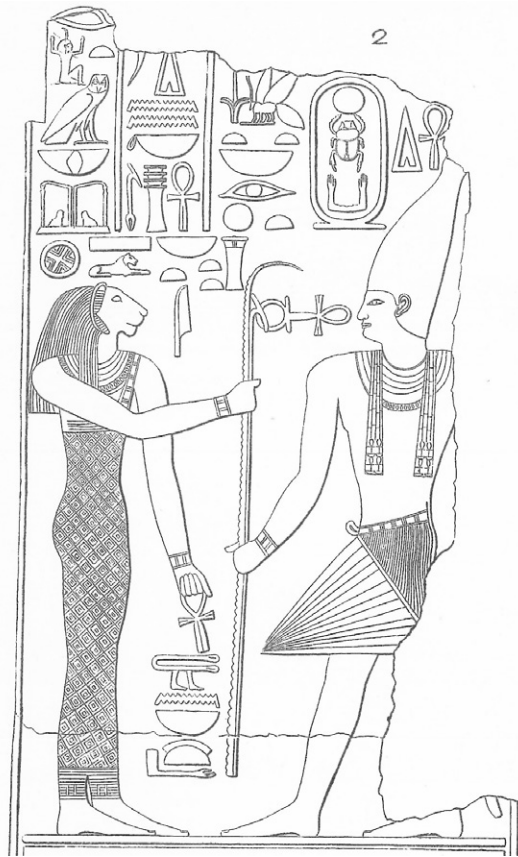


Figure 3. *Senwosret I* (Petrie 1896: pl. X,2)

of its transmission and protection. She is seen acting during the jubilee of Senwosret I at Coptos (Figure 3). During the New Kingdom, the goddess Mut assimilated her prerogatives, and the deity was rarely invoked alone after then. She lost her prestige inside official religion, but kings continued to pay their respects to her in her temple, at Bubastis (Neville 1891). Nevertheless, because the 22nd dynasty came from the city of Bubastis, of which Bastet was the major deity, it can be assumed that the Sheshonquids were aware of the nature and importance of the goddess inside the pharaonic ideology.

Therefore, if the accession of the goddess to the rank of dynastic patroness could have been induced almost automatically, Osorkon II, by fine stratagems, reintroduced the goddess in her ancestral role inside the official religion. Thus, contrary to the traditional interpretation, which sees in the epithet 'son of Bastet' a mark of attachment to the dynastic patroness, it turns out that Osorkon II was attached to the ancestral royal patron. Through this gesture, he reached into the roots of pharaonic ideology and gave sufficient authority to his discourse (Long-Athinodorou 2019) (Figure 4).

Writing about Horus' four avatars, Forgeau explained that Horus *z3-Wsir* and Horus *nd-it=f* 'sont deux avatars d'une même divinité adulte, archétype du souverain qui, dans le cours normal des évènements, a succédé à son père et auquel incombe de veiller au bon déroulement des funérailles et du service cultuel de celui-ci' (Forgeau 2010: 2). He has the role and

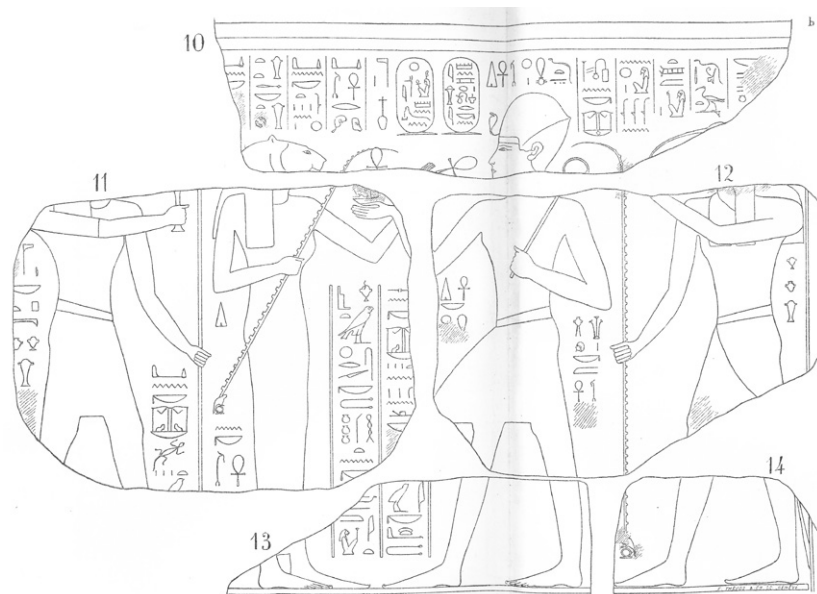


Figure 4. *Osorkon II* (Neville 1892: pl. XVII.)

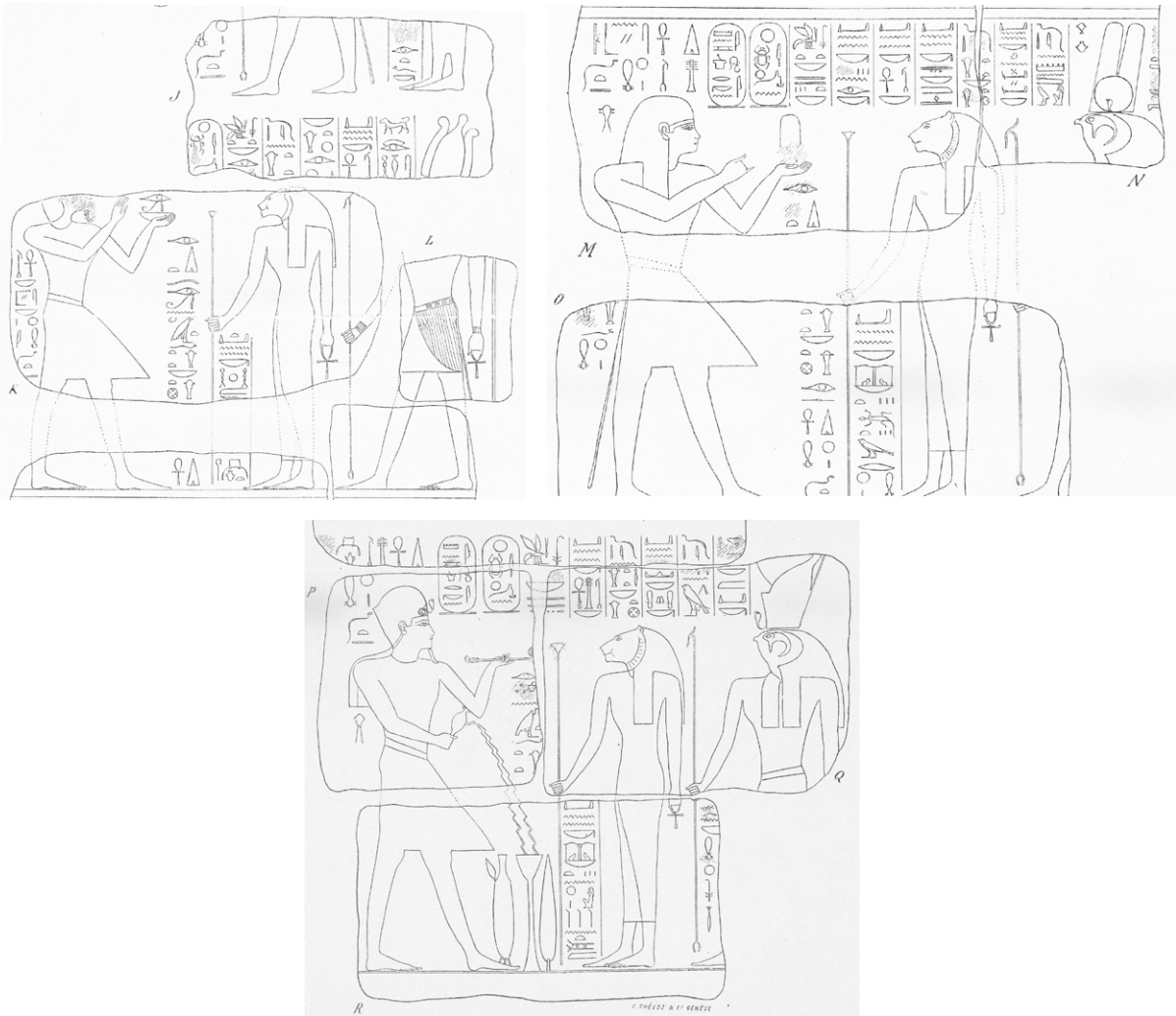


Figure 5. Osorkon I (Neville 1891).

functions of an adult son, emancipated from parental guardianship, who inherits the function of his father, since he is his first-born *wtwtiꜣf*, his heir *iwꜣf* as the eldest son *z3-wr* (Forgeau 2010: 37-39).

This right of succession, once he has reached adulthood, based on the filiation's bond with Osiris, only finds its legitimacy if associated with the bond of maternal filiation. This Horus is 'Horus son of Isis', now out of Chemmis, ready to recover what belongs to him since birth by right (through his paternal lineage), but which he has not yet been able to claim. It appears that, within the Egyptian conception of family, the mother has a role of family guardian by the lineage that she ensures and by the care that she puts into the education of her child. However, she 'détermine pour l'héritier, non le droit à la fonction, mais les qualités nécessaires à l'exercice de celle-ci' (Forgeau 2010: 39). The model of transmission of power and legitimacy is then based on a cognatic type of filiation.

It has been established that the official protocol of the kings is one of the vectors of the pharaonic ideology, as much as it constitutes a summary of the political programme of the kings, where they express the divine bases of their legitimacy. Moreover, we have stressed that the name of the kings would translate a will of legitimisation relative to the contemporary socio-political context of the latter. Now the title introducing the king's birth name is that of *z3-Rꜣ*. This is one of the fundamental traditions

of the pharaonic dogma: the king is the son of the celestial demiurge, Ra. Like other demiurges, such as Ptah, Atum, and even Amun-Ra - major deities in the transmission of power and divine essence to the king, patron gods of the pharaonic monarchy whose representative they choose on earth while protecting him - Ra is at the origin of the king's life, who is his son, whom he created and engendered. As the son of the god, his heir, he is the one *de facto* designated to take over the functions of his father on earth.

As daughter of the demiurges Ra and Atum, Bastet's son inherits the transmission of the ability to rule, from the egg; even before his coming into the world. This is what is called the mode of succession by uniparous androgenesis (Poiron 2021: 359-361).

### ***The epithets 'son of Bastet' and 'son of Isis': markers of hierarchical legitimacy***

In consideration of these different elements, it appears that the current understanding of the presence of the epithets 'son of Bastet' and 'son of Isis' inside the king's official protocol is more complex than it appears at first glance. We think that these epithets should be understood as testimonies of the resilience of pharaonic ideology to structural transformations in the management of the state. It constitutes a response of the theologians and the state to a factual context contemporary to the reign, as well as a manifestation of the vividness of the cultural memory of it, in relation to the ideological canons legitimising power. Under Osorkon II, this vividness of cultural memory is expressed at several levels of state-sponsored productions, notably on the reliefs of the Festival Hall at Bubastis, where Bastet is represented, as she was millennia earlier, standing before the royal cartouches, carrying the *w3s* sceptre.

In my opinion, the modification of the king's protocol represents the expression of the outcome of this takeover of the state by a single king. To short cut any future possibility of claims, laudatory expressions were added to the protocol, as well as the expression of an additional hereditary legitimacy on the throne through the link of filiation with the patroness of the dynasty, Bastet. A patroness who is, moreover, reputed to be one of the protectors of kingship ever since the origins of Pharaonic history. The choice to integrate *z3-B3stt* into the *nomen* illustrates, therefore, the pharaonic ideology's resiliency, adapting itself to the course of events, and on the other hand, the mastery of the cultural memory relating to the expression of the pharaonic identity.

Four years before his death, Osorkon II, probably too old, chose to name his grandson king at Thebes (Payraudeau 2014: 61-62; Payraudeau 2020: 126-137). The new king was given an official protocol that places him in continuity with the pharaonic tradition. On the other hand, his protocol contrasts sufficiently, from a mythological point of view, to allow the distinction between the Bubastite king, who, by his lineage, is the heir of the patron gods of the monarchy, able to reign in the egg even before his coming into the world, and Takelot II son of Isis, heir, with the required capacities to reign once emancipated from parental guardianship.

The succession of Osorkon II makes official the existence of a definitive dyarchy at the head of the country. Sheshonq III succeeds Osorkon II at Bubastis in the year 4 of Takelot II. At first sight, the postulate stating that the epithets 'son of Bastet' and 'son of Isis' are markers of attachment to two opposed dynasties causes the expectation of an almost immediate opposition between the two leaders. However, it is not until the year 11 of Takelot II that the division between the two kings breaks out openly (Figure 6).

Moreover, a cross-study of the titulature-*nḥbt* of Takelot II and Sheshonq III with that of Osorkon II, testifies to the inscription of the two sovereigns, in continuity with the preceding reign (Poiron 2021: 378-380, tabl. 28). If the reigns were to express any break with the Bubastite power, it would be expressed

1	Takelot II		
2			
3			
4		1	Sheshonq III
5		2	
6		3	
7		4	
8		5	
9		6	
10		7	
11		8	1 Padibastet I
1st crise			
12		9	2
13		10	3
14		11	4
15		12	5
2nd crise			
16		13	6
17		14	7
18		15	8
19		16	9
20		17	10
21		18	11
22		19	12
23		20	13
24		21	14
3rd crise			
1	Yuput I.	25	22 15
2			23 16
3			24 17
4			25 18
5			26 19
6			27 20
7			28 21
8			29 22
9			30 23
10			31 1 Sheshonq VI
11			32 2
12			33 3
			34 4
			35 5
			36 6
			37 7
			38 8
			39
Osorkon III	1		1 Sheshonq IV

Figure 6. Synoptic table of the Bubastite and Theban reigns between the reigns of Takelot II - Sheshonq III and Osorkon III - Sheshonq IV.

in their official discourse. Yet the Horus name of Takelot II is similar to the Horus name number 5 of Osorkon II, while the one of Sheshonq III seems to be built on the model of Horus name model number 2 of Osorkon II. The Nebty name of Takelot II seems to be inspired by the second part of the names of Golden Horus number 1 and 3 of Osorkon II: ‘powerful [of prestige]’ and ‘powerful of prestige in all countries’ (Figure 7).

<b>Horus</b>	
Osorkon II	1- <b>Horus</b> Taureau victorieux, Aimé de Maât 2- <b>Horus</b> Taureau victorieux, Aimé de Maât, Celui qui que Rê a fait apparaître comme roi des Deux-Terres 3- [...] en tant que roi pour restaurer les Deux-Terres 4- <b>Horus</b> Taureau victorieux, Aimé de Maât, le roi des Deux-Terres 5- <b>Horus</b> Taureau victorieux, Celui qui est apparu à Thèbes
Takélot II	<b>Horus</b> Taureau victorieux, celui qui est apparu à Thèbes
Chéchonq III	1- <b>Horus</b> Taureau victorieux, Rejeton de Rê 2- <b>Horus</b> Taureau victorieux, Aimé de Rê, Celui que (Rê?) à fait apparaître 3- <b>Horus</b> Taureau victorieux, Aimé de Rê

<b>Nebty</b>	
Osorkon II	1- <b>Deux-Maîtresses</b> , Celui qui réunit les deux parties comme le fils d'Isis 2- <b>Deux-Maîtresses</b> , Celui qui réunit les deux parties comme le fils d'Isis, Celui qui satisfait les dieux 3- <b>Deux-Maîtresses</b> , Celui qui réunit les deux parties comme le fils d'Isis, Celui qui a rassemblé les deux couronnes en paix 4- <b>Deux-Maîtresses</b> , Celui qui réunit les deux parties comme le fils d'Isis, Celui qui satisfait les dieux en rendant la justice 5- <b>Deux-Maîtresses</b> , Celui qui réunit les deux parties comme le fils d'Isis, Celui qui a rassemblé les deux couronnes en paix, Celui qui est nommé [...] 6- <b>Deux-Maîtresses</b> , Puissant (?)
Takélot II	<b>Deux-Maîtresses</b> Celui qui protège l'Égypte et subjugué les pays étrangers
Chéchonq III	N/A

<b>Horus d'Or</b>	
Osorkon II	1- [ <b>Horus d'or</b> ], grand de vaillance, Celui qui frappe les Asiatiques Mntyw, puissant de [prestige] 2- <b>Horus d'or</b> , grand de vaillance, Celui qui frappe les Asiatiques Mntyw 3- [ <b>Horus d'or</b> ], grand de vaillance, Celui qui écrase les pays asiatiques STt, puissant de prestige dans tous les pays 4- <b>Horus d'or</b> , puissant de force, Celui qui frappe les ennemis, puissant de prestige 5- [ <b>Horus d'or</b> ], Celui qui écrase les contrées étrangères, souverain puissant dans tous les pays
Takélot II	<b>Horus d'or</b> Grand de vaillance
Chéchonq III	N/A

<b>Praenomen</b>	
Osorkon II	<b>Le roi de Haute et de Basse Égypte</b> , Le maître des Deux-Terres (Puissante est la justice de Rê- L'Élu d'Amon)
Takélot II	<b>Le roi de Haute et de Basse Égypte</b> , le maître des Deux-Terres (la manifestation de Rê est lumineuse - l'Élu de Rê - dieu souverain de Thèbes)
Chéchonq III	1- <b>Le roi de Haute et de Basse Égypte</b> , Le maître des Deux-Terres (Puissante est la justice de Rê - L'Élu de Rê) 2- <b>Le roi de Haute et de Basse Égypte</b> , Le maître des Deux-Terres (Puissante est la justice de Rê - L'Élu d'Amon)

<b>Nomen</b>	
Osorkon II	1- <b>Le fils de Rê</b> , le maître des couronnes, (Osorkon, l'Aimé d'Amon, le fils de Bastet) 2- <b>Le fils de Rê</b> , le maître des couronnes, (Osorkon, l'Aimé d'Amon)
Takélot II	<b>Le fils de Rê</b> (Takélot - l'Aimé d'Amon- le fils d'Isis)
Chéchonq III	1- <b>Le fils de Rê</b> , (Chéchonq, Aimé d'Amon, le fils de Bastet, le dieu souverain d'Héliopolis) 2- (Chéchonq, l'Aimé d'Amon, le fils de Bastet) 3- (Chéchonq, l'Aimé d'Amon) 4- (Chéchonq)

Figure 7. Crossover of the *nḥbt*-protocol of Osorkon II, Takelot II, and Sheshonq III (Poiron 2021: 380, Tab.28).

In addition to those *rn-wr* composed in continuity with those of Osorkon II, the fact that Takelot II had the coronation name of the founder of the 22nd dynasty, Sheshonq I, definitively confirms that these kings come from a single dynasty.

The *nḥbt*-protocol of these kings revealed their cohesion, and the exercise of the central power aims at maintaining the balance of the State. Each manifested his attachment to his immediate or symbolic predecessor by their *rn-wr* choices. This exercise considered the structural modifications of the management of the State – notably that of the appointment of a vassal king to the central power – which they expressed in such a way as to underline their respect for the traditional pharaonic ideology.

### **Conclusion – What is the relationship between the goddess Bastet and power in the 22nd dynasty and how can she shed new light on the nature and identity of power at that time?**

The study of the role and importance occupied by Bastet within the official discourse of the 22nd dynasty has made it possible to note that, despite a proven Libyan origin, the kings of this dynasty did not cease to anchor their power in the respect of the pharaonic traditions and persisted in answering the requirements of the pharaonic dogma. To do so, they used some archaisms, including the integration of the epithet inside royal protocol. From this archaism, a new tradition was established, testifying to the vivacity and resiliency of the pharaonic ideology.

Thus, far from an image and a tribal practice of the exercise of power that would result from their Libyan ethnic and cultural identity, the way in which the State is seen and expressed itself during this period reflects, on the contrary, their Egyptian cultural identity.

They innovated in such a way as to translate and legitimise the new practices necessary for the exercise of power. They did this so well that some of these innovations became, in turn, traditions that lasted until the last moments of pharaonic history. This can be seen with the influence of certain female deities in Pharaonic ideology until the end of the 1st millennium BC, notably inside official protocol, through the continued use of the epithet *z3-X* in the *nomen* until the last indigenous ruler of Egypt, Nectanebo II (El-Enany 2014-2015).

At a time when political changes are frequent, the study of a stable phenomenon – the patronage of Bastet and its manifestation within official protocol – captures both the ideology and the history of this period in an original perspective. Through this new prism, some of the ideological anchors on which power was based during this period are revealed, leading to a better understanding of the cultural identities of 22nd-dynasty kings. Our research shows that Bastet became a witness to the resiliency of Pharaonic ideology within a context of political instability. Even more, she became a vector of innovation for power in search of balance.

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# Egyptian Remedies in the Greek Medical Sources

Nicola Reggiani

## Abstract

Egypt has always been regarded by the ancient Greeks as the homeland of famous and effective φάρμακα, either medicaments or poisons, perhaps even as the very cradle of medicine. The influence of Egyptian medicine on its Greek counterpart is well recognisable, especially in terms of ingredients and, above all, after Alexander the Great's conquest of Egypt in 331 BC, which gave rise to deeper interconnections between the two traditions. It is not surprising, therefore, that several medicaments recorded by the Greek medical authors are labelled as 'Egyptian', as either a memory of their true origin or a simple trade mark. This contribution presents and discusses such occurrences – among which we encounter some very famous products, e.g. the ἀχάριςτον ('unmerciful') eye-salve and the plaster called 'Isis' – in view of the Greek medical literature and Greek papyri.

## Keywords

Egyptian Medicine, Greek Medicine, Graeco-Egyptian Medicine, Greek Papyri, Ancient Pharmacology

## Introduction

Egypt has always been regarded by the ancient Greeks as the homeland of famous and effective φάρμακα (an ambiguous word, meaning either 'medicaments' or 'poisons'), if not the very birthplace of medicine. Homer's *Odyssey* speaks of 'the life-giving land of Egypt [that] produces lots of remedies, many good mixtures and many harmful' (Hom. *Od.* IV, 229-230: Αἴγυπτιή, τῇ πλεῖστα φέρει ζείδωρος ἄρουρα/ φάρμακα, πολλὰ μὲν ἐσθλὰ μεμιγμένα, πολλὰ δὲ λυγρὰ).<sup>1</sup> The 5th-century historian Herodotus reports that the Egyptian physicians were the most esteemed in antiquity, 'the first in medical art' (Hdt. III, 129: νομίζων δὲ καὶ πρότερον περὶ ἑωυτὸν ἔχειν Αἴγυπτίων τοὺς δοκέοντας εἶναι πρώτους τὴν ἰητρικὴν, τούτοις ἐχρᾶτο). In addition, he extensively deals with medicine in the second book of his *Histories*, entirely devoted to ancient Egypt; he emphasises the specialisation of Egyptian medicine (II 84) as well as the healthy status of the people there (II, 77; see Reggiani 2021: 154155). Pseudo-Galen's *Introduction or the Physician* (2nd century AD) ascribes to the Egyptians the invention of several medical branches (pharmacology, internal surgery, ophthalmology, intestinal hygiene: [Gal.] *Introd.* 1 – see the latest edition by Petit 2009, with an extensive commentary dealing also with the intriguing hypothesis that the author, a contemporary of Galen, was an Egyptian Greek: pp. L-LI).

The considerable influence of Egyptian medicine on its Greek counterpart is well recognisable, especially in terms of ingredients, certainly before but, above all, after Alexander the Great's conquest of Egypt in 331 BC, which gave rise to deeper interconnections between the two cultures.<sup>2</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that several medicaments recorded by the Greek medical authors are labelled as 'Egyptian,'

<sup>1</sup> Unless differently indicated, the translations are the present author's.

<sup>2</sup> In general, on this topic, see Von Staden 1989: 1-31 (in particular 13-19 on pharmacology), Marganne 1992, and Andorlini 2017: 230-239. On early Egyptian influences in the Hippocratic corpus (especially in the field of gynaecology), see also Iversen 1939 and Totelin 2009: 179-184.

as either a memory of their true origin or a simple trade mark – e.g. ‘the one most esteemed among the Egyptians’ in Galen’s *Method of healing* (Gal. *Meth.med.* X 822, 13: τὸ παρὰ τοῖς Αἰγυπτίοις εὐδοκιμοῦν).

This preliminary survey focuses on a selection of famous Greek remedies taken – truly or allegedly – from ancient Egypt. We exclude from this survey the ingredients (i.e. simple substances) of Egyptian origin, which are much too widespread to be taken into consideration here. The most used were natron (νίτρον, see Josset 1996), alum (στυπτηρία, see Photos-Jones and Hall 2014), mastic (μαστίχη, see Manniche 1999: 29), the ‘Egyptian bean’ (κύαμος, often used as a weight unit as well, see Totelin 2009: 154), among many others. Future comparison between Greek and Egyptian medical sources will likely prove useful from several viewpoints, for example the long-lasting issue of many products of the Egyptian pharmacopoeia.<sup>3</sup>

### The ‘Egyptian/Mendesian perfume’ or ‘Egyptian/Mendesian oil’<sup>4</sup>

As early as in the Hippocratic corpus (5th/4th century BC), in particular in some gynecological treatises (*Nature of women, Female diseases*), we find many mentions of a product named ‘Egyptian oil’ (τὸ Αἰγύπτιον ἔλαιον), sometimes of a type more precisely called ‘white’ (ἔλαιον Αἰγύπτιον λευκόν). Its primary use was as a calming ointment for so-called ‘hysteric suffocations’. These two products are explained by Galen (2nd century AD) in his *Explication of Hippocratic vocabulary*, as follows: ‘Egyptian oil: which the same people call *kikinon* [i.e. ‘kiki-oil’, castor oil, see Manniche 1999: 30-31]. The ancient indeed say that *kikinon* comes from *kiki*. Egyptian white oil: the one produced from the lilies, which is also called *krininon* and *sousinon* [i.e. ‘lily-oil’, see Manniche 1999: 68]’ (Gal. *Voc.Hipp.* XIX 70, 11-14 Kühn: Αἰγύπτιον ἔλαιον: ὅπερ αὐτοὶ καλοῦσι κίκινον. (οἱ μέντοι παλαιοὶ ἐκ τῆς κίκεως καὶ κίκινον.) Αἰγύπτιον ἔλαιον λευκόν: τὸ ἀπὸ τῶν κρίνων σκευαζόμενον, ὅπερ καὶ κρίνινόν τε καὶ σουσίνον ἔλαιον ὠνόμασται). On the contrary, according to Erotian (1st century AD), *Hippocratic vocabulary*, the Egyptian oil was to be identified with another known product, called ‘Egyptian perfume’: ‘Egyptian perfume: some take that from the bowl, it is indeed heating. Some call it *malabathrinon*,<sup>5</sup> some Mendesian, and in the second book of the *Female diseases* the same is said Egyptian oil’ (Erot. *Voc.Hipp.*, 96, 7-10 Klein: μύρον Αἰγύπτιον· οἱ μὲν ἐδέξαντο τὸ λεγόμενον ἀπὸ σκάφης· ἔστι γὰρ θερμαντικόν· οἱ δὲ τὸ μαλαβάθρινον· οἱ δὲ τὸ Μενδήσιον· καὶ γὰρ ἐν β’ Γυναικείων τὸ αὐτὸ φησιν ἔλαιον Αἰγύπτιον).

There is in fact some apparent confusion. We do indeed find an ingredient called μύρον Αἰγύπτιον (‘Egyptian perfume’) in Galen’s *Composition of medicaments by place* XII 569, 15; 648, 16; XIII 346, 14-16 Kühn, used as an emollient ointment for headache and other similar diseases. Galen says that ‘the Egyptian perfume is called not only like that, but also Mendesian. It is said that some also call it *megaleion*, and both derivations (i.e. ‘Mendesian’ and ‘*megaleion*’) are taken from Megalos, who created it, on the one hand from his name, in the so-called derivative manner, on the other hand *Mendesian* from his homeland’ (Gal. *Comp.med.loc.* XII 570, 1-8 K.: τὸ δὲ Αἰγύπτιον μύρον οὐχ οὕτω μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ Μενδήσιον ὀνομάζεται· τινὲς δὲ αὐτὸ καὶ μεγαλεῖον καλεῖσθαι φασιν, ἀπὸ τοῦ συντεθέντος αὐτὸ Μεγάλου τὴν ἐπωνυμίαν ἐκατέραν λαβόν, ἀπὸ μὲν αὐτοῦ τοῦ κατ’ ἐκείνον ὀνόματος ἐν τῇ τῶν καλουμένων παρωνύμων ἰδέα, ἀπὸ δὲ τῆς πατρίδος αὐτοῦ Μενδήσιον· ἔστι δὲ χαλαστικόν τε καὶ ἀνώδυνον), which, of course, points to the city of Mendes or the Mendesian district in Egypt. The Mendesian perfume itself (μύρον Μενδήσιον) appears as an ingredient in Galen’s *Composition of medicaments by place* XII 448, 6; 528, 5-7; 530, 6; 572, 13 K.; and later (6th cent. AD) also in Aetius of Amida, *Medical books* VI 58, 60 Olivieri.

<sup>3</sup> Parallel research conducted by Dr Elena Urzi in the framework of the same project dealt with a synoptic comparison of the general occurrences of simple ingredients in the Egyptian, Greek, and Coptic medical papyri. This resulted in a monograph to be published in the near future.

<sup>4</sup> In general, on these two products, see Manniche 1999: 64-66 and Totelin 2009: 153.

<sup>5</sup> It was the name of a scented oil obtained from the leaves of *Laurus cinnamomum* L., see Mitthof 2009.

This may seem a confirmation of Erotian's identification of the Egyptian oil/perfume with the *Mendesion*, but Galen in fact introduces a distinction in *Hippocratic vocabulary*: 'Egyptian white perfume: what is also called Mendesian, prepared with lilies and spices, for which it is addressed as perfume and not as oil: the same is also called *krinomuron* [i.e. 'lily-perfume'] and *sousinon*. Egyptian perfume: the perfume from the flowers of the Egyptian acacia, which is called also *metopion* [i.e. 'for the forehead', emollient against headache; see Manniche 1999: 66-67]' (Gal. *Voc.Hipp.* XIX 70, 15-71, 4 K.: Αἰγύπτιον μύρον λευκόν: ὅπερ καὶ Μενδήσιον ὠνόμαται, σκευαζόμενον διὰ τε κρίνων καὶ ἀρωμάτων, διὰ τοῦτο καὶ μύρον, οὐκ ἔλαιον προσαγορεύεται· τὸ δ' αὐτὸ καὶ κρινόμυρον καὶ σούσινον μύρον ὠνόμαται. Αἰγύπτιον μύρον: τὸ μύρον διὰ τοῦ ἄνθου τῆς ἀκάνθης Αἰγυπτίας, ὅπερ καὶ μετώπιον ὠνόμαται). Galen therefore distinguishes the Egyptian perfume *tout court* – also known as Mendesian, produced from acacia flowers – from the white type – which is substantially identical to Hippocrates' Egyptian white oil.

The pharmacologist Dioscorides of Anazarbus (1st century AD), however, goes further, stating that *Mendesion* 'is said to be produced from the *balaninon* oil (i.e. oil from the nut of the ben-tree, see Manniche 1999: 30) and from myrrh, cassia and resin. Some people, after weighing out the ingredients, add a small quantity of cinnamon, but to no useful purpose, for substances that have not been cooked together do not release their properties. Its activity is similar to that of the *metopion*, although to a lesser degree, nor does it last as long' (Dsc. *Mat.med.* I 59, 3 Wellmann: λεγόμενον ἔκ τε βαλανίνου ἐλαίου καὶ κυύρνης καὶ κακκίας καὶ ῥητίνης σκευάζεται. ἔνιοι δὲ μετὰ τὸν κατασταθμικὸν κινάμωμον μικρὸν προσεμβάλλουσιν ἀνωφελῶς· οὐκ ἐκδίδωσι γὰρ τὰ μὴ συνεψηγμένα τὴν δύναμιν. ἐμπερὴ δὲ ἔχει τὴν ἐνέργειαν τῷ μετωπίῳ, ἥττονα μέντοι καὶ οὐχ οὕτως ἐπιτεταμένην).

This testimony is to be compared with later authors, such as Aetius of Amida (6th century AD) and Paul of Aegina (7th century AD). The former states that 'The Mendesian unguent is the most emollient and laxative for the bodies and favours discharge; it is produced from ben-tree-nut-oil, myrrh, cassia and resin' (Aet. *Iatr.* I 126 Olivieri: Μενδήσιον μαλακτικώτατόν ἐστι καὶ χαλατικὸν σωμαίων καὶ πλοποίων· συντίθεται δὲ ἐκ μυροβαλανίνου ἐλαίου καὶ κυύρνης καὶ κακκίας καὶ ῥητίνης). Paul of Aegina adds rather more: '*Mendesion*: it is said like that because it has been discovered in Egypt, where indeed the *mendes* grows. Take 10 pounds of *balaninon* (in total 10 *sextarii*), 3 ounces each of myrrh and cassia's quill, 1 pound (some say 10) of turpentine resin, 3 ounces of cinnamon. Do not boil that, rather stir the dried ingredients up after putting them together for 60 days, then melt the turpentine resin and put it in the oil by turns, then stir up again for another 7 days, and thus stow away' (Paul. VII 20, 31 Heiberg: Μενδήσιον· εἴρηται μὲν διὰ τὸ ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ εὐρησθαι, ἔνθα καὶ ὁ μένδης τρέφεται, λαμβάνει δὲ ἐλαίου βαλανίνου λι. ι (ἐν ἄλλῳ ξ ι), κυύρνης, κακκίας κύριγγος ἀνά γ, τερεβινθίνης λι. α (ἔνιοι ι), κινάμωμου γ. τοῦτο οὐχ ἔψεται, ἀλλ' ἐμβληθέντα ξηρὰ κινεῖται ἐπὶ ἡμέρας ξ, εἶτα τακεῖα ἢ τερεβινθίνη εἰς μέρος τοῦ ἐλαίου ἐμβάλλεται, εἶτα πάλιν κινεῖται ἐτέρας ἡμέρας ζ καὶ οὕτως ἀποτίθεται). The reference to the *mendes* is here perhaps a popular etymology, or a reminiscence of the traditional he-goat nurtured at Mendes in honour of Khnum, which was himself called Mendes according to Herodotus (II 46, 4).

From these striking passages we therefore learn a different origin of the Mendesian ointment than the so-called 'Egyptian white perfume'. There is a clear confusion in the sources, certainly due to the existence of several similar products, all coming from Egypt, all composed of aromatic substances, and all used as emollients to cure comparable diseases.

### **Kuphi**

*Kuphi* (from Egyptian *kp.t*, Greek κῦφι) is perhaps the best known Egyptian 'perfume', which was burnt in the temples during the daily divine cult.<sup>6</sup> Its occurrences in Greek literature have already been discussed

<sup>6</sup> On the composition and use of Egyptian *kuphi*, see Loret 1887; Derchain 1976; Lühtrath 1999; Manniche 1999: 47-60.

by Maria Carmela Betrò (1991-1992), so their detailed discussion can be avoided here (Dsc. *Mat.med.* I 25 W.; Plut. *Is. et Os.* 81; Gal. *Antid.* XIV 117, 10-119, 8 K., from Damokrates; Orib. *Syn.* III 220 Raeder; Aet. *Iatr.* XIII 99 O.; Paul. VII 22 H). Betrò studies the recipes provided by the Greek authors, emphasising the fact that they hardly correspond to the original Egyptian indications, being a messy mix of all the possible exotic spices, further charged with symbolic values: i.e. ‘solar’ *kuphi* made from 36 ingredients, recalling the 36 decans; ‘lunar’ *kuphi* made from 28 components, with reference to the days in a lunar month. To Betrò’s discussion we may add that *kuphi* is cited several times in Greek medical literature as an ingredient or a medicament (Gal. *Loc.aff.* VIII 207, 3 K.; *Comp.med.loc.* XII 561, 3 K.; many passages of *Antid.* XIV K.; many passages of Paul of Aegina; [Gal.] *Rem.parab.* XIV 452, 5 K.; many passages of Aetius of Amida; Archig. 17, 15 Brescia; [Gal.] *Succ.* XIX 733, 17 K. = Paul. VII 25, 10, 34 H.; Alex.Trall. *Therap.* II 91, 10 Puschmann; Aet. XI 29, 108 Daremberg-Ruelle). Sometimes a further type (besides *κεληνιακόν*, ‘lunar,’ and *ήλιακόν*, ‘solar’) is also recorded, the so-called ‘sacerdotal *kuphi*’ (*κῦφι ιερατικόν*: Gal. *Comp. med.loc.* XIII 184, 2 K.; Alex. *Therap.* I 573, 8–10; II 299, 29 P.; *Lumbr.* II 595, 4 Puschmann). A further recipe is provided by Archigenes (17, 15-18 Brescia). Its medical use – almost unattested in the Egyptian sources – was as an aromatic substance against headache, epilepsy, worms, etc.

The Greek sources interestingly mention a whole category of medicaments typically called *κυφοειδεῖς* (‘*kuphi*-like’ – e.g. Gal. *Comp.med.loc.* XIII 198, 10-199, 4; 202, 15203, 8 K.; Paul. III 45, 6, 8-9 H.: *ὕγιαζειν δὲ δύναται, φησίν, τὰς ἐν κύστει ἐλκώσεις καὶ τὸ κῦφι καὶ αἱ κυφοειδεῖς ἀντίδοτοι* ‘also the *kuphi* and the *kuphi*-like antidotes are said to be effective to heal the ulcers at the bladder’), which is possibly connected to the fact that several diverse and successful products with compositions and properties similar to *kuphi* were circulating: see the plural form *περὶ κατασκευῆς κυφίων* (‘About the composition of the *kuphis*’) attested by *Suda* (μ 142) as the title of a work by an *ἀρχιερεὺς* (‘archpriest’) of Mendes called Manetho. It is noteworthy that this Byzantine lexicon seems to recognise in Manetho the actual inventor of *kuphi* (‘*kuphi*: Manetho the Egyptian composed that’ – *Suda* κ 2797: *κῦφι τοῦτο Μάνεθωσ ὁ Αἰγύπτιος κατεσκεύαζε*), which cannot but remind us of Megalos of Mendes, the alleged author of the Mendesian unguent discussed above.

A curious papyrus letter from 2nd-century AD Oxyrhynchites is perhaps a witness, unfortunately fragmentary, to the circulation of several different recipes of this renown product: fr. A ‘... I am very astonished and annoyed by this, sir. How ... often ... that our lord Harpebekis with great pleasure receives the *kuphi* from you? You have sent all the ingredients which are put into the *kuphi* together with bitumen and resin. You wished that from this resin the sufficient quantity should be added and that we [?] should announce you what has been taken [?], in order that you could send the copy of the recipe?’ (P.Warr. 13: ... *λείαν* (l. *λίαν*) *μετρωριζόμενος ξενίζου[αι αὐ]* | *τὸ κύριέ μου. πῶς πολλάκις γει* [ . . . ] | *ὡς ὁ κύριος ἡμῶν Ἀρπεβῆκικ ἥδι[α]στα πα[<sup>5</sup>ρά σο] [υ λα]μβάνει τὸ κῦφι; ἀνέπεμψας [τὰ] | εἰς τὸ κῦφι βαλλόμενα μετὰ ἀσφάλτ[ο]υ | καὶ ῥητίνης ἐξ ἧς ῥητίνης τεθέληκας | καὶ βληθῆται (l. βληθῆναι) τὸ αὐτάρκες καὶ σημᾶναί (l. σημῆναί) | σοι τὸ ἀρθέν, ἵνα ἀναπέμψης τὸ ἴσον τούτου ...). If we recognise in Harpebekis the god ‘Horus the Falcon’ (*Hr-p3-byk*), then the practical use of *kuphi* in this papyrus falls within the same sacred environment revealed by the other Greek papyrological sources.<sup>7</sup> No medical use of *kuphi* is attested in the Greek papyri.*

<sup>7</sup> See Chouliara-Raïos 2018. An official letter is cited in the latter as a further attestation of *kuphi* (SB XVIII 13948, Herakleopolites nome, AD 193/4) but the reference is wrong – the quoted passage (Fr. F, l. 4: *ἵς περὶ κῦ[φεω]ς?*, which is at any rate very fragmentary and uncertain) is instead from SB XVIII 13118 (= P.Tebt. II 598 *descr.*, Tebtunis, late 2nd cent. AD; ed. Battaglia 1986: 92-99), a priestly account. In SB 13948 (ed. Sijpesteijn 1986) there is no mention of *kuphi*. Since the said article does not come up with a complete list of the Greek papyrological documentary attestations of *kuphi*, it seems useful to provide them here: – SB XXVI 16459 (= PSI X 1151, priestly account, Tebtunis, ca. AD 107/8), 8 *τιμῆς ἀρωμάτων <ε>ἰς σύνθεσιν κύφεωσ* (‘for the price of the aromatic substances for the preparation of *kuphi*’). – SB XXVI 16460 (= PSI X 1152, priestly account, Tebtunis, ca. AD 107/8), 13 *τιμῆς ἀρωμάτων <ε>ἰς σύνθεσιν κύφε[ω]σ* (‘for the price of the aromatic substances for the preparation of *kuphi*’). – P.Tebt. II 298 (priestly account, Tebtunis, AD 108), fr. D, recto, ii 67 *εἰς κύν[θεσιν κύφε]ωσ* (‘for the preparation of *kuphi*’, new reading

Two facts must be observed about the medical use of this substance: (1) the general ‘confusion’ about *kuphi* recalls the same phenomenon that we noticed about the Egyptian/Mendesian perfume/oil mentioned above, and which probably affected all such products coming from the mythical homeland of medicine – in this sense, it is perhaps relevant that such a confusion is unattested in the papyri from Egypt; (2) *kuphi* is not attested in the Hippocratic corpus: the term very likely appeared in Greek in the Hellenistic age, after Alexander’s conquest of Egypt, when the Egyptian and the Greek languages came in closer and closer contact.

### The *achariston* eye-salve

A very famous remedy in Greek and Roman medicine was the effective eye-salve called ἀχάριστον ‘unmerciful’, because of its strength. In the passage providing its recipe, Galen underlines its Egyptian origin and describes its successful use in the Egyptian countryside. He additionally provides a second recipe created by himself, which attests to different versions of this remedy (elsewhere he also mentions an *achariston* named after Philoxenos: Gal. *Comp.med.loc.* XII 731, 1 K. ἐκ τῶν Φιλοξένου ξηρὸν ἀχάριστον; see Aet. VII 79, 31-32 O.: Φιλοξένου ξηρὸν ἀχάριστον): ‘The so-called unmerciful, against the big tear overflows. With this only, the Egyptian physicians successfully heal, especially among rural people: zinc oxide, drachmas 16; acacia, drs. 8; burnt and washed copper, drs. 8; poppy juice, drs. 4; erica fruit, drs. 4; myrrh, drs. 4; gum Arabic, drs. 16. Take with water. The usage is with women’s milk. The temperature is middle. If there is a disease around the eyes, this eye-salve is not to be used. The one I myself employed is as follows: zinc oxide, drachmas 16; erica fruit, drs. 2; burnt copper, drs. 4; poppy juice, drs. 2; myrrh, dr. 1; acacia, drs. 6; gum Arabic, drs. 8. Take with water. The usage has been described. Another one: zinc oxide, drs. 6; erica fruit, drs. 4; poppy juice, drs. 6; frankincense, drs. 2; myrrh, drs. 8; talc, drs. 2; acacia, drs. 8; burnt and washed copper, drs. 4; gum Arabic drs. 20. Prepare and use as aforesaid’ (Gal. *Comp.med.loc.* XII 749, 13-750, 11 K.: τὸ ἀχάριστον ἐπιγραφόμενον, πρὸς τὰς μεγίστας ἐπιφοράς. μόνῳ τούτῳ ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ οἱ ἰατροὶ χρώμενοι εὐήμεροῦσι καὶ μάλιστα ἐπὶ τῶν ἀγροικοτέρων. καδμείας δραχμὰς ις. ἀκακίας ἡ. χαλκοῦ κεκαυμένου καὶ πεπλυμένου ἡ. ὀπίου δραχμὰς δ. ἐρείκης καρποῦ δραχμὰς δ. κυμύρνης δ. κόμμεως δραχμὰς ις. ὕδατι ἀναλάμβανε. ἢ χρῆσις διὰ γάλακτος γυναικείου, ἢ κρᾶσις μέση, ὅπου δέ ἐστι περὶ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς διάθεσις, ἀπέχεσθαι δεῖ τοῦ κολλυρίου. ᾧ δ’ αὐτὸς ἐχρησάμην ἔχει οὕτως. ἢ καδμείας δραχμὰς ις. ἐρείκης καρποῦ β. χαλκοῦ κεκαυμένου δραχμὰς δ. ὀπίου β. κυμύρνης δραχμὴν μίαν, ἀκακίας στ. κόμμεως δραχμὰς ἡ. ὕδατι ἀναλάμβανε, ἢ χρῆσις δεδήλωται. ἄλλο. ἢ καδμείας στ. ἐρείκης καρποῦ δραχμὰς δ. ὀπίου στ. λιβανωτοῦ δραχμὰς β. κυμύρνης ἡ. λίθου σχιστοῦ δραχμὰς β. ἀκακίας δραχμὰς ἡ. χαλκοῦ κεκαυμένου καὶ πεπλυμένου δ. κόμμεως κ. σκεύαζε καὶ χρῶ καθὰ προεῖρηται).

Aetius provides an almost parallel version of Galen’s formulations: ‘the eye-salve made of erica which is appealed unmerciful, against the big tear overflows. With this only, the Egyptian physicians successfully heal, especially among rural people, etc.’ (Aet. VII 104, 106-108 O.: ἐρικηρὸν τὸ ἀχάριστον προκαγορευόμενον, πρὸς τὰς μεγίστας ἐπιφοράς· μόνῳ τούτῳ ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ χρώμενοι εὐήμεροῦσι καὶ μάλιστα ἐπὶ τῶν ἀγροικοτέρων κτλ.). See also Oribasius: ‘the unmerciful eye-salve against the big tear

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after BL XII 280). – SPP XXII 183 (priestly account, Soknopaiou Nesos, c. AD 138), iii 49-50 εἰς τῆμιμὴν ἀρωμάτων κατασκευῆς | κύφωος Ἄρ[πο]κράτου θεοῦ (‘for the price of the aromatic substances for the *kuphi* of the god Harpokrates’) and 54-55 εἰς τῆμιμῆ[v] [ἀ]ρωμ[ά]των κατασκευῆς | ἐτέρου κύφωος [Co]κνοπ(αίου) θεοῦ (‘for the price of the aromatic substances for the preparation of the other *kuphi* of the god Soknopaios’). – P.Louvre I 4 (priestly account, Soknopaiou Nesos, before AD 166), ii 33 τῆμιμῆς κύφωος καὶ ἄλλων δαπανῶν (‘for the price of *kuphi* and other expenses’) and 34 τῆμιμῆς κύφωος Ἄρποκράτου θεοῦ (‘for the price of the *kuphi* of the god Harpokrates’). – SB VI 9199 (priestly account, Soknopaiou Nesos, mid 2nd cent. AD), I 1 τιμῆς κύφωος Ἄρποχρά[του θεοῦ] (‘for the price of the *kuphi* of the god Harpokrates’). – BGU I 149 (= Chr.W. 93, priestly account, Soknopaiou Nesos, 2nd-3rd cent. AD), 1-2 [⟨ε⟩]ις τιμὴν [τῶν ἀρ]ωμάτων [⟨ε⟩]ις κατασκευὴν | ἐτέρου κ[ύφωος Co]κνοπ(αίου) θεοῦ μεγάλου μεγάλου (‘for the price of the aromatic substances for the preparation of the other *kuphi* of the twice-great god Soknopaios’). The temple declarations from Soknopaiou Nesos have been recently republished by Capron (2008).

overflows. It is especially effective on the rural people, etc.’ (Orib. *Syn.* III 122 R.: κολλύριον τὸ ἀχάριτον πρὸς τὰς μεγίστας ἐπιφοράς. ποιεῖ μάλιστα ἐπὶ τῶν ἀγροικότερων κτλ.).

Specific recipes of various distinct types of *achariston* eye-salves have been recovered in the Greek papyri from Roman Egypt, either mirroring Galen’s indications or showing different compositions (O.Bodl. II 2182, Thebes, 2nd/3rd century AD; MPER XIII 3, unknown provenance, 2nd/3rd century AD; P.Ross. Georg. V 57, unknown provenance, early 3rd century AD; GMP I 13, Arsinoites, 3rd century AD; P.Oxy. LXXX 5249, Oxyrhynchus, 3rd century AD; GMP I 14, unknown provenance, 4th/5th cent. AD; P.Horak 14, unknown provenance, 5th century AD. See in general Andorlini 2017: 9, 53-60 and 237). The frequency of attestation shows how widespread this remedy was in the Roman Empire. P.Grenf. I 52 (unknown provenance, 3rd century AD) bears also the very title ἀχάριτον (see Andorlini 2017: 49-53). Most remarkable is P.Princ. III 155 (2nd/3rd century AD), a papyrus sheet with a recipe of *achariston* copied on one side, and a milder version of the same eye-salve, with reduced quantities, titled παιδικ(όν) ‘pediatric, for children,’ which of course explains the need for a ‘less unmerciful’ preparation! (see Andorlini 2019: 6-12 and Reggiani 2022: 166-167).

### Isis plaster and other examples of medicines called ‘Egyptian’

Another meaningful example of an Egyptian remedy adopted by Greek medicine is the plaster called *Isis* (see Andorlini 2017: 237). The direct reference to the great Egyptian goddess is certainly not a random one: the medicament did come from priestly environments, just as other cases of similar products (see the Mendesian perfume created by archpriest Manetho, the ‘sacerdotal’ *kuphi*). *Isis* plaster is frequently mentioned by Galen, who stresses its Egyptian origin (‘the Egyptian medicament called *Isis*’: Gal. *Comp. med.gen.* XIII 758, 5-6 K. τῷ Αἰγυπτίῳ φαρμάκῳ, τῇ ἴσιδι καλουμένῃ) and its effectiveness for healing skin diseases (‘such plasters as the one of Machairion and the one of Epigonos and the so-called *Isis* are absolutely effective for the use of tampons’: Gal. *Meth.med.* XI 126, 1-5 K. ἐμπλαστὰ φάρμακα τελέως ὄντα, καθάπερ τὸ τε τοῦ Μαχαιρίωνος καὶ τὸ τοῦ Ἐπιγόνου καὶ τὸ προσαγορευόμενον Ἴσις εἰς τὴν τῶν ἐμμότων χρῆσιν).

Discussing the origins of its name, Galen makes it clear that *Isis* ‘came from the temples of Egypt’ (Gal. *Comp.med.gen.* XIII 518, 9 K.: ἐκ τῶν ἱερῶν τῶν ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ κομιθεῖναι); elsewhere he reports that some people said it came from ‘the inner rooms of the Hephaisteion in Egypt’ (Gal. *Comp.med.gen.* XIII 776, 18-19 K.: ἐκ τῶν ἀδύτων εἶναι καὶ τήνδε κατὰ τὸ Ἡφαίστειον ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ), that is the temple of Ptah at Memphis. Various types of *Isis* existed, one called ‘orange’ (‘The remedy *Isis* called “orange” is effective against rheumatic and chronic diseases, malignant and deadly sores, especially at the extremities’: *ibid.* 736, 16-19 K. ἡ Ἴσις λεγομένη κίρρᾶ φάρμακον ἐπιτετευγμένον πρὸς τὰ ρευματικά καὶ χρόνια καὶ κακοήθη καὶ δυσκαθῆ καὶ μάλιστα ἐπὶ τῶν ἀκρωτηρίων), one called ‘green’ (*ibid.* 794, 4 K.: ἡ Ἴσις χλωρά), one called ‘for the head’ (‘The “*Isis* for the head,” against malignant and deadly sores’: *ibid.* 747, 3 K. ἡ Ἴσις κεφαλικὴ πρὸς τὰ χειρώνεια καὶ δυσκαθῆ). Some people called it ‘of Epigonos’ (‘it is called “of Epigonos” by some, *Isis* by others’) and it was a ‘versatile remedy’ against ‘all types of wounds’ (*ibid.* 774, 7-12 K.: ἡ Ἴσις Ἐπιγόνου λεγομένη παρά τινων. πολύχρηστόν ἐστι φάρμακον, ἦν προσαγορεύουσιν ἴσιν ὑπὸ πάντων ἐπληνημένην. (...) ἡ ὑπὸ τινῶν μὲν Ἐπιγόνου λεγομένη, ὑπὸ τινῶν δὲ ἴσις, ποιοῦσα πρὸς πᾶν τραῦμα).

Many other remedies documented in Greek literature are flagged with the attribute Αἰγυπτία (‘Egyptian’), which clearly denotes their origin. There is, for example, a medicament for the ears (ὠτική), which is called ‘Egyptian, for the same conditions’ (Gal. *Comp.med.loc.* XII 639, 5-6 K.: Αἰγυπτία πρὸς τὰς αὐτὰς διαθέσεις); a liquid ophthalmic eye-salve (ὕγρη ὀφθαλμική) called ‘Egyptian against calli and leucomas’ (*ibid.* 737, 5-6 K.: Αἰγυπτία πρὸς τύλους καὶ λευκώματα); also ‘another Egyptian against calli and leucomas and chronic conditions’ (*ibid.* 737, 11-12 K.: ἄλλη Αἰγυπτία πρὸς τύλους καὶ λευκώματα καὶ

κεχρονισμένας διαθέσεις) a remedy ‘Egyptian for the mouth’ (Paul. VII 14, 9 H.: Αἴγυπτία στοματική); and so on.

Some remedies for bleeding wounds are titled ‘Egyptian’, though they are attributed to Greek-named physicians: ‘Andromachos’ Egyptian for bleeding wounds, as is recorded by Asklepiades’ (Gal. *Comp.med. gen.* XIII 643, 2-3 K.: Ἀνδρομάχου Αἴγυπτία ἔναιμος τραυματική, ὡς Ἀσκληπιάδης ἀναγράφει); ‘Surgeon Claudius Philoxenos’ Egyptian, against the aforesaid conditions’ (*ibid.* 645, 5-6 K.: Κλαυδίου Φιλοξένου χειρουργοῦ Αἴγυπτία πρὸς τὰς προειρημένας διαθέσεις). This may mean that even medicaments created by Greek scientists were labelled ‘Egyptian’ as a guarantee of their efficacy: see again Galen, ‘For instance the first (remedy) of the three (recorded) by Asklepiades and transcribed by me, the Egyptian plaster, which he also says to belong to Andromachos...’: *ibid.* 649, 2-12 K. ἀμέλει τὴν ὑπὸ Ἀσκληπιάδου πρώτην τῶν τριῶν ὑπ’ ἐμοῦ γεγραμμένην ἔμπλαστρον Αἴγυπτιαν, ἣν καὶ αὐτὸς τοῦ Ἀνδρομάχου φησὶν ὑπάρχειν κτλ.). But a physician’s Greek name does not automatically imply Hellenic origin: one of the most interesting mentions of Egyptian remedies in Galen is indeed the “Violence” of the Oxyrhynchite, medicine effective against the bites of all venomous animals – it is recorded by Apollonios the Memphite’ (Gal. *Antid.* XIV 188, 9-12 K.: Ὑβρις τοῦ Ὀξυρυγχίτου, φάρμακον ἐπιτετευγμένον πρὸς παντὸς ἰοβόλου πληγῆν. ἀνεγράφη ὑπὸ Ἀπολλωνίου τοῦ Μεμφίτου).<sup>8</sup>

## Conclusions

Although the early and constant presence of Egyptian references in Greek medicine falls within a general framework of cultural contacts that involved the whole ancient Mediterranean (see Totelin 2009: 141-196), Egypt was undoubtedly of considerable significance due to the acknowledged antiquity and superior efficacy of its medical knowledge and practice. The Egyptian origin of many drugs was thus very frequently a general label, used to evoke the effective therapeutic powers of the remedies. In fact, the custom to tag medicines after their geographical provenance or their alleged inventor’s proper name was purely Hellenic (see Reggiani 2020 and 2023) and completely lacking from the Egyptian mindset. This accounts for the several different formulations exhibited by certain specific medicaments, as well as the apparent confusion existing in the definition and description of some of them. In conclusion, even from the few proposed glimpses it is clear how much the ancient medical traditions were inseparably cross-connected and intertwined in a multicultural network that constitutes a profound matter of reflection for our contemporary civilisation.

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N.B. The Greek papyri are cited according to the official abbreviations provided by the online *Checklist of Editions of Greek, Latin, Demotic, and Coptic Papyri, Ostraca, and Tablets* (<https://papyri.info/docs/checklist>). For the Greek medical literary sources see Liddell and Scott’s *Greek-English Lexicon*, the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*’s canon of authors (<http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/canon.php>) and the online *Corpus Medicorum Graecorum* (<https://cmg.bbaw.de/en/homepage/corpus-medicum>).

<sup>8</sup> ‘Violence’: an appropriate nickname alluding to the remedy’s extraordinary strength, just as in the case of the *achariston*; ‘of the Oxyrhynchite’: i.e. created by a person called ‘the Oxyrhynchite’, coming from that Egyptian nome. See Andorlini 2017: 287-288 (with a correction to the text).

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# The Non-Funerary Chapels of Deir el-Medina. A Focus on the ‘Nominative Seats’

Aliénor Roussel

## Abstract

The Deir el-Medina settlement can be roughly divided into three sections, whose functions sometimes overlap. Besides the village itself and the necropolis, the site has a number of non-funerary chapels. These thirty or so chapels shaped a significant religious and votive area in the northern part of the village during the New Kingdom. They were associated with specific (principal or secondary) divinities and, apparently, deceased members of the community. However, these buildings remain insufficiently studied and the functioning and social structuring of these places are still largely unknown. The creation and consulting of a database connecting the chapels with their original archaeological furniture, the close examination of the mission reports, the comparison with other archaeological sites in Egypt, and precise field observations enable us to assert that the study of these structures will open a new way to look at social dynamics and negotiations in the village, as well as shedding light into a communal religiosity, which was probably at the core of ancient Egyptian personal piety, as other examples show.

This contribution presents the preliminary results of this study and chooses to focus on a very specific type of furniture: limestone seats embedded in brick benches, seats usually found lying against the side walls of the second room. Being the chapels’ best-known and most studied equipment, they crystallise issues around the existence of an ancestors’ cult or other gathering and communal ritual actions and the presence of family or professional ties between the bench owners, as well as the devotees and users’ real nature and gender.

## Keywords

Deir el-Medina, New Kingdom, Personal Piety, Archaeology of Sacred Spaces, Archaeology of Ritual, Chapel

## The seats in context

Deir el-Medina, located in Luxor (West Bank), is the village inhabited by the Tomb Institution’s workmen, the craftsmen of the royal burials in the Valley of the Kings and Queens during the New Kingdom (1550-1069 BC). In the northern parts of the village and the west cemetery, to the south, east and north of the late Hathor Temple, outside and inside the Ptolemaic walls, are scattered thirty or so non-funerary chapels, also known in French as ‘Chapelles de confréries’, ‘religieuses’, ‘votives’, ‘privées’ (according to B. Bruyère), or more recently ‘chapelles d’associations’ (Valbelle 2020). Despite the variety of their shape, they share common architectural and structural characteristics. Apart from two partly covered courts, a pronaos, one or three raised naos, side structures, and a common cultic equipment, their most remarkable features are the limestone seats inlaid in mud brick benches lying against the side walls of the second room (Bomann 1991: 41-50; Bruyère 1930: 9-10; Sadek 1987: 59-69; Valbelle 2020: 451-455). A majority of them bear hieroglyphic inscriptions mentioning the name and titles of specific and most likely deceased members of the workmen’s community. They have been considered since the 1920s to be the preferred location for ritual meetings and feasts, during which the *šdm.w ʿš.w m st M3 ʿt* (‘Servants of the Place of Truth’), as they called themselves, ate, drank and practised different ritualistic actions in the frame of divinity and ancestor worship (Bruyère 1934: 56-60; Bomann 1991: 72-73; Coulon 2006:

26-28; Lesko 1994: 93; Sadek 1987: 79-82; Sweeney 2014a: 217-224; Valbelle 1985: 17-20; Valbelle 2014: 250-253; Valbelle 2020: 451-455; Vitari-Viitala 2001: 94).

Being the most studied cultic equipment from the chapels, these seats – whether inscribed or not – crystallise issues linked to the role, importance, and evolution of these structures, as well as the actors, the reasons, the moments and modalities of the supposed rituals that took place within them. Were the seats' owners the main users, as well as the benefactors or/and the beneficiaries of these chapels? Does their identification prove that the chapels were made by and for an 'elite', at least a specific socio-professional category, or important families? Because the *sdm.w š.w* mentioned are only men, does it mean that women had no role in these chapels? These are some of the questions that were investigated through a global examination of the material at hand, both in the available records of previous excavations (mission reports and diaries), on-site surveys (in 2021 and 2022), re-discovery of artefacts found during B. Bruyère's excavation campaigns (kept in Magasin 12 [P1022]), as well as comparisons with other sites. All these elements have been compiled in a database connecting the chapels with their original archaeological furniture. The work has been conducted under the aegis of the Deir el-Medina mission, supervised by C. Larcher, head of the Ifao's Archives and Collections department.

## **Presentation of the seats: sources and shapes**

### *The sources*

#### *The seats and their benches: a difficult restitution*

At least 90 physical seats, complete or fragmented, inscribed or not, are shared between the Turin Museum (Italy), the Magasin 12 (P1022 at Deir el-Medina), the Magasin Carter (Luxor), and C.V.1 (*in situ*). It is highly probable that around 60 of these originate from the village's chapels (Table 1). Works on the identification and study of the seats in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo (Egypt), in Magasin 12, and in the Carter Magasin, are still in progress.

The original locations of 12 sets are known: the three seats still *in situ* in C.V.1's northern bench; the three (among six) fragments used by D. Valbelle (1981) to reconstitute a seat, including two fragments brought back by B. Bruyère from the eastern part of the Ptolemaic Temple (Bruyère 1952a: 141, no. 377; Valbelle 1981: 474; Valbelle 2020: 456 and fn. 39), and another one from the Temple itself (Valbelle 1981: 474). Valbelle thinks that all of them came from the little Ramesside chapel or the Amon temple of Ramses II (Valbelle 2020, 456-457). Among the twenty fragments she gives facsimiles of in her article on the 'nominative seats', Valbelle indicates that one was found within the Hathor Temple perimeter (Valbelle 2020, 457, fn. 43: pl. 1, no. 1), two to the east of the Temple (Valbelle 2020: pl. 2, nos. 10 and 18), one in the Great Pit (Valbelle 2020: pl. 1, no. 3), and two in the Meretseger sanctuary in the mountain (DEM4 55, MS\_2004\_0169\_006; Valbelle 2020: pl. 2, nos. 8 and 13). The locations of the 15 or so finds made by E. Schiaparelli, now in Turin, are still under debate: they could come from CV.1, chapel C, the so-called Opet Chapel, or from the Ptolemaic temple enclosure wall (the immediate eastern area) (Del Vasco, Poole 2018: 119).

According to the archaeological reports, B. Bruyère discovered benches in 14 non-funerary chapels: C.V.1, C.V.1190, C.V.1212, or the so-called Draftsman's Chapel, C.V.1213, or the so-called Djebel Chapel, C.V.1216, C.V.1221, chapels 2, 3 and 4, chapels B, E and F, the little Ramesside chapel, and the 'Hathor Chapel' of Seti I (Bomann 1991: 40, 42, 43, 45-50, figs. 17, 19, 21b, 22a, 23.1, 23.2, 23.4, 23.7; Bruyère 1930: 19, 35, 38-44, pl. I, IV, V and VII; Bruyère 1934: 57-61; Bruyère 1948: 91, 95-97, 101, 105, 120, figs. 51, pl. XII, map 3, section and map 10; Bruyère 1952a: 102; Bruyère 1952b: 20; Sadek 1987: 62-67, 69-72). About

TABLE 1. THE SEATS AS THEY ARE KNOWN TODAY, SOME UNPUBLISHED  
(STUDY IN PROGRESS UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF CÉDRIC LARCHER, IFAO).

Seats	Discoverer	Origin	Location	Total	Bibliography/Commentaries
N°20248 to N°20262 or N°6240- N°6245, N°6247, N°6249- N°6254 and N°9488- N°9490)	E. Schiaparelli (1905 and 1909)	C.V.1 or C.V.2?	Museo Egizio, Turin, Italy	15 or 16	16 seats according to Bruyère 1934: 59-60. Tosi and Roccati mentioned 16 seats but presented only 15 in their catalogue (1972: 204-210 and 356-361). Bruyère 1939: pl. XXIV and 357; Bruyère 1952a: 141, n°377; Sweeney 2014a: 217; Valbelle 1981; Valbelle 2020: 474, pl. I; future publication of P. del Vesco about the seats kept in Museo Egizio.
Anepigraph seats	B. Bruyère	C.V.1	C.V.1 ( <i>in situ</i> )	3	3 seats are visible nowadays (Gobeil 2015: 90; Valbelle 2020: 454; personal observations on field). 4 were found <i>in situ</i> during 1931-1932's excavations (Bruyère 1934: 57 and 59; Valbelle 2020: 454).
Inscribed seats	B. Bruyère	Eastern part of the Ptolemaic Temple; Hathor Temple and perimeter around it; little ramesside chapel?; Amon temple of Ramesses II?; Great Pit; Meretseger's sanctuary	Carter Magasin	27	Bruyère 1952a: 141, n°377; Bruyère 1955, 4; Valbelle 1981; Valbelle 2020: 456-457, 456 footnote 39, 457 fn. 43, 474-475, pl. I-2. 2 of them had been found during 2021 Ifao Mission in Magasin 12 (Deir el-Medina): DeM_2021_M12_0086 (N°6 in Valbelle 2020: 474, pl. I) and DeM_2021_M12_0088 (N°7a-b in Valbelle 2020: 475, pl. II); 27 are kept in Carter Magasin (Luxor): 26 have the features to be embedded in benches (flat, without feet) (DeM_2023_McCarter_12_0255 to DeM_2023_McCarter_12_0280).
Inscribed and Anepigraph seats	B. Bruyère	?	Magasin 12	31	31 seats re-discovered (unpublished yet) in Magasin 12 during the 2021 Ifao Mission have the features to be embedded in benches (flat, without feet): 2 inscribed (DeM_2021_M12_0081 and 0087); 3 with only incised columns (DeM_2021_M12_0034, 0039 and 0076); 20 anepigraph (DeM_2021_M12_0060, 0074, 0075, 0089, 0091, 0853, 0869, 0874, 0882-0883 together, 0888-0893, 0902, 0904-0906, 0923 and 0933. Not sure for 0075 and 0905); 6 maybe too large and heavy to have been in the chapels, they may come from the huts' station: DeM_2021_M12_0095, 0851, 0854-0856 and 0885 (2 of them wear workmen's marks: DeM_2021_M12_0851 and 0856).
R(E), K'(E), J(E), J'(E), N(E), X'(E), U(E), r(O), x(O), G(O), o(O), V(E), S'(E)	B. Bruyère	Col station	?	15	Bruyère 1939: 354-357, pl. XXXIX and XL; Valbelle 2020: 456-462.
				<b>Total</b>	<b>91 or 92</b>

chapels C and D, Bruyère (1948: 105-106) noticed that ‘the second room had been hypostyle and adorned with two benches’, but that ‘nothing remains’ (Bomann 1991: 49, fig 23.5; Sadek 1987: 65).

#### *The actual sources*

Bruyère himself saw seats, or their saddles, in only four of these chapels (C.V.1, the Hathor Chapel of Seti I, Merenptah’s Chapel and the so-called Opet Chapel in the north of the village), for an actual total of 24 individuals (Table 2). I didn’t take into account chapel E: although Bruyère mentioned saddles in it, he gave no further details (Bruyère 1948: 91 and pl. 3).

TABLE 2. NON-FUNERARY CHAPEL SEATS OR SADDLES OBSERVED *IN SITU* BY B. BRUYÈRE.

Chapel	Number of seats (northern bench)	Number of seats (southern bench)	Total	Bibliography
C.V.1	7	X	7	Bruyère 1934: 58 and fig. 44.
Hathor Chapel of Seti I	X	5	5	Bruyère 1948: 101.
Merenptah’s Chapel	X	5	5	Bruyère 1948: 90.
The so-called Opet Chapel	7	X	7	Bruyère 1939: 37; Bruyère 1952b: 37.
			<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>

In C.V.1, Bruyère initially estimated the presence of eight seats on the northern bench and six on the southern one, and then changed his mind and supposed the presence of seven seats on the northern and five on the southern bench. He did not mention if he actually saw them, but given the fact that Schiaparelli excavated seats from this chapel, and that there are seats *in situ* still, we can at least take into consideration the existence of the northern bench (i.e. seven seats). However, Bruyère saw only one bench (the southern one) in the Hathor Chapel of Seti I, with five spots, and deduced that a bench with seven seats must have laid against the northern wall. In Merenptah’s Chapel (not visible today), he found only one bench (again the southern one) with five seats, and proposed that there would have been another one, with seven seats, against the opposite wall. Finally, the so-called Opet Chapel contained, according to Bruyère, two benches, with the saddles of seven places on the northern side one. He reconstructed five seats on the southern bench (1939: 37; 1952b: 37). By deduction, he made reconstructions and estimated that the chapels each had an average of 14 seats (Bruyère 1934: 57-60; Sweeney 2014a: 217, and fn. 3; Tosi and Roccati 1972: 204; Valbelle 2020: 472). A.H. Bomann, however, thinks that there were only 12 seats in each chapel (Bomann 1991: 40, 71 and 78, fn. 72; Sweeney 2014a: 217, and fn. 6; Valbelle 2020: 455, fn. 32). These estimates allow us to deduce that all the chapels containing benches must have accommodated, at least, from

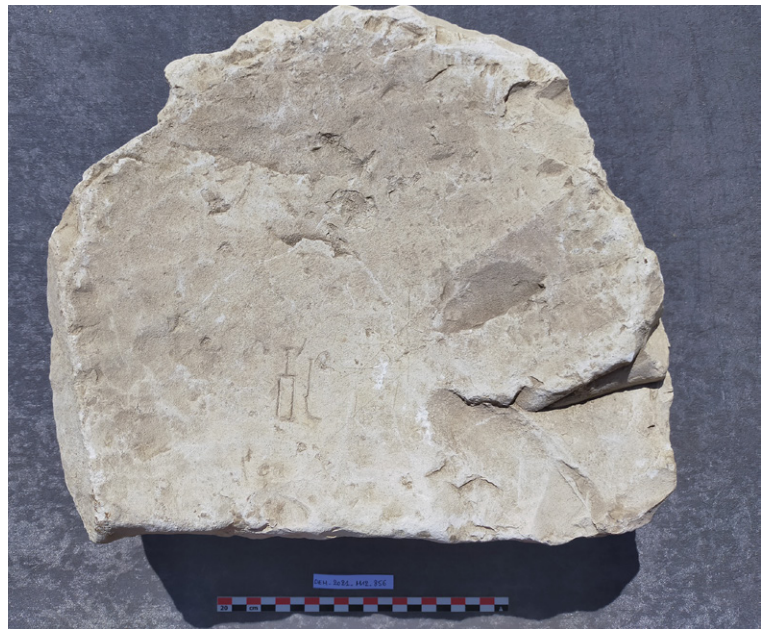


Figure 1. A seat now in Magasin 12 (P1022): DeM\_2021\_M12\_0856, with a workman’s mark (photo: author).

144 to 168 seats. This means that around 100 seats are yet to be (re)discovered, perhaps in the Carter Magasin (Luxor) or in Egyptian museums – unless, of course, they had been destroyed, inadvertently dumped in the excavation spoils, or used to backfill the site during Bruyère's campaigns.

### ***Seat shapes***

#### *A general presentation*

Rectangular or semi-circular, more or less curved, the seats mostly bear inscriptions on their tops and sides (Sweeney 2014a: 218-219; Valbelle 2020: 456-461). Most are incised, only Turin CGT 50259 and CGT 50260 being painted in black, with CGT 50261 wearing a pattern highlighted in red ink (Sweeney 2014a: 219, and fn. 23; Tosi and Roccati 1972: 209 and 360; personal communication from C. Gobeil). These inscriptions can be hieroglyphs, in one or several bands parallel to the inner or outer edge, or running along three or four outer edges. They can take the form of a panel, empty columns (DeM\_2021\_M12\_0034), and workmen's marks (DeM\_2021\_M12\_0856 and Figure 1). One seat presents an engraved motif, (CGT 50261). The seats are also recognisable with their flat undersides, without feet. Some of the examples from Magasin 12 (e.g. DeM\_2021\_M12\_0060, 0091, 0861, 0885) still bear *muna* traces. The presence of the latter proves that the seats in question were embedded.

#### *The inscriptions*

The inscriptions generally name villagers, their titles, and their filiation, as well as the workmen who dedicated the seat to them. Some inscriptions present the funerary formula *n k3 n* ('for the *ka* of N') (Bomann, etc.) and some names are followed by the epithet *m3' hrw*, in its simpler form. All the forms of this epithet are mentioned in Valbelle's study (2020: 460). These two scriptural elements seem to prove that the seats belonged to deceased members of the community who had reached the status of 'justified'. We note that both inscribed and anepigraph seats probably alternated in the same chapel, as three uninscribed individuals appear still in C.V.1, and taking into account that some of the Turin seats probably came from this chapel. However, concerning C.V.1, the possibility that the three seats were placed in that chapel by B. Bruyère during the restoration process can not be ignored.

#### *The 'col station' seats*

Other inscribed seats have been found in the huts of the 'col station', and can be used as comparative tools (Bruyère 1939: pl. XXIV, XXXIX and XL; Valbelle 1981; Valbelle 2020). The huts are located half-way between the village of Deir el-Medina and the Valley of the Kings and were probably used by the workmen to rest during the week, although their precise function is still debated (Davies 2018: 103-104). Their seats were set in individual or double benches inside the huts, next to the entry, and bear much more complete inscriptions (Valbelle 2020: 458 and 459, fig. 6). Much thicker, some of the seats imitate the shape of wooden domestic chairs, as R(E), scribe Qenherkhepeshef's seat. Although the huts themselves had no religious purpose (Valbelle 2020: 459), some material, and the presence of a chapel, seem to indicate the existence of activities linked to personal piety (Toivari-Viitala 2014: 197).

### **The villagers on the inscriptions**

#### ***The men: relatives and co-workers***

The inscriptions could give us information about the deceased members of the community to whom the seats were dedicated. Far from a 'call to the living' (see Desclaux 2018), or even a 'letter to a dead' (see Donnat 2014: 114-124), the form and substance of the seats' inscriptions are parts of a simple dedication.

Nothing is explicitly asked to the dead ancestor to whom the seat is dedicated, and no reproof is made to him. However, the dead ancestor does not require anything from his offspring.

### *Socio-professional categories*

The names all refer to men who lived during dynasties 19 and 20, and did not belong to the same and specific family (Sweeney 2014a, 219-223; Valbelle 2020: 461 and 461, fn. 54). Keeping in mind that the seats available represent only a small part of the furniture that the chapels might have contained, they do allow us to understand more about the socio-professional categories represented. In fact, the types of titles differ, depending on whether the seats come from the chapels or the huts (Table 3). The chapel seats have titles such as *jd<sub>nw</sub>*, ‘deputy of the gang’, i.e. assistant to the chief workmen (Junge 1996: 318 and fig. 7.4; Toivari-Viitala 2001: 7, fig. 1), sculptor, *w<sup>b</sup>*-priests of Amon-Ra, Min, or perhaps Hathor, and *šmsw-nswt* (a member of the royal escort). However, the seats from the ‘col station’ were dedicated to a scribe, foreman, servant of Ptah, and a master of Maat. Nevertheless, the titles of draftsman and *sd<sub>m</sub>* 𓄿 can be found on both. The latter is very general and can be seen on other types of furniture, architectural elements, and even in textual sources. Moreover, the chapel seats seem to bear inscriptions in connection with less high-ranking professions (Sweeney 2014a: 221). The presence of priests needs to be pointed out. The mention of gods, e.g. Amun-Ra, Min, Hathor, is quite consistent with other types of furniture (basins, statues, stelae, wall-paintings) found in the chapels. However, the presence of a servant of Ptah in the huts may be a reference to the oratory of the mountain, if we suppose that it is dedicated to this god and Meretseger. It might also be just an epithet, as Ptah is known as a favourite deity of craftsmen (Corteggiani 2007: 455).

TABLE 3. SEATS FROM THE CHAPELS AND ‘COL STATION’ THAT POSSIBLY REVEAL NAMES OF OWNERS AND OTHER INDIVIDUALS (RELATIVES, DEDICATORS?).

Seat	Origin	Owner	Other (owners, relatives, dedicators?)	Title	Bibliography
Turin n°50248	Chapel?	Siwadjet	-	<i>w<sup>b</sup></i> -priest of Min	Bruyère 1934: 59; Sweeney 2014a: 221, table 2; Tosi and Roccati 1972: 204 and 356; Valbelle 2020: 461.
Turin n°50251	Chapel?	-	Any	<i>jd<sub>nw</sub></i>	Bruyère 1934: 59; Sweeney 2014a: 221, table 2; Tosi and Roccati 1972: 206 and 357; Valbelle 2020: 461.
Turin n°50253	Chapel?	Amenhotep (?)	-	Sculptor	Bruyère 1934: 60; Sweeney 2014a: 221, table 2; Tosi and Roccati 1972: 207 and 358.
Turin n°50254	Chapel?	-	?	<i>šmsw-nswt</i>	Bruyère 1934: 59; Valbelle 2020: 461.
Turin n°50256	Chapel?	Hori(?)	-	Chief draughtsman	Bruyère 1934: 59; Sweeney 2014a: 220, table 1; Tosi and Roccati 1972: 208 and 359; Valbelle 2020: 461.
Turin n°50256	Chapel?	-	Nebnefer	Draughtsman	Bruyère 1934: 59; Sweeney 2014a: 220, table 1; Tosi and Roccati 1972: 208 and 359; Valbelle 2020: 461.

Turin n°50257	Chapel?	-	?	w'b-priest of Amun-Ra	Sweeney 2014a: 221, table 2; Tosi and Roccati 1972: 208 and 359; Valbelle 2020: 461.
DeM_2023_MCarter_12_0273	Chapel?	Nefer...	-	(...) of Hathor	Valbelle 2020: 461 and 474, pl. 1, n°1
DeM_2023_MCarter_12_0261	Chapel?	?	-	Sculptor	Valbelle 2020: 461 and 474, pl. 1, n°4.
DeM_2023_MCarter_12_0278	Chapel?	-	?	jdnw	Valbelle 2020: 461, pl. 2, n°9.
K'(E)	Col station	Qaha, son of Qenymenou	-	Sculptor	Bruyère 1939: 354-355 and pl. XXXIX; Valbelle 2020: 461.
K'(E)	Col station	-	Qenymenou	Sculptor	Bruyère 1939: 354-355 and pl. XXXIX; Valbelle 2020: 461.
R(E)	Col station	Qenherkhepeshef	-	Scribe	Bruyère 1939: 354 and pl. XXXIX; Valbelle 2020: 461.
R(E)	Col station	?	-	Servant of Ptah, master of Maât	Bruyère 1939: 354; Valbelle 2020: 461.
R(E)	Col station	-	Ramose (predecessor)	Scribe	Bruyère 1939: 354-355 and pl. XXXIX; Valbelle 2020: 461.
R(E)	Col station	-	Qenherkhepeshef (son)	Scribe	Bruyère 1939: 354-355 and pl. XXXIX; Valbelle 2020: 461.
U(E)	Col station	-	Horshery	Draftsman	Bruyère 1939: 356 and pl. XL; Valbelle 2020: 461.
X(O)	Col station	?	-	Draughtsman	Bruyère 1934: 357; Valbelle 2020: 461.

*Benefactors, beneficiaries, users, staff members... or all at the same time?*

Several types of actors can also be distinguished: benefactors, beneficiaries, users, chapel staff. We can define 'benefactors' as living members of the community, or possibly from beyond, with 'beneficiaries' being those individuals, dead or alive, divine or mortal, who benefitted from the rituals performed in these chapels. The chapel users might be those devotees who physically performed the rituals, or visited the chapels for religious or secular purposes. Chapel personnel can be defined as those in charge of the technical and practical maintenance of these structures, i.e. cleaning, guarding, etc. The villagers named on the seats could have belonged to one or several of these categories.

In her study, Sweeney distinguished three categories named on the seats: owners, family members, and others (2014a: 219-221, tables 1-2). The owner is taken to be the one to whom the seat is dedicated, but the symbolic owner (the deceased individual, beneficiary of the dedication) has to be distinguished from the practical owner, the living one, who is allowed to sit on it, possibly one (or even all) of the family members cited in the inscriptions.

However, if the practical use of the seat was not restricted to the family, and thus anyone could sit on it, the meaning of this action appears to be completely different. Some specialists compare the seats to a modern memory bench, the purpose of which is that the living might remember the dead. Although this might be right, the hypothesis that the dead might 'physically' participate in the rituals by being assigned places within the chapel is also interesting (Coulon 2006: 30). Although the benefactors of some of the chapels could be pharaohs, or at least viziers, they probably had nothing to do with the seats because they were not named on them. In the case of this particular type of furniture, only villagers,

relatives or colleagues of the dead owner are involved. The beneficiaries are indeed multiple, real, or symbolic: the gods, the deceased, and the living.

The presence of ancestors is referred to everywhere in the chapel: with the cult statue accompanying the divinity to whom the chapel is dedicated, stelae, and lararia busts (Demarée 1983; Keith 2011). Ancestors seemed to assume, above all, the intermediate role that they are known for, serving the interests of the living by listening to their prayers and interceding on their behalf with the gods. This does not prevent them from being able to benefit from the rituals and worship, directly, or by rebound effect. To play this important role, they probably were important members of the community, even 'leaders of groups', as Sweeney has suggested (2014a: 222). Most of the men named on the seats had links with cult practices within the chapels (Sweeney 2014a: 223). An interesting question concerns the uninscribed seats – perhaps another indication that these were reserved for important people, for the inscription as well as for the practical use.

Comparisons with monuments and other furniture inscriptions, as well as textual sources, provide us with information on the staff linked to the chapels. Unlike state temples, there was no special clergy for the chapels: villagers took the function of *w'b*-priests in rotation (Valbelle 1985: 328). The seats mention, among other titles linked to cults of gods and kings, numerous *w'b*-priests. However, this latter title is very common among the Deir el-Medina community and not very revealing, even if the locals served various cults and divinities, as the guardians looked after several chapels (Bomann 1991: 71). However, names and titles can be a way to date the chapels, as Valbelle and Sweeney did in their studies. For example, according to Valbelle, the names of *w'b*-priests and *b3k* servants of Amon, master of Panebes, designated temple personnel in the reigns of Thutmose II and Hatchepsout (Valbelle 2020: 470).

#### *A focus on the term ḥmsj and its interpretation*

In addition, regardless of their original location, some seats bear the word *ḥmsj*. The latter has several meanings that may have been used at the same time. Especially when associated with the word *nfr* ('beautiful'), the word can generally be translated widely as 'beautiful seat', 'good sitting', 'settlement', 'happy', 'beautiful sitting', 'good rest', 'good stay', or 'perfect establishment' (Coulon 2006: 29; Sweeney 2014a: 229–230; Valbelle 2020: 471, and fns. 124–130). The most significant translation might be, according to Valbelle, 'good companion', designating those who sat on these seats in the huts of the 'col station'. Her point is particularly based on these seats that are arranged in pairs and side by side. Thus, *ḥmsj* might designate a material object, the associated social function or status, the action of resting, or to sit for a special event, as well as referring to a human being. To me, if the term really means 'good companion', it could designate the seat's deceased owner, as well as the individual who had the object made and dedicated to a dead villager. The meaning 'good rest' probably hints at the death of the person to whom the object was dedicated and his status as 'justified'. Moreover, the expression 'the good stay' might express the desire to encourage the owner to sit in the chapel after his death and participate in the rituals with the living. Used also to designate an aspect of the marriage state, the word (*ḥmsj jrm/m-dj*) (Toivari-Viitala 2001: 76; Valbelle 2020: 467) undoubtedly carries the meaning of sitting and living together, in this case the dead sitting and living forever with the divinity in the chapel. Nevertheless, we should remember that the word can be understood in different ways, depending on the location. The same formulas used on the seats are present on other types of archaeological and architectural furniture, unconnected with chapels (Sweeney 2014a: 229; Valbelle 2020: 468, and fn. 106).

#### *Seat function(s): the case of Qenherkhepeshef*

It is interesting, even essential, to compare the seats coming from the two sites. However, this furniture probably did not have the same meaning, depending on its location. For example, the scribe





Figure 2. A wall painting from the bench of the central shrine in Chapel 2, next to the Ptolemaic Hathor temple(photo: author).

Qenherkhepeshef owned two seats in different locations (Bruyère 1939: 354, pl. XXXIX; Valbelle 2020: 460, fig. 7 and pl. 2, no. 15). Based on Valbelle's study, it seems that the one kept in the 'col station' hut had an administrative and symbolic function on a social-professional level: to materially mark the scribe's place and office and to assert his professional evolution. This seat was dedicated to him by his colleagues, and the office continued to be used after the scribe's death. Thus the living scribe used this object to legitimise his own status by placing himself in the professional filiation of his predecessor(s). This is what Qenherkhepeshef did with his superior and adoptive father Ramose (Cerny 2001: 133-134; Valbelle 2020: 462). However, his seat in the chapel had a religious function, linked with the ritual performed in this structure. We can see that they are dedicated in this context by and to family members (Sweeney 2014a: 220). Nevertheless, both seats shared, in addition to a practical function, a social role: physically asserting the authority of the person to whom it was dedicated and exposing their importance within the community. It is indeed unlikely, given our estimate of the total number of seats, that all community members owned one.

### ***What about women?***

No female name has been found on the seats' inscriptions, but that does not mean they had no role in the rituals or the maintenance of the chapels. Two chapels, the Hathor Chapel of Seti I and the Amon Temple of Ramesses II, bear wall paintings showing men and women. An apparent offering scene in Chapel 2's central naos has been interpreted as a woman and a man, facing right (a queen and a king?), walking towards a sitting god (El-Amir 2018: 262-264) (Figure 2).

### ***C.V.1213: a chapel dedicated to women?***

Women obviously participated in festivals, at least as devotees of divine processions, but only Ostrakon Turin 57062 mentions a woman participating actively in the Anuket cult (Sweeney 2014a: 228-229; Valbelle 2020: 467-468, 470). However, some chapels were probably dedicated to female divinities, i.e. Taweret, the protector of pregnant women and the family (Corteggiani 2007, 548). Indeed, three fragments linked to the goddess were discovered in C.V.1213: a piece of limestone, a piece from a bas-relief, and a fragment of a limestone stela (Bruyère 1930: 20, fig. 1, 50; DEM1 22-23, MS\_2004\_0144\_042;

DEM1 22- 23, MS\_2004\_0144\_066; DEM2 28-29, MS\_2004\_0150\_002). We can assume that women would be more frequent visitors to this type of chapel as everyday users.

### *Women and votive offerings*

Sources showing women performing ritual gestures are scarce. For example, out of 400 votive (non-funerary) stelae from Deir el-Medina, 85 show ritually active women accompanied by their husbands or male relatives, and 32 illustrate a single woman in the position of principal actress (Sweeney 2014b: 179). This last figure should be considered with caution as some stelae have been assigned to this archaeological site on the basis of stylistic and provenance criteria (Sweeney 2014b, 179, fn. 2). Women are represented praying, or, in the most prestigious cases, offering incense or a burnt offering (Exell 2009: 85, 134; Sweeney 2014b: 185), or presenting libation vessels (Sweeney 2014b: 186). Whether they accompany their husbands or not, women are ‘prioritized in the worship of Taweret, Hathor and snake goddesses in family setting’ (Sweeney 2014b: 188). However, this type of representation is very codified and symbolic and should not be taken as a depiction of everyday life. As women could sometimes be dedicators of statues or stelae (Demarée 1983: 174), the non-funerary chapels could have welcomed votive offerings made or commissioned by female inhabitants.

### *The anthropoid busts*

Women, too, were the subjects of ancestor cults. Six limestone anthropoid busts in various states of conservation, also known as ‘ancestral busts’ or ‘bustes de laraires’, were found near C.V.1213 (DM 4004, DM 4011 and DM 4017), to the south of the Ptolemaic Hathor temple, so probably in C.V.1 or C.V.2 (DM 4005 and DM 4036), inside the Graeco-Roman enclosure of the temple (DM 4065?); a wooden individual was also discovered in a naos of the Amon Temple of Rameses II (Unknown) (Bruyère 1930: 6-18, 11 fig. 3; Keith 2011: 13, 136, 138, 144, 194; Keith-Bennett 1981: 55). These busts did not display very pronounced male or female characteristics, allowing devotees to use the same bust to worship the ancestor of their choice regardless of gender (Bruyère 1934-1935: 173; Keith 2011: 85). DM 4017 is likely to have been the vessel for a female ancestor (Keith 2011: 87), but possibly incarnated a male ancestor once put in the chapel. So, assuming that the presence of these busts in the chapels at the time of the excavations was not caused by archaeological contamination, and that there was no gender discrimination in terms of ancestor worship, women could have been active (real and/or symbolic) actors, witnesses, and benefactors of the rituals and the divine presence, even if they are not found named on the seats.

### **Conclusion**

In short, although much remains to be done in the study of the ‘nominative seats’, as Valbelle calls them, they already offer insights about individuals, their family ties, professional links, and social practices. The seats had, without a doubt, a practical and a social function, exposing the *sgm.w š.w*’s importance and influence within the community, which are not necessarily linked with professional prestige. This fact, probably based on a small sample of the original furniture of the chapels, suggests either that not every workman owned a seat, or that the more influential families are not the ones we think. Like D. Valbelle (2020), I think that the chapels had two purposes: religious (everyone, men and women linked by family ties participated) and associative (only a few members participated and some of them had the function of priests within the chapels). However, the latter function has to be very nuanced. The varied shapes of the seats is a pending question: did the form depend on a trend, socio-professional status, family affiliations, or even on the side of the workers? It will be useful to determine if it can be a dating criterion. A.H. Bomann’s hypothesis, which has to be considered, is that some benches were not supposed to bear seats but votive offerings or ex-votos, like some of Akhetaton’s chapels in the workmen’s village at Tell el-Amarna (Bomann 1991: 57-80). However, no trace of seats has been found

on the Tell el Amarna benches. Even if the pharaoh's authority, in particular through the person of the vizir, probably initiated the construction of these chapels and is present everywhere in the decor (wall paintings) and the furniture (i.e. the cult statues of Amenhotep I, stamped bricks, altars, etc.), the seats seemed to have remained a private space, reserved for the *šdm.w* 'š.w. Given that this type of chapel could have been much more prevalent in the Theban area than in the current remains, as shown by the chapel of Wedjmose (Bomann 1991: 83, 97, fn 7 and fig. 34; Grébaut 1890-1900: 6-7; Wilkinson 2000: 187), it is possible that other structures similar to those at Deir el Medina will be discovered in the future.

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# Marija Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė and the Beginnings of Egyptology in Lithuania

Tadas Rutkauskas

## Abstract

The year 1922 was marked not only by the centenary of the decipherment of the ancient Egyptian writing system and the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb, but also by the beginnings of Egyptology in the young independent state of Lithuania. In that year, Marija Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė (1885-1941), the first Lithuanian Egyptologist and a former student of Russian Egyptologist Prof. B. Turaev, began to teach the history of ancient Near East and Egyptian hieroglyphs at the University of Lithuania in Kaunas. She visited Egypt three times, leaving fascinating descriptions of her travels, attended several meetings of the International Congress of Orientalists, and was in close contact with various Egyptologists, especially with B. Turaev, G. Loukianoff, V. Golenischeff, and A.G. Reisner. This contribution discusses the achievements, projects and publications of this extraordinary woman, almost unknown to the wider academic audience abroad, in light of current research. The study of her life, legacy, and ancient Egyptian antiquities from her collection, now curated at the M.K. Čiurlionis National Museum of Art in Kaunas, still goes on.

## Keywords

History of Egyptology, Museum Collections, Lithuania, University Studies, Antiquities Trade, Travels to Egypt

In September 1922, Marija Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė (1885-1941), the first Lithuanian Egyptologist, began to teach at the newly founded University of Lithuania in Kaunas. This date can be regarded as the beginning of Lithuanian Egyptology. Her life, achievements, and the history of her ancient Egyptian antiquities collection have been the subject of different investigations and have been relatively well studied, primarily by A. Snitkuvienė (2009; 2011). However, there are still many details about the life and work of M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė that require a closer look. Her academic activities are still to be evaluated in the international context of Egyptology of the first part of the 20th century. The puzzle of her life can still be partly completed by new documents found in libraries, private collections and museums, or mentions in books previously unnoticed. Thus, the almost complete picture of the courses she taught at the university could be reconstructed recently. Most importantly, the research and publication of the ancient Egyptian antiquities from her collection need to be continued.

Marija Rudzinskaitė was born in a village near Kėdainiai (Lithuania), in a big family of small landlords, where the Lithuanian language was not spoken. Thus, she could not speak Lithuanian, even at the beginning of her work at the university in 1922, and had to learn it then. Instead, Polish and Russian were the languages she was proficient in. The most famous member of the family was her elder brother, Professor Dionizas Rudzinskas (1866-1954), a prominent agronomist and plant breeder who, at the beginning of the 20th century, worked at the Moscow Institute of Agriculture. Most probably thanks to his support, Marija Rudzinskaitė was able to come to study history in Moscow – first at Pedagogical courses, then at Higher Women's Courses, and finally at Moscow's Imperial University.

In the capital of Russia, she met a person who changed her circle of interests and her life – Boris Turaev (1869-1920), a famous Russian Egyptologist and professor at St Petersburg University (Bolshakov 2020: 357-359). He was in charge of the collection and displays of ancient Egyptian antiquities at the Art Museum of Moscow Imperial University (currently the Alexander S. Pushkin State Museum of Visual Arts) opened in 1912. B. Turaev, by the way, went to school in Vilnius and in 1899 described Egyptian antiquities in the Vilnius Antiquities Museum (Snitkuvienė 2011: 136-138). In 1913, Marija Rudzinskaitė started to attend his lectures in Egyptology for history students of Higher Women's Courses. These lectures took place in the museum and often in the Egyptian gallery itself. Thanks to them and the person of the Russian Egyptologist, she became deeply interested in ancient Egypt. However, this does not mean that M. Rudzinskaitė had not been attracted by this ancient civilisation before. The lack of sources does not allow us to make clear conclusions in this case. It is unknown how long she attended the lectures of B. Turaev, probably not more than four years (VUB RS, F 110-306, fol. 10). However, the impact and enduring influence that the Russian Egyptologist had on the student from Lithuania can be clearly seen in the article 'In Memory of Professor Boris Turaev after one year since his death' (Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė 1921), which was highly appreciative and full of gratitude and respect for the 'Great Scholar and Teacher'. She remembers his lectures in the Egyptian room of the museum in Moscow where he 'felt at home and living within the mesmerising life of ancient Egypt; he also charmed us, his students' (Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė 1921: 119). Indeed, the impact of the Russian Egyptologist and his works on M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė's scientific interests and perceptions can be very clearly discerned.

After completing her studies and obtaining a Master's diploma in world history in 1916, M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė returned to Lithuania. However, it is not possible to determine the exact date or even the year of the return; but it must have been between 1916-1917. Russia's political and social situation at that time surely was one of the reasons for returning to her home country, which became an independent state in February 1918. M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė settled in Kaunas, which became Lithuania's temporary capital in 1920 when Poland occupied Vilnius. In this town, she started working as a history teacher in several schools.

We do not know when and where, either in Lithuania or Moscow, M. Rudzinskaitė married. It appears that right after the marriage, her husband was taken into the army and lost his life during the First World War (Snitkuvienė 2011: 39). The complete lack of sources from that time means that we cannot reconstruct any reliable picture. Marija Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė remained single, and until she died in 1941 she lived alone in rented rooms or apartments. This fact, together with the political and humanitarian situation in Lithuania during the Second World War and right afterwards, is the reason why, after her death, so few personal documents and objects of hers survived. The lack of such a 'personal archive' does not allow us to reconstruct many aspects of the life and work of Marija Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė, as we might have expected from someone who died less than one hundred years ago. Some objects from her collection that she kept at home and were not deposited in a museum have also been lost for the same reasons. It is impossible to calculate their number, as no list of all her objects ever existed or has not survived until today.

Before meeting B. Turaev in 1913, M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė went to Egypt for the first time in 1910. It is not known how much time she spent there, and it is not even possible to say if she visited some other places than Cairo. The journey was a Moscow teachers excursion organised by the Moscow Archaeological Commission (?), and the main object of it seems to have been Constantinople and Palestine (Snitkuvienė 2011: 40). As a member of this Commission, M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė planned to go to Egypt in 1921 and take part in archaeological excavations there (Snitkuvienė 2009: 184). However, nothing more is known about it. M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė visited Egypt two more times – in 1924 and 1934. The journey in May 1924 is much better known as it was described in

her diary, published as a series of articles in the newspaper *Lietuva* in the years 1924-1925 (Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė 1924b; 1925b; 1925c), and in her book *The Tomb of Tutankhamun and Monuments of Thebes* (Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė 1933: 29-62). After an adventurous arrival via Jerusalem, M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė spent several days in Cairo. She visited the Egyptian Museum and the Giza pyramids, even climbing to the top of the Cheops pyramid (Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė 1925b, no. 73: 4). The journey of 1924 seems to be the first and the only one during which the Egyptologist visited Luxor. She spent a week there, visiting the monuments of ancient Thebes and describing them in a vivid and beautiful style in her diary. She much regrets that the newly found tomb of Tutankhamun was closed, and the excavations stopped at that time. M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė had a camera with her and some of her photographs were most probably used in her book. However, only one photograph of the Valley of the Kings and the tomb of Tutankhamun was clearly acknowledged as hers (Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė 1933: pl. 17). Other illustrations in her aforementioned book were most probably taken from other publications or even postcards. No other photographs or negatives by M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė survived, except one in a private collection. Taken in the temple of Luxor, it was used as a card for a letter written in January 1939. Several postcards that she sent to Lithuania from Cairo and Luxor during this journey have survived, giving a glimpse into her happiness being in Egypt despite the heat of May and her lack of money. For example, on 11 May, she wrote from Luxor to her brother D. Rudzinskas: 'I am living as in a fairy tale. I never thought I could live so pleasantly' (MAB RS, F 303-33, fol. 3).

After returning from Luxor, although short of money, the Egyptologist stayed in Cairo until the end of May, or even a little bit longer, and visited the Egyptian museum many times. It is not possible to say if she had some special research interests there, but, of course, the objects from the newly found tomb of Tutankhamun attracted her attention the most. She wrote: 'I am sitting every day in the museum – I am studying the tomb of Tutankhamun. There is so much work to do there, so much material that is difficult to describe' (Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė 1924b, no. 153: 6). In Cairo she also made acquaintances with important people, with whom she would stay in contact later and who would help her gather a collection of ancient Egyptian antiquities. One was a Russian Egyptologist, Grigoriy Loukianoff (1885-1945), at that time consul of Czechoslovakia in Cairo, who helped her considerably. Years later, we find him still corresponding with her, offering to buy some antiquities on her behalf, or sending her articles and news about the latest archaeological discoveries in Egypt (Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė 1925b, no. 80: 4). In Cairo, G. Loukianoff introduced her to Vladimir Golenischeff (1856-1947), who received her very warmly as a former student of B. Turaev. She most probably also met Egyptologist Vladimir Vikentiev (1822-1960), himself a former student of B. Turaev, whom she knew from Moscow and who was teaching at that time in Cairo (Ikram and Omar 2020: 51, 64). These contacts were crucial for the Lithuanian Egyptologist who clearly felt alone in her country.

There is relatively little known about the last journey in July 1934, although it was also described in a series of newspaper articles, 'Excavations of pyramids near Giza', in 1935 (Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė 1935b). M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė seems to have only visited Cairo on this trip; however, it was fruitful, as she could visit the excavations conducted by the Egyptian archaeologist Selim Hassan and George Andrew Reisner at Giza. She had previously met S. Hassan at the International Congress of Orientalists in Leiden in 1931, and later at the Egyptian museum in Berlin (Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė 1935b, no. 7: 155). Thus, she could present the latest archaeological works in Egypt to Lithuanian readers. In this series of articles, she not only describes her impressions while visiting the excavations but also included excerpts from the official reports given to her by S. Hassan and published in the Cairo newspaper *Bourse Egyptienne* in 1932-1934 (Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė 1935b, no. 7: 153-154). She did not meet S. Hassan at the excavation site, he was in Europe at the time, so it was his assistant who guided her around. She was fortunate, however, that G.A. Reisner was able personally to show her the newly found

noble tombs and was very gracious, knowing that the guest from Lithuania was a student of his good friend B. Turaev (Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė 1935b, no. 9: 215-216). M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė already knew the American Egyptologist, as he had taken her to his excavations in 1924 (Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė 1925c, no. 79: 4).

It is unknown if M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė brought some antiquities from Egypt in 1910 or 1934. However, in 1924 she did acquire several objects. Some were purchased from the Egyptian Museum's Sale Room and these are now curated at the M.K. Čiurlionis National Museum of Art in Kaunas, i.e. the mummy of a man (inventory number Tt 2797) and a coffin box of the late 21st/early 22nd dynasty (inventory number Tt 2798). Although in the Lithuanian press of that time, this mummy was labelled as that of an ancient Egyptian princess (Mašiotienė 1931: 4), a radiological examination of the body using computer tomography conducted in 2011 showed that it is actually the mummy of a male, of rather low social status and in a poor state of preservation (Piombino-Mascali *et al.* 2015). During the same journey, M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė also acquired some antiquities from G. Loukianoff: a demotic papyrus with a marriage contract and several papyrus fragments of the *Book of the Dead* (Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė 1936a: 34). The demotic papyrus is now lost and nothing more is known about it except the reference to it. We cannot be certain whether the fragment of the *Book of the Dead* now in the M.K. Čiurlionis National Museum of Art (inventory number Tt 12848) is the same, or just part of the fragments acquired then.

M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė also stayed in contact with G. Loukianoff later, and was most probably offered other objects to purchase from time to time. In his letter from Cairo written on 24 September 1930, he reminds her that it is now an excellent time to buy something – before the start of the season when tourists and collectors come back. He offers for sale some 'statuettes of priests', 'a model of pharaoh's face', a papyrus of the *Book of the Dead*, four metres long, and some other objects (Snitkuvienė 2009: 191; Snitkuvienė 2011: 85-87, fig. 86). Unfortunately, the photographs of these objects, with descriptions and prices sent together with his letter, and mentioned there, did not survive. Despite attractive offers, of which this letter must have been just one of many, the financial possibilities for acquiring them were limited. It is important to stress that M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė bought the whole collection from her personal funds – the modest salary of a university teacher. Even though she lacked money during her stay in Cairo, she did all she could to acquire antiquities, even asking her university for funds so that she could gather a collection on its behalf, but in vain (Snitkuvienė 2011: 85). Although the university partly covered the costs of her travels to Egypt, it seems it was not at all interested in building up a collection for educational purposes. The same was also the case for the museums that M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė had contacts with.

Indeed, her dream was to assemble a collection of 'Egyptian mortuary cult' (Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė 1933: 62). Despite her limited means, this was in great part successful, as she continued to acquire different objects, thanks mainly to G. Loukianoff. Twenty-five objects from her former collection are now curated at the M.K. Čiurlionis National Museum of Art (Snitkuvienė 2011: 161-167, 173-175). Nineteen of these came to the museum as a deposit in 1940. Several other items were offered as gifts by M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė to her friends and colleagues, and these found their way into the museum collection much later. Most of this collection's objects are small pieces – amulets, scarabs, shabtis, bronze statuettes, etc. In addition to the several larger antiquities mentioned above – the mummy, the coffin box, the papyrus fragment – there are several others to mention also. We can begin with the incomplete coffin lid of Udjarenes, dating to the 26th dynasty (inventory number Tt 2796). This item belonged earlier to G. Loukianoff and was previously in the collection of Anthoine Barthélemy Clot (1793-1868), before reaching Lithuania in 1936 (S.J. 1936: 1008). At around the same time, most probably with the help of G. Loukianoff, two mummy masks from the Ptolemaic period (inventory numbers Tt 2798 and Tt 2799) were also acquired. Most of the objects from the collection



of M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė were included and described, more or less in detail, in the catalogue prepared by O. Berlev and S. Hodjash (1998). Nevertheless, the collection still awaits appropriate and thorough publication. Only the fragment of the *Book of the Dead* has been published (Rutkauskas 2004): it is the only example of an ancient Egyptian papyrus now in Lithuania; dated to the 19th dynasty, it resembles the famous papyrus of Neferrenpet now in Brussels and Philadelphia (Rutkauskas 2004: 183-186).

The history of this fragment and how it reached the museum provides a good example of the complicated circumstances under which the collection of M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė was preserved. She faced many difficulties in keeping and exhibiting her antiquities in Kaunas, moving them from one rented room or apartment to another, or from one museum to another (Snitkuvienė 2009: 192-195). Indeed, there was no 'appropriate' museum at that time in Kaunas for ancient Egyptian objects. In the young state of Lithuania, after more than a hundred years under the dominion of the Russian empire, in the temporary capital Kaunas (after the occupation of Vilnius by Poland), the museological situation was indeed complicated. The newly created M.K. Čiurlionis Art Gallery (later Vytautas the Great Museum of Culture, now the M.K. Čiurlionis National Museum of Art), which was to become the most important museum in the young state, had collection goals other than ancient Egyptian antiquities, even with a mummy. Thus, M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė kept some objects, including the mummy, in the rooms and apartments she rented, or in the Pedagogical Museum (currently Lithuania's Education History Museum). The collection of ancient Egyptian antiquities was, of course, something intriguing and exciting for visitors, but it did not suit the general politics of the museums at that time. The negotiations with the museums regarding the suitable conditions and display spaces for her exhibits were indeed difficult and annoying for M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė. She had always dreamed of a special separated room, an 'Egyptian corner', where her collection could be seen and used for educational purposes (Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė 1933: 62). She wanted to follow the example set by her teacher, B. Turaev, and the lectures he gave in his ancient Egyptian gallery. Such a venue, she hoped, would turn into 'a small cultural centre around the Egyptian collection', as she wrote in a letter to the Minister of Education (Snitkuvienė 2011: 94, fig. 94). However, this was never to become a reality in this form.

In the end, the major part of her collection was deposited in the Vytautas the Great Museum of Culture and it stayed there after her death. It remained intact during the Second World War and could be exhibited afterwards. How many other objects there were – either not deposited and kept at home or lost – it is difficult to estimate, but there would surely have been several. For example, the *Book of the Dead* fragment came to light some forty-five years after her death. In 1985, when A. Snitkuvienė wrote an article to commemorate the centenary of M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė's birth, a collector contacted the M.K. Čiurlionis National Museum of Art and sold it the papyrus he had bought from the owner of the apartment that M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė once rented (Snitkuvienė 2011: 174). Happily, it could finally rejoin the other objects from her collection now preserved in the museum.

In Kaunas, M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė was also very active on the academic level. The opening of the University of Lithuania in 1922 (the name was changed to the Vytautas Magnus University in 1930) provided the right opportunity for her, as the entire academic staff had to be hired. However, it was not so easy. As the sole woman among historians in the Department of Universal History, and the lone scholar interested in the ancient Near East, she had to assert herself. The first steps would also have been very difficult because of the language. In an undated letter of 1921 or 1922 to a writer, and later her colleague at the university, Juozas Tumas-Vaižgantas, she wrote:

'In my home country, I am obliged to be silent because, unfortunately, I do not know my mother tongue, I am learning it and making little progress. I hope that one day I will learn it so well that I can write and speak freely about Egypt – completely unknown to young Lithuania.' (Snitkuvienė 2011: 115, fig. 109)

In the letter she also mentions that she is enclosing the manuscript of her translation into Polish of the *Tale of Sinuhe*. She asks J. Tumas-Vaižgantas, rather desperately: ‘What should I do with it and in general with all my Egypt (...) Am I not needed here, should I leave again?’.

During her first two years at the university, and with special permission, M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė could teach in Russian, but, starting from the winter semester of 1924, she started to give her lectures in Lithuanian. She was to continue working at the University of Lithuania from 1922 until her death, with a pause due to illness between 1925 and 1928. Her major course in all these years was ‘History of Ancient East’. For fifteen years, with its title changing slightly, it appears that her course lasted four semesters – one year for ancient Near East and another for ancient Egypt. It consisted of lectures and practical seminars. The exact syllabus of this course is unknown; only a part of it, dedicated to the history of ancient Egypt, is preserved in printed form as a lecture synopsis, possibly, for the year 1924 (LNB RS, F 130-1630, fol. 1-44). It comprises a general introduction to the history of the ancient Near East, followed by chapters on ‘Sources’, ‘Chronology’, ‘Inhabitants of Egypt’, ‘Archaic Egypt’, and ‘Features of Ancient Egyptian Culture’. The text is incomplete – it ends with the Old Kingdom. The list of books on the first page (the course reading list perhaps), indicates that M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė was well acquainted with major Egyptological works of that time. It is difficult to say how extensive her personal Egyptological library was; once more, nothing, except a few books, was preserved. She also planned to translate James Henry Breasted’s *A History of Egypt* and publish it in Lithuanian. However, the university was unwilling to give funds for it as the book was being translated from Russian and not the original language (Snitkuvienė 2011: 115).

The practical seminars for the lecture ‘History of Ancient East’ also changed their titles over the fifteen years: ‘Seminar of Egyptian history’, ‘Seminar of Ancient East’, ‘Egyptological seminar’, even ‘Hieroglyphic texts’. Their exact curriculum is unknown, but for those attending her lectures on Ancient Egypt, the students had the opportunity to learn ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs. This was possible right from the very first autumn semester of 1922: the symbolic date, linked with the discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamun and the centenary of the decipherment of the ancient Egyptian writing system, was stressed by M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė in her later publications (1924a: 16; 1932a: 1; 1933: 5).

A significant challenge, not unexpectedly, was the lack of publications in the library of this newly founded university. Thus, a reworking of Günther Roeder’s book *Ägyptisch: Praktische Einführung in die Hieroglyphen und die ägyptische Sprache, mit Lesestücken und Wörterbuch* (1913) was a practical solution. With the author’s permission, and the help of a student, M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė replaced the German translations of the hieroglyphic signs with Lithuanian ones, simply by pasting them. *Egyptian Hieroglyphs*, therefore, became the first and only ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics/ Lithuanian dictionary, published together with examples of hieroglyphic texts taken directly from G. Roeder’s book (Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė 1932a). It is impossible to say what history students learned exactly, as there are no syllabi, notes, or memories of former students. Another work, *A Grammar of Egyptian Hieroglyphs*, written by M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė herself, was prepared to print stage but never published, most probably due to lack of funds (Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė 1934: 32).

In addition to the major course ‘History of Ancient East’ and its seminars, M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė occasionally gave some other one-semester courses as well. However, the titles of these are only known from the university’s academic calendars. For example, in the spring semester of 1937, she had ‘Culture of Hittites’ (VDU kalendorius 1937: 55) and in the autumn semester of 1939, ‘Ancient Egyptian Science’ (VDU kalendorius 1939b: 36). The course ‘Culture of Hittites’ was not accidental. M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė was acquainted with the famous Hittitologist Bedřich Hrozný (1879-1952). He visited the university in Kaunas in 1937 and gave several public lectures there (Dapkutė and Kuiziniene 2013: 199-200). She met him again the following year at the 20th International Congress of Orientalists in Brussels

(Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė 1938: 818). In 1925, she also received permission from the Faculty of Humanities to teach the course 'History of Ancient Art' (Šimkutė 2011: 105). It seems, however, that this course never appeared, as she had to pause her work at the university due to illness and had no courses from the autumn semester of 1925 until the spring semester of 1929. This course is not mentioned in later academic calendars.

During the last three semesters before her death, when the Faculty of Humanities of the University was transferred to Vilnius, then Lithuanian again, she also had different courses: in the spring semester of 1940 she gave 'Ancient Egyptian Culture' (Vilniaus universiteto 1940: 12), in the autumn semester of 1940, there was 'Status of Workmen in Ancient Near East' (LTSR Vilniaus universiteto 1940/1941: 31), and in the spring semester of 1941, 'Culture of Mitanians and Hittites' (LTSR Vilniaus universiteto 1940/1941: 42). Although the last one looks very 'exotic' within the political context of that time, the second one reflects well the requirements of the communist regime just after the Soviet occupation of Lithuania. The most striking thing is that M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė also gave courses on the Far East. In the spring and autumn semesters of 1938, she taught 'History of Ancient China' (VDU kalendorius 1938a: 53; VDU kalendorius 1938b: 51), and in the spring semester of 1939 there was 'Impact of Chinese Culture on Japan' (VDU kalendorius 1939a: 33, 54). It was known that she was also interested in Chinese culture, having published an article 'Chinese Family' (Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė 1939a). However, it was a surprise to find out that she lectured on it also at the university level. Does this reflect not only her wide range of interests, but also the university's demand for lectures on broader subjects?

As a representative of the university in Kaunas, M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė took part in several conferences abroad. In April 1923 she went to Berlin together with her students and during this excursion they visited the museums to look at Egyptian, Assyrian, and Babylonian collections, with M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė acting as guide. However, the scholar also used the opportunity to take part in the second *Deutscher Orientalistentag* at Berlin University (Ž.K. 1923; Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė 1924a: 20-21). In the Egyptological section, all the discussions, of course, turned around the discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamun. Thus, it was an excellent opportunity for M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė to hear the latest Egyptological news, even if she was the only woman among twenty-one men, and the only scholar not from Germany (Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė 1924a: 20). At this same event she made acquaintances with the German Egyptologists Johann Heinrich Schäfer, Adolf Erman, Hermann Ranke, Günther Roeder, among others. Later, she also participated in three meetings of the International Congress of Orientalists – September 1931 (Leiden), September 1935 (Rome), and September 1938 (Brussels). All these scientific events, and her impressions of them, were described in her newspaper articles (1932c; 1935a; 1938). Although she did not present papers herself, and was only a listener, these events were of significant importance for her, providing rare opportunities to meet colleagues, make new acquaintances, and take the pulse of Egyptological research. After the congress in Rome, she wrote:

'Several days of working together tied all scholars into one family; and this family was bonded neither by blood nor by some real-life issue but an abstract idea – the "Fairy tale of the Orient".' (Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė 1935a: 815)

This feeling of belonging to one big family of orientalists and Egyptologists was lacking in her home country. In 1941, the International Congress of Orientalists was to take place in Paris, but was cancelled because of the Second World War. With the sad death of M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė in May of the same year, the participation of Lithuanian researchers in such events ceased for many decades to come.

M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė was very active in spreading knowledge about ancient Egypt in Lithuania, both academically and popularly. Already between 1911-1916, her articles were published in Polish and Russian periodicals (VUB RS, F 110-306, fol. 10). However, these essays still need to be

discovered – we only know about them from one of her students. She published about twenty articles and six books (booklets most of them) in Lithuania. Her first articles to appear were initially written in Russian and translated into Lithuanian. Her articles in newspapers and journals covered various aspects of ancient Egyptian culture, religion, and history. One of the most popular subjects in her writings was, of course, the tomb of Tutankhamun and its findings. Especially fruitful were the 1930s, when her major publications appeared. *Egyptian Hieroglyphs* (Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė 1932a) has already been mentioned above. In the same year, 1932, her second book *Status of Woman in Ancient Egypt* was published (Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė 1932b). In the first part she gives a general picture of women's lives in ancient Egypt; the second part is dedicated to Queen Hatshepsut. Notably, Cleopatra does not find a place in the book at all, as the author explains: 'I do not mention Cleopatra here, because she did not rule the whole of Egypt, and only in its declining days' (Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė 1932b: 17). This fact illustrates very well which periods of ancient Egyptian history interested her. Her other writings also show a disinterest and reluctance to engage in Greco-Roman times. Another work *Status of Woman in Babylonia* was also written by M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė, and prepared for publication, but it never appeared (Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė 1934: 32).

The following year, another book, the above-mentioned *The Tomb of Tutankhamun and Monuments of Thebes*, was published (Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė 1933). In addition to the diary of the journey to Luxor in May 1924, the description of the discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamun is included, together with different illustrations of Theban monuments and finds from the tomb of the young pharaoh. Probably her most original work was published in 1934 – *The Importance of Name in Ancient Egypt* (Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė 1934), dedicated to the 'Great Scholar B.A. Turaev'. M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė regarded it as part of her planned broader comparative study of ancient Egyptian magic and ancient Lithuanian religion. Although she was unable to gather enough material for the beliefs of ancient Lithuanians, as scientific research into this subject was just starting, some interesting questions were raised, and parallels could be drawn. She draws attention to several of them, not only in this publication but also on other occasions. Even when asking the Minister of Education for an appropriate room for her Egyptian collection, she argues:

'This collection fits completely well beside the heritage of the Lithuanian nation because ancient Egyptian religious ideas, as I have already partially shown in my scientific works, in some respects link up with ancient Lithuanian religious beliefs.' (Snitkuvienė 2011: 94, fig. 94)

Such similar ideas and archetypes, however, should be seen within the much broader context of the world's religious beliefs and folklore (Rutkauskas 1998).

All the books mentioned above were published in 'The Ancient East' series. Its goal, according to the inscription on the back covers of these books, was 'to make the wider Lithuanian society take an interest in the high culture of the Ancient East; to familiarise it with the most important monuments of Egyptian literature, religion and art, and to prepare the soil for future Oriental studies in Lithuania'. This series was planned to continue with other works on, e.g., ancient Egyptian religion, the Amarna era, religion, pyramids. A list of them appears at the back of the book as being prepared for print (Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė 1934: 32). Alas, nothing survives from some thirteen unpublished manuscripts of the prepared books, booklets, and articles – of which only the titles are known, and that were devoted to different topics about the ancient Near East and Egypt (Snitkuvienė 2009: 202).

Although not a real philologist, M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė also worked on translations of ancient Egyptian texts. It is impossible to say when she started learning Egyptian hieroglyphs, nor for how long, but it was probably with her teacher, B. Turaev. The example set by the Russian Egyptologist and his

translations of Egyptian literature into Russian surely influenced her. Already in 1922, the translation of the *Tale of Sinuhe* was published, translated by M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė (1922) first into Polish and then by another person into Lithuanian. A short general introduction to Egyptian literature was provided together with the translation. This was one of her first articles published, and she expresses the hope that her introduction and translation would be the beginning of something greater:

‘Such precious Egyptian culture still awaits a great future, being entirely unknown in young Lithuania, thus let my translation of the Egyptian tale about Sinuhe from hieroglyphs and papyri be the beginning of the sowing of Egyptology into the soil of Lithuanian science.’  
(Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė 1922: 371-372)

Other texts were translated later and were used in her books. The *Tale of Two Brothers* and the *Book of the Dead* were also prepared for printing but never saw the light of day (Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė 1934: 32).

The last and the most significant work by M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė appeared in 1936. It was her first volume of *A History of the Ancient East*, devoted to Egypt. In this most prominent and broadest book, she gives a picture of ancient Egyptian history from the earliest times to the Late period (26th dynasty). Once more, the Greco-Roman times are left aside. In her introduction she discusses the influence of the Orient on European culture and presents the related sources and problems. It is important to stress here that M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė criticised very strongly the ideas of Panbabylonism, especially the works of the Russian historian Robert Wipper (1859-1954), whose several monographs and schoolbooks were translated into Lithuanian (Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė 1925a). She was against his disregard for the importance of ancient Egypt, and objected to the use of his books in Lithuanian schools, and even at the university. On the other hand, M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė always stressed that ancient Egypt was actually ‘the cradle of our culture and science’, where ‘the oldest mathematical, astronomical, technological and medical works were created’ (Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė 1939b: 271). Ancient Greece and Rome played a secondary role for her, although one would go too far to consider M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė as an adherent of ‘Panegyptism’.

In her article against R. Wipper, she argued that the translations should be made from the works of real specialists in the ancient Orient, such as B. Turaev (mentioned first), Eduard Meyer, James Breasted, Adolf Erman, and Gaston Maspero (Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė 1925a: 492). The rich bibliography from *A History of the Ancient East*, comprising more than 140 works and including the significant Egyptological publications of the time, shows how widely read M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė was. It is not easy to assess how she accessed these publications, as it is not known how extensive her personal book collection was and how the university helped in this case. It can be deduced that her journeys to Europe were of the greatest importance. It appears that she went to Berlin during her summer holidays from time to time, although there are no direct mentions of visits to research libraries. In the same year, another booklet appeared, the last one written by the Lithuanian Egyptologist – *The Land of Gods and Perfume*, dedicated to Ethiopia (Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė 1936b). In this work, the land of Punt, according to ancient Egyptian sources, is introduced, and the expeditions to it are described, not forgetting to stress the influence on Ethiopia made by the ‘high culture of ancient Egypt’ (Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė 1936b: 4).

As mentioned above, after the return of Vilnius to Lithuania and the transfer of the Faculty of Humanities from Kaunas to the city, M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė moved there at the beginning of 1940. She continued working at the re-established Vilnius university and expected it to be a step forward on the academic as well as museological level. The Egyptologist planned to take her entire collection to Vilnius and join it with other ancient Egyptian antiquities kept there. However, her death in May 1941 prevented such plans from being realised. The Second World War and the Soviet occupation, with all the tragedies and cultural and scientific losses that they brought, made it impossible to continue the Egyptological

tradition in Lithuania. Not one of her former history students became interested professionally in ancient Egypt, i.e. to become Egyptologists and possibly leave Lithuania and continue studies abroad. That it was possible in other fields is exemplified by the world-famous archaeologist Marija Gimbutas (1921-1994). She studied archaeology at the same university where M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė worked and left Lithuania in 1944. It was she, Marija Alseikaitė (later Gimbutas), who wrote a short but very warm obituary for M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė, calling her 'a renowned scientific power' who always 'regarded herself as a real daughter of Egypt' (Alseikaitė 1941). It is unknown if M. Gimbutas attended any of Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė's lectures, or if these two extraordinary women had ever met at the university. Nevertheless, the Egyptologist must have indeed been a shining example of a woman scientist for a young student. A student of M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė, the historian Ieva Andrulytė-Aleksienė (1901-1989), is the only one who tried to continue Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė's work (Snitkuvienė 2011: 97, 123). After the Second World War, she worked in the M.K. Čiurlionis National Museum of Art and curated the collection of ancient Egyptian antiquities in the Department of Applied Arts. In 1946, thanks to her, the exposition of ancient Egyptian Art, including the objects from Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė's collection, was created. She also published a book, *Art of Ancient Egypt*, the only work on this subject by a Lithuanian author (Andrulytė-Aleksienė 1968).

The death of M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė, the Second World War, together with the Soviet occupation of Lithuania, with all the changes that it brought, also meant the end of the possible development of Egyptology in Lithuania. There were no further steps after the beginning that M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė made. However, her achievements and activities in this field remain significant even if they could not be continued. In the Lithuanian scientific and cultural milieu, she left a bright, Oriental trace that was very strongly felt and appreciated by her contemporaries. Despite many problems, such as difficulties in language, and the place of Egyptology within the other disciplines at the university, or being a woman scientist, she succeeded in sparking an interest in ancient Egypt thanks to her captivating writing and her collection based on 'Egyptian mortuary cult'. In this enterprise, the influence of her teacher B. Turaev is clearly discernible. They were both the precursors of professional Egyptology in their home countries. Thanks to her teacher, she was more interested in cultural rather than political history, especially in literature and religious beliefs. Her dream was the creation of an 'Egyptian corner' within a museum, after the example set by B. Turaev's exhibition at the Art Museum of Moscow Imperial University. Although such a project was never to materialise during her life, her collection now forms a small, yet essential, part of the Egyptian antiquities in the museums in Lithuania.

The activities and achievements accomplished by M. Rudzinskaitė-Arcimavičienė, under the challenging conditions of the first half of the 20th century, still need to be further studied. Although scientifically active only in Lithuania, and publishing in Lithuanian, she deserves a small but bright place in the history of Egyptology. Her merited status among other women Egyptologists of the first half of the 20th century still needs to be accentuated, and her Egyptological work more deeply evaluated within a broader international context. Thus, the research continues, and hopefully sheds new light on her life and work, enabling a more detailed assessment of her achievements and the beginnings of Egyptology in Lithuania.

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# Arsinoe II as an Image of Isis in Egyptian Source Materials

Zeinab M. Salem

## Abstract

Ptolemy I Soter, established the cult of Alexander the Great and appointed his brother 'Menelaus' as his high priest. At the same time, he adopted the cult of Sarapis which brought the Egyptians and the Greeks together. Henceforth, the Ptolemaic kings and queens associated themselves with the cult of Sarapis. Even the marriage of Arsinoe II and her full brother Ptolemy II Philadelphus was announced as a reflection of the marriage of Isis and her brother Osiris. Thus, Arsinoe was represented as a manifestation of the goddess Isis. Consequently, she carried many of her titles and appeared with her at the temple of Philae. Arsinoe's assimilation with Isis can be traced in many records, i.e. the Memphis Stela, the Stela of Tell El Maskhuta, and the Tanis relief. Moreover, Arsinoe's Vatican Museum statue is inscribed with her name and titles, including 'the daughter of Geb', and 'Image of Isis'.

## Keywords

Arsinoe II, Goddess Isis, Sarapis, Ptolemy II, Philadelphus, Tell El Maskhuta Stela, Mendes Stela, Philae temple

## Arsinoe II and her cult

Although Ptolemy I Soter, fostered the cult of Sarapis (Hölbl and Saavedra 2001: 100) it was Alexander the Great who first dedicated a temple to Isis in the city of his dreams, Alexandria. Meanwhile, it has been stated (Hinge and Krasilnikoff 1990: 34-40) that Ptolemy I built temples for Sarapis in many cities. It should be noted that Sarapis was the Greek name of the ancient Egyptian god 'Wsir- Hapi', whose cult flourished from the Late period and became popular, with its centre in Memphis (Stambauch 1972: 5).

Ptolemy I also funded the burial of the Sarapis bull and erected statues for his Greek representation in Alexandria. Therefore, Sarapis, Isis, and their son Harpocrates, became the divine triad of the Ptolemaic Kingdom. Accordingly, Ptolemaic kings and queens connected themselves with Sarapis and Isis, and 'this new divine couple was frequently associated with the royal couple in prayers, dedications, and even official oath formulas. Sarapis was thus the protector of the new dynasty and perhaps also of the new capital city' (Dunand and Zivie-Coche 2004: 218).

Arsinoe II was born between c. 318-314 BC and c. 300 BC; she married her father's friend Lysimachus, king of Thrace, who was about sixty years old, and provided him with three sons. Lysimachus was also the father-in-law of Arsinoe's brother, Ptolemy II, who married his daughter, Arsinoe I. In the meantime, her half-sister Lysandra married Lysimachus's son Agathocles. Lysimachus became engaged in war with Seleucus and in c. 281 BC, he was killed at the battle of Corupedium, forcing Arsinoe to escape to Ephesus and then to Cassandrea (Carney 2013: 11-31, 35-40, 49).

Meanwhile, Arsinoe paid the price for the rivalry between her mother Berenice I and her stepmother Eurydice, the daughter of Antipater, who married Ptolemy I and bore him three children – Ptolemy Ceraunus, Ptolemais, and Lysandra (Ellis 2005: 39). It seems (Ellis 2005: 68) that the rivalry started when her father, Ptolemy I Soter, excluded 'Ptolemy Ceraunus' and named his younger son, Ptolemy II

Philadelphus his coregent. Eventually, Ptolemy Ceraunus defeated the Seleucids and controlled most of Macedonia. Moreover, he decided to include the lands of Lysimachus. Ceraunus proposed to marry his sister Arsinoe II and adopt her children (Carney 2013: 50-51). Aware of his ruthlessness, Arsinoe was hesitant to accept his proposal. Accordingly, he took an oath to treat her as his 'beloved wife', and to consider her sons as his own; only then did she agree to marry him. After the wedding ceremony Ceraunus surrounded the castle and killed her sons in front of her eyes. Not allowing her even to bury them, she was exiled to the island of Samothracia in the northern Aegean Sea. With its name meaning 'High place of the Thracians', it was considered a sacred island, its sanctuary being dedicated to the great gods. Arsinoe built a rotunda there and Philadelphus added a propylon (Fant 2003: 125-126; Dimitrova 2004: 6).

On her return to Alexandria, Arsinoe II married her full brother Ptolemy II Philadelphus, their union being declared a reflection of the marriage of Isis and Osiris (Pfeiffer 2021: 9). Arsinoe II was to be the first Ptolemaic queen to be deified in her own right (Ashton 1999: 56), however, it has been stated (Hölbl and Saavedra 2001: 94) that Berenice I had an individual cult, based on the existence of a temple dedicated to her, the Berenikeion. It seems (Mckechnie and Guillaume 2008: 277) that Ptolemy II Philadelphus issued a decree to place statues of Arsinoe in all the Egyptian temples. The 'Mendes Stela' shows the king depicted with Arsinoe and his son offering to the ram-god, Mendes (Hölbl and Saavedra 2001: 83), who also appears on the other side with the goddess Hatmehit and the deified Arsinoe, who addresses him saying, 'I pray for you to the master of the Gods, so that he gives you numerous years as a king' (Nilsson 2010: 489), thus indicating the role played by Arsinoe as a mediator between the gods of Egypt and her brother-husband, Ptolemy II.

Moreover, Ptolemy II built an Arsinoeion in Alexandria and dedicated a sanctuary within the temple of Cape Zypherion to her, appointing a priestess for her cult (Quaegebeur 1971: 243). It appears that she held the epithet 'bearer of the (golden) basket' (*kanephoros*), and her name was mentioned in the royal documents after the name of 'Priest of Alexander and the Theoi Adelphoi' (Carney and Müller 2021: 97). Arsinoe was also granted a coronation name that reflected her remarkable religious status: *ḥnm(t) ḥb n m3't mr (t) ntrw* ('her heart is united with Maat, the beloved of the gods') (Leprohon 2013: 179), with *ḥnm(t)* taken as meaning 'united' (Lesko 2002: 383).

### **Arsinoe II as an image of Isis**

Meanwhile, Arsinoe was the first Ptolemaic queen to be linked to the goddess Isis, this assimilation being traceable in the following records:

#### **Stelae**

##### *The Memphis Stela*

Arsinoe's name and titles appear on the Memphis Stela (now in the British museum, AE379), which belonged to the priest of her cult, who referred to her as *'s3t nsw, snt nsw, ḥmt nsw, s3t 3mn, nbt t3wy, 3rsin3t, ntrt mr sn 3st'* (Quaegebeur 1971: 246). Arsinoe not only appears to be carrying the titles of Isis, but also her name, 'the beloved of her brother, Isis'.

#### Translation

'King's daughter, King's sister, King's wife, daughter of Amun, the lady of the two lands, Arsenat, the goddess, the beloved of her brother, Isis.'

*The Stela of Tell El Maskhuta, known as Per Atum or Pithom*

This stela portrays Ptolemy II Philadelphus, on the far right, presenting Maat to Atum, who is followed by Osiris, Horus, Isis, and Arsinoe. Bricault (2020: 34) suggests that the queen is depicted as Isis. She bears the title *'tit ist'* ('image of Isis') (Sethe 1904: 82). On the left, Philadelphus is shown offering the eye of Horus to his father god Atum in the presence of both Isis and Arsinoe who has the titles *'snt nsw hmt hrt nbt t3wy'* (Sethe 1904: 82). These titles mean 'the sister and wife (of) the king, the female Horus, the lady of the two lands'. This stela is currently in the Cairo Museum CG 22183.

**Temples scenes and inscriptions***The Tanis Relief*

In this relief, now in the British Museum (EA 1056) Arsinoe is shown standing beside the gods, holding the *ankh* sign and a papyrus staff. In front of her, Philadelphus is depicted clasping the was scepter and the thunder bolt of Zeus; he wears the double crown (Bowman 1996: 23). The queen is shown wearing her unique crown, featuring the vulture headdress, with the red crown, as well as the two long plumes of Isis, Amun's ram horns, and Hathor's emblem. The innovative and remarkable crown she wears gives an indication of her exceptional status (Vandorpe 2019: 547).

*The Philae Temple*

The temple at Philae is one of the very first major ones built by the Ptolemaic kings. Although, there is evidence of an earlier structure on the island from the 25th dynasty, and the oldest standing monument dates to Nakhthnub I. Philadelphus, the founder of the main temple, dedicated it to both the goddess Isis and his wife-sister Arsinoe. The temple was enlarged by his successors and became the most important cult centre for Isis. For many centuries it was the focal point of pilgrimage, until it was shut down on the orders of the emperor Justinian I in AD 550 (Wilkenson 2000: 214).

In this temple, Ptolemy II seems to act as an Egyptian king, who inherited his father's throne, which his mother, Isis, protected and handed on to him. It has been stated (Žabkar 1988: 130) that the interaction between kingship and Isis was known since the Old Kingdom. Ptolemy II is thus represented adoring the goddess and praising her (Žabkar 1988: 27): 'The King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Usikare-meramun, has come before you, that he may adore your beautiful face, Isis; give him Upper and Lower Egypt (in) peace, without any disturbance, forever'. In another scene the king is standing worshipping the goddess, with no offering being presented, and behind him there is a text that reads: 'Son of the Sun, Ptolemy, has come before you, O Isis, the Great, God's Mother, kissing the ground before your beautiful face; give him your love forever' (Žabkar 1983: 116).

The above statements reveal an essential aspect of the relationship between the king and goddess. They highlight the purpose behind the veneration of Isis and even the reasons for the construction of the temple. Moreover, they show that the Ptolemaic kings followed in the footsteps of the Egyptian kings in the process of their coronation. They were keen to be accepted by the gods, who would assign to them the task of ruling. Hence, Ptolemy II appears to have been regarded by the goddess as her son, Horus. In Room 12 she addresses him saying: 'To you I have given the inheritance of Horus of Pe' (Porter and Moss 1991: 245; Žabkar 1988: 25). This strong relationship is more obvious in another inscription in which Isis says to Ptolemy II: 'I have given you the lifespan of Re in heaven; I have given you heaven (itself) with what is in it; I have given you victory over the south' (Žabkar 1983: 119).



Figure 1. Arsinoe and the goddess Isis, eastern wall of the sanctuary, Philae Temple, Aswan (© Zeinab M. Salem).

It appears that Isis is further referenced in another text depicted behind her throne: 'O my beloved son, son of the Sun, Ptolemy I have given you the south as far as *Kenset, Ta-Seti*, bent down forever, belongs to you' (Žabkar 1983: 119-130). She also gave him the north: 'I have given you the north as far as heaven, the Great Green, bowing (its) head forever, belongs to you'. Such statements clearly explain how Ptolemy II was received into the Egyptian pantheon, and how Ptolemaic kingship was established, based on their relationship with the divine mother Isis, who gave them the throne of Egypt, as well as all foreign lands and heaven.

Arsinoe, it seems, is represented four times in this temple accompanying the goddess Isis (Žabkar 1988: 12), and once with goddess Nephthys, this scene being found on the wall of the northern and southern jambs of the gate, where Ptolemy II is depicted offering flowers to Nephthys and Arsinoe (Žabkar 1988: 58). On the sanctuary's eastern wall, Arsinoe is depicted standing behind Isis, who is shown nursing Horus, and the king is offering *nemest* jars to them (Figure 1). On the western wall the king is represented offering them *deshert* jars (Figure 2). In these scenes the king refers to Arsinoe as 'the King's wife, the King's daughter, the King's sister, Daughter of Amun, Mistress of the Two Lands, the goddess who loves her brother, Arsinoe, Princess, great of praises, Lady of charm, sweet of love, Mistress of Upper and Lower Egypt, great queen of Egypt, Mistress of the Two Lands, Arsinoe, living forever' (Žabkar 1988: 89-90).

*Nemest* jars were used for purification in the daily temple rituals and during festivals; they were believed to contain the inundation water. They were also used during mortuary rites (Assmann 2005: 323). *Deshert* water vessels were also used in the temples for purification in both the daily rituals and the festivals (Eaton 2013: 166; Helck and Otto 1984: 214-216).

We see that the above text includes the same titles used in Ptolemy's Hymns to Isis. Thus, Arsinoe was not only assimilated to Isis but was deified as her manifestation. In another text, Ptolemy II praised Isis and emphasises her royal perspective by referring to her as 'Adornment and lady of the Ornaments of the Palace. Lady of desire of the green fields, Nursling who fills the palace with her beauty, Fragrance



Figure 2. Ptolemy II depicted offering *dshret* jars to Isis and Arsinoe, western wall of the sanctuary, Philae Temple, Aswan (© Zeinab M. Salem).

of the palace, mistress of joy, who runs her course in the Divine Place. Rain – cloud which makes green [the fields] when it descends, Maiden, sweet of Love, Lady of Upper and Lower Egypt, who issues orders among the divine Ennead, according to whose command one rules. Princess, great of praise, Lady of Charm whose face loves the joy fresh Myrrh' (Žabkar 1983: 130). Using such epithets underlines the strong connection between the goddess and the palace, as well as the queens, who would be playing the roles of Isis and bearing these titles (Žabkar 1983: 116). While in the temple they were the goddess' adorers and priestesses, her living image, and active participants in her rituals and festivals.

It seems that Isis was thus adored by her son Ptolemy II and his deified queen Arsinoe II, who shared with her the veneration that she attained from Philadelphus and his successors. At Philae, Isis, the divine mother, 'receives daily and festive offerings by her son, the living Horus, Ptolemy; there she is joined by the king's wife and sister, the deified Arsinoe, who shares in the goddess's role as the Divine Adorer and the High Priestess of the temple. The land belongs to Isis, and she rules it from her temple, where, ever since the day of its consecration, she maintains daily contact with her people through her adoptive son, upon whom she conferred the royal inheritance of her son Horus' (Žabkar 1988: 133).

#### *The Khonsu Temple*

The Khonsu temple was built by Ramesses III, south-west of the temple of Amun at Karnak (e.g. Wilkinson 2000: 161); it was subsequently enlarged by many rulers, i.e. Ramesses XI and Herihor. The Ptolemaic kings added new structures and restored some of the earlier ones. Alexander the Great built new corridors and Ptolemy II reassembled parts of it; it was redecorated by Cleopatra III and her son Ptolemy IX (Wente and Weeks 1981: 17).

In this temple, Arsinoe appears in one scene standing behind the god Khonsu, where she is depicted with his papyrus staff in one hand and the *ankh* in the other. In front of Khonsu we see Ptolemy II receiving the oar and Hepet. The inscription accompanying the queen reads, 'Words spoken by the

King's Daughter, King's Sister, Great King's Wife, Lady of the two Lands, Daughter of Amun, Arsinoe, the Goddess who loves her brother: I bequeath to you the nine bows together, while you are the Ruler on the Throne of Horus' (Wente and Weeks 1981: 5).

Analyzing the above text points to a connection between it and the inscription at Philae, where Isis bequeaths the inheritance of her son Horus to Philadelphus. Hence, Arsinoe here appeared as 'Arsinoe Isis' (Carney 2013: 108).

### **Sculpture**

The Vatican Museum's colossal red granite statue (Cat. 22681) shows Arsinoe II wearing a long-fitted Egyptian dress, tripartite wig, and the two *uraei* (Riefstahl 1960: 125). It is inscribed with a text giving the name and titles of Arsinoe, among which we find: 'Princess, Daughter of *Geb*, Governess, Daughter of the *Merhu* bull, Great of Completion, Great of Praise, Daughter of the King of Lower Egypt, the Sister and Wife, Queen of Upper and Lower Egypt, Image of Isis, Beloved of Hathor, Lady of the Two Lands, Arsinoe Philadelphus, Beloved of Atum, the Lord of the Two Lands' (Nilsson 2010: 404) (Figure 3).

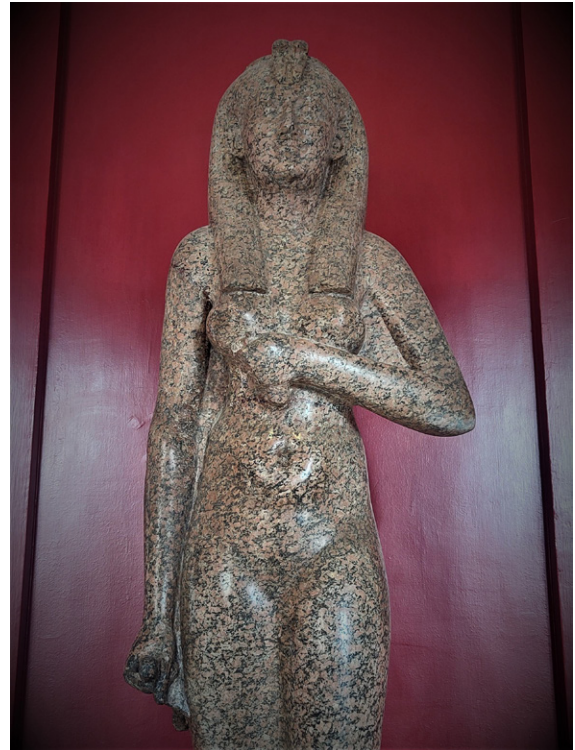


Figure 3. The colossal granite statue of Arsinoe II colossal in the Vatican Museum (Cat. 22681) (© Zeinab M. Salem).

The limestone statuette of Arsinoe (Cat. 20.2.21) in the Metropolitan Museum, New York, represents the queen wearing a dress that 'consists of a chiton and himation with a fringed edge, which is draped over the right shoulder and tied in a knot above the right breast'. The dress and the hair style's 'corkscrew curls' are typically 'Hellenistic Greek' (Higgs and Walker 2001: 165). Subsequently, this iconography became the popular Hellenised image of Isis (Jackson 2016: 14).

### **Conclusions**

Queen Arsinoe II was the first Ptolemaic manifestation of the goddess Isis. Via her deification, she was introduced to both the Egyptians and the Greeks as a new goddess with a Greek name and the divine image of Isis. Arsinoe appeared with a new iconography and a crown, which was created just for her. Furthermore, she was portrayed as a female ruler and a goddess who is the beloved sister-wife of Ptolemy II and divine mother of the rest of the Ptolemaic kings. Arsinoe's presence among the Egyptian gods and inside their sanctuaries, guaranteed her a prominent religious status that helped the Ptolemaic royal cult to survive for centuries, overcoming the many 'frictions and insurrections' (Carney and Müller 2021: 101)

Furthermore, the cult of Isis and Sarapis was able to spread across the Mediterranean, outlasting the Ptolemaic dynasty. The Isis cult was adapted by many Flavian emperors, starting with Vespasian, who was well disposed towards receiving the Alexandrian triad, spending the night in the Iseum in Rome after his son, Titus, had defeated the Jews. Titus and Domitian showed the same respect to Isis. Domitian erected an obelisk in the Piazza Navona that depicted his coronation by Isis and Sarapis, inscribing it

with the hieroglyphic title, ‘the beloved of Isis’ (Boch 2014: 234). Hadrian praised Isis and Sarapis after his visit to the Serapeum of Alexandria, representing them on Alexandrian coins.

Isis became popular among upper-class Romans (Boch 2014: 235), endorsed by Commodus playing an active role in her rituals (Heyob 1975: 29). Isis coins were minted as part of New Year celebrations to guarantee prosperity and fertility to the empire and people of Rome all year around (Boch 2014: 235).

In the 3rd century AD, the Isis temple in Rome was still open and received some of the emperor’s attention and funds. Isis remained a common figure on Roman coins. With the Christianisation of the Empire, Isis started to lose support, although her rituals and festivals went on being celebrated by the public. Hostility towards the cult started when the Serapeum of Alexandria was destroyed in AD 391, and in the same year an edict was issued in Rome banning offerings and the worship of pagan deities (e.g. Heyob 1975: 34-35). Although the cult of Isis declined, the Iseum of Rome continued being used by some pagan elites until the beginning of the 5th century AD (Demarsian 2011: 14).

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# An Analysis of Offerings in Predynastic Upper Egypt: A Case Study from the Northern Cemetery at Ballâs

Amr Khalaf Shahat, Patricia V. Podzorski

## Abstract

This study presents the archaeobotanical analyses of seven botanical samples from five graves excavated at the Predynastic cemetery of north Ballâs, located in Upper Egypt in the Qenah Bend area. Castor beans, preserved in a desiccated condition, were the largest archaeobotanical sample analysed (grave B20). The beans were strung together and found around the neck of the deceased suggesting the use of the plant may have been intended as ornament or other resource. This is also one of the earliest findings of castor beans reported from Egypt. Other archaeobotanical findings consisted of *Balanites* dates (grave B211) and doum fruits (grave B27) typical of Upper Egyptian species. Sheep/goat dung was also found in the assemblage (graves B25 & B26). Information on the archaeological context of each sample is given. Carbon dating and stable isotope analyses were conducted to situate the interpretation of the botanical samples within the larger grave and cemetery contexts, paleo-ecological interpretation, and to expand our understanding of the social history of food offerings during the Predynastic in the upper Egyptian region of Ballâs.

## Keywords

Predynastic, Northern Cemetery of Ballâs, Archaeobotany, Castor Beans, Doum, *Balanites*, Stable Isotope

## Introduction

The northern cemetery of Ballâs<sup>1</sup> in Upper Egypt was excavated by Albert M. Lythgoe for the Hearst Egyptian Expedition of the University of California between 1900-1901. The expedition was under the direction of George A. Reisner and supported by Mrs Phoebe Apperson Hearst. The cemetery was the focus of a dissertation by Podzorski in 1994. The botanical assemblage discussed here, albeit small (seven samples), presents important contributions to the variety of plant species documented in Predynastic Egypt, particularly castor beans (*Ricinus communis* L.) (see Table 1). The beans are empty of their oil content and were strung together and placed around the neck of the deceased, which suggests the use of the plant as an object rather than food. The samples under study were sent to California between 1903-1906. Currently, these materials reside in the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, University of California Berkeley. Another interesting finding in this small assemblage is the presence of sheep/goat dung pellets among the materials from the Predynastic Ballâs graves. This is not a unique finding, as sheep/goat dung pellets have been found alongside assemblages of plant-food offerings in Predynastic Egypt, e.g. Hierakonpolis (Fahmy 2003; Fahmy *et al.* 2008), Matmar, and Armant (Podzorski 1994: 428; El Hadidi *et al.* 1996). This contribution presents the identification of seven archaeobotanical remains and carbon dates for two samples for verification of date in case of possible intrusions. Stable carbon isotope data for the Predynastic Ballâs botanical sample is also reported for paleo-ecological interpretation of the plant-food ecology of these species.

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<sup>1</sup> This phrasing is used to distinguish this site from the similarly-named Predynastic cemetery excavated a few years earlier by Quibell and Petrie (Quibell 1895: 1; Petrie and Quibell 1896: 1). The site should also not be confused with Deir el Ballâs which contains remains from the Second Intermediate Period, New Kingdom, and later.

### **Excavation History**

In 1899 Mrs Phoebe Apperson Hearst contracted with Dr George A. Reisner to ‘make historical and archaeological researches’ in Egypt for the benefit of the University of California (Reisner 1908: v). Once the Egyptian Expedition had been established, it fell to Reisner to determine where they should work. Reisner consulted with Ludwig Borchardt and J.E. Quibell and was granted permission to work in the area of Dêr (Reisner 1908: v). In December of 1900 Reisner gave Albert Lythgoe the task of excavating the northern cemetery of Ballâs, which he described as being of the ‘Predynastic’ (Reisner 1908: vi). The first entry in Lythgoe’s field notebook is dated Wednesday, December 26, 1900 (Lythgoe 1901: 1) and the last date he recorded was ‘Jan. 1901’. The northern cemetery at Ballâs was in the process of being looted when the expedition arrived. Unauthorised excavation continued even after the Expedition set up its camp and began work on the site. Grave 4, which was one of the first burials opened, was broken up and destroyed by *sebakhin* overnight. Thereafter the expedition posted guards and removed valuable items (Lythgoe 1901: 3).

Lythgoe does not explicitly mention his method of excavation, however, it is likely that the techniques he employed were similar to those documented for his later work at Naga-ed-Dêr Predynastic cemetery 7000 (Lythgoe 1965: xi-xii): a crew of workmen would engage in the initial clearing of an area; then the openings to tombs were located (generally by the softer consistency of the soil and their colour); the shafts were cleared, and, finally, once the burial was revealed, the contents of the grave were noted and photographs were taken by Lythgoe with the aid of trained workmen.

The method of recording consisted of making an outline sketch of the grave and its contents and noting the relative positions of all objects. A small outline sketch of each artefact was usually made, accompanied by a brief ware description, occasionally with measurements, and keyed to the tomb plan by number. Each object was marked with a three-part number in the field (e.g. B 173/12). This identification number was written in pencil on all artefacts recovered, except the most fragile. Objects found in the fill above the grave floor were either numbered after the *in situ* objects had been designated or given only cemetery and tomb designations (e.g. B173). Objects recovered from the fill were sketched in the notes. Photographs were taken of about half of the graves before objects were removed. Studio photographs of selected objects were taken after they had been removed to the expedition field camp (Podzorski 1994: 12-13).

The Hearst Expedition did not collect all the remains from any of its excavations. At the northern cemetery of Ballâs, more than half of the ceramics and other objects appear to have been left at the site. Lythgoe noted the presence of matting, cloth, and other highly perishable materials that had survived due to the dry Upper Egyptian climate. Over one hundred references to various types of plant remains, including ‘vegetable matter’ (the most common term), grain, chaff, wood, fruits, nuts, etc. appear in Lythgoe’s notes. However, almost none of these materials were transported to the University of California. With very few exceptions, the human remains from the site were not kept, and sex, age or pathologies observed on the skeletal remains were cursory, at best. Lythgoe’s remarks on skeletal and botanical materials must be viewed with caution, since he was not a specialist in the identification of human or botanical remains (Podzorski 1994: 13-14). The artefacts collected by the expedition were apparently shipped to the University of California between 1903-1906. The field notes and photographs were retained by Reisner and later sent to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (Podzorski 1994: 16).

### **The Cemetery**

The northern cemetery of Ballâs was located on the west bank of the Nile, c. 20 km (12 miles) south of modern Qenah, across the river and slightly north of the ancient town of Coptos. Reisner described

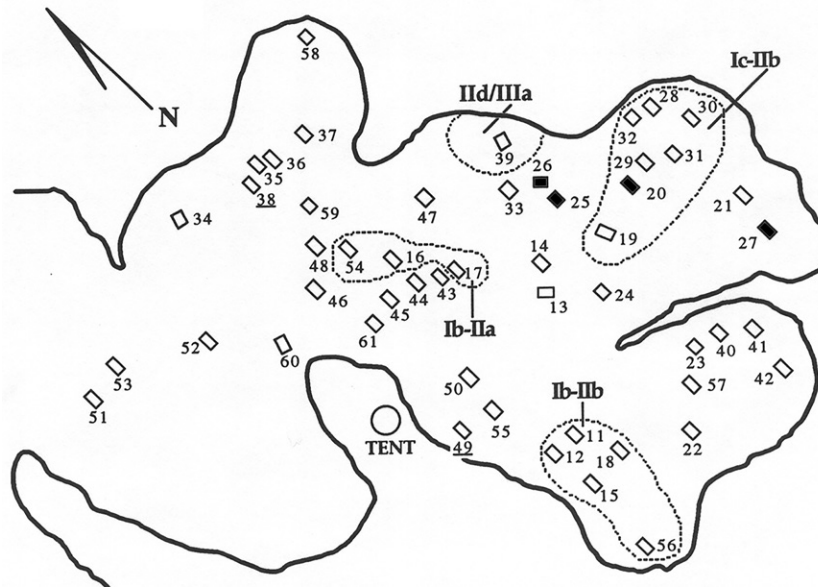


Figure 1. Map showing locations of tombs in the SE section of the main cemetery, northern cemetery of Ballâs. Tombs B20, B25, B26 and B27 are indicated in black (after Podzorski 1994).

the cemetery as being ‘about a kilometre north of Petrie’s work at the same place’ (Reisner 1901: 24). This description would place its location south of the town of El-Ballâs, in contrast to the Dynastic cemeteries and palace structures of Deir el Ballâs, which were located north of the town (Fischer 1964: Map; Lacovara 1990: 1). Photographs taken at the start of the excavation show high limestone cliffs some distance in the background, while the cemetery itself lies on a relatively flat sand and gravel terrace (Podzorski 1994: pl. 1).

The Predynastic cemetery was described by Lythgoe as being set atop ‘four slight knolls’ (Lythgoe 1901: 1), but the location of specific tombs in relation to these knolls was not recorded. The development of the cemetery was generally SE to NW, covering an area of about 340 m x 190 m. The main cemetery consisted of two components: the south-eastern portion, also identified as Cemetery 3 (Lythgoe 1901: 4), dates primarily to the Naqada II period (Figure 1), and the larger, north-western section (Figure 2), contains mostly Naqada III – Early Dynastic burials (Podzorski 1994: 10). An empty expanse of c. 70 m separates the two portions of the main cemetery. A total of 250 Predynastic graves were recorded by the Hearst Expedition for the cemetery, although tomb numbers going up to 356 were assigned to specific workmen in the notebooks. It is likely that tombs for which we have numbers but no records represent either empty graves or anticipated work that never occurred. Four of the five graves discussed in this paper come from the earlier portion of the cemetery.

### **Tomb Architecture**

The 250 graves recorded for the northern cemetery of Ballâs were consistent in form with tombs known from other Predynastic and Early Dynasty sites in Egypt.<sup>2</sup> Most of the graves excavated at the site were simple pit tombs. Two other styles of tombs were also noted: open pit with recessed and sunken side chamber (Reisner Type ic; ‘stairway tomb’) (Reisner 1936: 1-8; Hendricks 1994: 152) and single chamber

<sup>2</sup> The tombs from the northern cemetery at Ballâs were originally recorded in two notebooks. Typed transcripts of these notebooks, including redrawn (not traced) tomb plans and artefact sketches, were made in the early portion of the 20th century. Unfortunately, some errors exist in the transcribed versions. Sometime after the transcriptions were made, the second notebook was lost and now only the typed copy remains.

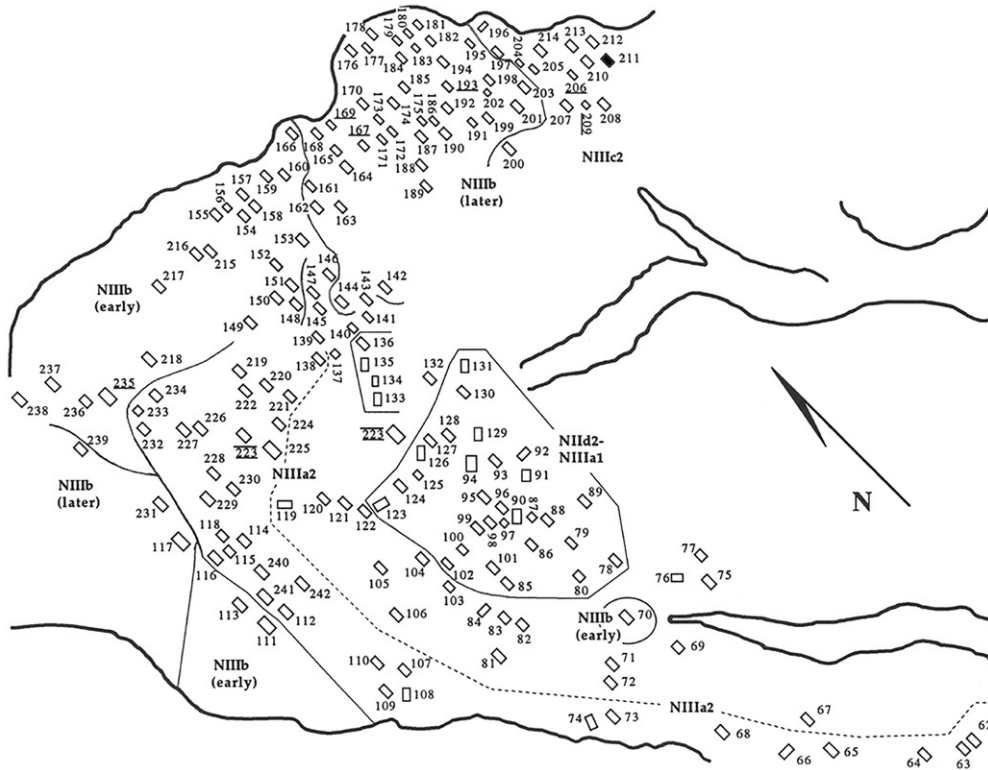


Figure 2. Map showing locations of tombs in the NW section of the main cemetery, northern cemetery of Ballâs. Tomb B211 is indicated in black (after Podzorski 1994).

pit tomb with mud brick lining. The five tombs discussed in this study are all of the simple pit type. Average tomb sized increased through the period of use of the cemetery (Podzorski 1994: 37). Orientation of tombs was generally north-south, within  $\pm 20^\circ$  of magnetic north (Podzorski 1994: 39-40). None of the tombs were rock cut. There was no evidence of superstructures.

There was evidence for different methods of roofing in the graves. Wood was the most common material observed. Plain wooden roofs, some quite thick (B231-roof 7 cm thick Lythgoe 1901: 78), were made of branches or small logs and wooden planks laid across the opening of the grave pit. Wood with reed matting and 'mud' or 'mud plaster' in various combinations were also noted. Lythgoe reported that the remains of some roofs were visible 'on the sides of pit.' There were a few examples of wooden posts that might have served as roof supports or in roof construction. In a very few of these cases the poles had been bound with rope. In grave B211, Lythgoe (1901: 71) noted traces of two vertical wooden posts 2.5 cm - 3 cm in diameter in the northeast and northwest corners of the grave. Remains of wooden roofing were noted at a height of 70 cm above the grave floor in the same burial.

## Materials and Methods

In this section, we discuss the archaeobotanical materials and their tomb context. Each grave is described, including its structure, human remains, and objects found. Artefact information is derived from the preserved objects and museum catalogue records in the Hearst Museum, Lythgoe's field notes, and studio photographs and layout notes made at the expedition field camp after work at the site was completed in 1901. The photographs are identified by Old Series Photo Register (OSPR) numbers. After Reisner's death, the original field notes and photographs were retained by the Museum of Fine Arts,

Boston, with copies made for the Hearst Museum in later years.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, none of the graves discussed here were photographed during the excavation. Description and analytic results of the plant remains follow the discussion of tomb context. Archaeobotanical analysis was conducted using visual analysis by stereomicroscope 10 x magnification. <sup>14</sup>C radiocarbon dating and stable carbon isotope analysis were conducted on two samples, one castor bean and one caprine dung (see Table 1).

The notational scheme used to ‘type’ or classify each vessel in the ceramic assemblage from the northern cemetery at Ballâs, both the actual ceramics, as well as those known from photographs and sketches, was developed in 1994 (Podzorski 1994). The basic scheme is that published by Petrie in his Predynastic and Proto-dynastic corpora (Petrie 1921, 1953) and expanded upon by other users, most notably Brunton and Mond and Myers. Variability in the Ballâs corpus was captured using notations added to the core Petrie designation (Podzorski 1994: 75-76). Relative dates assigned to similar vessel types by the original publication author(s), whether S.D., Stufe, or variations on the Naqada series dates, were recorded for each vessel. In rare instances, some form of absolute date existed and these were recorded as well.

The position of a burial within the cemetery, in relation to other tombs, is also useful when attempting to date a tomb. Often termed ‘horizontal stratigraphy’, the utility of this approach rests on the fact that cemeteries tend to grow or accrete in more or less orderly fashion. Tomb placement is rarely completely random. Once a graveyard is founded, the position of later tombs is influenced by the already existing interments. Other factors, such as familial relationships, social status, local topography, etc., also affect tomb location.

Tomb dating is an iterative process based in part on the range of dates for the ceramic assemblage and any ‘index fossil’ artefacts within tomb; elements of tomb construction may also be factored in. In addition, dating can be influenced by the horizontal stratigraphy of a cemetery. Dating tombs, particularly those with few or common contents, rarely produces precise results and date ranges are often given.

TABLE 1. ARCHAEOBOTANICAL MATERIALS FROM THE PREDYNASTIC CEMETERY OF NORTH BALLÂS. TWO SAMPLES FROM THE ASSEMBLAGE WERE FURTHER ANALYSED FOR CARBON DATING USING AN ACCELERATOR MASS SPECTROMETER AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA IRVINE AND <sup>13</sup>C STABLE ISOTOPE ANALYSIS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA BERKELEY.

Museum #	Context	Plant ID Family	Genus, species	Common name	count	Cal BC 14C	δ <sup>13</sup> C <sub>vsmow</sub> ‰
#6-4857	Grave B20	Euphorbiaceae	Ricinus communis	castor bean	150	3511-3426, 84% certainty	-24.3
# 6-4858	Grave B20	Euphorbiaceae	Ricinus communis	castor bean	150		
# 6-4859	Grave B20	Euphorbiaceae	Ricinus communis	castor bean	150		
#6-4875	Grave B25	dung	caprine dung	sheep/goat dung	100	3635 – 3555, 62.3%	-22.91
#6-4876	Grave B26	dung	caprine dung	sheep/goat dung	100		
#6-4892	Grave B27	Arecaceae	Hyphaene thebaica (L.) Mart.	Doum	4		
#6-5755	Grave 211	Zygophyllaceae	Balanites aegyptiaca (L.) Dekukem 1812	Desert dates	9		

<sup>3</sup> Our thanks to the department of the Art of Ancient Egypt, Nubia, and the Near East, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and to the staff of the P.A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, especially Dr Frank Norick and Joan Knudsen, for access to these resources.



Figure 3. Shell #6-4862. Marine bivalve mollusc from the Veridae family. Species is most likely *Corbicula fluminalis* (O.F. Müller, 1774) (Courtesy of the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology and the Regents of the University of California).



Figure 4. Botanical sample #6-4857 of *Ricinus communis* L., castor beans from tomb B20 in the northern cemetery of Ballâs (Courtesy of the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology and the Regents of the University of California).

### Grave B20 Context

According to Lythgoe's (1901: 13) field notes and tomb plan, grave B20 was a simple rectangular pit, c. 1 m x 65 cm, containing the remains of a child, c. 5 years of age. The grave was undisturbed and the skeleton intact, lying on remnants of woven textile and 'rush' matting in the typical Predynastic flexed position with arms drawn up in front of the torso, on its left side, head south, facing west. The burial assemblage included a bivalve shell of a small freshwater clam of the *Corbicula fluminalis* species (O.F. Müller, 1774)<sup>4</sup> found 10 cm in front of the neck (Figure 3), near a mass of 'beans strung ... as beads' in eight strands. The shell is not pierced for suspension. A wide-mouthed, black-topped jar (possibly Petrie type B57b,c/B74c/B78c; not collected), and a black-topped beaker (#6-4861) containing 'remains of vegetable matter' were in the southwest corner of the grave.

The Hearst Museum preserves the tall beaker (#6-4861; a close variant of Petrie type B35c), the mass of beans (#6-4857-4859), and the shell (#6-4862). Based on the limited sample of two ceramic vessels (one known only from a profile drawing by the excavator) and the position of the grave within the cemetery, the tomb appears to date sometime in the Naqada Ic-IIa/b.

The archaeobotanical sample from grave B20 consists of specimens of desiccated castor beans (*Ricinus communis* L.). The botanical identification is castor beans from the spurge family *Euphorbiaceae*. The sample analysed in this study from the Hearst Museum consisted of c. 150 seeds of castor beans (PAHMA #6-4857; #6-4858; and #6-4859) (Figure 4). They were all empty of their oil content and the seed coats show holes on each end. Whether their intended use was ornamental or as some type offering is unknown. The shells of castor beans are toxic if eaten, but the expressed oil is known to have various uses (Serpico and White 2000: 391-392). Lythgoe's notes state: 'Around the neck [of the skeleton] was a great quantity of small lenticular beans which had been strung and used as beads. They encircled the neck in 8 separate strands'. Although the original stringing no longer exists, all the surviving beans appear to have been pierced longitudinally and thus their identification as a necklace is supported.

<sup>4</sup> We express our thanks to Eva Panagiotakopulu, University of Edinburgh, for the identification of the freshwater clam species.

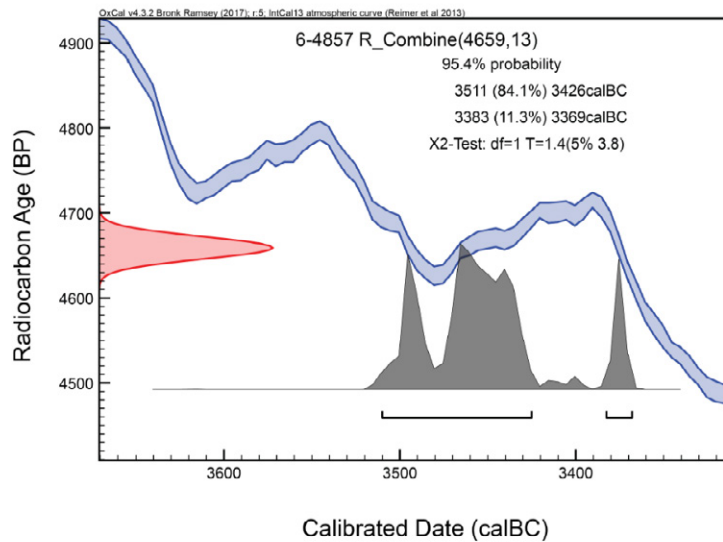


Figure 5. Calibrated radiocarbon results for sample #6-4857 (castor bean (*Ricinus communis* L.) fragment from grave B20) using OxCal 4.3. Double lines denote the IntCal13 terrestrial calibration curve with  $1\text{-}\sigma$  envelope (Reimer et al. 2013). Inset denotes the results of Bayesian statistical analysis (© Brian Damiata, UCLA).

After the archaeobotanical identification, a sample of the castor beans was taken for carbon dating. AMS  $^{14}\text{C}$  to confirm the Predynastic date of the sample and to ensure that the specimens were not intrusive in the burial assemblage. The  $^{14}\text{C}$  age of the sample is  $4659 \pm 13$  BP, and the calibrated date using Bayesian statistic model is 3511–3426 calBC with 84% certainty (Figure 5). The date conforms well with the Predynastic Naqada I/early Naqada II date inferred from the relative ceramic chronology suggested for the grave. Based on the proposed Simplified relative chronology of the Naqada period (Dee et al. 2014: 322, Figure 1), the  $^{14}\text{C}$  date for this period falls within the range of 3700–3450 BC. This date range is perhaps a century lower than suggested in some recent sources (e.g. Wengrow 2006: 273).

Carbon stable isotope analysis was conducted on two botanical samples. The carbon stable isotope on plants provides information on whether the plant is a C3 or C4 species, a distinction based on how these plants process carbon dioxide from the air during the photosynthetic cycle into either three-carbon compound for the C3 plant or four-carbon compound (C4 plant). C3 plants are the most abundant among plant species, examples are wheat and barley which predominate in the Egyptian diet. C4 plants are less common but they occurred in the Nubian diet, e.g. sorghum and millet, and in some Egyptian foods such as tigernut (*Cyperus esculentus*) (Shahat 2023: 318). As for the stable carbon isotope data for the castor beans, the  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  is  $-24.3 \pm 0.1$  ‰ which means it is a C3 plant. The importance of measuring the carbon stable isotope, even if we already know that this is a C3 plant, is to estimate the water use efficiency and hence the ecological conditions of the plant as to whether it grew during a time of drought and water-stress conditions or under humid or well-irrigated conditions (Shahat and Jenzen 2021: 237). The carbon stable isotope value for this sample is of a C3 plant growing under normal non-water-stressed conditions.

### Grave B25 Context

Ballâs grave 25 contained the remains of a single individual, probably an adult, who had been laid to rest in the usual flexed position (left side, head south, facing west). The head area was disturbed and the skull, except for the lower jaw, was missing from the grave. There was no cloth or matting (Lythgoe 1901: 15). The rectangular grave with rounded corners measured 1.15 m x 0.85 m. Funerary goods had been placed



Figure 6. Sample #6-4875, sheep/goat dung from grave B25. Charred and uncharred dung include small digested botanical remains (Courtesy of the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology and the Regents of the University of California).

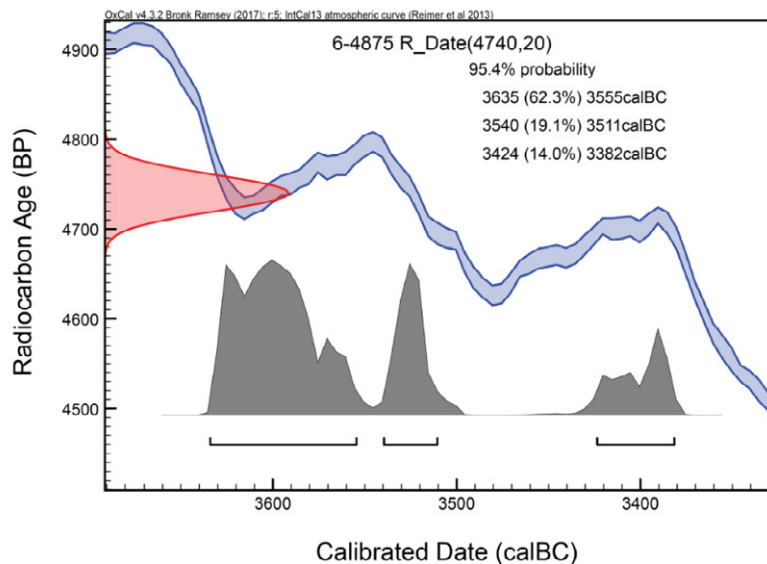


Figure 7. Calibrated radiocarbon results for sample #6-4875 (sheep/goat dung with botanical inclusions from grave B25) using OxCal 4.3. Double lines denote the IntCal13 terrestrial calibration curve with 1- $\sigma$  envelope (Reimer et al. 2013). Inset denotes the results of Bayesian statistical analysis (© Brian Damiata, UCLA).

along the west wall of the grave, opposite the head and upper torso of the deceased. The assemblage included five ceramic vessels. At the southern end were two small black-topped pots: a jar with small base (#6-4877) and a slender beaker (possibly type B26D/B25f; not collected). Two red polished bowls (possibly types P11F,m/P24N and P11F/P24N,L; not collected) and an unslipped, rather crudely hand-formed Nile silt bowl (#6-4880) that had been placed inside one of the larger red slipped bowls completed the grouping. Also found, according to the field notes, 'Under and between [the bowls] ... was considerable quantity of beans or similar vegetable' (#6-4875) (Lythgoe 1901: 15).

The Hearst Museum preserves two pieces from the ceramic assemblage: the black-topped jar with small foot (#6-4877; type B62b<sub>2</sub>) and the crude Nile silt bowl or cup (#6-4880; R1b1/2; a close variant of Petrie type R1b1). The 'beans or ... vegetable' material noted by the excavator have been identified by the authors as sheep/goat dung (PAHMA #6-4875) (Podzorski 1994: 428). Due to the very limited



number of clearly identifiable vessels, the ceramic seriation date for this grave is very broad (Naqada Ic – Naqada IId), possibly focusing on the early half of the Naqada II.

The archaeobotanical sample from grave B25 is limited to digested chaff inclusions inside caprine, i.e. sheep/goat, dung pellets. Specimen #6-4875 includes c. 100 sheep/goat dung pellets found in both charred and uncharred condition (Figure 6). Small, digested botanical remains of cereal chaff of identical size are clearly seen, but their identification was not possible using macrobotanical visual non-destructive analysis.

A sample of dung was taken for carbon date and stable carbon isotope analysis. The AMS-<sup>14</sup>C date results yielded a <sup>14</sup>C Age 4740 ± 20 BP, and the calibrated date using Bayesian statistics is 3635 – 3555 with 62.3% certainty (Figure 7). The stable carbon isotope analysis of the sheep/goat dung required extraction of a 0.5 mg sample processed by Shahat at the Stable isotope Facility at the University of California Berkeley. The carbon isotope ratio for the chaff in the dung pellet is δ<sup>13</sup>C = -22.91 relative to VSMOW standard; and the δ<sup>15</sup>N (‰) is 10.05 relative to the standard, i.e. atmospheric air with C: N% ratio of 8.75. This indicates that the sheep/goat diet was predominantly C3 plant (normal moist environment) with a small proportion of C4 plants.

### **Grave B26 Context**

Ballâs grave 26 contained the badly disturbed remains of ‘a very young child – only few days or weeks old’. Only the damaged skull and a ‘few ribs & leg bones’ were noted. The tomb plan shows a rectangular grave measuring 1.1 m x 0.55 m (Lythgoe 1901: 15-16). Unlike the body, the grave goods seem to have been relatively undisturbed. As is typical, they were located along the west wall of the grave, starting at the southern end. The grave contained six ceramic vessels: two black-topped jars, one small (#6-4813) and a second, larger jar containing ‘sand’ (possibly type B44s/B68b,c; not collected), a coarse Nile silt bottle (possibly type R91/92; not collected), and three red polished pieces. These include a red polish hole-mouth jar which ‘contained nothing but sand’ (possibly type P33/P26; not collected) and a very small bowl (possibly type P11H/P25c; not collected). A larger red slipped bowl (possibly type P11a/P22a/24k; not collected) is reported to have contained ‘remains of vegetable matter’.

Only the small black-topped jar (#6-4813; type B78b/2) from this grave is preserved in the Hearst Museum.<sup>5</sup> However, based on the field sketch, tomb B26 contained two other vessels of relatively distinctive forms that appear to have close parallels with two vessels that are in the Hearst: (B28-3 #6-4883) and (B23-2 #6-4869). Of note, the small black-topped vessel from B26 has a shallow hole that has been drilled partway into the interior wall of a base sherd. This hole indicates the piece was probably sampled for Perlman and Asaro’s early neutron activation study of ceramic fabric (Perlman and Asaro 1971). Unfortunately, the published table does not link their sample numbers with the museum catalogue numbers (Perlman and Asaro 1971: 189, Table 13.5). Ceramic dating based on these three vessel types and the location of the tomb within the cemetery indicate an approximate date of Naqada Ic – early to mid Naqada II. The archaeobotanical materials from this grave also consists of caprine dung pellets (Museum #6-4876) (over 100 pieces). Charred and desiccated sheep/goat dung were found. It is interesting to note that graves B25 and B26 were immediately adjacent to each other.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> PAHMA #6-4813 was associated with B3-15 in the museum’s catalogue. However, based on the studio photograph annotation for Old Series Photo Register (OSPR) #2530 and measurements comparing the 2nd, 6th, and 10th vessels in the photo, the pot identified as B3-15 is more likely #6-4818. The field-recorded measurements for B26-1 (10 cm x 8 cm) match those of #6-4813 (9.9 cm x 7.8 cm), so it seems more likely that this piece is from grave B26.

<sup>6</sup> The field notes for grave B26 do not mention ‘beans’ being found, only ‘vegetable matter’. The original museum catalogue card for the ‘beans’ from B25 have the Museum number ‘6-4875-76’, although the ‘76’ was later erased. It is possible that there was some confusion at the time of cataloguing and both samples are from grave B 25.

### Grave B27 Context

According to the field notes and tomb plan, grave B27 was a large rectangular pit 2.1 m x 1.1 m. The skeleton was at the southern end of the grave in the usual flexed position, with the forearms in front of the chest and hands near the neck. 'Remains of clothing and rush mat' were below the body. The skull, mandible and scapulae were out of position, but the remainder of the body was undisturbed (Lythgoe 1901: 16). Four ceramic vessels were found in the grave. A red polished bottle (possibly type P87b/R91/R92; not collected) was adjacent to the disturbed skull and possibly not *in situ*. The remaining vessels were along the west side of the grave, opposite the lower body. A relatively deep, red polished bowl (possibly type P28a/P13F; not collected) contained a very small black-topped jar (#6-4890). North of the bowl was a small, black-topped beaker (B25f2-2/B22e,f,j/B26D/B27b; not collected) with 'vegetable matter' (also not collected). In addition, 'a few pieces of fruit (?)' (#6-4892) were found between the hands and neck. The excavator noted that the lower (northern) portion of the grave, a space of at least 50 cm, did not contain any objects (Lythgoe 1901: 16).

The Hearst Museum possesses only one of the ceramic vessels from this grave, the very small black-topped jar (#6-4890; type B58b/2). Due to the very limited number of clearly identifiable vessels, the date for this grave is based primarily on the position of the tomb within the cemetery and is very broad (NIc – NIic (-?)), possibly in the later portion of this range.

The only organic remains preserved in the Hearst Museum collection catalogued under this tomb entry are small fragments of doum fruits *Hyphaene thebaica* (L.) Mart (#6-4892). These are mainly four large fragments from the fruit exocarp or outer layer.

### Grave B211 Context

Grave B211 was a rectangular pit 1.75 m long by 0.7 m wide (Figure 2). It had been completely plundered and an unspecified number of human bones, possibly of an adult, were found in the fill above the tomb floor. Architectural remains include traces of two vertical wooden posts (c. 2.5 cm to 3 cm in diameter) at the corners of the northern end of the grave and a wooden roof at a height of 70 cm above the floor (Lythgoe 1901: 71). The posts may have helped support the roof of the burial chamber. It is also possible they were used to stabilise wooden or matting panels that once lined the walls of the grave. The former type of construction was noted in several Predynastic graves at Naga-ed-Dêr (Lythgoe 1965: 168-170, 204-205, 269, 337, etc.). A small marl clay bowl (#6-5754) and a quantity of 'nuts' (#6-5755) were recovered from the fill.

No samples of the wooden elements of the tomb were collected, but the Hearst Museum possesses the marl bowl (#6-5754; type Protodynastic 14g\*) and the nuts. Due to the presence of a single identified vessel, the ceramic seriation date for this grave is extremely broad (NIII – NIIIc2). It may date to the later portion of this range based on the location of the grave within the cemetery.

The archaeobotanical remains found in grave B211 are nine pits of desert dates

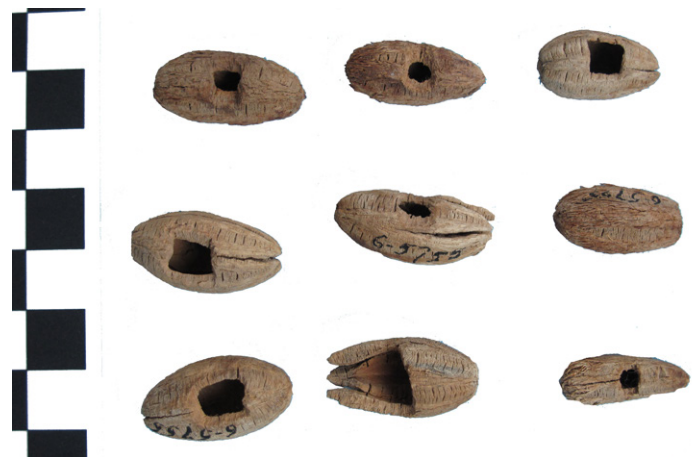


Figure 8. *Balanites* date sample #6-5755, nine count from grave B211 (Courtesy of the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology and the Regents of the University of California).

(*Balanites aegyptiaca* (L.) Delile, 1812) from the *Zygophyllaceae* family (sample #6-5755). Only the fruit endocarp with hole marks are preserved in desiccated condition (Figure 8). All of these pits have a square, round or triangular hole cut in one side, presumably to facilitate removal of the pit content. One of the pieces has holes cut through both sides. This sample was not included in the isotopic test due to the limited accessibility to such kind of analysis on Egyptian collections.

## Discussion

This section contains a discussion of the organic remains found in the assemblage from the northern cemetery in Ballâs. This is not a holistic discussion of the topic, but rather is limited to the samples taken by the excavator. The discussion below is organised by each species found.

### **Castor Beans (*Ricinus communis* (L.))**

Castor bean was found in tomb B20. The castor bean is an oil-producing species from the spurge family, *Euphorbiaceae*. Only the outer seed coat (exterior plant part) is preserved in desiccated condition. The beans found in this grave have holes at each end which would permit stringing like beads and, although no thread was preserved, their orientation when found clearly indicated that eight strands of beans had been wrapped like a necklace around the neck of the child (Lythgoe 1901: 13). A small unpierced freshwater clam shell of the *Corbicula fluminalis* species (O.F. Müller, 1774) was found near the beans. The use of shells and plant elements such as *Balanites* date pits or doum fruit in the Predynastic to make ornaments is not uncommon, as seen in sites such as Hierakonpolis (Burleigh 1983: 361-367). It is also attested ethnographically by Shahat in areas in Upper Egypt, such as Luxor where doum fruits and sycamore figs were tied together as necklaces (Shahat 2021: 60). Although not unknown, the presence of castor beans is rarely reported from Egypt in this time (de Vartavan *et al.* 2010: 205-206). Early archaeological evidence of the castor plant in Nubia, dated to c. 7500 BP, comes from the site of Kabbashi Haitah in central Sudan (Abdel Magid 2014).

Although the skin of the castor bean is highly toxic, the cold pressed oil is not, and in later times may have been used for lighting, lotions, lubricants, and in other preparations, including tanning leather and medicines (Serpico and White 2000: 392; Moreno García 2018: 160). Textual sources from later periods of Egyptian history indicate a variety of uses for castor bean oil, including lamp oil (chronicles of the prince Osorkon (8th century BC) (Moreno García 2018: 166). Moreno García (2018: 161) mentions castor oil as part of the ‘invisible trade’ with Nubia, where the oil was used as tanning material in the hide and leather skin industries. These products were imported into Egypt from Nubia. Leather sandals, leopard skins and cattle hides, which are reported in Akhemenid texts as major imports from Nubia through the Kharga oasis to the Nile Valley, all used castor oil (Moreno García 2018: 168). Moreno García (2018: 166) suggests that the crop was not cultivated in Egypt until the 1st millennium BC. Serpico and White (2000: 391) also mention possible late cultivation of castor bean, and that even in modern times wild castor is more commonly harvested than cultivated. However, paleoethnobotanical evidence show that seeds of castor were found in sites dated to the Predynastic, including Maadi (Keimer 1947), Badari, and Hemamieh (Brunton and Caton-Thompson 1928: 38, 41). Even though later texts provide evidence that castor oil came as an import from Nubia, suggesting cultural interaction with the region, from an archaeobotanical point of view it is uncertain whether or not castor seeds were imported or grown locally. This would require confirmation using strontium isotope analysis, which helps identify region of origin. As for the use of the castor oil, modern ethnographic evidence from East Africa indicates that one of the major uses of the plant is for tanning hides (Moreno García 2018: 166). Integrating these textual sources with the archaeobotanical findings from the northern cemetery of Ballâs has one caveat, as our material dates to the Predynastic.

Results of the carbon stable isotope analysis on the castor beans provides information on the photosynthesis pathway of the plant whether it is a C3 or C4 species (i.e. process the carbon dioxide from the air into 3-carbon compound or 4-carbon compound), in this case it is a C3 plant. The measure of  $^{13}\text{C}$  isotope also gives a hint on the ancient water availability and the paleoenvironmental conditions under which the plant grew. In this case the isotopic value of  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  -24.3‰ marks high water availability, and non-drought conditions during this point of time in the Predynastic. This agrees with other ecological interpretations by archaeobotanists working elsewhere in Upper Egypt, such as the site of Hierakonpolis dating to the same period by El Hadidi. In his work on the biodiversity of flora in Egypt's Predynastic at Hierakonpolis, El Hadidi concluded that the Predynastic environment was wetter and would have been suitable for agriculture, pastoralism, and settlement up into the Great Wadi (1982: 105). Other studies demonstrated the relationship between the environmental conditions and increased human settlement along the Nile. As climatic changes happened in the Eastern desert, marked with increased aridity, more population settlements moved to the Nile valley in the 4th millennium BC (for more details in the topic, see Pachur and Hoelzmann 2000; Nicoll 2004; Kuper and Kropelin 2006; Clarke *et al.* 2016).

### ***Balanites Dates (Balanites Aegyptiaca (L.) Del)***

The discovery of *Balanites* dates in grave B211 is a common finding among the archaeobotanical assemblages in Upper Egypt. *Balanites* was found in other Predynastic sites in Upper Egypt, as reported by El Hadidi (1982) in Hierakonpolis. El Hadidi describes the finding of *Balanites* from three localities at Hierakonpolis, including a cemetery context. He found *Balanites* kernels in Locality 11 dated to the Neolithic (El Hadidi 1982: 108) and *Balanites* fruit stone in Locality 6 dated to the Naqada I period (El Hadidi 1982: 105). Dryer has also found the species in Naqada and identified it as *Balanites roxburghii* (de Vartavan *et al.* 2010: 52) Even though in modern times *Balanites* dates only grow in Upper Egypt, there are findings of the *Balanites* from lower Egyptian contexts, such as Saqqara, where *Balanites* dates were found in the subterranean galleries of the Step Pyramid dated to the 3rd dynasty (Lauer *et al.* 1950). *Balanites* was also found in Giza in the boat of Cheops, located south of the Great Pyramid dated to the 4th dynasty (Nour *et al.* 1960: 45-46). If ecologically *Balanites* only grows in the south, it is likely that the *Balanites* was imported from Upper Egypt to the north.

### ***Caprine Dung***

In his notes, Lythgoe (1901: 15) mistakenly identified this material as 'beans or similar vegetable'. However, this archaeobotanical study confirms the identification as sheep/goat dung. This material was found on the tomb floor, underneath two bowls.

From the Egyptological side, the interpretation of finding sheep/goat dung among assemblages of plant-food remains in Predynastic Egypt usually goes undiscussed and it is worthy of attention for understanding its possible symbolic meanings. This is not an uncommon finding, as caprine dung from funerary contexts have been reported by other archaeobotanists as coming from cemetery contexts dated to the Predynastic at Hierakonpolis, Matmar, and Armant (Petrie and Quibell 1896: 2; Podzorski 1994: 428; El Hadidi *et al.* 1996). In the absence of texts and wall scenes in the grave pits of the Predynastic, interpretation is challenging, but could it be that the supply of sheep/goat dung symbolises a provision of fuel or fertilisers for growing food and cooking in the afterlife? The finding of dung amongst food offerings was also attested during the dynastic period. For example, a ceramic bowl full of cattle dung was placed among the food offerings in the tomb of Kha and Merit (TT8) dated to the 18th dynasty (see Museo Egizio Collection, Inventory #S. 8627; Shahat 2021: 134).

The carbon isotope ratio for the dung pellet is  $\delta^{13}\text{C} = -22.91 \pm 0.1$  ‰ relative to the international standard VPDB (Vienna Pee Dee Belemnite) for the stable carbon isotope; and the nitrogen isotope values  $\delta^{15}\text{N}$

=  $10.05 \pm 0.1$  ‰ relative to the standard, which is atmospheric air. The caprine sample has C : N‰ ratio of 8.759. We can imply the diet of the caprine using the two sources linear mixing model. Based on this model, the diet of the sheep/goat that supplied this dung sample consisted of a large fraction of C3 plant species (94.9%) and a minor contribution of C4 plants, only 3.3%.

The benefit of reporting stable carbon isotope in the sheep/goat is to identify the kind of diet on which they were fed. In this case, it predominantly fed on C3 plants, like wheat and barley (grain or stalks), with possible minor contribution of C4 grasses into the diet. The measure of the nitrogen stable isotope also provides important information on the nitrogen content of sheep/goat dung. If the animals were used as sources of fertiliser as suggested by some of the ancient Egyptian scenes from later during the Old Kingdom, this would influence the nitrogen isotopic composition of crops grown in this soil and hence the stable isotope ratio of nitrogen in humans who consumed these crops (Mie *et al.* 2022). Scholars such as Amy Bogaard and Paul Szpak have extensively discussed the impact of the use of animal fertilisers on ancient soil fertility and how this is reflected in high nitrogen values of plant crops grown in such soil (see Bogaard *et al.* 2007; Fraser *et al.* 2011; Szpak *et al.* 2012 on charred remains in the Old World; Szpak and Chiou 2019 on desiccated remains from Peru in the New World).

## Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to present the results of recent scientific analyses of a small sample (7) of preserved archaeobotanical remains from the northern cemetery of Ballâs. The five tomb assemblages that contained these materials are discussed above. Only limited interpretation is possible here. A few things are noteworthy. Of the five tombs discussed, two (B20 and B26) contained single burials of subadults (c. 0-5/6 years of age). Only eight child burials are recorded for the site, no doubt more were originally interred in the cemetery (Podzorski 1994: 46-47). These two graves contained more artefacts (6) than was typical (2) for the period (late Naqada I-Naqada IIb/c) at the site (Podzorski 1994: 471). The other late Naqada I – Naqada II tombs (B25 and B27) held single adult burials that also contained more artefacts (6 and 7 respectively) than was typical. Grave B25 was slightly under the median size for the period, while B27 was one of the largest. Grave B211 (possibly late Naqada III) was plundered and the grave slightly below the median for this period (Podzorski 1994: 35-38). However, the presence of the upright wooden posts at the north end is perhaps indicative of a more complex form of tomb construction. Although drawing reliable conclusions about human behaviour at this site based on such a small sample is not possible, it is interesting that the four earlier tombs had burial assemblages that held more objects than was typical of the period at this site.

This study demonstrates the value of re-examining museum collections for paleoethnobotanical identification of offerings from Predynastic contexts. Even though the archaeological methods were different than currently used and few samples were collected by the excavators, contextualising the archaeobotanical remains with ceramic and other artefact data, human remains and tomb architecture, expands our understanding of the possible food offerings and plant biodiversity in the Predynastic. Species such as castor beans were mostly known from later periods as imports from Nubia used in tanning animal hides, and as oil for lamps. Carbon dating helps tackle different problems in regard to context; until now only relative ceramic dating, often compromised by the disturbed condition of the cemetery, was available. In this case, carbon dating confirmed that the castor beans are of Predynastic date. Furthermore, careful reading of the archival field notes from the excavations in the museum brings to light how the castor beans were placed in the burial, as objects of material culture and perhaps as ornaments or identity markers. In this case, despite the commonly known use of the species for oil production and medicinal recipes, while the toxicity of the whole bean makes it an unlikely food source, as Lythgoe described, the castor beans were used as strands of a necklace and hence as a funerary offering around the neck of a deceased child. In addition, if castor beans were imported from Nubia,

as suggested by later textual evidence discussed by Moreno García, this might provide evidence of early interaction with Nubia in the Predynastic. However, this requires more isotopic testing (e.g. using strontium isotope) to confirm whether or not the plant was an import.

Furthermore, conducting carbon stable isotope analysis has contributed to our understanding of the ecology and ancient water availability in the Predynastic. This confirms theories proposed by other scholars, such as El Hadidi, who, based on his analysis of weed species and the biodiversity of Egyptian flora in the Predynastic, especially from Hierakonpolis, documented that the period was wetter and more humid and suitable for agriculture, as opposed to other periods in the ancient Near East and North Africa.

Another observation from this collection is the finding of the caprine dung pellets among the ancient Egyptian archaeobotanical assemblages in the funerary context. The stable isotope of carbon and nitrogen of this sample has contributed to our understanding of the diet of these animals, which was predominantly C3 plants like wheat and barley. Meanwhile the nitrogen isotope value contributes to the growing number of studies on ancient agriculture and manuring systems and to our understanding of the nitrogen composition of dung pellets from the Predynastic context in Egypt, which can serve future isotopic studies in Egypt.

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# Military Awards or Made on the Fly? A Review of Golden Flies as Awards in Ancient Egypt

Taneash Sidpura

## Abstract

Fly-shaped pendants have been found in Egypt from the Predynastic Period onwards and are generally interpreted as military awards for bravery in battle because two soldiers, Ahmose Pennekhbet and Amenemhab Mahu, described receiving golden flies from the king. However, no holistic analysis has taken place to consider if this view is accurate or justified.

Furthermore, whilst generally excluding golden flies, wider studies undertaken in the 2000s have suggested that objects from the king should instead be described as rewards or gifts. All these terms carry specific connotations but have not yet been adequately defined and applied.

As a consequence, a two-stage approach is taken. First, this contribution proposes a framework for understanding awards through examining other types of exchange, namely gifts and rewards, which may be applied to understand presentations from the king in ancient Egypt. Second, golden flies are reviewed to assess if they meet the criteria for being an award. This is primarily through considering if their appearances, sizes, or material are sufficiently distinctive to be publicly recognisable, which is a core aim of an award, and if there are associations with military activity.

Overall, we aim to review and debunk here the theory that golden flies were military awards, as their stylistic features and contexts do not support such an interpretation, as these features were more likely due to personal needs and contemporary social practices.

This contribution is a summary of key findings from my PhD dissertation, undertaken at the University of Manchester in 2022.

## Keywords

Flies, Awards, Golden Flies, Fly Pendants, Amulets, Rewards, Gifts

## Introduction

Pendants in the form of flies have been found in ancient Egypt from Naqada II onwards, with examples made of gold from the First Intermediate Period. There are textual references to fly pendants in the 18th-dynasty inscriptions of Ahmose Pennekhbet and Amenemhab Mahu, who described receiving golden flies from the king, following military campaigns. On this basis, golden flies have most commonly been interpreted as military awards given to brave soldiers following deeds of valour on the battlefield (first proposed by Sethe 1911: 143-145). In fact, some historians have described them as being part of an honorary order called the Order of the Golden Fly (e.g. Aldred 1971: 201). Some historians have also extended this view to all fly pendants, regardless of material (e.g. Butterweck-AbdelRahim 2002: 67).

However, the term 'award' has specific connotations which must be defined, and its applicability to golden flies assessed, before these views can be justified. For example, following her investigation of

*shebyu*-collars, which have also been interpreted as awards, Binder (2008: 257) concluded that they most likely operated as gifts, because in inscriptions that describe them being given to officials by the king the reasons for the giving are generally unclear or unstated, appearing instead to highlight a personal relationship. In this light, golden flies should also be reviewed to examine if they truly accord to being interpreted as an award.

This has been analysed by first presenting a definition of an award through differentiating them from other types of exchange, namely gifts, rewards, and trade. Second, golden flies are reviewed to assess if they meet that definition through considering three traits: their appearances, sizes, and material. This chapter demonstrates that a fundamental aspect of an award is for it to be recognisable as such through having distinguishable features. Subsequently, the analysis of golden flies reveals that they possess no appropriate distinguishable traits that would support an interpretation of military awards.

### Understanding Gifts, Rewards, and Awards

From the Old Kingdom, there are numerous accounts of Egyptian officials receiving various and generally expensive items from the king (for an overview, see Butterweck-AbdelRahim 2002). They often consisted of jewellery, frequently of gold, but also included servants, furniture, funerary objects, and weapons. This practice of giving by the king has been translated and described using different terms, often inconsistently, despite these terms having quite specific meanings and connotations. For example, Binder used the term ‘gift’ interchangeably with ‘reward’ (2008: *passim*). Also, in the *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*, this practice is described variously as ‘Auszeichnung’ (Drenkhahn 1975: 581-582), ‘Ehrung’ (Helck 1975: 1184-1185) and ‘Belohnungen’ (Feucht 1977: 731), despite there being no significant differences in the definitions given, and all are understood as the transfer of precious objects to officials to mark a good act or quality.

Similarly, golden flies have generally been described by historians as an honorary military award, which, as this has not been adequately defined or justified, would imply that they were given during a ceremony to publicly mark a special achievement (OED Online 2018a). However, this interpretation of an award must be defined and justified, which can only take place with regard to other types of exchange, i.e. within their context, and notional differences can be used to understand their use in practice (Giddens 1979: 16). For instance, it is theoretically possible that when golden flies were given by the king they were intended as payment in lieu of currency, to express gratitude for a job well done, or to commemorate the official’s relationship with the king.

It is thus essential to define the differences between key concepts of exchange in modern usage to prevent misinterpreting these practices in ancient Egypt. As a consequence, the concepts selected here are gifts, rewards, and awards. The purpose of this review is not to create comprehensive definitions but a framework, in order that analysis of the giving of objects by the king to favoured officials, and in this case golden flies, are not miscategorised. It is also proposed that when needing to describe an object that has been given from one party to another without adding connotations, more neutral terms, such as ‘exchange’ or ‘presentation’, are used.

### Gifts

Current definitions of gifts in ancient Egypt can be exemplified by Janssen’s seminal (2010: 2-3) studies on Egyptian economy, which are based on the premise that a gift was the basic form of exchange between two parties because it was based on mutually agreed and reciprocated giving. This view is mainly due to earlier studies by Karl Polanyi, who based his ideas on Karl Marx’s anti-capitalist theories, and secondary observations of western Pacific civilisations (e.g. Malinowski 1926: 22). On this basis, ethnologists and

Polanyi viewed gifts as profitless exchanges of inalienable things based on the principle of reciprocity, with Pharaonic Egypt being a marketless and indeed profitless economy that operated on the basis of redistribution and gift-giving (Gregory 1982: 18; Polanyi 1977: 74).

While the aim here is not to provide an overall evaluation of this view, there is considerable evidence to the contrary, including:

- The existence of markets is well documented through iconographic examples (Warden 2014: 11).
- There are examples of private landowners paying taxes but not receiving anything in return (e.g. pWilbour/Brooklyn 34.5596.4, Gardiner 1941-1948; Warburton 2010: 168).
- Ostraca from Deir el-Medina documenting exchanges between two individuals list the equivalent values in copper and silver ‘in a community where silver itself was virtually unknown’ to highlight the costs of what was being exchanged (e.g. oPetrie 3, Černý and Gardiner 1957: XVI.3; Warburton 2010: 165).
- Other ostraca from Deir el-Medina document dispute over prices, which should not happen if they were profitless and reciprocal exchanges (e.g. oDeM 133, McDowell 1990: 137).

A fundamental and critical problem with Polanyi/Janssen’s view is its entailing that the Egyptians would not want to enrich themselves and make a profit, and conversely denies the existence of human goodwill as gifts would only be given to receive something in return. The former is somewhat ridiculous as even the earliest remains of human civilisation indicate social and economic differentiation. For example, early Predynastic graves at el-Badari demonstrate social stratification, as the graves with richer objects were larger, more complex, had a greater number of objects, and were grouped together within a cemetery (Anderson 1992: 55-66). Furthermore, the letters of Hekanakht show the landowner attempting to make profit by retaining grain because he was anticipating poor harvests, which would result in higher prices for the grain (Eyre 1999: 49).

Overall, as Eyre (2010: 306-307) pointed out, the redistribution model is neither particularly useful nor applicable in understanding exchanges in any period of Egyptian history. Consequently, this means that describing everyday transactions in ancient Egypt as gifts is unhelpful and possibly even misleading, especially as it is not aligned to modern usage of that term. The simplest way to describe a basic transaction, such as those documented on the aforementioned ostraca, would be trade, which is an exchange of commodities to acquire/sell the good/service.

A better approach to defining gifts is an exchange or one-way giving, in which the aim is to communicate regard based on a personal relationship (e.g. Offer 1997: 452). A gift does not place an implicit obligation to reciprocate as it symbolises a personal relationship between the giver and receiver, which can be expressed in more ways than a gift, and if it did would be ‘repugnant and painful to the donor, destructive of liberality that is intended’ (Noonan 1984: 695). As a consequence, the precise form and amount of the gift is less important than its symbolising a personal relationship, whereas in trade the form and value of the objects are critical to the success of the exchange. For this same reason, whereas rewards and awards normally take on an expected or traditional form and are linked to specific actions and events (see below), gifts are more closely associated with social conditions and individual personality and can thus vary considerably. For example, many types of items given as gifts in modern times, such as vouchers, chocolate, jewellery, etc., could be given on several occasions (e.g. birthdays, anniversaries, Christmas) and the amount, expense, form, etc., is entirely dependent on social norms and personal whims.

Proposed definitions for trade and gifts are thus given below. The aim is not to provide an overall refutation of current understanding of gifts, trade, and Egyptian economy, but that it is important to differentiate between these concepts when interpreting types of exchange, especially in the context of presentations made by the king to his officials.

Trade

Buying of a commodity to acquire it and/or selling of a commodity to gain value/profit

Gifts

Material expression of a personal relationship

**Rewards**

A reward can generally be understood as repayment, recompense, or remuneration for a service, merit, or action (OED Online 2018b; 2018c). A reward can be tangible or abstract but is a direct consequence of a notable action or set of actions. It is primarily intended to motivate and reinforce the positive behaviours (and/or reduce negative behaviours) which led to those actions (White 2011).

A key difference between a gift and reward is that the former would be associated with the giver and their relationship with the receiver, whereas the latter would be associated with an event and the reason for giving. In modern times, bonus payments, obtaining a promotion at work, and receiving praise could thus be understood as types of rewards, as they are due to specific actions.

Rewards

Recompense or remuneration for a service, merit, or action

**Awards**

An award is similar to a reward, in that it is a consequence of actions, merit, or personal qualities, but it is normally given by a judge/panel following arbitration (OED Online 2018a). Most significantly, an award must have a tangible form that is intended to be recognisable to others through having uniquely distinctive and consistent properties. Its core purpose is to publicly distinguish the recipient as an awardee and thus, from this perspective, the award is a prestigious and exclusive marker. For example, a trophy in the form of a standing man, clutching a sword, is recognisable as an Academy Award ('Oscar') and represents a prestigious acclamation of the winner (Kalb 2017).

Because the main function of an award is to act as a public marker and symbolise an achievement, unlike a reward, an award may have limited monetary value, such as a paper certificate. In fact, according to the Academy Awards Regulation 10, a trophy may not be sold without first offering it to the Academy for \$1.00, and thus theoretically its monetary value to the owner may only be \$1.00 (Vega 2022). This should be differentiated from reputational benefits or social status enhancements that receiving an award may result in, and indeed an award is the only type of presentation that generally results in the receiver obtaining social gain.

Furthermore, unlike a gift, there is no implied relationship between the giver and receiver; the intention of an award is for it to be presented after an independent review and any relationships between recipients and the awarding body should normally be declared. For instance, Rule 18.12 of the Academy Awards states that 'To avoid conflicts of interest, individuals directly involved with any achievement under awards consideration shall not participate on the awards committee and its advisory groups' and

anyone who has a ‘personal connection with any achievement shall not be present during deliberation and shall abstain from voting’ (Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences 2022).

#### Awards

Prestigious items that have been conferred to publicly recognise an outstanding act, service, or quality

### Golden Flies

#### *Understanding Presentations from the King*

In her analysis of sources that described officials receiving presentations from the king, Guksch (1994: 39-44) found that there were many different causes for the kings’ actions, but it often centred on the behaviour and character of the official. Binder (2008: 1) took this a step further in her study of the giving of gold by the king, in which she believed that the behaviour and character of the official in relation to the king was the ‘defining factor’ for that giving. This is because in textual and iconographic sources throughout Dynastic Egypt that describe/depict aspects of an Egyptian official’s life, generally referred to as self-presentation, the king is the main focus and the officials emphasised their relationship with him through recounting what they did for the king, and/or in their presence, and consequently receiving the king’s love (see Bassir 2019). For example, on the 6th-dynasty stela of Weni he described serving King Pepi I loyally, being loved by him more than any other (*mḥ ib n(y) ḥmꜣf im r srꜣf nb r s’ḥꜣf nb r bꜣkꜣf nb*), and being given a limestone sarcophagus as a result (JE 6304, *Urk.* I: 99; Tresson 1919: 2-3).

Furthermore, these texts and iconographic sources generally lack precise details on what was given and why, preferring instead to highlight their relationship with the king. This can be well illustrated by the 19th-dynasty stela of Mose, where he is shown being showered with gold by King Ramesses II, but neither the text nor the images give any insight into the actual amount or forms of the gold, as they are instead depicted as vague circles (Hildeshim 374; Schulman 1988: 122-125). Also, rather than describe why Mose might have been presented with such richness, the text recalls that he was beloved of the king and what he did in the king’s presence was very good (*m-bꜣḥ pr-ꜣ nfrwy n.(i) ir(t).nꜣfwr sp 2*). It would seem that the core aim of this stela was for Mose to demonstrate his physical and social proximity to the



Figure 1. Sennefer wearing heart pendants inscribed with Amenhotep II from TT 96 (photo: Taneash Sidpura).

king, which was more important than his personal achievements or ‘direct interface with a deity [Ptah]’, who is instead depicted as being worshipped by the king (Price 2008: 118).

As Egyptian officials described what they were presented from the king as a consequence of a personal relationship, they most closely accord with the definition of gifts as given above, and thus Binder was justified in terming them gifts but less so when describing them as rewards. That is, the objects that the king gave to his officials were presented to them as a symbol of their mutual love and favour. This notion can be particularly well illustrated by the heart-shaped pendants of Sennefer, which are inscribed with the cartouches of Amenhotep II and thus signal that he was beloved of the king; as Sennefer was depicted wearing them, it would indicate that this feeling was mutual (Figure 1; TT 96; *Urk.* IV: 1432; Petrie and Quibell 1896: pl. LXXVIII). Likewise, Pepi I’s declaration on Weni’s inscription would not be out of place on a modern Valentine’s card!

### *Presentations of Golden Flies*

Despite presentations from the king being re-defined as gifts, golden flies have nevertheless been regularly interpreted as military awards; even Binder, who otherwise concluded that gold given by the king were gifts, believed that golden flies were probably military awards (2008: 52). This is primarily due to the texts of Ahmose Pennekhbet and Amenemhab Mahu.

In his tomb at El-Kab and on two statues, certain episodes of Ahmose Pennekhbet’s career are described, especially his participation in six military campaigns (El-Kab: tomb 2, doorway, west inner thickness; Louvre C49; NMS 1948.486; Sethe 1906: 32-39; Davies 2014: 392-395). At the end of the inscription, he listed the various gold items that he received from the kings he served, including four rings, four collars, one bracelet, six flies, three lions, and two axes from King Tuthmosis I (Sethe 1906: 39).

Likewise, Amenemhab Mahu also described his military exploits in his inscription, and after each episode he reported what he received from the king with whom he fought (TT 85, entrance hall, west wall; Sethe 1907: 889-897). During campaigns in Syria, King Tuthmosis III twice presented him gold: one lion, two collars, two flies, and four rings on the first occasion; two collars, four rings, two flies, one lion, one female servant, and one male servant on the second (Sethe 1907: 892-893).

There are also three Egyptian men who have been depicted wearing golden flies:

- Suemniut on an image in his tomb wears one golden fly and two lions beneath a collar (TT 92, outer hall, north wall; Baud 1935: 138-149).
- Dedi wears two golden flies and two lions around his neck in a damaged scene from his tomb (TT 200, transverse hall, north-east wall; Bryan 2001: plate 22.2).
- On a statue of a kneeling man, originally from Edfu, and whose name has not survived but is titled as a sailor, there are two flies depicted around his neck and an armlet on each upper arm (JE 49565; Eaton-Krauss 2011).

As well as having golden flies, all five of these individuals also have in common their 18th dynasty date and use of military titles, which has thus resulted in the impression that golden flies should be associated with the military and functioned as awards.

However, as demonstrated above, presentations from the king did not normally serve as awards and, if true, golden flies would be a significant outlier, which needs to be reviewed thoroughly and holistically. For instance, regarding the three men depicted with golden flies, the circumstances in which they acquired them have not been described and thus it cannot be known for certain if they would meet

the definition of an award (e.g. if they were given by an independent panel as a public recognition). It should also be noted that 18th dynasty Egypt was a militarised state and a significant number of officials were associated with military roles and/or had military titles (Kemp 2005: 227-230). In fact, the last kings of the 18th and the first kings of the 19th dynasties were all army commanders before taking the throne. It should therefore not be surprising that inscriptions and depictions showing officials wearing fly pendants are found with military men because they formed a significant portion of the populace that owned or commissioned monuments during that period (e.g. Binder 2008: 224). In addition, fly pendants were particularly popular in the 18th dynasty and it is possible that its selection was a fashion of the period, rather than being specifically related to the military (Sidpura 2022: 119, 142-143, 215).

Moreover, the principle aim of these five officials' texts/depictions was to emphasise their relationship to their kings by describing their activities in the presence or on behalf of the king, how they served the king and how closely connected they were to the king:

1. Ahmose Pennekhbet's text, like many others of this genre (e.g. the stela of Sobek-Khu, Manchester 3306; Peet 1914, Sidpura 2022: 278-283), could be described as a log of his interaction with the king:
  - He started and concluded the text by stating his physical and metaphysical closeness to the king (*m šms nsw r nmtt=f m st nbt*, Sethe 1906: 33; *iw n tš=i r nswt hr pri*, Sethe 1906: 38).
  - When listing what he was given, he directly connected them to the king by specifying the king's name but not the reasons for it.
  - On Louvre C49, there is 'a remarkable visual conceit symbolising Ahmose's close connection to several kings' by having his name in line 2 aligned to the cartouches of the kings in lines 3-6 (Davies 2014: 403).
2. Amenemhab Mahu likewise focussed his text on his activities beside the king:
  - He started the passage by stating he was close to his king and followed him everywhere (*iw šms.n(=i) nb=i r nmtt=f hr h3st mh3tt rsyt mr=f iw=i m 3ry-rdwy=f*; Sethe 1907: 890).
  - The text contains two unusual animal-related incidents that are not directly related to Amenemhab Mahu's career but were likely included because they demonstrate his activities before the king (Sethe 1907: 893-894).
  - King Amenhotep II was recorded as saying that he promoted Amenemhab Mahu because of his character (*kd*) rather than any specific achievement (Sethe 1907: 897; Sidpura 2022: 106-108, 307, n. 44).
  - Within the tomb, the text was displayed next to an image of King Tuthmosis III (Virey 1891: 237).
3. Dedi demonstrated his connection to the king through the placement of the image and indirectly:
  - The image of him wearing the golden fly was placed next to images of King Tuthmosis III and Amenhotep II (Porter and Moss 1960: 303).
  - On a funerary cone from the tomb, it states that Dedi received gold from the king because he was effective to his heart (*n '3t n mnh=f hr ib*, Bremen Überseemuseum: B14408; Sethe 1909: 995d; Davies and Macadam 1957: no. 4).
4. The tomb of Suemniut, TT 92, was unfinished and there are no further details on the golden flies, but the relevant image appears to be part of a larger composition showing offerings to King Amenhotep II (Bryan 2001: 67).

5. The statue of an unknown sailor features a brief inscription on the reverse that states that the king loved him, praised him, favoured him and granted him a favoured old age and burial, with no further details on any specific achievements (the original inscription has not been seen by the present author, and the translation is from Eaton-Krauss 2011: 68).

In addition, in all cases, these five men describe or show quantities of other objects that they received from the king, such as servants, armlets and land, although exact details are not apparent. As analysis of golden flies, nor indeed any artefact, should be taken out of its context, their function must be considered alongside these other objects. Overall, it would suggest that these officials were more keen on showing that they received quantities of gold to demonstrate its prestige rather than its precise form or amount, similar to Mose (see above). Because of the limited details regarding the appearance of the golden flies and other objects given, it would be difficult to identify them as distinctive and recognisable, which is a key element of an award (see above). Additionally, as some of what was given could be purchased in markets (e.g. for slaves, see pBerlin 9784: 1-10; Gardiner 1906), it is unlikely that just having these types of presentations would be sufficient to act as a marker of distinction for the owner, which is necessary for the operation of an award. In this context, therefore, much like Weni's sarcophagus, Sennefer's hearts (Figure 1), and Mose's gold bits, the golden flies were given by the king to his officials as visual representations of the relationship between them and should thus be defined as gifts.

### ***Review of Golden Flies as Awards***

In any case, even if the golden flies were given as awards to the aforementioned five officials, it should not necessarily entail that all examples of golden flies were military awards. And it certainly does not entail that all fly pendants, including those of other materials such as faience, ivory and carnelian, were also military awards as some scholars have assumed, especially as some have been depicted with Nubian captives (Figure 11). To test this assumption, golden flies need to be examined holistically to assess if they meet the definition of an award. As it is not known how and why they were acquired by their original owners (in most cases, the identities of their original owners are not known), it cannot be ascertained if they were purchased or received as part of personal relationship, and thus analysis is solely reliant on the physical properties of the object. Specifically, it needs to be considered if there are examples of golden flies that have any particularly distinguishable features, which could be formed into a distinct category and would thus potentially meet the requirements of being an award; i.e. an observer should be able to recognise them as an award and differentiate them from those that were not (unless all fly pendants were awards). That is, golden flies must be examined to test which of these suggestions is correct:

- All golden flies were awards and the material was used to distinguish them from those that were not.
- Some golden flies were awards and they could be identified by distinctive features, such as their size or appearance.
- No golden flies functioned as awards.

Therefore, the categories that will be analysed are their appearance, size, and material as these traits would be easily observable.

### *Appearance*

An investigation of fly pendants undertaken as part of my PhD dissertation found at least 538 golden flies, strung across 83 strings, with the earliest dating to the First Intermediate Period and the latest to





Figure 2. MMA 2012.237.1 (courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York).



Figure 3. CG 52671 (von Bissing 1900: pl.6.2).



Figure 4. UC 51593 (photo T. Sidpura, courtesy of the Petrie Museum of Egyptian and Sudanese Archaeology, UCL).



Figure 5. Fitzwilliam E.67a.1939: Jewellery, Detail (photo T. Sidpura, reproduced by permission of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge).

the New Kingdom (there are examples of golden flies after the New Kingdom but this was the extent of my research). All examples are approximately A-shaped but can be split into five stylistic groups:

1. Limited or no decoration and few features (e.g. MMA 2012.237.1 Figure 2)
2. Defined and decorated head and thorax (e.g. CG 52671, Figure 3)
3. Defined head and thorax and decorated wings (e.g. UC 51593, Figure 4)
4. Inlaid (e.g. Fitzwilliam E.67a.1939, Figure 5)
5. Flat and decorated (e.g. MMA 10.130.2404)

While the majority of golden flies are unprovenanced, and therefore cannot be dated with accuracy, it would seem that this sequence of stylisation is roughly chronological. That is, golden flies appear to become more finely decorated over time. This is not surprising of course as advances in technology generally resulted in the Egyptians forming finer detailing in jewellery. This can be substantiated by comparing golden flies to contemporary non-gold flies, which show similarities in appearance and suggest that designs were a feature of their time. For example, compare the long trapezoid thorax with multiple horizontal incisions on Liverpool 1977.108.11 (Figure 6) to UC 31462 (Figure 7), both of which date to the 18th dynasty and yet this feature is otherwise not common.

Most significantly, hardly any of the golden flies have distinguishable features that could allow them to be well differentiated from other examples. Of the examples that do have particularly distinct elements and could therefore be recognisable to an observer, such as the well-executed thoraxes of CG 52671



Figure 6. Liverpool 1977.108.11 (photo T. Sidpura, courtesy of National Museums Liverpool).



Figure 7. UC 31462 (photo T. Sidpura, courtesy of the Petrie Museum of Egyptian and Sudanese Archaeology, UCL).

(Figure 3) and the back-to-back design of Fitzwilliam E.67a.1939 (Figure 5), they are in fact unique. Therefore, there are no examples of golden flies that can form a distinct category, as stylistic changes predominantly appear to be due the practices of that time.

#### Size

Big flies would indeed be very recognisable and distinguishable and could therefore be an indicator of them acting as awards, as suggested by Binder (2008: 50). As seen in Figure 8, the sizes of golden flies range from 0.8–9.3 cm in length and 0.3–6.5 cm in width, but the majority are near to an average of 1.37 cm in length and 0.9 cm in width. However, there are four sets of particularly large examples:

- three golden flies from the burial of Queen Ahhotep (CG 52671, Figure 3)
- two electrum flies from the burial of Queen Ahhotep (CG 52692)
- the depiction of golden flies on the statue of an unknown sailor (JE 49565)
- two gilded flies from tomb A.09.941, Abydos (Liverpool 1977.108.11, Figure 6)

All these look very different to each other and have little in common, except that they date to the 18th dynasty. In addition, of these largest examples, it is far from certain that any of them could be military awards. This is because two sets belong to Queen Ahhotep, who despite interpretations to the contrary, cannot be associated with military activity and was presented as a powerful queen in her burial and on stela CG 34001 (this is assuming that they referred to the same individual, Sidpura 2016; 2023). Also, Liverpool 1977.108.11 are actually made of bronze and as texts describing presentations from the king emphasise that they were gold (see above), it is unlikely that these examples were of that type. Lastly, as the flies on the statue are depictions, it is not clear how accurate and reflective of reality they might be, especially as jewellery could be exaggerated on statues to flaunt them as a way of inviting attention (Dr Campbell Price, personal communication).

It is also worth pointing out that the golden flies of Ahhotep are often considered the archetype and as a result were selected to form the determinative sign L3 in Gardiner's sign list instead of how fly determinatives actually appear in Egyptian texts (e.g. see Bardenet 1999: 21 for examples from the Ramesseum and Medinet Habu). But as Figure 8 shows, Ahhotep's flies are relatively massive and, as described above, have a unique appearance. Therefore, they should not be thought of as typical examples but rather exceptional.

It would therefore seem that large golden flies were not indicative of being military awards but were perhaps more likely due to stylistic or personal preferences. This can be substantiated by non-gold fly

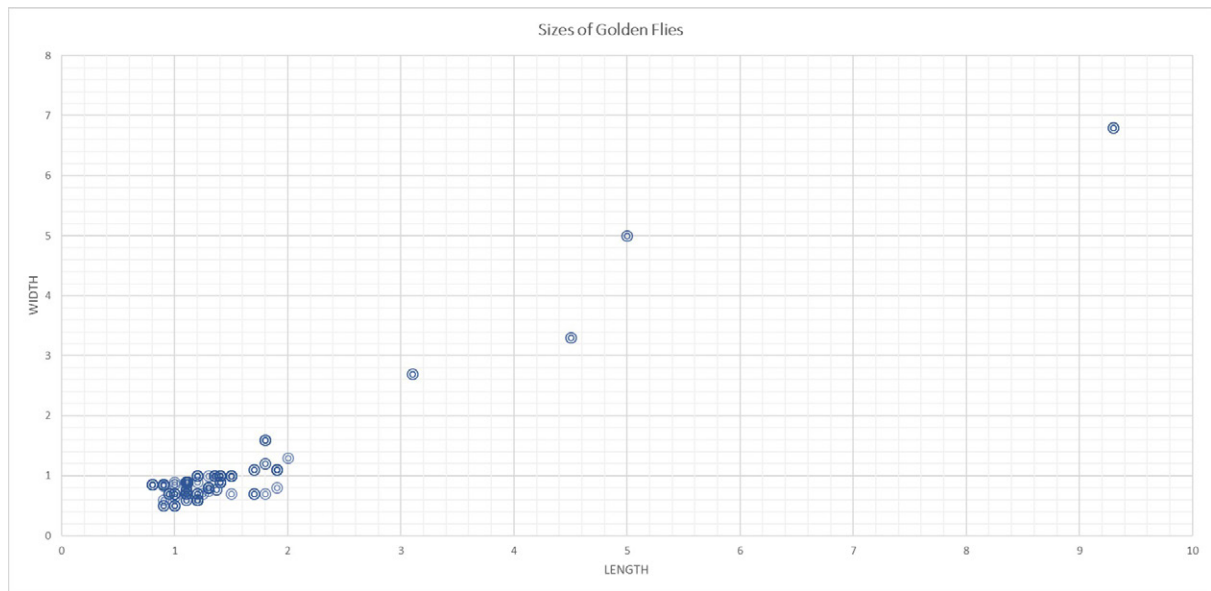


Figure 8. Sizes of golden flies (created by T. Sidpura).

pendants, where the largest examples are of ivory and appear highly similar to those found in Nubia (e.g. Manchester 7392 with a length of 6.5 cm; Figure 9). Nubian fly pendants are generally larger than Egyptian, having an average length of 10.8 cm for ivory examples and 3.6 cm overall (Sidpura 2022: 175). It may be noteworthy that the large, flat wings of CG 52671 and Liverpool 1977.108.11 are normally more characteristic of Nubian flies than Egyptian.

### Material

It is possible that the material itself was a sign of an item being an award. While theoretically many materials could be recognised as distinct, in Egyptian presentation texts officials generally describe, and indeed highlight, that they received quantities of gold from the king. Gold, of course, is very recognisable and could certainly be considered a prestigious and public symbol of renown.

However, as shown above, Binder has already demonstrated that when gold was given by the king to a favoured official, it should be defined as a gift. Furthermore, as shown in Table 1, where it is known, the majority of golden flies were found in burials with women, who were not normally the recipients of presentations from the king and were not associated with military activity in ancient Egypt (Binder 2008: 235). In fact, not a single physical example of a golden fly has been found with a man in Egypt, but all iconographic and textual references are associated with men, including some with Nubian traders and captives (e.g. BM EA 922, Figure 10; TT 93, Figure 11). And it is extremely unlikely that Nubian captives would be depicted with military awards from the king!

For the most part the original provenances of golden flies are not known, but where they are, they have generally been found in burials that appear to be richer than those which contained fly pendants of other materials, if measured by the quantity of gold objects found within them (Sidpura 2022: 150). In fact, 16 golden flies were found in the burials of queens, such as those of



Figure 9. Manchester 7392 (photo T. Sidpura).

Ahhotep. It is thus likely that the use of gold material reflects the richness of whomsoever formed the burial rather than it being associated with an award.

TABLE 1. OWNERS OF GOLDEN FLIES

	No. of golden flies		No. of strings	
	Number	Proportion	Number	Proportion
Men	15	2.8%	5	6.0%
Women	39	7.2%	7	8.5%
Children	1	0.2%	1	1.2%
Unknown / uncertain	483	89.8%	70	84.3%
Total	538		83	

### Conclusion

In summary, an examination of golden flies suggests that they cannot be defined as awards. The physical properties of an award should include its having distinctive and characteristic traits that would be recognisable to an observer and thus mark the recipient as an awardee. However, golden flies do not have any such features that could relate to them being an award, as any distinctive features appear to be due to stylistic reasons or personal preferences. Because their contexts are largely unknown, it is not clear how golden flies were acquired by their owners and thus it cannot be ascertained what their function may have been. However, we would tentatively suggest that all golden flies, like fly pendants of other materials, functioned as amulets to protect the wearer (Sidpura 2023). In addition, when they were given by the king to an official, like all the other gold and precious objects that the king presented, the golden flies most likely symbolised the close connection between them. In this context, they should also be defined as gifts.

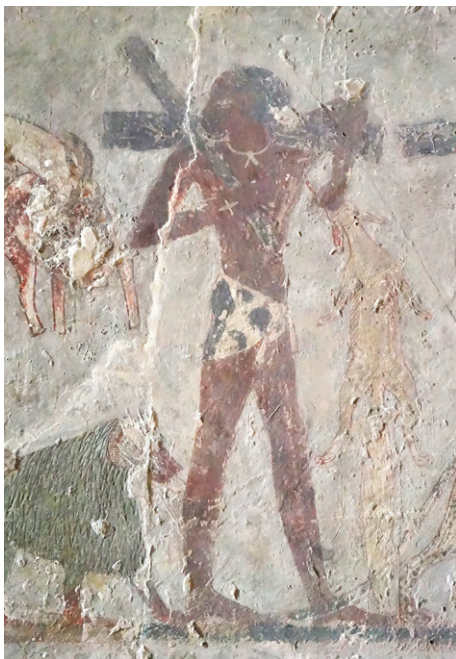


Figure 10. Nubian trader from TT 200 (photo T. Sidpura).



Figure 11. Nubian captive from TT 93 (photo T. Sidpura).

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# Libyan Political and Social Impacts on Ancient Egypt in the Third Intermediate Period

Marwa Soliman

## Abstract

Since the earliest times in history, the Libyan border has been the cause of significant issues for Egypt. The kings of the 1st Dynasty were forced to protect the western borders and may have been involved in actions to secure them within Egypt's Western Desert. In terms of the Libyans, it is worth noting that they seem to see the Western Desert's borders as primarily geographical in nature, as opposed to the Egyptians' ethnic categorisation. The preoccupation of the late Ramesside kings with the struggle for the throne left the battlefield open for the senior military leaders of the Libyan mercenaries, which led to their success in increasing their political, religious, and military influence in the south from the end of the Ramesside period until the Third Intermediate Period (TIP). Political and social changes characterised the TIP in Egypt (1076-664 BC). Egypt was divided into small states, increasing the power of local government and reducing the power of the central authority. While some states reunified with the centre, others remained independent. Therefore, this current research will shed light on the impacts of the Libyans on Ancient Egypt during the TIP resulting from the obvious changes that occurred politically and socially, identifying the various causes, manifestations, and consequences. Furthermore, to what extent Libyans affected the political and social levels in Egypt will be discussed.

## Keywords

Libyan, Third Intermediate Period (TIP), Political, Social, Impacts

## Introduction

The general belief among historians was that outsiders who entered Egypt had no impact on its politics, culture or society. Despite being biased and illogical, the idea of Egyptianisation is still supported by some. However, it is reasonable to think that Egyptians and foreigners shared influences, especially if they were successful in assimilating into the various political, cultural, and religious facets of the state. This is relevant to the Libyans who managed to take control of Egypt and rule it.

Regarding the resources available for the study of ancient Libyans, it can be argued that the limited knowledge about this civilisation is primarily due to the nomadic nature of Libyan societies, which left scant archaeological evidence (Ritner 2009a: 43). Despite the prevailing assumption that the Libyan homeland was confined to Cyrenaica and the western oases, the archaeological record has failed to support this claim. Rather, the bulk of what is currently known about ancient Libya is derived from Egyptian texts and representations, which are often biased against the Libyan people (Ritner 2009a: 43). However, Egyptian records from all eras provide conclusive evidence of the pastoral lifestyle of Libyan groups, as evidenced by the prevalence of Libyan cattle culture in various historical texts, including the Predynastic 'Libya Palette', the Old Kingdom Annals of Senefru, and the victory texts of numerous pharaohs, such as Sahure, Niuserre, Pepy I and II of the Old Kingdom, Merneptah and Ramesses III of the New Kingdom, and Taharqa of the TIP (Ritner 2009a: 43).



It is of paramount importance first to geographically differentiate between the groups of Libyans. Generally, the term Libyan expresses a variety of peoples and lifestyles living not only in the regions west of the Nile Valley but also inside Egypt itself, particularly in Middle Egypt and the Western Delta (Juan 2018). However, classical authors such as Herodotus (c. 450 BC) called all the various independent people inhabiting the huge land mass extending west from Egypt to the Atlantic Ocean Libyans (O'Connor 1987). Additionally, the Egyptians of the New Kingdom (1500-1050 BC) referred to their western neighbours as 'Tjehenu' and 'Tjehemu'. Their texts also mention specific subgroups called 'Meshwesh' and 'Ribu' or 'Libu' (O'Connor 1987). The Meshwesh and the Libu probably lived in Cyrenaica. By describing the Meshwesh and Libu as *mhw*, a word literally translated as family, the Egyptians appeared to emphasise that kinship played a primary role in their social and political organisation, which shares much in common with modern nomadic tribal societies like the Bedouin. Additionally, other Libyans, known simply as the Tjehenu, lived in Marmarica, the coastal region lying between Cyrenaica and Egypt. New Kingdom records offer the clearest picture of Libyan-Egyptian relations (O'Connor 1987).

Even though the Libyans seized control of Egypt shortly after 1100 BC, Egyptian culture remained so deeply rooted that it survived the upheaval, and the conquerors adopted both the Egyptian written language and the Egyptian religion. In fact, everything we know about them has been passed down to us through Egyptian culture. Despite this, Libyan rule in Egypt had a profound impact on Egypt and Egyptian culture, and thus on Egyptological sources (Jansen-Winkel 2015: 38).

This period is fundamentally characterised by four aspects: political structure, kingship concept, language and writing, and burial customs. For each, Leahy argues that Libyan influences can be seen. The defining characteristic of the politics of the Libyan period is political fragmentation. There was a degree of division in Egypt not seen since the Predynastic period (Leahy 1985: 58).

According to Leahy (1985: 59) it seems that the Libyans attempted to adapt to the Egyptian system for a short time, but then returned to their own political structure, a loose confederation based on family alliances and appointments, rather than a centralised monarchy, but retained a vague appearance of Egyptian rule. The diverse kings that Piye encountered did not seem to bother the Libyans. 'King of Upper and Lower Egypt' was simply a title for a substantial segment of the population (Leahy 1985: 59). Payraudeau (2014: 282-283), on the other hand, believes that, despite the strong links between the 21st and 22nd dynasties and their military nature, Leahy's sociopolitical analysis is less convincing. Overall, Payraudeau emphasises the importance of additional research and caution when interpreting the Libyan period.

### **The historical context of Libyan-Egyptian Interactions**

The Libyans were the first significant foreign group to become prominent in Egyptian civilisation, appearing in the late New Kingdom and TIP. The 21st to 24th dynasties in Egypt are part of what is known as the Libyan Era (c. 1077-734 BC). This period viewed the political division of Egypt, ruled by an expanding number of kings, many of whom adopted a royal style. This fragmentation has been recognised as the result of the Libyans' likely origins as a collection of nomadic tribes (Leahy 1985: 52-65). Payraudeau (2014: 287) argues that the analysis that Egypt's political fragmentation during the TIP was a result of the Libyan way of life is not supported by available evidence. He argues that territorial fragmentation was not unique to this era and had occurred in earlier periods of Egyptian history, and that the tribal background of Libyans did not necessarily lead to the destruction of centralised states. Ethnological comparisons suggest that the tendency towards territorial and political fragmentation during the TIP did not necessarily stem from a foreign societal concept.

In the context of the later New Kingdom, the use of the term ‘Libyan’ may be ambiguous, with O’Connor (1990: 30) recommending the use of ‘Tjemhu’ instead. This term encompasses not only the inhabitants of ancient Cyrenaica but also the coastal zone between it and the Egyptian Delta (O’Connor 1990: 30). The classical term ‘Libyan’ was historically applied to a variety of peoples ranging from the Atlantic to the Nile Delta, including the modern-day coastal regions of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, as well as a vast desert hinterland. However, in the later New Kingdom, the term ‘Libyu-people’s land’, properly translatable as ‘Libyans’, referred exclusively to one of several regions within the broader rubric of Tjemeh’s land (O’Connor 1990: 30). It is important to note that the modern-day state of Libya now has well-defined borders encompassing a sizable area, including the coastal areas of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, as well as a considerable desert hinterland (O’Connor 1990: 30).

There was a fundamental continuity of communication between the Egyptians and the populations living west of the Nile Valley during the early phases of the New Kingdom (Juan 2018). The appearance of new ethnic names (Libu and Meshwesh) and the activities of these groups do not provide insight into their respective lifestyles, and the available information regarding their activities is limited. While it is reasonable to assume that there existed diverse modes of living among these groups, their internal organisation remains obscure and requires further research. It is worth noting that some of these groups traversed the Western Desert, including its oases, and established settlements in southern Egypt, where they raised cattle. Furthermore, they took the traditional routes into the Fayum and Delta regions, settling in towns and villages and occasionally clashing with Egyptian authorities. In Egyptian sources, such encounters were depicted as invasions (Juan 2018).

During the later period of the New Kingdom, specifically during dynasties 19 and 20 (c. 1295-1069 BC), the Egyptians developed extensive and frequent interactions with a population known as the ‘Libyans’ (O’Connor 1990: 29). A brief historical overview is necessary to understand the interactions between the Libyans and Egypt in the New Kingdom. This interaction had two major consequences: First and foremost, it had a profound cultural impact on Egypt at the time. Second, by studying the society of these ‘Libyans’, we can better understand the ‘Libyan dimension’ in Egypt’s political and social life during the TIP (Leahy 1985: 51; O’Connor 1990: 29).

According to Egyptian battle reports, it is possible to trace as early as the Ramesside period that Libyans or Tjehenu/Tjehemu coming from the west became a significant threat for Egypt (Saleh 2006: 8). These were divided into various subgroups: Meshwesh and Rebu/Lebu living in Cyrenaica, and the Tjehenu living in Marmarica, i.e. between Cyrenaica and Egypt (Kopanias 2017: 115-130).

During the reign of Amenhotep I, Ahmose Pennekheb campaigned against the Keheq-Libyans in the Wadi Natrun region or one of the western oases, first mentioned (indirectly) during the reign of Amenhotep III. During the reign of Akhenaten, the presence of Libyans as a regular part of the king’s military forces suggests that there was a sustained contact between Egypt and Libya (Sagrillo 2012: 1-5). The Meshwesh tribe, in particular, is widely recognized as one of the most significant Libyan tribes. Their characteristic braided sidelocks, pointed beards, and ostrich feathers in the hair of chiefs are often depicted in temple iconography (Sagrillo 2012). Also dating to Akhenaten’s reign is a unique representation on papyrus depicting a group of Libyans killing an Egyptian captive. This papyrus points to a growing series of conflicts between the Egyptians and the Libyans, which became quite intense during the 19th and 20th dynasties (Sagrillo 2012).

Seti I (c. 1291-1279 BC) engaged in a significant battle against Libyan tribesmen, making it tempting to link this event with the establishment of the fortress (Snape and Wilson 2007: 129). They may apparently have been Meshwesh, of which few details are known. Rameses II (c. 1279-1212 BC) built a chain of forts along the coast southwest of Mersa Matruh (Leahy 1985: 53; Sagrillo 2012). Hence, as early as the

13th century BC, Libyans settled in Egypt, and this may have continued into the 11th century BC. Two millennia earlier, Egypt and its regions to the west had been in contact sporadically (Leahy 1985: 53). In Regnal Years 5 and 11 of Rameses III, there were two further campaigns against the Libyans, this time predominantly involving the Meshwesh-Libyans, although the Libu and other tribes also participated. The same occurred under the reign of Merenptah.

The Libyan invasion of Egypt during the 13th and 12th centuries had multiple causes, which varied depending on the tribe. Poor environmental conditions in the western regions may have played a role in precipitating conflict, according to Sagrillo. Kopanias suggests that the Lebu and Meshwesh tribes, who had a relatively affluent upper class and an organised central government, sought to acquire land to improve their political and social standing. In contrast, the invasion of other tribes, such as the desert nomads, may have been primarily motivated by a desire to capture pasture lands (Sagrillo 2012). The impact of climatological changes and population movements of the Sea Peoples forced the Libyans into closer contact with the Nile Valley during the later New Kingdom, leading to new cultural confrontations. The fifth year of the campaign of Merenptah against the Libyans was initiated when a coalition of tribes under the Libu reached the western border of the Nile, resulting in a general famine. Following the Egyptian victory, the Athribis stela records that Libyan camps were abandoned, their crops gone, and their wells damaged by the actions of the king (Ritner 2009a: 47). Kopanias (2017: 115-130) highlights how the Lebu and Meshwesh tribes were able to enlist the assistance of a significant number of northern warriors to acquire land and improve their political and social standing, which challenges the concept of 'Libyan invasions' and raises the possibility of Egyptians attempting to prevent Libyan access to the Nile Valley, followed by the settlement of defeated Libyans in the area. The Ramesside period witnessed heightened competition over customary grazing areas in Lower and Middle Egypt, leading to conflicts over the control of agricultural land, Lower Egypt's resources, trade routes, grazing areas, and independent herds and herders. The relationship between Libyans and Egyptians oscillated between cooperation and hostility, and Moreno García (2014: 618-620) notes instances of mobile Libyan individuals ascending to positions of notable political power within the Egyptian state.

Egypt faced continuous marauding by Libyan tribesmen, leading to Rameses III's attempt to appoint a supreme chief to regulate their land in year 5 (c. 1194 BC). This strategy was a diplomatic solution to find a single tribal ruler for negotiations, which was a common approach used by settled societies. The failure to impose a single ruler led to war, with the Libyans being defeated and settled by tribes in reservations (Ritner 2009a: 48). The tribal structure preserved in their isolated camps had a profound impact on Egyptian society during the TIP, and the Libyan rise in rank as mercenaries and ultimately as kings, which highlights the enduring influence of tribal dynamics on the ancient world (Ritner 2009a: 48). According to the Harris Papyrus and the walls of his mortuary temple in Medinet Habu, Rameses III settled thousands of Libyan prisoners in camps throughout Middle Egypt to serve as mercenary soldiers for the state. Later texts refer to the 'Five Great Fortresses of the Meshwesh' located near Herakleopolis Magna, where the prisoners were forced to learn the Egyptian language and assimilate into Egyptian culture. Rameses II had previously done the same, as noted by Sagrillo (2012). Despite Rameses III's claim of victory over the Libyans, they continued to pose problems throughout the 20th dynasty. Libyan raiding parties led by the Meshwesh conducted incursions as far as Thebes with the intention of targeting the Egyptian population, as evidence from Deir El-Medina shows. Moreover, Libyan settlements are likely to have continued into Middle Egypt and the Western Delta (Sagrillo 2012).

On the other hand, the relationship between the Egyptians and their western neighbours seems to have been friendly, although trade opportunities were not the sole reason for Egyptian presence in Matruh areas (Hulin and White 2002: 173). The Marsa Matruh/Zawiyet Umm el-Rakham region represented the nearest point of habitable contact for the Egyptians to engage with the Libyans. The boundary between military and economic activity on the borders of Egypt was fluid, and garrisons were necessary

to provision themselves from the surrounding district, which would not have been possible farther east (Hulin and White 2002: 173). The Egyptian inhabitants of the region took advantage of the maritime trade passing along the coast during the later phases of the Umm el-Rakham site, as evidenced by the presence of Cypriot pottery, and there is no reason to assume that they would not have done so earlier, as concluded by Quirke from a study of Middle Kingdom material (Hulin and White 2002: 173).

To sum up, the ‘pastoral crescent’ of Egypt served two primary functions: as a grazing area for pastoral populations and as a trading axis connecting the Mediterranean to the Fayum, Middle Egypt, and the northern oases of the Western Desert. This area was unique in that many of these activities were carried out by autonomous Egyptian and Libyan populations outside of the institutional sphere. As a result, sovereignty was challenging to enforce, and collaboration was the norm, although conflicts did occasionally occur (Moreno García 2014: 618-620). Moreno García suggests that during the Middle Kingdom, Beni Hasan and Bersheh became a trade and pastoral hub frequented by Libyans, and the governors of these areas organised substantial herds of cattle. However, during the Ramesside era, warfare and conflict became common, and what has been historically referred to as ‘Libyan invasions’ were, in fact, conflicts over land use and cattle management. The pharaohs attempted to control and regulate the flow of wealth held by the Libyans by establishing forts along the western border of the Delta. The relations between Libyans and Egyptians were characterised by oscillations between collaboration and conflict, depending on the modalities of exploitation of resources in the area (Moreno García 2014: 618-620).

Regarding the Egyptian political and social structure during the Libyan period, Egypt in 750 BC presents a vastly different image when compared to that of 1200 BC. Previous Egyptological scholarship had posited that the 22nd dynasty represented the advent of Libyan rule in Egypt. However, numerous inconsistencies with this notion have been identified, including the use of Libyan names by some rulers of the preceding 21st dynasty, close familial relations between the royal lineages of the 21st and 22nd dynasties, and the interment of kings from both dynasties in the same Tanis cemetery. Consequently, it is reasonable to assume that Libyan rule in Egypt commenced immediately following the end of the last Ramesside dynasty and was a sudden transfer of power rather than a gradual and peaceful transition (Jansen-Winkel 2015).

During the Libyan period, Egypt witnessed division into two entities that were effectively politically independent, despite occasional rapprochements (Leahy 1990: 155). This division lasted c. 400 years and remained a significant factor for even longer, impacting long-term changes in Egyptian society (Leahy 1990: 155). In the 1st millennium BC, it was the most significant aspect of Egypt’s political structure. However, the extent to which the division was culturally determined, in addition to the impact of Libyan settlement in Egypt, requires further investigation (Leahy 1990: 155). A detailed study of relationships between and within Egypt’s two halves, between the kings in the north and the high officials at Thebes, and between the pharaohs and the chieftains of the Meshwesh and Libu in the west, as well as between Thebes and the rest of Upper Egypt, might lead to a deeper understanding of political and cultural developments (Leahy 1985).

In the 21st dynasty, Upper Egypt was controlled by military commanders or generals who were also High Priests of Amun at Thebes; some of these governors even assumed royal titles. Lower Egypt was ruled by a king of Libyan descent. This kingdom was composed of numerous Libyan princedoms at the head of which were chieftains of Meshwesh and Libu, who were also military commanders and priests. There were only local princedoms in Lower Egypt, and they were certainly attested to c. 800 BC, but their origins probably go back even further. Consequently, Upper Egypt also began to disintegrate and form local princedoms. The victory stela of the Nubian king Pianchi, which dates to c. 750 BC, provides

us with a very accurate picture of the Egyptian political landscape: there were five kings, including Pianchi, and twelve princes in power (Jansen-Winkel 2015: 36).

During the period between the end of Osorkon II's reign and the latter half of the Libyan period, Egypt was ruled by two distinct royal lineages. This circumstance may have played a role in the political and societal discord that led to the civil war between the 22nd and 23rd dynasties. The Bubastite 22nd dynasty governed in the north, while the 'Theban' 22nd dynasty ruled over Upper Egypt, initiated by Takeloth II, who was the first to assert descent from Isis during the Bubastite period (Meffre 2016: 47).

According to Leahy, after an initial attempt to adapt to the Egyptian system, the Libyans reverted to the political structure with which they were familiar – a loose confederation reinforced by family alliances and appointments, not a centralised monarchy, while retaining the outward appearance of Egyptian kingship. It is noticeable that the multiplicity of kings that Piye encountered does not seem to have bothered the Libyans (Leahy 1985: 51-56; Ritner 2009a: 48). However, for Payraudeau (2014: 282-283), Leahy's treatment of the Libyan period as a singular entity is questionable, since there is evidence suggesting the presence of distinct phases with unique characteristics. Significant changes occurred between the 21st and 22nd dynasties, including the disappearance of the Pontiff kings, the affirmation of Libyan power, and a more active foreign policy. Furthermore, the stability of the first half of the 22nd dynasty differed significantly from the period of civil war that followed, and Piankhy's depiction of fragmentation may have been overstated. Besides, Payraudeau cautions against solely attributing novelties of the TIP to Libyan impacts, as it may disregard the adaptability of Egyptian culture during this era.

### **Libyan Integration into Egyptian Society**

Regarding Libyan society in Egypt, it is characterised by pastoral nomadism. According to Ritner, the Libyans had developed significant and perhaps quite complex relations with non-nomadic societies, particularly the Egyptians. The Libyan society is ranked or stratified, and the Libyans had institutionalised their leadership as paramount chieftains under whose direction they were developing a policy of settlement and dominance in the western half of the Nile Delta. Thus, Ritner's theory presumes the existence of a stratified Libyan elite to acquire dominance over a sedentary population (Egypt) so as to further enhance its existing advantages (Ritner 2009b). Despite the Egyptians' efforts, Papyrus Harris I (76: 11-77: 2) describes a significant infiltration of Libyans into the Western Delta that lasted for a long period after the 19th dynasty ended (Morris 2005: 775). During the 20th dynasty there was a noticeable increase in the number of Libyans migrating into Egypt, with the majority settling in densely populated areas of the Western Delta region (Mushett Cole 2014); Leahy (1985: 56) adds that some of these same migrants may have joined the Egyptian army as auxiliaries. Mushett Cole (2014) confirm this trend toward increased Libyan migration. While there is no way to measure the effectiveness of policies aimed at cultural assimilation, the large number of foreigners living in camps were likely to have retained some degree of cultural identity. However, Leahy argues that only a relatively small number of captives would have been affected by such policies compared to the mass of uncontrolled immigrants, and since they were settled among their own people, there would have been little incentive for them to adopt Egyptian customs. Payraudeau (2014: 284-285) notes the lack of solid evidence regarding Libyan culture, with only a few anthroponyms and deities known that hint at their socio-political organisation, which suggests that the author's argument against assimilation may underestimate the level of Libyan integration into Egyptian culture. While distinctive elements have been used to argue against assimilation, such as onomastics, costume, religion, and political systems, they may not add up to sufficient evidence. Ramses III's installation of the children of Libyan chiefs in garrisons and teaching them the Egyptian language suggests that some Libyans were exposed to Egyptian culture for generations. Therefore, the

graphic evolution between the north and south that Leahy uses as evidence of Libyanisation is not definitive and is based on the same citation as Payraudeau's critique.

As part of their process of acculturation, the Libyans captured by Merenptah and Ramesses III were housed in fortified camps and taught Egyptian, a process the Egyptians extensively used during the New Kingdom. According to a stela from Deir el-Medina, this is specifically attested for Libyans (Leahy 1985: 56).

By the late 20th dynasty, many acculturated Libyans had risen to respectable positions in Egyptian society. One of the most powerful officials of this time, Herihor, may have been of Libyan descent, even though there is no clear evidence to support this. It is a fact that during his tenure as a High Priest, his power rivalled or even exceeded that of the king. According to some scholars, a Libyan dynasty led by Herihor and his family, rose to power over Egypt (Morris 2005: 776). This notion is reinforced by their depiction in the Khonsu temple at Karnak, where the names of Herihor's sons were recorded. Notably, some of his sons bore Libyan names, including Osorkon, which is attested in its earliest occurrence. While it has been argued that these Libyan names were bestowed upon certain sons of Herihor as an honorary gesture to signify the family's military significance, a Libyan origin for Herihor himself is also a plausible explanation. Given the prevailing view that Herihor's background was primarily military rather than priestly, it is reasonable to suggest that he may have originally come from one of the colonies of Libyan mercenaries that the Ramesside rulers had established in camps throughout Egypt (The Epigraphic Survey 1979: xiii).

Infiltration and settlement of Libyans in the Western Delta appear to have culminated in the Libyan invasions. Several factors contributed to this movement (Trigger *et al.* 1983: 277). In the absence of a clear explanation, evidence suggests that cattle, sheep, and goat breeding was an important economic activity for Libyan populations. Regular and abundant availability of water was a crucial matter, and fortified enclosures were used by some sectors of Libyan society. The census of cattle was of primary concern for early pharaohs, and the numbers of prisoners and dead northerners represented in Narmer's mace head and Khasekhemwy's statues suggest a vast area able to sustain substantial herds and settled by hundreds of thousands of people (Moreno García 2014: 613). It is most likely that they fled (including women, children, and cattle) due to an ecological disaster, such as a prolonged drought (Leahy 1985: 53). The Meshwesh centres of the Delta were important partly because of military colonies of freed Libyan prisoners of war were established in the 20th and perhaps 19th dynasties, but probably also because of immigration. This period appears to have seen a new wave of Libu immigration into the Western Delta (Trigger *et al.* 1983: 277).

By tracing the political and social situation in the TIP, it is clear that Libyans had become well integrated into the Egyptian administration by the beginning of it, particularly within the military sphere. For example, the Great Overseer of the Army and High Priest of Amun Herihor, and the High Priest, Pinodjem I's son, bore the Libyan name Meshelot (Masaharta) during the 21st dynasty. Many of the kings and High Priests in office during the 21st dynasty, however, were of Libyan descent but ruled as Egyptians in essence. A Meshwesh-Libyan, perhaps from one of Middle Egypt's five 'Great Fortresses of the Meshwesh', ruled as King Osorkon the Elder in the 21st dynasty. Even though his nephew, the great chief of the Meshwesh-Libyans, Sheshonq I, came to the throne and established the 22nd dynasty, Egypt was under direct Libyan rule for more than two centuries (Sagrillo 2012).

A major characteristic of the political and administrative system during the Libyan 21st to 23rd dynasties is the concentration of power in the hands of the king's close relatives. The Libyan social structure resulted in the king being recognized as a tribal leader on par with other prominent chiefs. The king's authority was not derived solely from his royal position, but rather from the alliances and

agreements he had forged with influential figures who pledged their allegiance to him, whereby he gave out high positions and privileges as well as military support when needed and assigned them 'fiefs'. Due to this, appointments to high civil and military offices were no longer based on the specific abilities of functionaries, but rather on their position within tribal hierarchies and their relationship with their overlords, with genealogical closeness being a major factor in determining eligibility (Broekman 2010a). A royal relative being appointed to the highest public office is obviously harmful to the former occupants, and it is not surprising that they occasionally expressed their displeasure about losing their influence. In particular, the priesthood of Amun, which had gained immense political and economic power during the 18th to 21st dynasties, vigorously resisted the loss of their powerful and lucrative positions (Broekman 2010a).

### **Libyan political and social impacts**

For a better understanding of the structure of Libyan society, both before and after they arrived in Egypt, a 'segmentary lineage system' model was proposed by Mushett Cole. This model divides each lineage into smaller descendant groups that competed with one another for status. This inherently unstable political structure is one of the key reasons for describing Libyan politics as segmented lineages (Mushett Cole 2014). It has been noted that since the start of the Libyan period the political structure of Egypt has been characterised as tribal. Initially addressed by Leahy (Leahy 1985: 55), and then by Ritner, who expanded the theory using anthropological data derived from 'segmented lineage systems', based on the support between brothers, genealogical closeness in determining alliances, and patrilineal lineage importance (Ritner 2009b: 334-335).

Although they ruled from the inside and were never expelled, Libyans cannot categorically be considered foreigners due to the extent and duration of their settlement. From the royal iconography adopted by the Libyans, no change is evident in the status or function of kings, giving the impression of complete Egyptianisation (Leahy 1985: 57). However, explaining the tribal background of the Libyan dynasties and the feudal character of their rule as a corollary of that background, it is probable that Libyan social groups were viewed as confederations of politically equal descent groups. A balance of power may have existed between these descent groups, which was maintained by mutual competition. Patrilineal segmentary lineage is the basis of this social structure, without a paramount chief or other central authority, in which small segments of lineage are nested within segments of ever-increasing size, with each segment claiming descent from a common male ancestor. Therefore, the smallest segments are nested within segments consisting of descendants of a grandfather and within segments composed of descendants of a great-grandfather, and so on. Every lineage is led by a brother or cousin, who are placed on equal social levels. This results in brothers and father's brother's sons cooperating and displaying solidarity in the face of external threats, while simultaneously competing for resources and dividing them. There are several phenomena that are characteristic of the period and issue, including the importance of brotherhood, the retention of lineage titles, and the emphasis placed on genealogical lines, which demonstrate how this tribal patrilineal system came to influence Libyan rule in Egypt. Osorkon I referred to this concept in his prayer to Bastet, found on a granite block at Tell Basta in the spring of 2003, which is similar to the prayer by Osorkon II to Amun, inscribed on a stele with his image (Cairo Cat. 1041), which says: 'Re, king of the gods, great chiefs of the Ma, great chiefs of foreigners, and prophets of Herishef King of Upper and Lower Egypt, brother following brother' (Broekman 2010b: 86).

The social-political background of the Libyans refers to the principle of brother succession having priority over succession passing from father to son. This may be explained by the effects of the tribal background of the Libyans, the genealogical emphasis, the importance of the notion of brotherhood, the retention of Libyan tribal titles alongside Egyptian ones, and the changed conception of kingship, on several levels and at several moments, during the whole Libyan period, including the 21st dynasty

(Broekman 2010b: 89). In addition, brother-to-brother successions rapidly increased, e.g. among the High Priest of Amon in the 21st dynasty, as Pinudjem I's sons took on the position systematically (Broekman 2010b: 89-90). As a result, brother-to-brother succession became increasingly important, probably due to the lower fragmentation risk between brothers than extended kin (Broekman 2010b: 88). Genealogies also become more important, with numerous statues or steles recording them across Egypt, similar to the references to brotherhood (Mushett Cole 2014).

For the elite of this period, the concept of a sole king was unimportant. Despite Herihor, Pinudjem I and Menkheperre adopting royal style in the early 21st dynasty, the concept of sole rule still seems to have been maintained, with northern kings often being acknowledged in the south and with Amenemope bringing the two halves together (Kitchen 1986: 272; Mushett Cole 2014). Despite this re-unification under the late 21st and early 22nd dynasties, there were increasing numbers of kings, great chiefs, and chiefs of the Ma from the middle of the 22nd dynasty onwards. As opposed to previous periods of division, such as the First Intermediate Period (Morris 2005: 59), the different regions coexisted peacefully, and members of the elite did not experience great difficulties becoming kings (Mushett Cole 2014). The statue of Nakhtefmut clearly shows a radical change in the concept of kingship. It is not apparent from this statue that Nakhtefmut had any problems recording the titles of King Horsiese (A), who gave him the statue, and his contemporary Osorkon II (Mushett Cole 2014). After Osorkon II, Shoshenq I and the first few Libyan kings successfully established their authority by placing royal dynasty members in senior positions to retain control. As a result, a single family held monopoly of power similar to the paramount chiefs (O'Connor 1990: 104). As a matter of fact, the HPA Osorkon 'B' and future Osorkon III dated some of the donations at the end of the *Chronicle of Prince Osorkon* to Shoshenq III rather than his rivals (Ritner 2009a: 373-375), which strongly suggests that one Libyan ruler might have been perceived, at least nominally, as being superior to the others (Mushett Cole 2014).

At Thebes, Shoshenq I was perceived as a foreigner at the time of his accession. He was called Great Chief of the Ma, rather than king, and his name, written without a cartouche, has the foreign, throw stick meaning (Leahy 1985: 57; Kitchen 1986: 288). In this sense, it reflected the Libyan system of a 'chief' or 'great chief' leading each of these segmentary units. Consequently, these titles became markers of lineage rather than political positions, explaining why Libyan kings view these titles as important for their sons to inherit, and why the king is increasingly viewed as a first among equals (Leahy 1985: 59; Jansen-Winkel 2015: 35-50). As there is no evidence to suggest that an individual was ever appointed to a title, and they seem to always be inherited from close relatives, this strongly suggests that these were lineage rather than administrative titles (Mushett Cole 2014).

Mushett Cole (2014) have previously contended that the introduction of a tribal governmental system by the Libyans in Egypt was unlikely. However, while Libyan rule did lead to significant changes in the concept of kingship, the title of king was no longer deemed crucial by the Libyans, as it was for the Egyptians (Leahy 1985: 59). As such, the Libyans did not see it as necessary to hold sole power through the title. Nevertheless, the title remained an important marker of status, particularly for Egyptians. In societies where aristocratic symbols are highly regarded as markers of legitimacy, other groups may be incentivised to adopt them as a means of enhancing their social status (Mushett Cole 2014). The impacts of the Libyans on the period of fragmented political structure resulted in decentralisation (Leahy 1985: 51). Thus, there seems to be an explanation for the fragmentation under the Libyan kings, with each segment asserting its independence through control over a specific territory. In addition, it implies a possible motivation; with each segment constantly competing with the others, it was imperative for them to settle their importance and status by establishing themselves as leaders of territorial separation. There are several pieces of evidence demonstrating that this structure was maintained after the Libyans gained control of Egypt, such as the retaining of lineage titles, i.e. 'Great Chief' and 'Chief of the Ma/Libu' (Mushett Cole 2014).



Payraudeau (2014: 1613-1614) challenges the traditional view and argues that the Libyan origin of many of Egypt's pharaohs and their preference for decentralised systems led to the division of Egypt into eleven autonomous states during the TIP. This conception of kingship is supported by the *Chronicle of Prince Osorkon*, which mentions multiple kings simultaneously ruling without challenging each other's claims. Broekman (2010a: 129) also attributes various events and political developments during this period to the tribal background of the Libyan dynasties. However, the political system of the Libyans during the TIP remains largely unclear, and the tribal way of life did not necessarily result in the destruction of centralised states. Ethnological comparisons suggest that specific political conditions played a significant role in the fragmentation of the Egyptian state during this period. Therefore, this argues that fragmentation should not necessarily be viewed as a negative outcome (Payraudeau 2014: 286-287). These differing perspectives highlight the complexity of the TIP and the variety of factors that contributed to the political landscape of ancient Egypt.

Furthermore, for Payraudeau (2014: 286-287) the Libyan presence in Egypt during the TIP had a limited social impact on Egyptian territory, particularly in terms of language, religion, and material culture, in contrast to later eras such as the Persian, Greek, and Roman, which had a more significant influence on Egyptian civilisation. It is important to note that not all changes in various aspects of pharaonic civilisation during the TIP can be attributed to Libyan influences, as they were primarily the result of specific developments within Egypt and influenced by the international context. Payraudeau attests that the Libyan presence in Egypt during this period is considered to have had a relatively minor impact on Egyptian culture compared to later foreign influences.

Another consequence from the mid Libyan period to the 26th dynasty, the titularies of the High Priests of Amun can be used to reveal their political influence and attributions (Meffre 2016). By placing a daughter among the Lady Songstresses of Amun, initiated by Takeloth II with Karoma during the late Libyan period, the rulers of Thebes demonstrated a new balance of power. Rudamun placed one of his daughters as God's Wife, as did some Libyan chiefs of the Western Delta, such as Ankhhor C, Chief of the Libu. Nebetimauemhat was sent to Thebes to be near to the God's Wife, as well as initiating the practices that had already been in place during the second half of the Libyan period, and were made more visible during the Kushite and Saite eras (Meffre 2016). Accordingly, the choice of one of the royal daughters as a Songstress of the Abode of Amun, initiated by Takeloth II with his daughter Karoma, provides insight into the new power balance in Thebes. Some Libyan chiefs from the Delta, including Ankhhor C, Chief of the Libu in the Western Delta, also placed their daughters in the entourage of the God's Wife (Meffre 2016).

Most of the changes began during the latter mid Libyan period, particularly at the end of the civil war. The titularies of the High Priests of Amun demonstrate that their occupations gradually became religious in nature, and they lost most of their political impact. A change like this could be explained by two linked factors. In part, the civil war might have been caused by the exceeding importance of the Amun High Priests. On the other hand, since the Upper Egyptian 22nd dynasty was restricted to Theban territory, it may have been thought unnecessary for the High Priests of Amun to play political and military roles (Payraudeau 2014: 361). Consequently, in the 22nd dynasty, the Theban crown prince became the High Priest of Amun. It is clear from the actions of late Libyan period rulers toward Thebes that this change was evident. For maintaining their relationship with Thebes, Nimlot D and Peftjauawybastet turned to those serving Amun and Montu, the two great Theban deities of the time. Rather than the High Priest, the God's Wife seems to have been a prominent figure of the Amun clergy. As part of the dedication of a liturgical vessel, Nimlot D worked with the two God's Wives, the Libyan Shepenwepet I and the Kushite Amenirdis I. As well as keeping close relations with the God's Wives of Amun, Peftjauawybastet sent his daughter Jeruth to be a Songstress of the Abode of Amun and an entourage member of the priestess (Meffre 2016).

As early as the second half of the Libyan period, the territory of the Theban 22nd dynasty was rapidly confined to the Theban area. According to R Meffre, Hermopolis and Akoris were the northern limits of the 22nd dynasty's influence around the Theban region. In the text of Piankhy's triumphal stela, the Libyan household of the Upper Egyptian line of the 22nd dynasty had disappeared from Thebes by the time of his campaign and the city fell under Kushite control. Therefore, the Kushite invasion is likely to be due to this fragmentation (Meffre 2016).

Both the royal and private sectors experienced radical changes. In Upper Egypt, the elaborate superstructures of the Memphite tradition and deep rock-cut tombs are disappearing. The 'Valley of the Kings' sequence ends. There is no longer the old tradition of spending a lot of energy and resources preparing for the afterlife. Unlike earlier Egyptian history, a temple precinct is used to inter the dead, instead of constructing physically isolated necropolises (Leahy 1985: 61). A further change was the shift towards family vaults rather than individual burials, as seen with the coffin caches of the Amun and Montu priests at Thebes and the tombs of Tanis and Memphis to the north (Leahy 1985: 61). I believe that this reflects the Libyan nomadic ideology of family ties.

## Conclusion

When the Libyans arrived in Egypt, they lost much of their ethnic identity but retained most of their social structure, impacting Egypt in several aspects. First, the decentralisation of power implied the Egyptian perception of kingship and central government deviated from the traditional Egyptian model. As a result, the importance of having a sole king over Egypt, or a unified country under their rule, was no longer key, and several kings were allowed to coexist simultaneously. Libyan social and religious customs differed from those of the Egyptians, with the retention of ethnically Libyan identity by the elite during the Libyan period, reflecting the cultural impact of their rise to power. The fragmentation of power during this period is better understood through the model of 'segmentary lineages', which maintained social equality between social lineages and competition between individual rulers, and enabled the possibility of multiple kings and great chiefs.

Second, Libyan integration into Egyptian society, as well as cultural practices such as long genealogies and the adoption of Libyan names, entered Egyptian culture during the 22nd dynasty, who made no attempt to conceal their tribal Libyan origins. This resulted in the merging of Libyan and Egyptian cultures, as well as the emergence of a new political elite made up of both Libyan and Egyptian elements. The Libyan period was characterised by an increasing number of leaders adopting the royal style and coexisting peacefully with one another as a result of tribal backgrounds. This changed radically the way the political system functioned and was perceived by those in power. This fragmentation and the presence of concurrent kings were not new in Egyptian history, since they were also present in the First and Second Intermediate Periods. Nevertheless, in the Third Intermediate, simultaneous anarchy without conflict gained recognition, especially during the first half, leading to the country's fragmentation and political turmoil, which later led to the Kushite invasion.

Third, the monuments of the TIP indicate a significant shift among the most important Theban political figures during the Libyan period. The High Priest of Amun held economic, religious, and military power as the head of the clergy of the most important Upper Egyptian god, as well as being a general and troop commander.

The Libyan cultural and social impact on Egypt during the TIP is reflected in the preservation of social and religious customs and practices, which are perceptible through the segmentary lineage system that remained important for Libyan society both before and after their arrival in Egypt. The kings of the 22nd dynasty did not conceal their tribal Libyan origins, and several 'Libyan' cultural practices entered

Egyptian cultures, i.e. the use of long genealogies for legitimisation and the adoption of Libyan names. The elite's preservation of an ethnically Libyan identity during the Libyan period reflects the cultural impact of the Libyans' rise to power. Despite the modest nature of private tombs, high artistic quality was maintained in the decoration of coffins, as well as metal casting and inlay.

To conclude, although some evidence exists regarding the social and economic impacts of the Libyans on Egypt during the TIP, further systematic surveys and excavations are necessary to gather more information.

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# Social and Economic Life in Early Ptolemaic Egypt: The Potential of the Zenon Archive

Lena Tambs

## Abstract

The Archive of Zenon, the largest surviving private archive from Ancient Egypt, contains rich information about the lives and affairs of various persons living in Egypt and beyond under Ptolemaios II Philadelphos and Ptolemaios III Euergetes. Since Zenon had a habit of carefully storing papyri that came into his hands, and his career changed several times in the period covered by the surviving sources (263–229 BC), the documents shed welcome light on different geographical areas and systems that he, and many of his contemporaries, interacted with.

To better understand the significance of such systems and social dynamics, the author approaches the c. 1845 texts of the Zenon archive with conceptual and computational methods of Social Network Analysis (SNA) in an ongoing research project. This contribution introduces this project and reflects on the archive's relevance for such research, with concrete examples of how SNA can assist Egyptologists in studying relational and attribute data revealed by ancient texts and on a large scale.

## Keywords

Ancient Archive, 3rd Century BC, Social Network Analysis, Gephi, Greek, Demotic, Papyri

## Introduction

Zenon, son of Agreophon, was born in Kaunos in Caria (modern Turkey) c. 285 BC but spent most of his adult life and old age in Egypt. As the private agent (ὁ παρ') of Apollonios, who served as the *dioketes* (or financial minister) of Ptolemaios II, Zenon was a powerful and influential person in his time. He spent much of the early years covered by the archive travelling as Apollonios' agent in the Levant and Egypt, before settling in the newly established town of Philadelphia in the Fayum in 256 BC. Here, he continued working as agent and representative of Apollonios, while simultaneously building the private businesses that would eventually become his main concern. Importantly, Zenon had a habit of filing rather than discarding papyri. Although his responsibilities now changed, he thus brought his papyri with him when he moved to the Fayum (Edgar 1931: 25–26) – where they were left for us to find and study more than two thousand years later (Vandorpe 2015: 448).

This contribution serves a two-fold purpose; to present the author's ongoing research project and discuss the potential the Zenon archive holds for studying social and economic life under Ptolemaios II Philadelphos (285–246 BC) and Ptolemaios III Euergetes (246–222 BC). After introducing the source material and main archive owner, it briefly explains how formal methods of Social Network Analysis (SNA) can be used to study relational and attribute data revealed by the ancient sources. This is followed by a case study of an interpersonal network built from 36 texts written between 263 and 258 BC, and an outline of preliminary research topics to be tackled in the larger project this research relates to. The chapter concludes with some thoughts on the archive and methodology's relevance for studying the socio-economic history of early Ptolemaic Egypt.

## The Source Material

Especially from the winter of 1914 onwards, texts belonging to the Zenon archive appeared in batches on the antiquities market (Edgar 1918: 159; Vandorpe 2015: 448). They were unearthed in ancient Philadelphia – a settlement founded by Ptolemaios II and his *dioketes* Apollonios on the fringes of the Fayum, c. 68 km south of Cairo (Figure 1), c. 260-256 BC (Mueller 2006: 121, 149, 209). Since they were found by *sebakh*-diggers, the archaeological context is, however, unknown.

### The Archive of Zenon (263-229 BC)

That the texts were found in Philadelphia correlates well with what we know about the archives' primary owner, Zenon son of Agreophon. More persons contributed to the text groups and Zenon was not the last owner. That it is, nevertheless, referred to as his archive is fitting, seeing how the vast majority of the documents were filed by him; that he remained active until the last year of the archive's life history (i.e. 229 BC); and that the identity of the last owner remains uncertain (Vandorpe 2015: 453).

With c. 1845 known papyri, the Zenon archive is exceptionally large by Egyptological standards. The texts are primarily of a documentary nature, including numerous letters (for the text types, see Vandorpe, 2015: 453-455; Pestman 1981: 183-194. For classification of the early texts discussed below, also Tambs, forthcoming: esp. Chart 2). Since many prominent people, including Zenon and Apollonios, were of foreign descent (e.g. Clarysse 1980: 105-106), the vast majority of the documents are Greek, although the corpus also includes some Demotic and bilingual manuscripts (with Greek *and* Demotic writings). In addition to the archive's grand size and documentary nature, it should be stressed that the texts cover a limited period of c. 35 years (263-229 BC). Overall, the sources can thus be assumed to present information about real-life events, and to paint exceptionally detailed pictures of life in this brief window of time.

At the same time, it should be warned that the networks one can reconstruct from this and similar text corpora will never be complete (Lemerrier 2012: 24-25). Only traces of the multitude of overlapping and competing networks the studied entities would have been subject to were ever recorded in writing, and only a fraction of these texts survived, and are available, for us to study. In the case of the Zenon archive, we must, for example, acknowledge that the archive(s) are biased towards his and Apollonios' activities and interests, and that little is known about the socio-economic relations he and others were already involved in when we first meet them. As we shall see, the corpus nevertheless holds great potential for studying socio-economic life in early Ptolemaic Egypt, but before stipulating some of the aspects the archive does shed light on, we shall acquaint ourselves with the main owner.

### Zenon son of Agreophon

Zenon's life has been outlined elsewhere (e.g. Durand 1997: 25-30; Edgar 1918: 160-161; 1931: 15-50; Vandorpe 2015: 448-453; 2019: 273-275), and what follows draws heavily on these accounts. The brief introduction given below highlights aspects relating to the archives' relevance for reconstructing

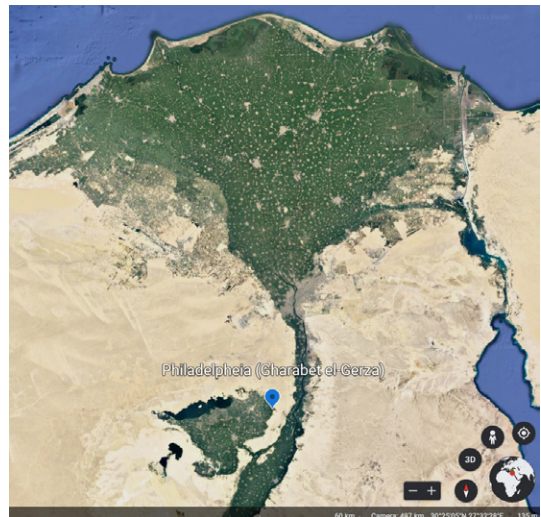


Figure 1. Map showing the location of Philadelphia (modern Gharabet el-Gerza) (Google Earth ©2023).

social and economic histories. As several have before, this outline is set out as a chronological narrative centred on Zenon's person and obligations.

As mentioned, Zenon was born c. 285 BC. It is not certain when he moved to Egypt, but an early letter reveals that he already worked for Apollonios by 261 BC (TM\_1426 / P. Cairo Zen. 5 59801), and from 260 BC Zenon travelled and conducted business as his delegate and private agent in the Levant. Upon his return to Egypt in 258 BC, he continued to work as Apollonios' right hand. When he was not accompanying the *dioketes* on inspection tours within Egypt's borders, he resided in Alexandria. In this period, he was thus heavily involved with Apollonios' household, for example sending numerous letters to members of his personal staff while travelling. Amongst his many duties, Zenon also functioned as a gatekeeper, being the one you had to go through to get an audience with the minister of finances. In other words, he held an important and powerful position as Apollonios' trusted employee.

Then, in 256 BC, Zenon moved to the newly established town of Philadelphia (see Figure 1), where he seems to have stayed for the remainder of his life. He still made occasional trips – especially to places near Memphis or to the capital of Alexandria (Edgar 1931: 27). Until 248/247 BC, his primary duties were, however, to manage a large estate of 10,000 *aurorai* that had been granted to Apollonios, and to see to the further development of the town of Philadelphia.

Zenon's responsibilities did, however, reach much further than the private sphere and local scale. As Apollonios' private agent and representative, he was simultaneously engaged in a range of private and public business in the Arsinoite, but also nearby nomes. For example, Apollonios owned a factory but also a second (more scattered) estate in the Memphite region, and, although Zenon resided in Philadelphia, he was also heavily involved in the management of this *dorea*. In addition to providing information on the social, economic, and administrative connections bridging such places and regions, this section of the archive also represents a wealthy source of information on the fuzziness of administrative borders, providing many examples of how they could be, and were, crossed.

In addition to the town and estate of Philadelphia prospering in the years Zenon was left in charge, the documentation also reflects how Zenon's personal prestige increased with time. The line drawn between Zenon's official and private affairs (as Apollonios' agent or acting on his own account) is often fine and difficult to distinguish. In either case, his personal involvement in a wide range of affairs, trades, and businesses earned him a respected position in the local hierarchy. Moreover, we can observe how Zenon's private affairs gradually grew to be more important and time-consuming.

Whereas the fate of Apollonios, who disappears from the documentation shortly after Ptolemaios III comes to the throne in 246 BC, is disputed, it is clear that Zenon stayed and continued to attend to his private businesses after he was dismissed from his duties in 248/247 BC. He kept adding texts to the archive until 240 BC, after which he appears to have handed his documents over to the last owner, whose identity remains uncertain (Vandorpe 2015: 452). Nevertheless, he is attested until the spring of 229 BC, i.e. few months before the archive ends.

### ***The Zenon Papyri on Life in the Early Ptolemaic Empire***

Such summaries of Zenon's life give but an impression of the diverse subject matters the archive touches upon. To mention but a few, the early sources provide particularly welcome insight into activities on the fringes of the early Ptolemaic Empire, which are otherwise poorly recorded (e.g. Edgar 1931: 18-19). These include information on the extent of Ptolemaic control, the way people moved about, the ships they used, the import of commodities, the level of taxes various goods were subject to, the slave trade, customs of gift giving, etc. Texts from the following period similarly contain rare details about the

practicalities of internal inspection rounds, including the travel plan, staff brought along, and concerns of locals preparing to receive the travelling party, but they also lift the curtain on some of the private business that would be attended to during such official trips. At the same time, reports and updates reveal details about matters concerning Apollonios' household in Alexandria.

After Zenon settles in Philadelphia, he is no longer regularly informed about life in Apollonios' household, although he does keep in touch with certain people and occasionally travelled there (Edgar 1931: 27). The subject matters covered in this period are numerous and heterogeneous, but so long as Zenon's main responsibilities were to manage Apollonios' large estate and develop the town, a significant part of the archive naturally concerns matters relating to this *dorea* and settlement.

With regards to the latter, it is worth noting that, although the state was heavily involved in the rapid development of the Fayum in the 3rd century BC (Minnen 2019: 256), written and archaeological evidence from the site demonstrate that much of this process was in practice delegated to, and handled by, individuals (Mueller 2006: 120-121). In addition to providing rare insights into Ptolemaic town-planning (for the town's characteristics, see e.g. Mueller 2006: 116-119; Edgar 1931: 27-29), they tell stories about what it was like to live in and near this rapidly developing new foundation. In this respect, it should also be mentioned that various archaeological and survey work has been conducted on the town and related cemeteries in recent years (e.g. Chang *et al.* 2020; Gee 2020; Gehad *et al.* 2020; 2022; Marouard 2018).

If we zoom further out, from the *dorea* and town to the connections linking them to nearby places, we find examples of people crossing borders to work, conduct business, ship goods, or use institutions located some distance from where they lived. The estate, but also Zenon and many others living in the area, had business elsewhere. In relation to this, Clarysse (1980: esp. 95-105) argues for a tendency in which places and institutions located to the west served important administrative functions, whereas economic ties were particularly strong towards the east. Moreover, he argues that the estate was more closely related to the Memphite nome and Nile Valley than to the rest of the Fayum; it is, however, interesting to note that most of Zenon's *private* business appear to have been situated within the Arsinoite nome (Clarysse 1980: 104-105).

### **The Network Approach**

It is clear from the outset that the source material is rich and complex. It provides a wealth of information on various topics that (at least to the modern scholar) appear to be more or less related. All can be linked – if by nothing else then the shared context that is the archive. Whereas the sheer number of texts might seem overwhelming, the working hypothesis is that studying the documents collectively will further increase the archive's relevance. As a means to do so, conceptual and computational tools of SNA are employed to study the texts from a network perspective.

Before diving into the case study, we very briefly introduce some of the main principles of SNA (for easily digestible introductions aimed at historians and archaeologists, see, e.g., Collar *et al.* 2015; Graham *et al.* 2022: 195-264; Ruffini 2008: 8-40; Tambs 2022b: 40-52; Waerzeggers 2014; for handbooks, e.g. Scott 2017; Wasserman and Faust 1994; for network analytical glossaries, e.g. Collar *et al.* 2015: 17-25; Tambs 2022c: 1-6).

### **Social Network Analysis (SNA)**

SNA is a sub-branch of network science that offers theoretical and methodological tools for modelling, analysing, describing, and interpreting social network data. To make use of formal network analysis, one



must first build the network to be studied. Many types of (social) networks exist, and ancient sources can be conceptualised and translated into several of these. For example, in the first extensive study approaching ancient Egyptian written sources with SNA tools, Ruffini (2008: 21) points out that ancient data can inform us about ties linking:

(1) person to person, if we know the exact nature of a social connection between the two people, (2) person to place, if a person is attested in a text as at, from, or going to a specific place, (3) place to place, if two places are attested in the same text, and (4) person or place to event, if a person or place is attested in a text with other people or places.

In network visualisations (like the ones presented below), nodes are often shown as dots, and edges as (undirected) lines or (directed) arrows drawn between them. All one really *needs* to create such models is thus (1) unique identifiers referring to the studied entities (i.e. the nodes, representing texts, people, places, settlements, ceramic types, names, etc.), and (2) information on how they are to be linked (i.e. the edges or relational ties, which can be based on co-attestations, social relationships, similarity, geographic distance, etc.).

This contribution is written within the context of a CRE conference, so as a simple example of how this works in practice, imagine that we want to create a small network to explore who attended five conferences with SNA tools. A common practice is to organise the network data into separate node- and edge-lists. In the node-list, we identify each person by a unique id. In the edge-list, we connect pairs of nodes in two separate columns, referring back to their respective node ids. If we already have the relevant attendance lists at hand (and cross-identification is straightforward), we can proceed to compile a list of individuals attending the relevant conferences and assign unique numbers (or other identifiers) to them. The only required data is the id that tells the software to model a given record as a separate node, but to keep track on who the dots represent, we would probably also want to include the persons' names in the dataset. This (and other information of interest) can be easily added to the records as node attributes by writing the given information in a separate column (as shown in Table 1: Simple node-lists of people (a) and people and conferences (b).1a).

TABLE 1: SIMPLE NODE-LISTS OF PEOPLE (A) AND PEOPLE AND CONFERENCES (B).

<b>Id</b>	<b>Name</b>
1	Mona Jacobsen
2	Mona Jacobsen
3	Peter Hansen

<b>Id</b>	<b>Name</b>
1	Mona Jacobsen
2	Mona Jacobsen
3	Peter Hansen
4	CRE 2022 – Montpellier

Next, we need to link these people in pairs. Since this can be done in several ways, important early tasks are to conceptualise the network and define the relational ties that will help answer the research questions. Here we could, for example, opt to link pairs of individuals that attended the same event directly (as in Table 2a). This would result in a so-called monopartite or 1-mode network (with only one node type). Alternatively, we could link attendees to the events that are the conferences (Table 2b). To do so, we add the events to the node-list Table 1: Simple node-lists of people (a) and people and conferences (b).1b) so we can create a bipartite or 2-mode network in which nodes of one type (the conferences) are connected to nodes of the other type (the people that attended them).

TABLE 2: SIMPLE MONOPARTITE (A) AND BIPARTITE (B) EDGE-LISTS.

Source	Target
1	2
1	3
2	3

Source	Target
4	1
4	2
4	3

Although only this sort of information is required to utilise SNA in one's research, it will in most cases be useful to qualify both nodes and edges with attribute data (Tambs 2022b: 45-46). Sticking with this example, we might for example want to also incorporate the dates and coordinates of the events, or specify the level of involvement a person had in the given conference.

### *Viewing the Archive of Zenon through an SNA Lens*

Whereas SNA is slowly gaining momentum in related fields such as Assyriology, ancient History and archaeology (for recent overviews, see the HNRB; Crabtree and Borck 2019; Holland-Lulewicz and Roberts Thompson 2022; Peeples 2019; Rollinger 2020), scholars have only recently applied formal aspects of SNA to study ancient Egyptian material (e.g. Broux 2015; Chollier 2016; 2020; Cline and Cline 2015; Dekker 2018; Dogaer and Depauw 2017; Dulíková and Mařík 2017; 2021; papers collected in Dulíková and Bárta 2020; Teigen 2021; Herzberg-Beiersdorf 2023; Martinet 2020; Ruffini 2007; 2008; Sacco 2019; Stefanović 2019; Tambs 2022a; 2022b-c). A steady growth in application and ongoing projects does, however, suggest that SNA is also on the rise in Egyptology and Egyptian archaeology.

Early applications of SNA in Egyptology and related fields have demonstrated the potential of the methods, but it must be admitted that the learning curve is relatively steep and that preparing data for formal network analysis is often time-consuming. In addition to weighing such and other costs against the benefits, one must critically assess whether SNA is a fruitful, or even an appropriate approach for answering the questions at hand. If it is, network science comes with near endless possibilities. That nearly anything can be conceptualised as a network and such models can differ greatly in type, mode and scale speaks to the method's wide reach of relevance (Tambs 2022b: esp. 47-48). At the same time, it should warn us that the researcher must always define the characteristics of his or her network data and explain what the nodes and edges that make up the given model represent (Lemercier 2012: 24).

### *The Networks I Model*

For our purposes (outlined below), two distinct types of network models were built from the ancient sources. In the first, persons and locations are linked to the Zenon papyri in which they are mentioned, so these are monoplex 3-partite affiliation networks, with three types of nodes but only one edge kind. All edges are directed, in that they point from a text to a person/group or place mentioned in it. In the other network type, all nodes represent people and the edges drawn between them reflect interpersonal relationships. These models are monopartite but multiplex, since all nodes represent human actors, but we record various kinds of social and economic edges between them. Since these relationships may or may not have an inherent direction (a collaborative tie, for example, being classified as 'undirected' whereas an edge representing a sale is 'directed' from the seller to the buyer), these network models are mixed (but usually treated as undirected in the network analysis).

What follows serves to demonstrate how SNA works in practice and on three scales, zooming out from (1) a single text to (2) data extracted from a selection of 36 documents written between 263 and 258 BC and (3) ending with a very preliminary model indicating the potential of the project's interpersonal network. Having recently come to realise that, for this present Zenon project, modelling unnamed

persons and collective groups in addition to named individuals is most fruitful, both network types are discussed on the micro-scale. This contribution does, however, place the interpersonal networks at the centre of attention (the data collection process and 3-partite networks are described in more detail in Tambs, forthcoming).

### *The Example of TM\_666*

A Greek account (TM\_666 / P. Cairo Zen. 1 59004) will here serve as a concrete example of the sort of network data I record and build my networks from. This account is famous for listing eleven places in which grain was obtained c. 259 BC, but also contains a checked account of flour distributed to people travelling over a period of c. four months (Durand 1997: 55-72; Edgar 1922: 225-230; 1925: 7-10; Tcherikover and Fuks 1957: 121-122).

For converting such an ancient text into a 3-partite network, a node-list in which the relevant text, persons/groups and/or places are referred to by unique identifiers, as well as an edge-list that specifies which pairs of nodes are to be linked, were prepared. For recording these datasets, we make use of the lists of people and places offered by the online platform Trismegistos (TM, Broux and Depauw 2015; Depauw and Gheldof 2014; Verreth 2013). They form the prosopographical and topographical baselines, but are heavily extended with nodes representing unnamed locations, persons and groups, but also various types of node- and edge attributes that are deemed useful to keep in the project's database or to study as part of the network analysis and interpretation of results.

Once such richly attributed node- and edge-lists have been recorded, the given text is modelled as a 3-partite network with edges drawn from the given text node to each person/group or place attested in it (as described in Tambs, forthcoming). By recording information on the role persons and places take in the texts, we can, for example, quickly see which people and locations are attested as such, and which are indirectly mentioned, as a patronym/metronym or describing a person, thing, or animal. Similarly, categorisation of a person's biological sex allows the distribution and structural positions of men, women, and people of unknown sex to be studied – in isolation, or in combination with other attributes or network analytical measures.

In contrast to these so-called affiliation networks, the edge-list of the monopartite network is meticulously built from scratch. Taking the compiled list of persons and groups attested in each text as the starting point, the relational ties are recorded between pairs of nodes as the document is read. Since accounts rarely specify who is at the giving end, and I generally do not link all persons listed in them to one another, this document type tends to produce few interpersonal relationships. Still, five social relations involving a total of ten individuals are revealed by this text (Figure 2).

Importing and visualising the node- and edge-lists containing the monopartite network data of TM\_666 as a social network

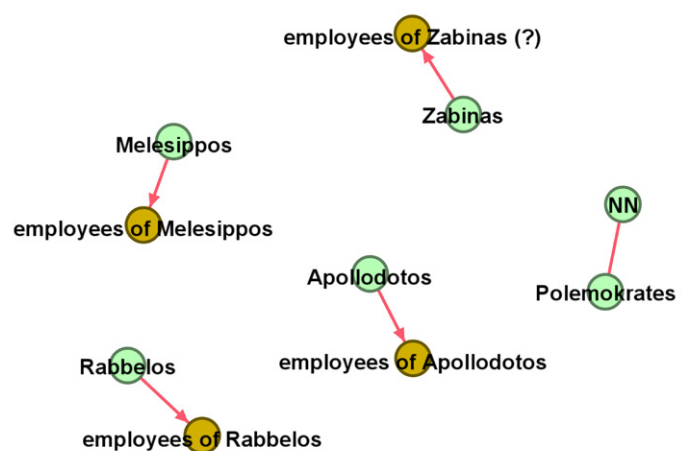


Figure 2. Interpersonal relationships revealed by TM\_666 visualised as a monopartite network model. Node colour: male (light green), unknown sex (brown). Node size: degree centrality (10-25). Edge colour: social (red) relational tie (graph by author, created in Gephi).

with the ForceAtlas2 layout algorithm (Jacomy *et al.* 2014) in Gephi (Bastian *et al.* 2009<sup>1</sup>) reveals that the network is small and dispersed. We quickly see that neither of the pairs are interlinked, so this whole network consists of five so-called connected components, representing the five dyads (pairs). Moreover, common metrics reveal that each node in it has a degree centrality of '1' and a betweenness centrality of '0.0'. As we might expect, this dataset is thus not very interesting from a structural and network analytical perspective.

Albeit an extreme example (for a more complex model resulting from an early contract [TM\_665 / P. Cairo Zen. 1 59003], see Tambs, forthcoming), many ancient sources will result in such small and scattered network models, for which a formal network approach might not be needed or meaningful. This is certainly true of the network data visualised in Figure 2. This account is, however, part of something far bigger, and preliminary exploration of the lists of people offered by TM has confirmed that many individuals attested in the archive do reappear in a number of texts (Tambs, forthcoming). Widening the network boundaries to information learned from 36 early documents will serve to demonstrate that such cases are of crucial importance for the relevance of the SNA approach.

### *The Case Study of Early Texts*

As a case in point, we can zoom out to the network representing this case study and highlight the parts of this larger model that were informed by TM\_666 (Figure 3). Even if the text in question is an account – i.e. a problematic text type for identifying individuals outside of the given source – we learn

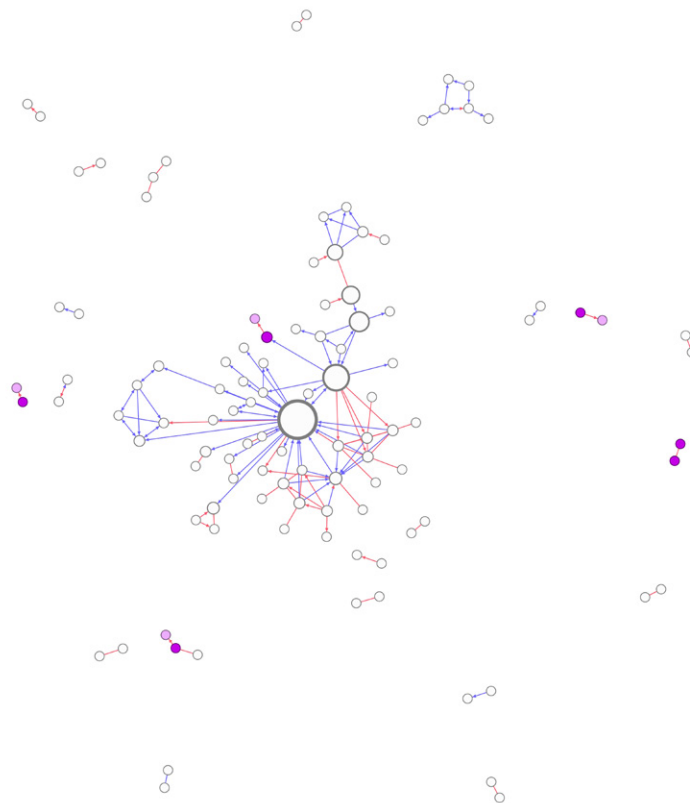


Figure 3. Relationships from TM\_666 highlighted in the interpersonal network built from 36 early texts. Node colour: individual attested in TM\_666 (dark purple), group attested in TM\_666 (light purple), person/group not attested in TM\_666 (white). Node size: betweenness centrality (25-100). Edge colour: social (red), economic (blue) relation (graph by author, created in Gephi).

<sup>1</sup> Available at <https://gephi.org/>.

that the new texts reveal further relational information about two of our nodes. They are Rabellos and Apollodotos, who are attested in similar roles (with flour given to τοῖς παρὰ Ῥαββήλου and τοῖς παρὰ Ἀπολλοδότου) in TM\_666.

In addition to the group nodes that represent their agents, Rabellos is now also linked to his brother Obanes, who receives wine in another account (TM\_2377 / P. Lond. 7 1930). Apollodotos, on the other hand, is tied to the main component formed in this network graph. The relevant economic edge reflects that Apollonios the *dioketes* sent Apollodotos a letter with instructions for export of Syrian grain (TM\_2021 / PSI 4 324). Moreover, a closer look at the TM lists of people attested in the Zenon papyri indicates that the connected component made up by Rabellos, his men and his brother is unlikely to grow further. Apollodotos will, however, reappear in later texts, that may reveal valuable new information as to his activities and connections.

More interesting than seeing the edges informed by TM\_666 in this wider context, is exploring what characterises the network model built from the selection of early texts (Figure 4). Once the researcher has a network like this, (s)he can effortlessly visualise recorded attributes, like colouring the nodes to

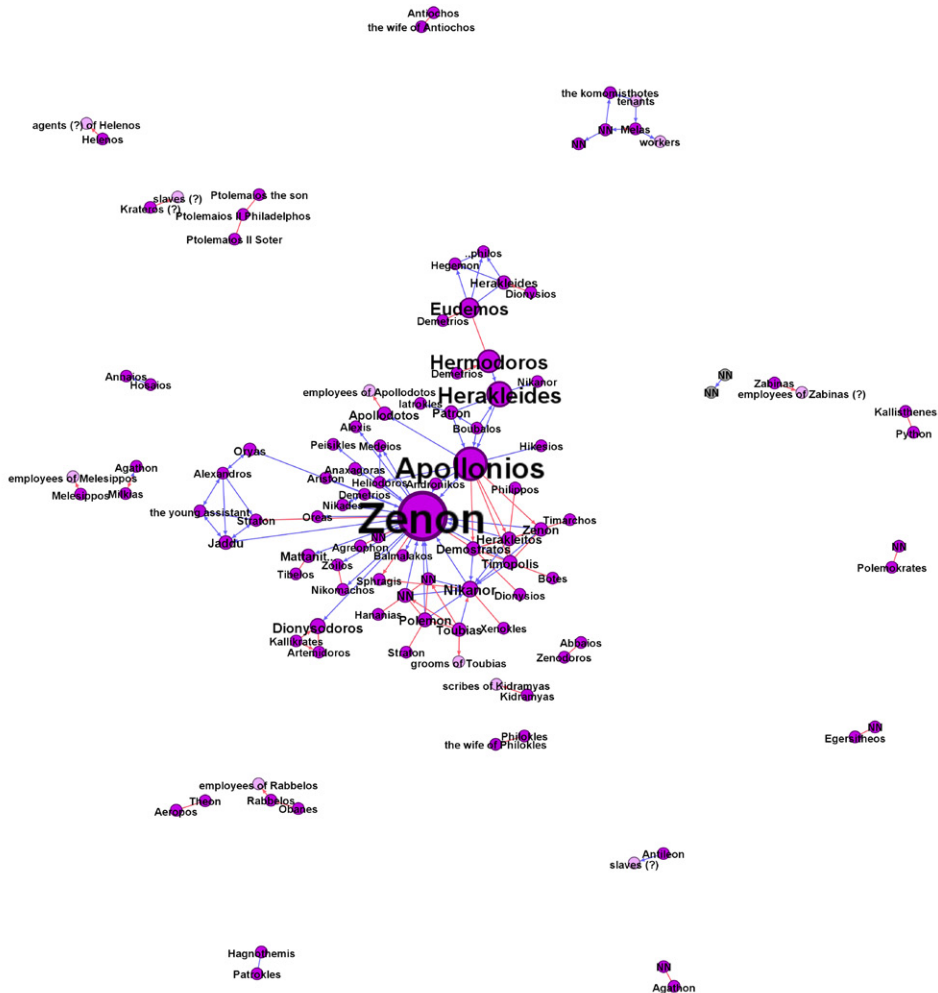


Figure 4. Network visualisation of the monopartite model of interpersonal relations extracted from 36 early manuscripts. Node colour: individual (dark purple), group (light purple), unknown (grey). Node and label size: betweenness centrality (25-100). Edge colour: social (red), economic (blue) relational tie (graph by author, created in Gephi).

explore where the nodes representing collective groups are positioned, or use the network analytical software for attribute analysis or to formally measure and analyse the network at hand.

To give but a few examples, counting the number of text ids listed as edge attributes reveals that at least one pair of nodes could be linked by an interpersonal relationship in 25 of the 36 documents (cf. 21 texts before unnamed persons and groups were added, Tambs, forthcoming). Collectively, the network they reveal consists of 109 nodes and 178 edges. 11 of these nodes represent groups (shown as light purple nodes) whereas two were classified as unknown (grey). Such statistics could of course be easily obtained outside of Gephi, but by visualising the data as a social network, we can more easily see the structure of the network. As such, we find that the groups and unknown nodes are scattered rather than clustered together in one part of the graph, but also that most are positioned in smaller connected components and thus only directly or indirectly linked to a low number of other nodes.

For our purposes, the most interesting and valuable part of the network is, however, the core component positioned in the centre of the visualisation. In previous research on socio-economic networks from Pathyris, I repeatedly observed how ancient archival material tends to generate interpersonal networks that are characterised by one component being vastly larger than the rest (see esp. Tambs 2022b: Ch. 5 and 289-297). That the same tendency is already seen in this modest test case is reassuring, since it indicates that enough cross-identifications and reappearances of persons appear across texts for the archive to be meaningfully studied with SNA. Since many of the archive's main actors are already represented in it, and many more texts are preserved from the later periods, this core component will surely grow significantly bigger and more complex as data from more texts are incorporated into the model.

For the network method's feasibility, this is important as it suggests that enough links between actors are attested for network analytical metrics and theories to be applicable. These can, for example, be used to study and interpret structural characteristics of the whole networks or core component, but also the network position and function(s) served by specific nodes or edges in them. In Figure 4, for example, the nodes were calculated and sized according to their betweenness centrality – i.e. a metric calculating how often a given node appears on the shortest path found between pairs of other nodes in the network. Next, we can use these results to compile a list of persons the software has identified as being particularly central by this measure and in this dataset (Table 3: Top-ranking nodes by betweenness centrality. 3).

TABLE 3: TOP-RANKING NODES BY BETWEENNESS CENTRALITY.

Label	Id	Betweenness centrality	Degree centrality	Occupational information
Zenon	TM_Per_1757	0.224157	48	Agent of the dioketes Apollonios (TM_Per_937)
Apollonios	TM_Per_937	0.129897	20	Dioketes (financial minister)
Herakleides	TM_Per_1851	0.080824	7	Ship captain
Hermodoros	TM_Per_1673	0.065247	6	Agent of the oikonomos (?) Demetrios (TM_Per_1383_1384)
Eudemos	TM_Per_1702	0.048287	10	Agent of the oikonomos Demetrios (TM_Per_1335)

Knowing what we know about the archive, it is unsurprising to find Zenon and Apollonios at the top of such a list for any covered period. Considering that many of the primary sources on which this network is based were written while Zenon was travelling as Apollonios' agent in the Levant, it also makes sense that a ship's captain would function as a broker, linking different parts of the network. A few more words

should, however, be uttered on Hermodoros and Eudemos. Both are known from a letter concerning a shipment of cloths for the wrapping of mattresses, and this letter, which also mentioned the ship captain Herakleides, happens to be preserved in two copies (TM\_1906 / P. Zen. Pestm. 76 a and TM\_2372 / P. Zen. Pestm. 76 b), written by the same hand on 27 January 258 BC (Pestman 1980: 248).

If we interpret the highlighted nodes' betweenness centrality alongside their degree centrality scores (which equals the total number of interpersonal relations the given node is involved in), we notice that Eudemos' betweenness centrality is lower although he is involved in more relationships overall. A closer look at the highlighted individuals' network positions (Figure 4, upper part of the core component) offers an explanation; Hermodoros represents the only path linking Eudemos and the people surrounding him to the rest of the core.

Visualising network data as a network graph can help us better 'see' the system(s) under scrutiny and recognise patterns and curiosities in the data, but it should also be stressed that the network analytical software's knowledge does not go beyond the data fed into it. Whereas software such as Gephi can reveal much about our network data, network theories can help us make sense of results and observations. If we want to learn more about these and other persons or groups' agency; or assess the degree to which the models reflect real-life situations, the networks must, however, also be interpreted and read in context. As Egyptologists, we can use such models as guiding lights or treasure maps, but must constantly return to the ancient sources and scholarly literature to grasp what the network analysis really means.

As a case in point, the recorded information is already in the model, but because Gephi stacks parallel edges (i.e. more than one edge connecting the same pair of nodes) on top of each other, they can be difficult to spot without filtering, etc. After Gephi has led our attention to this section of the graph, we might thus, for example, want to reverse the process and return to the source to check what the model represents. The letter in question has been translated as follows (in Pestman 1980: 249):

Eudemos, the agent of Demetrios the oikonomos, and Herakleides, the agent of Dionusios the antigrapheus, to Hegemon and ...philos greetings.

Herakleides --- has brought down from Naukratis to the Emporion the 9 webs of soroiacloth for the wrapping of mattresses that he received from Hermodoros, the agent of Demetrios [the oikonomos?].

Fare well, year 27, Choiach 3.

In comparing this to the graphic representation (Figure 4), it becomes evident that Eudemos' relatively high degree centrality score reflects that he was one of two persons sending this communication to two recipients. As such, he forms part of a densely connected group of senders and recipients, and their respective superiors. Currently, this group is only linked to the rest of the core component by information learned from the same document. From the content, we learn that Hermodoros had provided the cloths that Herakleides brought to Alexandria, so the two of them are linked by a directed economic tie representing the delivery.

Whereas these relationships are rather straight forward, the connection between the former group and latter pair (i.e. Hermodoros and Herakleides) is 'uncertain'. Because the reading of the title of the Demetrios that is attested as Hermodoros' superior is uncertain, he is represented by a different node than the namesake of which Eudemos was an agent. Based on Pestman's notes, Hermodoros and Eudemos were nevertheless linked by a collegial tie, but this was marked as 'uncertain'. In the graph (Figure 4), this edge represents a weak tie, in that removing such 'uncertain' edges would disconnect Eudemos and the nodes surrounding his node from the core component. Here it is, however, worth mentioning that the TM lists of people attested in the Zenon archive already reveal that we will meet

one of the recipients, Hegemon, again in several later texts (TM\_720 / P. Cairo Zen. 1 59063, TM\_1076 / P. Cairo Zen. 3 59436, TM\_1309 / P. Cairo Zen. 4 59681, TM\_1310 / P. Cairo Zen. 4 59682, TM\_1856 / P. Zen. Pestm. 25, TM\_1882 / P. Zen. Pestm. 51). One or more of these may well serve to strengthen the link between this group and the rest of the core.

Lastly, it should be stressed that in this yet small dataset, the fact that two copies of the letter in question were preserved affects the relative importance of the people and relationships attested in it. Whereas Herakleides is attested in additional texts (TM\_673 / P. Cairo Zen. 1 59012, TM\_674 / P. Cairo Zen. 1 59013, TM\_1428 / P. Cairo Zen. 5 59804), the TM data suggests that Hermodoros and Eudemos are only known from these copies. We can thus predict that, as more texts are added, their relative importance will (fittingly) drop. This can be taken as a warning that we need to treat small datasets and networks with caution, but also an argument for making use of the ease of shifting perspectives and jumping between scales offered by SNA (Lemercier 2012: 32-35). Zooming out might help us see the big players and grasp more general tendencies and characteristics of the studied system(s); zooming in to explore and better understand the roles played by smaller (or more poorly preserved) players, whose activities and perspectives might nevertheless provide valuable details on aspects of social and economic life in Early Ptolemaic Egypt.

#### *A Glance at the Early Texts in Context*

The impact of ‘odd cases’ such as duplicates on the network analysis will, however, be reduced as the dataset grows. As a final test, we can make a first attempt at envisioning the degree to which it is expected to do so. Although the monopartite dataset is collected through methods of close reading and literary review, the data-collection process started with the TM lists of people attested in the ancient

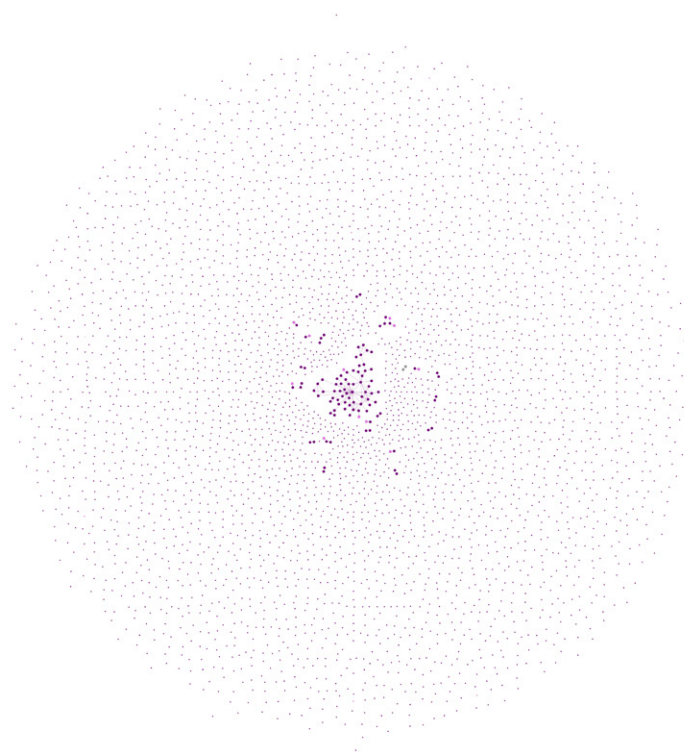


Figure 5. Current stage of the monopartite dataset. Node colour: individual (dark purple), group (light purple), unknown (grey). Node size: degree <1 (25), degree >1 (50). Edge colour: as nodes (graph by author, created in Gephi).



texts (as described above). As an experiment, we can therefore add nodes representing the persons that, according to TM, are mentioned in the remaining 1809 documents to this picture (Figure 5).

It must, however, be emphatically stressed that this image is highly preliminary and thus not very informative. Only relations attested in the 36 discussed texts link nodes in Figure 5, and the TM lists of attested persons are continuously revised and built upon as the sources are being worked through. Moreover, of the added nodes, only the ones representing persons who can be meaningfully linked to others by the content of the Zenon papyri will make it into the project's interpersonal network model. Furthermore, unnamed individuals and collective groups are added manually, since they are not included in the TM lists. That being said, the visualisation does give a rough indication of what is to come and serves as a reminder that digital tools are in fact needed for studying relational and attribute data preserved in the Zenon archive collectively.

### **The Potential of the Archive and Relevance of the Methods**

With this demonstration, I hope to have shown that SNA holds great potential for Egyptological research. However, representing and studying the Zenon archive in the form of richly attributed 3-partite and monopartite networks is admittedly a time-consuming task, so why make the effort? What sort of research objectives do I intend to use SNA for, and what is the added value of the network perspective?

#### ***The Larger Research Project***

The Academy of Finland Centre of Excellence in Ancient Near Eastern Empires (ANEE) asks how changing empires impact social group identities and lifeways. In this highly interdisciplinary research environment, I study how people lived under the early Ptolemaic kings by means of approaching the Zenon archive from a distinct network perspective (as described above). Since the project is still in its early stages, listing was confined to a few topics that my approach and methodology will allow me to explore.

A main objective is to examine which people and places are mentioned in the Zenon papyri, and to study how they are linked. As we have seen, this is achieved through two approaches that materialise in two distinct types of networks: (1) 3-partite affiliation networks in which people and places are linked to the texts in which they are mentioned, and (2) monopartite interpersonal networks in which pairs of individuals or groups are linked by the social and economic ties they shared.

In extension, we aim to model and analyse the network data retrieved from the ancient sources from various perspectives and on different levels. This will include exploration of diachronic developments in the data and network structures (for the three-folded dating scheme, see Tambs, forthcoming), as well as moving between the macro-scale that is the whole networks, meso-scale that is subsets of them, and the micro-scale that is selected ego-networks. Moreover, we intend to employ network analytical metrics for the purpose of analysing the networks and identifying central actors and structurally important edges in them, such as frequently attested persons and places in the 3-partite networks or people and relational ties bridging otherwise weakly connected communities in the interpersonal models.

Similarly, I will use different networks, but also filter and study subsets of them, for specific purposes that will be more or less dependent on formal network analysis. As a concrete example, texts from the periods in which Zenon resided in Philadelphia (256-229 BC) offer many perspectives on life in this and neighbouring regions. Amongst the topics they shed welcome light on, and that the network perspective is appropriate for studying, is the running of Apollonios' large estates. In this respect it is fortunate that Zenon's archive not only preserves documents concerning his management of the *dorea*

in Philadelphia (256-248/247 BC), but also includes several of his predecessor, Panakestor's documents (overseer 257-256 BC), as well as those of his successors, Eukles (248/247-244 BC) and Bion (244-243 BC).

Many persons of differing social standing and backgrounds are mentioned in these texts, and several make appearances in more than one source. Thus, the network approach will enable the study of texts relating to this estate in the wider context that is the archive, but also on their own terms or even in relation to the documents concerning the running of Apollonios' Memphite estate. We already heard that Zenon was involved in the running of both estates. As another case in point, we can mention that the previous manager, Panakestor, was not discharged but rather relocated – probably to the Memphite estate (Edgar 1931: 26) – as Zenon settled in Philadelphia. With the 3-partite network data, the link between these estates and regions can, e.g., also be studied from a spatial or material perspective, seeing how several texts speak about shipments sent to, from, or between them (Clarysse 1980: esp. 96 and 101).

Once the project's database is constructed, it can thus be used to study a range of research topics. To give but one last example, the dataset will also be used to test the degree to which subsets of the network data collected in this project can be meaningfully compared against that previously extracted from 21 archives from the late Ptolemaic town and military camp of Pathyris in Upper Egypt (186-88 BC). Behavioural patterns of individuals and groups in this small-scale community have previously been explored with SNA (Tambs 2020; 2022a; 2022b: esp. 372-438). A means to compare the findings of these studies against the different chronological and spatial contexts of the Zenon papyri could thus be to isolate and compare ego networks of persons involved in private business in and around Philadelphia with those of selected individuals from Pathyris (as in Tambs 2022b: 372-438). For this purpose, it is fortunate that the Zenon archive reaches across various social strata, but also that Zenon became increasingly involved in private business himself, since this increases the likeliness of finding comparable case studies that could be used to test the degree to which historical network models such as these can be meaningfully compared across projects.

### Concluding Remarks

The objectives listed above differ in several ways, but they also have certain things in common. One is that texts belonging to the archive provide insights into the matters at hand; another is that in one way or another, they assume that relationships matter. By means of modelling monopartite and 3-partite networks from the bits and pieces of information revealed by ancient sources, SNA can assist us in studying them in context and as parts of larger systems. Of crucial importance for the appropriateness of the outlined network approach is, however, that a high number of the people and places are well known. Preliminary analysis of raw data extracted from the full corpus (of 1845 text) via TM in 2021, as well as of qualified 3-partite and interpersonal networks based on 36 early documents, has confirmed the hypothesis that a sufficiently large number of people and places reappear in more than one document for the Zenon archive to be meaningfully studied with formal SNA methods (Tambs, forthcoming).

For our purposes, the relevance of the archive is further strengthened by the wide range of affairs and subject matters Zenon and his colleagues were involved in. Particularly promising is that they have left us with an archive that penetrates several social layers, from Apollonios, serving as the king's financial minister, to Harendotes, struggling to sell his lentils in Philadelphia. In a letter to the *oecosome* Philiskos, Harendotes asks for an extension on the rent he pays for selling 35 *artabae* of lentils a month, explaining how 'they (the pumpkin roasters) come early in the morning, sit down near me and my lentils, and sell the pumpkins, giving me no chance of selling lentils' (TM\_2085 / PSI 402, as translated in Rostovtzeff 1979: 120). Many individuals, like this lentil roaster, appear only once or a few times in the documentation. Others, like the financial minister, reappear time and time again. Whereas such familiar persons serve to link individual parts of the written corpus and the networks, the former help qualify

the models with detailed information and real-life examples. Moreover, spatial data worked into the networks will serve to ground the models in physical space (Tambis, forthcoming).

My working hypothesis is that studying many such instances in context and in relation to one another can lead to new insights into the various systems, boundaries and (informal) rulesets the ancient subjects adhered to. If we can utilise aspects of SNA to map and analyse such network data in systematic manners, before interpreting what we ‘see’ in the networks against the historical context, and considering existing social and economic theories, we might better understand what it was like living under the Early Ptolemaic Empire. With my Zenon project, I strive to explore how studying ancient archives from distinct network perspectives can assist us in such attempts.

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## Abbreviations

ANEE	Ancient Near Eastern Empires (< <a href="https://www.helsinki.fi/en/researchgroups/ancient-near-eastern-empires">https://www.helsinki.fi/en/researchgroups/ancient-near-eastern-empires</a> >, viewed 12 July 2023)
CRE	Current Research in Egyptology
HNRB	Historical Network Research Bibliography (< <a href="https://historicalnetworkresearch.org/bibliography/">https://historicalnetworkresearch.org/bibliography/</a> >, viewed 12 July 2023)
P. Cairo Zen.	<i>Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire</i> = Edgar 1925
P. Lond.	<i>Greek Papyri in the British Museum</i> series
P. Zen. Pestm.	<i>Greek and Demotic Texts from the Zenon Archive</i> = Pestman 1980
PSI	<i>Papiri greci e latini</i> (Pubblicazioni della Società Italiana) series
SNA	Social Network Analysis
TM	Trismegistos (< <a href="https://www.trismegistos.org">https://www.trismegistos.org</a> >, viewed 12 July 2023)
TM_###	TM texts id (< <a href="https://www.trismegistos.org/tm/">https://www.trismegistos.org/tm/</a> >, viewed 12 July 2023)
TM_Per_###	TM person id (< <a href="https://www.trismegistos.org/ref/">https://www.trismegistos.org/ref/</a> >, viewed 12 July 2023)

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# The Emergence of Egypt's Southern City: Preliminary New Kingdom Domestic Findings in the Mut Precinct

Michael R. Tritsch

## Abstract

In 2005 and from 2018 to 2020, the Johns Hopkins University (JHU) Expedition at the Mut Precinct unearthed New Kingdom domestic material. The findings included a large amount of mainly red painted mud brick in close proximity to two column bases and a stone feature consisting of a layer of stone slabs and a standing sandstone architectural element with a cavetto cornice and torus roll. This area was originally interpreted as a small neighbourhood chapel, with the stone feature representing the shrine and the painted mud brick being used to adorn the walls of the surrounding structure. However, based on new research, the nature of this domestic environment has been revised, shifting from a chapel to a columned 'reception room' in a possibly elite house, similar to the 'divan room' at Deir el-Medina, as well as exhibiting parallels to the central hall or transverse hall in houses at Amarna. The stone feature is a *divan* and the painted mud brick originated from a niche shrine(s) and an altar, commonly found in domestic contexts. Further, the discovery of these elements at Mut may indicate a regional style related to the Theban area, attested by their unique design linked to Deir el-Medina. While these interpretations are preliminary and subject to change following further excavation, they do provide insight into New Kingdom domestic life and worship, along with building construction methods.

## Keywords

New Kingdom, Karnak, Amarna, Deir el-Medina, Domestic Archaeology, Private Religion

## Introduction

This article investigates the New Kingdom (NK) material unearthed in the Johns Hopkins University (JHU) excavation at South Karnak in the rear of the Precinct to the Temple of Mut, south of the Sacred Lake and outside of the 18th-dynasty enclosure wall.<sup>1</sup> The excavation site (Figure 1) is located in an area identified as a domestic setting, possibly urban,<sup>2</sup> forming part of Thebes from at least the NK onward.<sup>3</sup> Initial work in this area focused on the second stratum, which revealed the remains of a large, 25th dynasty (747-656 BC), mud brick administrative building. However, in 2005, excavation in trench 10 continued down to the fourth stratum, revealing a stone architectural feature and a jumble of painted mud bricks, as well as some ceramics (Sullivan 2007: 29-31, figs. 1-4; 2011: 532; 2013: 10, 14-15, 146, fig. 6.3).

<sup>1</sup> Work was initiated in this area from 2004-2006 by Elaine Sullivan, a JHU PhD candidate at the time. The subsequent excavation that took place from 2018-2020 was led by Violaine Chauvet of the University of Liverpool, in conjunction with Betsy Bryan of JHU.

<sup>2</sup> Magnetometry conducted in the eastern half of the Mut Precinct, south of the sacred lake, strongly indicates an urban environment with multiple phases of inhabitation in antiquity (Strutt 2013: 4-6, fig. 2, 13-16, figs. 10-11, 32-36, figs. 23-25). Additionally, unrelated excavations revealed late Second Intermediate Period (SIP) and NK production and storage areas along the 18th-dynasty enclosure wall, with domestic environments uncovered further to the south (Bryan 2008: 27-28, 34-35, figs. 1-4; 2012: 2-5, figs. 2, 5-7, 9-10; Fazzini and Bryan 2021: 72-73).

<sup>3</sup> In the same vicinity, Theban domestic sites have also been confirmed at Abu el-Gud (el-Saghir 1988: 80-81; Lacovara 1997: 5, 61), c. 200 m south of Mut, and Karnak (Azim 1980: 161-162, 165, fig. 4, plate 45; Millet and Masson 2011: 5-7, fig. 6), however, these urban environments remain poorly understood.

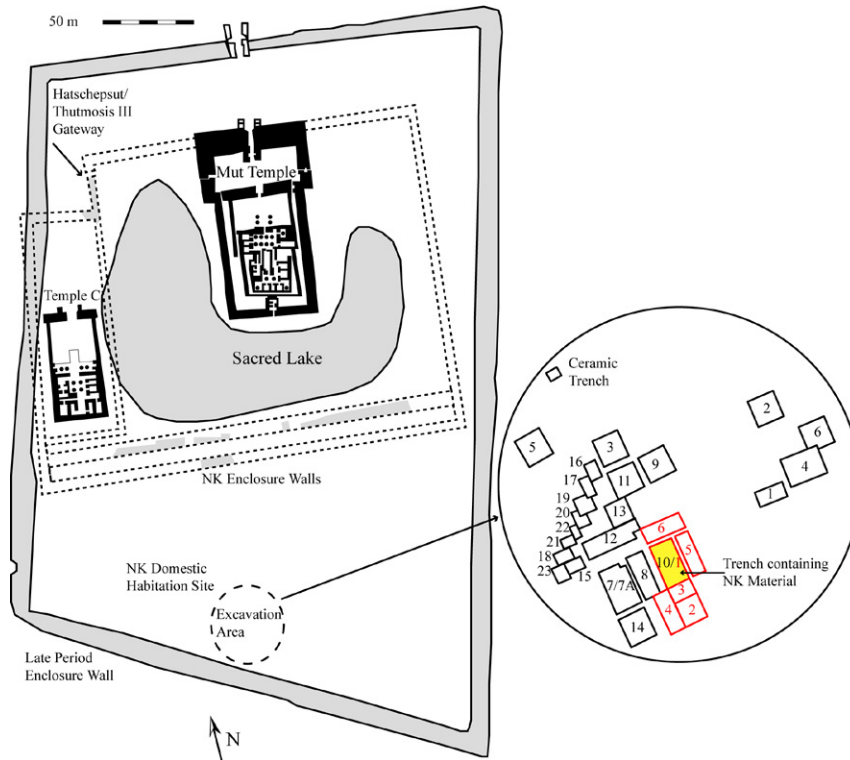


Figure 1. Map of Mut Precinct highlighting excavation site; note that trenches outlined in black represent the 2004-2006 excavation, with those outlined in red being opened in 2018-2020. Trench 10/1, indicated in yellow, is location of NK material (after Sullivan 2013: 13, fig. 3.3, 147, fig. 6.3).

The investigation into the fourth stratum was renewed in January 2018, with trench 10 redesignated as trench 1.<sup>4</sup> Since then, 14 additional painted mud brick features and three new sandstone elements have been identified in this trench (Figure 2), of which nine have been significantly excavated to allow for interpretation. Several mud brick walls have also been found, partially defining the southern extent of the area under investigation, but further excavation is necessary to locate the remaining walls. As a result, a reconstruction of the building in which this material originated is not possible, but the original form of the features and the context can be postulated.

In regard to chronology, precise dating of the fourth stratum remains somewhat open at this time. The ceramics excavated around the stone feature in the initial excavation were dated to the 19th to 21st dynasties (1295-945 BC). The largest category of pottery, carinated bowls, would have been used in association with food consumption, with a small number of other pottery types having a storage function. However, because only a limited area was exposed, it is difficult to determine if the material analysed was in primary or secondary context (Sullivan 2013: 21, 117-119, 133).

During the 2018 through 2020 seasons, the pottery recovered from the north section of the trench primarily dates to the first half of the 18th dynasty (1550-1390 BC) up to the reign of Amenhotep III, with the majority of diagnostic sherds coming from red burnished bowls and cups, also connected with food consumption (Seiler 1995: 197-98). This is earlier than initially proposed, possibly resulting from

<sup>4</sup> In addition to resuming work in this trench, five more trenches were subsequently opened (trenches 2-6), three to the south and two immediately adjacent to the north and east, but excavations had not yet reached the NK level as of the end of January 2020.





Figure 2. Photograph of photogrammetric model of trench 1 from the winter 2020 season (photograph by author).

the removal of the original pottery and leaving lower levels exposed. It is, therefore, not possible to properly date this re-excavated area beyond the NK until more work can be done.<sup>5</sup>

### Description and analysis of excavated material

#### Stone architectural element and related features

In evaluating the excavated material, initial attention focused on the stone feature (Figure 3) uncovered in 2005. Located in the central region of the trench, it consists of a single layer of six reused stone slabs (feature 1043), originally referred to as pavers, abutting a standing, unscribed, sandstone architectural

<sup>5</sup> I would like to thank Betsy Bryan for her analysis of the recovered pottery.

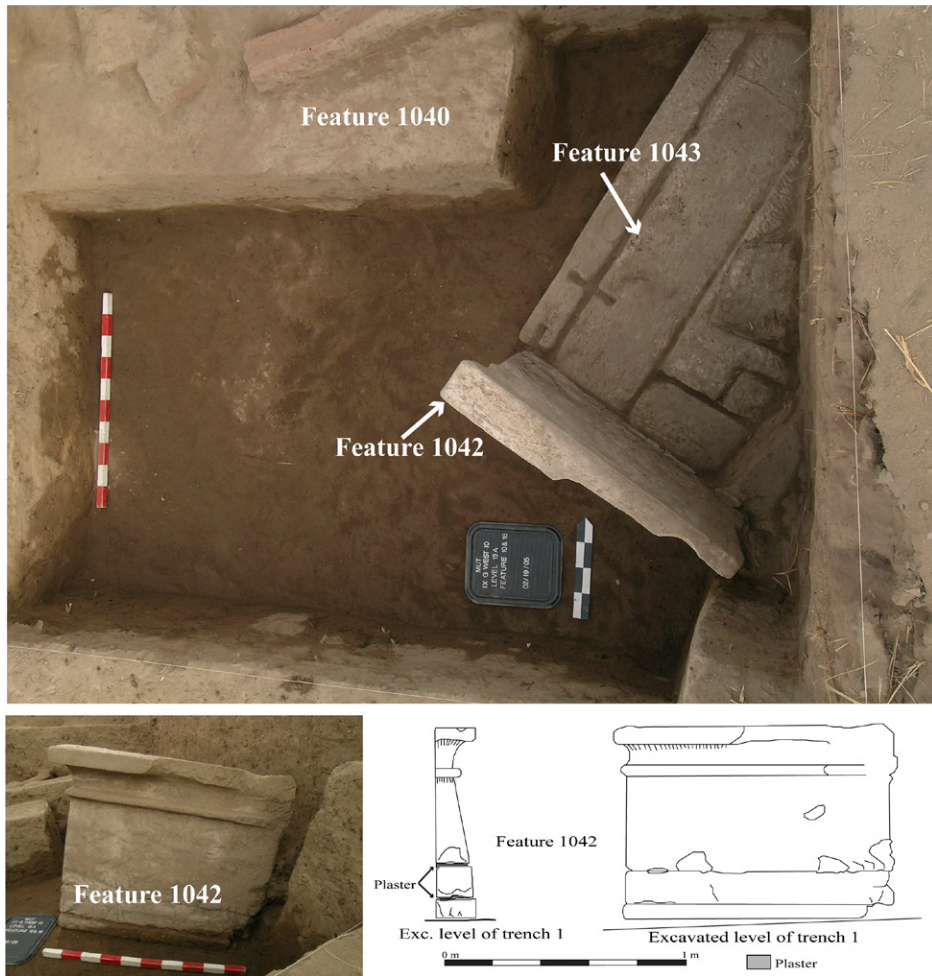


Figure 3. Stone architectural element (features 1042 and 1043) in situ, with painted mud brick jumble (feature 1040) visible to its north (photographs by Elaine Sullivan; line drawing after Sullivan 2013: 21, fig. 3.8).

element (feature 1042), 95 cm high and 102 cm wide, with a flat back and embellished with a cavetto cornice and torus roll. Traces of white plaster were visible on the top of the cornice and the surface of the slabs, but no paint was apparent. Additionally, because the slabs are repurposed elements, the dovetail construction joints evident on their surface served no practical function and were likely covered, along with the small gaps between the slabs, by a coating of white plaster. Finally, it was noted that one in situ line of mud bricks was visible along the eastern edge of the stone slab, possibly indicating the presence of a wall (Sullivan 2013: 20-22, figs. 3.6-3.9).

In 2020, two circular, in situ, sandstone column bases, features 28 and 30 (Figure 4), were unearthed in close proximity to the stone feature, suggesting a columned hall. A bottom elevation of 75.2 m above sea level for the column bases and the stone slabs (feature 1043) confirms they are contemporaneous. The column bases, of 70.5 cm diameter and 6 cm thickness, exhibit a 33 cm diameter round groove around their centre,<sup>6</sup> with four grooves likely extending out therefrom as radii to mark the centre for placing

<sup>6</sup> The dimensions provided reflect only feature 30, as over half of feature 28 remains unexcavated in the northern balk, however, based on the exposed portion, it appears commensurate with feature 30. Also, with the exception of elevations, all measurements provided for features excavated from 2018-2020 were calculated from the photogrammetric 3D model of the area generated using Agisoft Metashape and were rounded to the nearest 0.5 cm.

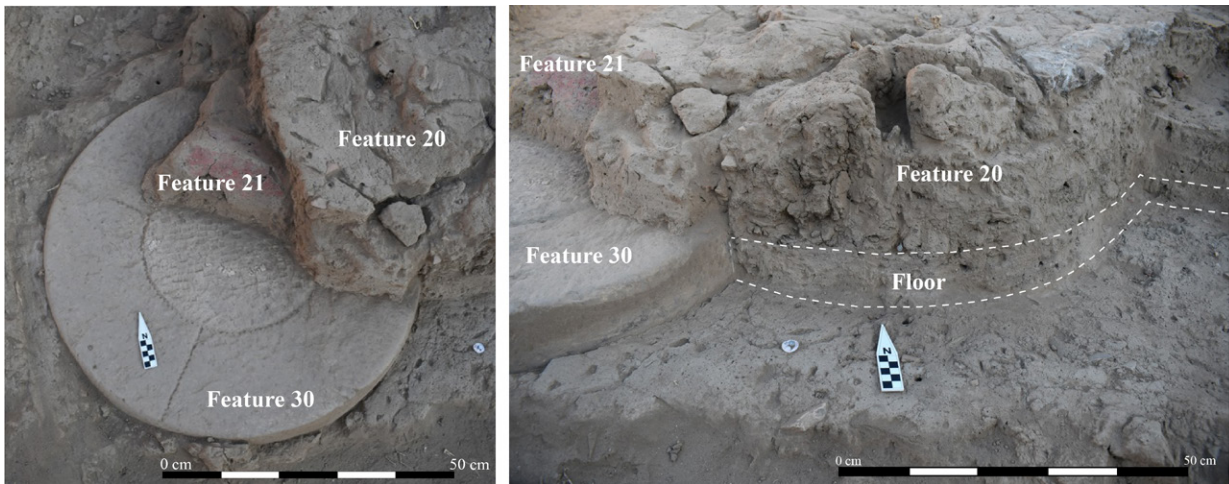


Figure 4. Feature 30 (column base), with profile view of stratigraphy on right showing a purposeful compaction beginning c. 2 cm below top surface of column base (photographs by author).

the columns,<sup>7</sup> paralleling column bases from Amarna and Deir el-Medina (Bruyère 1939: 69; Kemp and Stevens 2010: 115, fig. 2.14, 136-138; Peet and Woolley 1923: 41). In terms of orientation, the visible radius grooves roughly running north-south on the two column bases share the same alignment and are parallel to the long edge of the stone slabs (feature 1043). In addition, the column bases are positioned three cubits<sup>8</sup> apart edge-to-edge, and the edge of the southern column base (feature 30) is located three cubits from the edge of the stone slabs. Finally, to the east of the southern column base, the profile of the soil under the large slab of painted mud bricks (feature 20) changes from very bricky with solid elements clearly present (demolition fill) to compact and homogenous, at a level approximately 2 cm beneath the upper elevation of the column bases, indicating a mud plastered floor.<sup>9</sup> The column bases appear partially sunk into the floor as a result of the continual dismantling and renewal of this surface over time, making the upper-most layer the final circulation level. In regard to the columns themselves, they were likely removed when the structure was vacated, prior to the collapse of the surrounding walls, given the location of mud brick fragments directly atop the column bases.

Additionally, in the south section of the trench, the renewed excavation uncovered three walls in a U-shape orientation opening to the north, with the enclosed area designated as room 1 (Figure 5). The alignment of the long east-west running wall (feature 7) parallel to the corniced slab (feature 1042) indicates a relationship between these two elements, which supports the conjecture that this entire area is part of a single room with columns supporting the ceiling, but more excavation is needed to determine the complete layout of the walls. Further, the partially enclosed area (room 1) can be tentatively identified as a bed niche based on the eastern wall (feature 8) having a protruding half pillar, typical of this type of room (Bietak 1996: 23-24, fig. 2, 39; Lehner 2014-2015: 80-85, figs. 4-6; 2015: 4-6; Moeller 2016: 197-201, figs. 6.3-6.5, 345, fig. 9.1), although the style and location are more reminiscent of a much earlier period.

<sup>7</sup> The coarse texture of the centre of the column bases suggests that they supported a stone column, which requires a roughly chipped surface for proper seating and stability, seen on the column bases in the main room of Butehamun's house (S-T 6) at Medinet Habu (Hölscher 1954: 5, fig. 3, plates 5A-B) and in houses at Elephantine, such as House 47 from the 17th dynasty (Pilgrim 1996a: 208), acting as status symbols for the home owner (Crocker 1985: 58-59, 62-64, table 2).

<sup>8</sup> The standard length of the Egyptian cubit is typically defined as 52 cm (Pommerening 2005: 274).

<sup>9</sup> Most houses at Deir el-Medina have a mud plastered floor, making the Mut context consistent with domestic environments (Valbelle 1985: 119).



Figure 5. View of room 1 in south section of trench from 2018 season; note the two large pieces of painted mud brick in situ (photograph by James T. Van Rensselaer).

Weatherhead and Kemp 2007: 3, plate 0.1, 60, fig. 1.10, 77, 141-142, plates 2.15-16, 2.18, 142, 145, plate 2.23, 220-221, figs. 3.16-17, colour plate 3.6). However, beyond the inclusion of these features, little similarity exists with the Mut stone feature.

The closest parallel is the shrine in room 4 of Panehesy's house (T.41.1), shown in Figure 6. While the sidewalls in the reconstruction display a similar profile to the Mut stone feature<sup>10</sup> (Frankfort 1927: 213, plates 47-48; Pendlebury 1951: 26-27, fig. 6, plate 30, figs. 1, 4, plate 31; Sullivan 2013: 162-163, fig. 7.5), because this conception is only hypothetical, combined with the facts that the proportions do not align with the Mut feature and recent excavations show the Mut stone slabs are at the floor level negating the presence of any stairs or ramp, the analogousness of Panehesy's shrine is minimal. Further, a similarly shaped cavetto cornice fragment recovered in House Gate Street 8 in the Workmen's Village at Amarna also seems to suggest that the Mut stone feature may have originated from a shrine (Sullivan 2013: 162-163, fig. 7.4). However, the size and actual physical appearance of the fragment is considerably different from the stone feature. Plus, the fragment's discovery in a secondary context makes its relationship

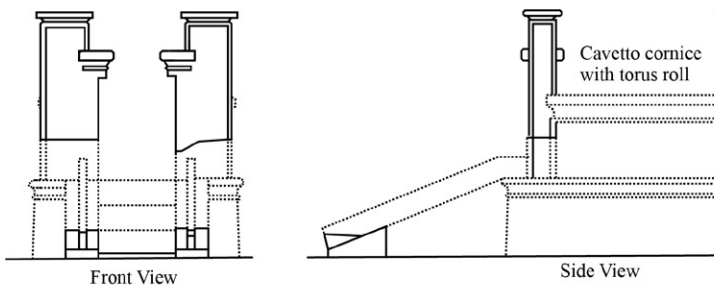
<sup>10</sup> It is also worth noting that the reconstruction referenced is contra to Ikram's (1989: 96-97) proposed design, which leaves out cavetto cornices.

### Initial interpretation

An initial analysis of the Mut stone feature interpreted the corniced element (feature 1042) as forming the side of a shrine and the stone slabs (feature 1043) as forming the floor, with more of the shrine yet to be unearthed. Cavetto cornices with a torus roll often indicate religious structures, and, at Amarna, the use of white plaster and whitewash parallels domestic altars (Sullivan 2013: 162-164). In a comprehensive review of private chapels in the Amarna Workmen's Village and in Deir el-Medina, cavetto cornices often adorn doorways, benches in shrines, screen walls (Figure 6), and the shrines themselves, and white coatings are applied throughout the chapels, with the two most representative examples being the Main Chapel at Amarna and the Brotherhood Chapel at Deir el-Medina (Badawy 1968: 421; Bomann 1991: 1, 9-11, 18, 28-29, 31, 45-46; Bruyère 1929: 96; 1939: 37-38, fig. 8; Kemp 1984: 21-23, fig. 2.7; 1985: 1, 4, 5, fig. 1.4; Peet and Woolley 1923: 95, 101-108, plate 27, figs. 1-4, plate 36, fig. 2;



Brotherhood Chapel at Deir el-Medina



Reconstruction of shrine in Panehesy's house at Amarna

Figure 6. Examples of the use of cavetto cornices in shrines, surmounting screen walls in the Brotherhood Chapel at Deir el-Medina (top, photograph by author) and sidewalls in Panehesy's house at Amarna (bottom, after Pendlebury 1951: 27, fig. 6).

between two doors, while one armrest indicates its placement in the corner of the room (Bruyère 1939: 65-67, fig. 19, plate 11; Weiss 2015: 30). The limestone or mud brick foundation of the *divan* is plastered and whitewashed, which parallels the surface finish found on the Mut stone slabs, and the armrests are made of limestone or whitewashed mud brick and topped with a cavetto cornice with torus roll, showing striking similarities in their design with the Mut corniced sandstone slab (Bruyère 1934: 85;

to architectural emplacements uncertain<sup>11</sup> (Stevens 2006: 221, fig. II. 13.3). As a result, this fragment likewise does not help in the interpretative process. Finally, garden shrines were suggested to be homologous structures (Ikram 1989: 89, 98, fig. 3; Sullivan 2013: 162, fig. 7.3), but because the Mut context has been determined to be the interior of a building, this comparison is no longer relevant.

Given the lack of significant similarity found to support the interpretation of the Mut stone feature as a shrine and the fact that cavetto cornices<sup>12</sup> and white plaster surface coatings<sup>13</sup> are not limited to purely cultic environments, renewed research focused on domestic structures to locate more congruous comparanda.

#### Revised interpretation

A thorough review of architectural features in houses identified the *divan* at Deir el-Medina as a closely analogous element to the Mut stone feature. Often interpreted as a bed or seating area, the typical *divan*<sup>14</sup> is built against a wall with a horizontal foundation and a vertical standing element at one or both ends, often referred to as armrests. When the *divan* has two armrests it is frequently positioned

<sup>11</sup> While this fragment could have also been part of a stela, that typology is very unusual at Amarna, leading to the hypothesis that it is from a shrine grille (Stevens 2006: 221).

<sup>12</sup> Cavetto cornices are a common feature that appear on a variety of architectural emplacements in non-cultic settings, as examples brought forth later in this article illustrate.

<sup>13</sup> The use of white coatings on limestone seats in Chapelle Votive (C.V.) 1 at Deir el-Medina attests to this finish on surfaces that do not come into contact with sacred, cultic objects, as confirmed in August 2019 by their visual inspection at the Museo Egizio (Bruyère 1934: 58-60, fig. 44; Tosi and Roccati 1972: 204-210, 356-361).

<sup>14</sup> Originally coined by Bruyère, the term *divan* simply refers to a bench with side arms; although a Persian term that designates not only a low couch but also a government office and reception hall, this nomenclature is being retained to be consistent with its common use in referring to this feature.

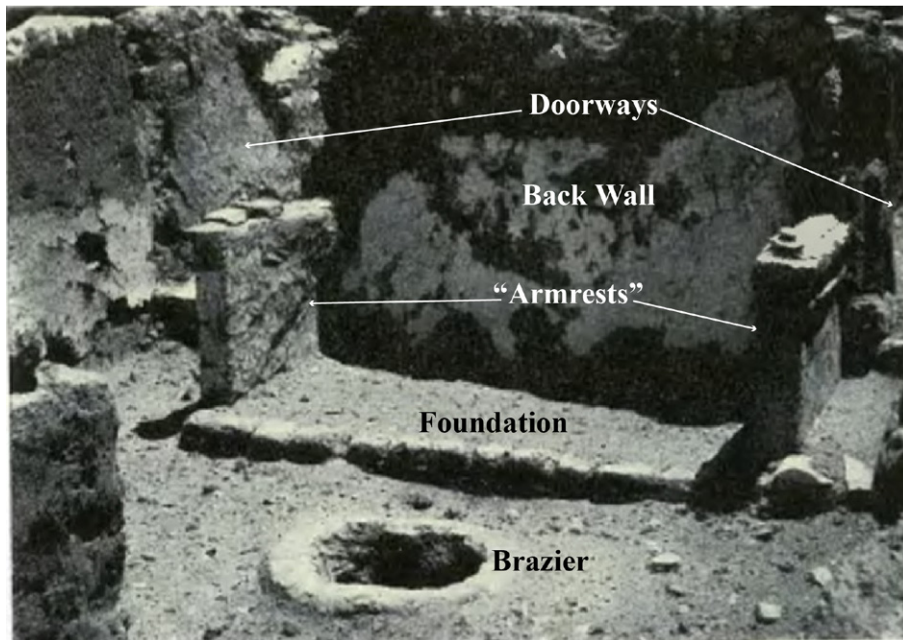


Figure 7. Divan in House N.E. XIII at Deir el-Medina (after Bruyère 1939: 66, fig. 19).

1939: 65-67; Meskell 2002: 117, fig. 4.8, 120, fig. 4.10; Weiss 2015: 30). Moreover, the in situ line of mud bricks on the eastern edge of the stone slabs, suggesting the presence of a wall against which the feature is situated, further supports this interpretation.

House N.E. XIII incorporates a white plastered *divan* (Figure 7) positioned between two doorways, with a cavetto cornice with torus roll on top of the two whitewashed, mud brick armrests. Bruyère (1939: 66, fig. 19, 259) lists the height of the *divan* as 68 cm, which has been determined to be the height of the armrest by using the dimensions of the individual bricks and counting the number of clearly visible rows. Adding the foundation, the total height of the *divan* is 78 cm, reasonably similar to the 95 cm height of the Mut stone feature. Other comparable *divans* with limestone armrests exist in Houses N.O. XIV and S.E. I (Bruyère 1939: 66, 265, 290, plate 11).

In total, at least 48 *divans* have been identified in the 68 houses of the walled village (Bruyère 1939: 65; Meskell 1998: 217), representing a minimum inclusion rate of 71%, which speaks to their commonality and supports the theory that they would be found in other habitation sites in the region as well.<sup>15</sup> Closely matching the *divan* in appearance, the Mut stone feature incorporates the same major elements and shares a similar size and construction,<sup>16</sup> leading to its identification as a *divan* located within a columned room in a house. Further, understanding the Mut context to be part of a domestic structure provides a framework within which the painted mud brick can be placed, guiding the interpretative analysis.

<sup>15</sup> *Divans* have also been found outside the walled village at Deir el-Medina, which further points to their pervasiveness in this area, but they are not included in this discussion due to their incomplete publication. They appear in House 1312, in houses on the slope of Gournet Marei, and possibly in a dependency of the chapels (1218) (Bruyère 1930: 37, plates 1, 4, 5, 8; 1937: 24-25, fig. 12, plate 1; 1948: 119, plate 3; Valbelle 1985: 120-121, plate 3A).

<sup>16</sup> The only major difference is that the Mut feature is made of sandstone while the *divans* at Deir el-Medina are composed of limestone, but this is not considered significant and could simply be attributed to the heavy use of sandstone at the Karnak temples versus the readily available limestone at Deir el-Medina.

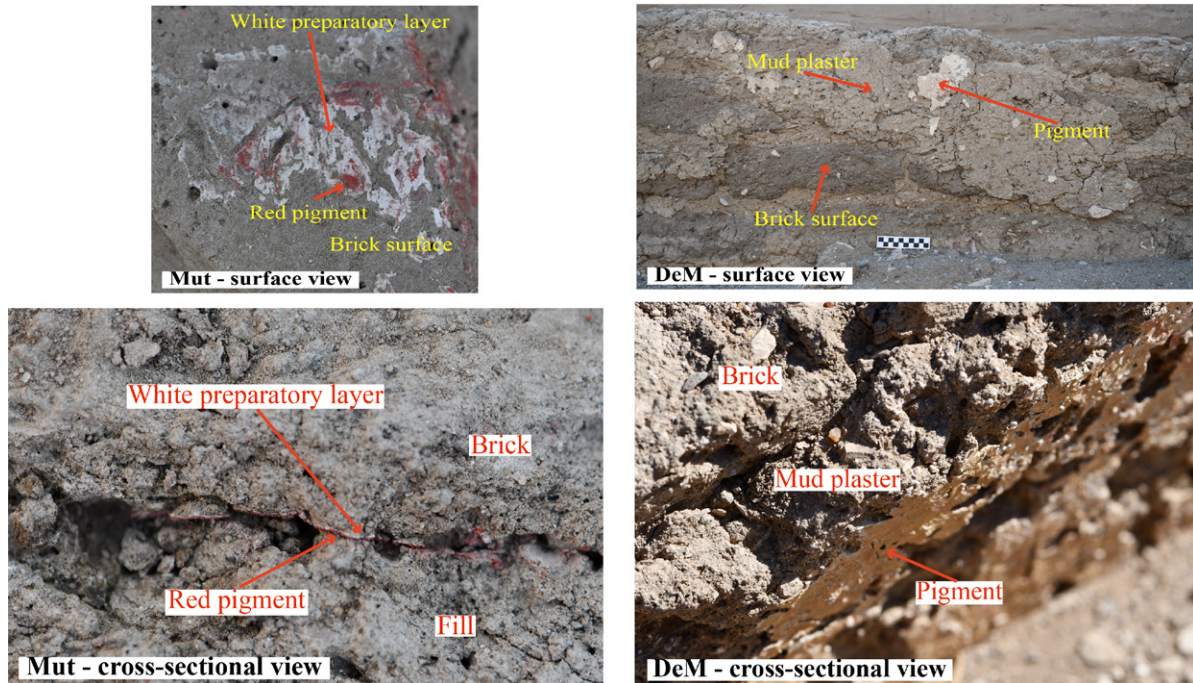


Figure 8. Photos on left illustrate the painting technique used at Mut, with the application of a thin white underlayer, which contrasts with the thick layer of mud plaster used at Deir el-Medina, as shown in photos on right (photographs by author).

### Painted mud brick features

#### Painting technique

The decoration on the Mut mud brick features (Figure 8) consists mainly of red pigment, likely red ochre,<sup>17</sup> applied either directly onto the surface of the brick or with a preparatory layer of either a thin white underlayer or mud wash (Kariya 2019: 2). The use of a very thin undercoating is quite unique and appears to be previously unattested in NK Egypt,<sup>18</sup> with paint usually applied on a thick layer of either mud or gypsum plaster, the normal wall coatings prevalent throughout Deir el-Medina<sup>19</sup> (Bomann 1991: 41; Bruyère 1939: 22, 65), Amarna<sup>20</sup> (Glanville 1929: 39, 51; Kemp 1979: 48; Kemp and Stevens 2010: 129-130; Weatherhead 2007: XXIV; Weatherhead and Kemp 2007: 163), and Lahun (Petrie 1891: 7, plate 16, fig. 6). Yet, while the painting technique is different, parallels do exist in regard to the form of the painted mud brick features.

#### Niche jambs (features 1040, 17, and 22)

In the northeast corner of the trench, the original excavation uncovered a large collapse of mud brick architectural elements labelled collectively as feature 1040 (Figure 9). It contained three relatively

<sup>17</sup> The two principal colorants used for red in the 18th dynasty were copper hematite and red ochre, with red ochre being much more prevalent (Lee and Quirke 2009: 113-114; Weatherhead and Buckley 1989: 208-209).

<sup>18</sup> The only other example of this painting technique of which I am aware appears on a Middle Kingdom (MK) painted birth brick from Building A, the mayoral residence, in the town of *Wah-sut* at South Abydos (Wegner 2009: 448-449, fig. 1, 451, fig. 3, 453, fig. 5).

<sup>19</sup> During visits to Deir el-Medina chapels in July 2019 and January 2020, it was confirmed that the brick walls were covered by approximately 2-3 cm of mud plaster, followed by a layer of plaster and then paint. This was also observed from a distance in houses at this site.

<sup>20</sup> An examination of several painted plaster Amarna house fragments in the British Museum (EA 58831, EA 58838, and EA 58839) in July 2019 further verified this painting technique.

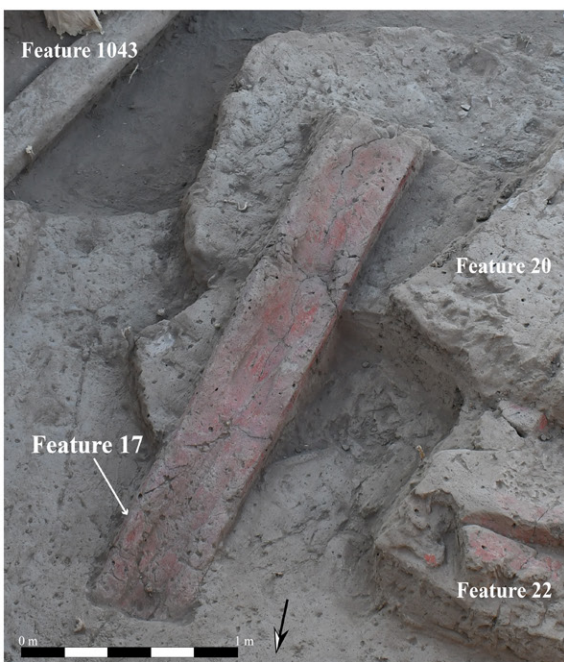
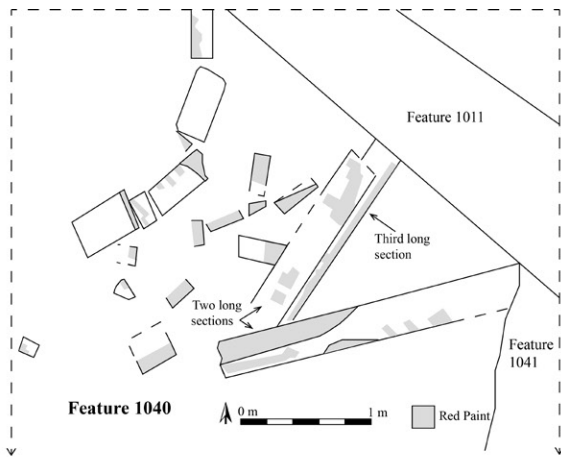


Figure 9. Niche jamb fragments. Top, painted mud brick jumble (feature 1040) excavated in 2005 (after Sullivan 2013: 24, fig. 3.11); middle, feature 17; bottom, feature 22 (photographs by author).

long sections of mud brick construction and over 15 smaller pieces, exhibiting primarily red paint but with some black, yellow, and white paint present as well. Two long pieces were rectangular, displaying some slight curvature on the surface, with the third long piece also having a similar form. The longest element measured over 200 cm. The components making up feature 1040 were originally conjectured to be associated with the doorways or interior walls of the building that enclosed the stone feature. The discussion of comparanda mentions red coloured door jambs, niches in the ‘Northern Quarter,’ altars, and features in private chapels at Amarna, but does not directly connect any of these elements to the material excavated (Sullivan 2013: 22-25, figs. 3.11-12, 164).

From the renewed excavation, feature 17 consists of a long rectangular element of mud brick architecture that continues down into the excavated surface, appearing similar to at least two of the long sections from feature 1040. Constructed from bricks stacked in stretchers, the dimensions of the exposed portion are 124 cm long by 20 cm wide by 9 cm thick. The top surface is slightly concave and covered with red paint which extends down the sides, forming a straight, horizontal line where it ends. A thin layer of white continues further down, with a very small remaining section being undecorated. In addition, small patches of yellow pigment appear on the eastern side; DStretch did not reveal any inscriptions or other embellishments. Feature 22 is composed of at least three red painted mud bricks on two different levels. These two sections appear to have been originally connected, forming an element almost identical to feature 17, snapping in half during deposition and folding in on itself.

The size and shape of Mut features 17 and 22 clearly identify them as ‘jambs,’ yet, while both mud brick door and niche jambs (Figure 10) are uniformly painted red (Bruyère 1939: 40, 45), the form and pattern of painting of the Mut features indicate that they are not door jambs. Recovered door jambs from Deir el-Medina, for instance S.6180 (Tosi and Roccati 1972: 194-195, 347 [50229]) and S.9502 1&2 (Tosi and Roccati 1972: 196-197, 348 [50233]) inspected at the Museo Egizio, Torino, are three-sided, with the front, the side facing the doorway,



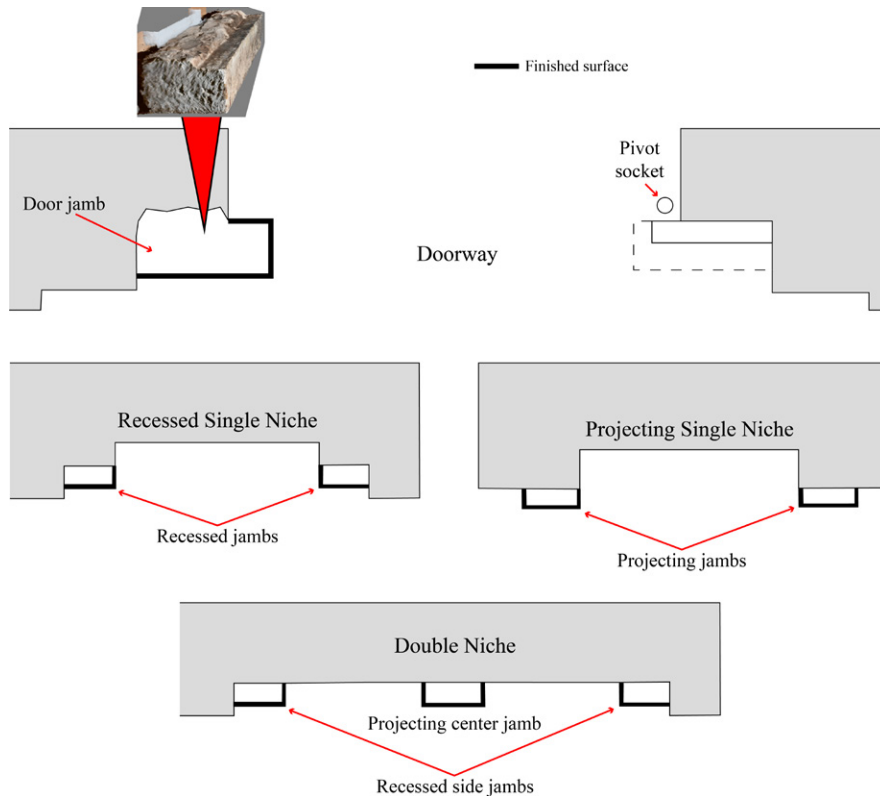


Figure 10. Examples of door and niche jambs. Top, top view of a threshold from Deir el-Medina, illustrating how door jamb S.9502 1, Museo Egizio, Torino, fits into it (drawing after Bruyère 1939: 45, fig. 14, photograph by author); middle left, top view of single recessed niche (after Kemp and Stevens 2010: 130, fig. 2.23); middle right, top view of single projecting niche (drawing by author); bottom, top view of double niche (after Borchardt and Ricke 1980: 125, Abb. 12).

and a small part of the back being finished and decorated, with a lip formed on the back surface to hold the door closed. Although the Museo Egizio pieces are constructed from stone, mud brick elements exhibit the same form (Bruyère 1939: 45, fig. 14). This shape of door jamb is further seen in houses at Amarna, such as P47.19-20 (Borchardt and Ricke 1980: 126-127, Abb. 14-16). This configuration is clearly different from the Mut jambs, which have both sides and the face fully smoothed and decorated, with the only unpainted surface being the back, which would be the surface attached to the wall, slightly inset.

In evaluating recessed niche jambs from Deir el-Medina, such as S.9509 (Tosi and Roccati 1972: 196, 349 [50232]) and S.9524 (Tosi and Roccati 1972: 186-187, 343 [50217]),<sup>21</sup> they only have two faces finished, the front and one side (Weiss 2015: 64). While this construction of niche jambs seems to closely correlate with those at Amarna and in House N.E. XV at Deir el-Medina, which are all inset into the wall (Bruyère 1939: plate 12), it does not match the design of the Mut jambs.

The projecting jambs on niche shrines in Houses S.E. VIII and S.O. V at Deir el-Medina, however, present with a more similar construction, with the front and two sides smoothed and decorated (Bruyère 1936: 336; 1939: 325-329, plate 12; Harrington 2013: 69, fig. 20). This three-sided finish appears on the central jamb in recessed double-niche structures at Amarna as well, such as the one in House P47.19 (Borchardt and Ricke 1980: 124-127, Tafel 12A). Therefore, Mut features 17 and 22 can be definitively

<sup>21</sup> Note that Tosi and Roccati identify 50217 as a door jamb, however, it is more likely a niche jamb as it is only decorated on two sides.

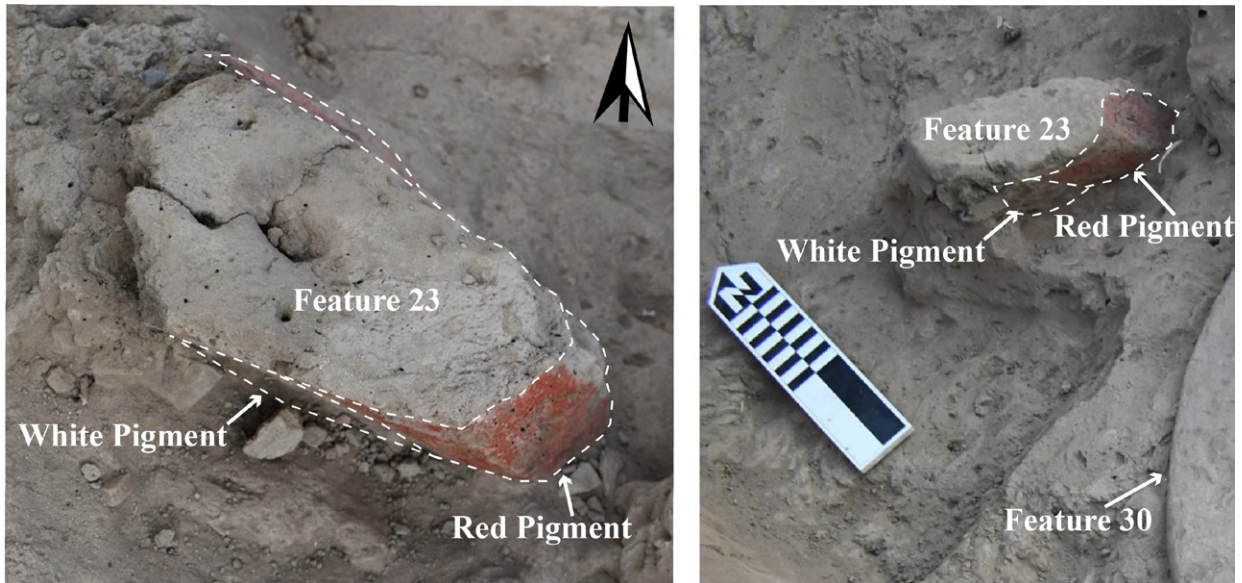


Figure 11. Feature 23, possible balustrade or rim fragment from an altar; note border between red and white pigment on south side (photographs by author).

identified as projecting niche jambs, which, when combined with feature 1040, means that at least four or possibly five projecting niche jamb fragments have been recovered. The length and projecting form of features 17 and 1040 establishes that they would have originated from a full-length niche, with a typical height of 170 cm (Bruyère 1939: 67-68; Meskell 2002: 119), rather than their much smaller, partial-length counterpart with recessed jambs sunk into the wall some distance above the floor level, the so-called ‘rectangular or round-topped’ niches found at both Amarna (Stevens 2006: 246-247; see also Peet and Woolley 1923: 63, 81, 86, 90) and Deir el-Medina (Bruyère 1939: 77, 193-196, fig. 86, 261, 332, fig. 204, plates 15-20; Weiss 2015: 55-56, 62-65, 238-297). Further, the quantity of niche jamb fragments identified likely indicates the inclusion of more than one projecting single niche in the Mut context, with the existence of a double niche considered doubtful given that no recessed jambs have been found. Finally, the presence of niches is consistent with the identification of a *divan*; these elements occur concomitantly in ‘reception rooms’ of domestic contexts, a connection that is further explored in the general discussion of niche emplacements.

#### *Balustrade or rim of an altar (feature 23)*

While features 17 and 22 can be conclusively identified as niche jambs, only a preliminary assessment can be offered for feature 23 (Figure 11), a trapezoidal-shaped mud brick measuring 12 cm long by 8.5 cm wide by 10 cm thick and exhibiting red pigment painted over a white preparatory layer on three sides. However, the red colouration on one of the long sides is only partial, with a pronounced line of demarcation beyond which the colour changes to white. The shape of feature 23 suggests that it may be part of a balustrade or rim associated with a domestic altar. The sharp border between the red and white pigment on one side may be attributed to its position abutting a step to the side of a balustrade.

Household altars at Amarna consist of a rectangular platform, with stairs or a ramp with balustrades positioned in front of them. They are located against a wall or in the corner of a room, with the edges of the altars frequently accented with a rim that matches the shape of the balustrades (Spence 2007: 288; Stevens 2006: 222-223, figs. II.13.4, II.13.6, 225-232, fig. II.13.10, table II.13.1). The altar in House P47.22 is a representative example (Borchardt and Ricke 1980: 132, Abb. 18, Tafel 13A). Based on the photograph,

the general form and three-sided finish of the balustrades and rim appear similar to Mut feature 23, except that the tops are rounded<sup>22</sup> (Stevens 2006: 227); the top of feature 23 is flat. On similar emplacements at Medinet Habu, the balustrades on the 18th dynasty altar in House 1 and the possible 22nd to 25th dynasty altar in House II appear flat on top (Hölscher 1939: 68-70, figs. 54, 56; 1954: 7, fig. 6, plates 6F, H, I; Kleinke 2007: 46-47, Tafel 8c; Stevens 2009: 18), but they are considerably thinner than feature 23.

Closer comparanda are the so-called *lits clos* at Deir el-Medina, similarly positioned against a wall or in the corner of a room. While the purpose of the *lits clos* has been debated, the general consensus is that they functioned as house altars,<sup>23</sup> like those at Amarna and Medinet Habu (Friedman 1994: 110-111; Harrington 2013: 74-75; Kleinke 2007: 16-17, Abb. 8, 56-62, Farbtafel 2; Koltsida 2006: 165-167, fig. 1, 171-172; Weiss 2009: 204, 206-208). They are approached by three or five stairs, often flanked by balustrades with flat tops and decoration apparent on all three sides, as seen in Houses N.E. VI, S.O. VI, N.O. XI, C. VII, S.E. I, N.E. XIII, N.E. II, and N.E. VI, closely matching Mut feature 23 in terms of contour and finish. The *lits clos* also incorporate a rim of the same shape as the balustrades (Bruyère 1939: 56-58, fig. 18, plates 9-10). Given this similarity, it can be suggested that feature 23 was part of a balustrade or rim on a side wall from a *lit clos* style altar. Further, although the *lits clos* at Deir el-Medina, and the altars at Amarna and Medinet Habu, present with a mud or white surface coating, in contrast to the red pigment covering feature 23, red is attested on an altar in the garden shrine in House T.34.1 at Amarna (Frankfort and Pendlebury 1933: 64, plate 22, fig. 6, plate 23, fig. 3; Ikram 1989: 93-94), providing evidence that altars can be coloured red and supporting the preliminary identification offered.

*'Panels' of articulated mud brick (features 18, 20, 24, and 27)*

The final grouping of painted mud brick features (Figure 12) remains the most elusive and, while a very preliminary interpretation can be proposed, continued excavation is needed to more clearly elucidate their form and origin.

Two related assemblages of connected mud bricks make up feature 18. The diagnostic grouping is composed of at least three rows of multiple bricks, 42.5 cm long by 20.5 cm high by 9.5 cm thick. The colouration consists mainly of red atop a thin white preparatory layer that ends with a defined border oblique to the current excavated surface. The white layer continues to cover the remainder of the brick surface.

Feature 20 identifies a large pentagonal slab of mud bricks. Although originally considered to be a single element, further excavation revealed that it consists of multiple different components, with the southeastern and northern edges belonging to two distinct features. The red paint on the southeastern edge continues onto the bottom surface,<sup>24</sup> with the red paint on the northern edge extending 2.5 cm onto the top surface. The northern edge dimensions are 115 cm long by 17.5 cm thick, with the long sides of the bricks set parallel to the painted top edge, similar to feature 18.

<sup>22</sup> This shape is also observed on a carved limestone fragment found in room 11 of Ranefer's house, which may have originated from a balustrade in an altar context (Kemp and Stevens 2010: 141, fig. 2.26, plate 2.25, 143). Closely mimicking the mud brick balustrades, this stone example suggests that the excavated shape of the balustrades at Amarna represents their original form, unaltered by taphonomic processes.

<sup>23</sup> Although the *lit clos* designation, originally assigned by Bruyère, is somewhat of a misnomer and contributes to the confusion surrounding this feature, it is being retained (like the term *divan*) to be consistent with its common use in the literature when referring to these structures.

<sup>24</sup> While some paint is also present on the top surface, this appears to be the negative impression from the removed element above it.

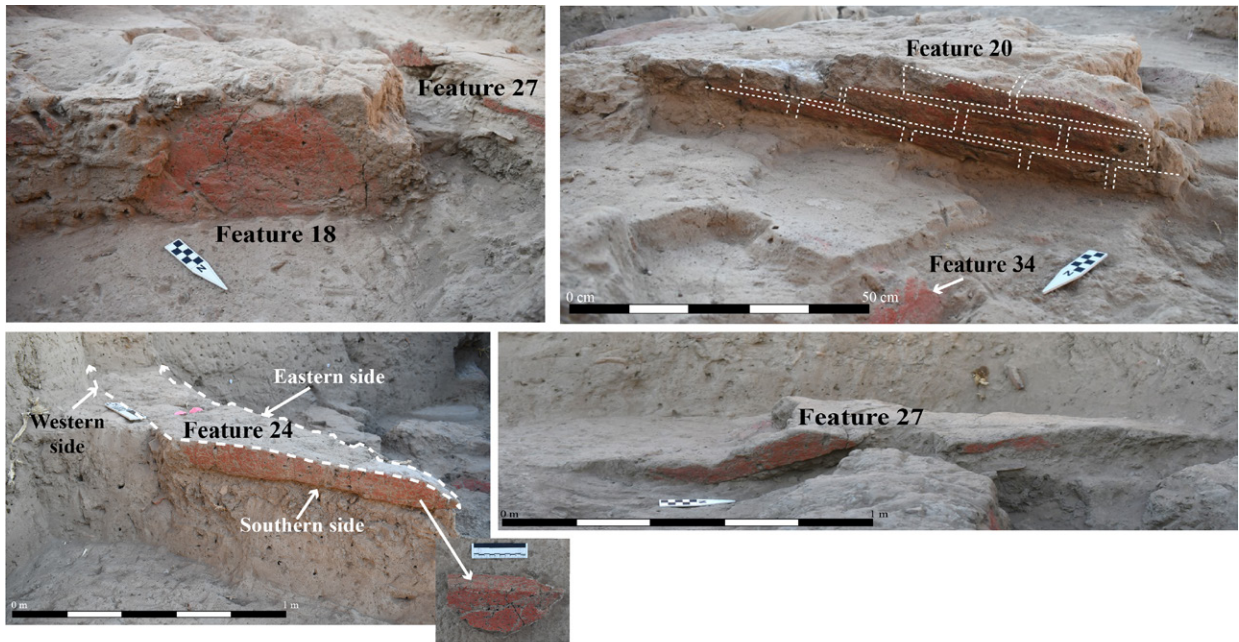


Figure 12. 'Panels' of articulated mud bricks. Top left, diagnostic grouping of bricks from feature 18; top right, northern edge of feature 20; bottom left, feature 24, with inset photo of removed brick showing pigment on bottom surface; bottom right, feature 27 (photographs by author).

A trapezoidal-shaped slab, feature 24 consists of at least 13 rows of bricks running south to north, continuing into the northern balk. Measuring 35 cm wide, the western edge is 88 cm long and the eastern edge is 139 cm long. Red pigment over white covers the 58 cm long by 7.5 cm thick oblique southern edge and bottom surface, which is similar in shape to the northern edge of feature 20.

Finally, feature 27 designates an additional row of red painted mud bricks running south to north, continuing into the northern balk. It is 89.5 cm long by 42 cm wide at its widest point by 5.5 cm thick. With the top painted surface facing down and the painted edge exposed, it is also comparable to the northern edge of feature 20.

Features 18, 20,<sup>25</sup> 24, and 27, which essentially consist of panels of multiple, articulated, red painted mud bricks, bear some resemblance to feature 23 and similarly may have formed part of a balustrade or rim of an altar. The size and deposition of these panels, with preserved right-angle corners, make them close matches to the body of the rectangular altars discussed above. However, because these elements are not fully excavated, combined with the intrinsic difficulty of excavating mud brick completely intact, their original surface finish cannot be definitively ascertained.

Given this uncertainty, an alternate interpretation of these features is that they may have originated from a projecting lintel(s)<sup>26</sup> surmounting a niche(s), matching the projecting jambs (Bruyère 1936: 336). They are comparable to EA 58838, a mud plaster, polychrome decorated lintel from NE Group House A at Amarna inspected at the British Museum, sharing a similar angle and construction.<sup>27</sup> These panels may have also incorporated a torus roll, akin to lintel fragment EA 58846, attributed to Amarna House V.37.1.

<sup>25</sup> The assessment offered for feature 20 only applies to the elements defined by the southeastern and northern edges.

<sup>26</sup> A 'lintel' is the flat, horizontal band spanning across the top of an opening. The term 'cornice' is used when the simple lintel is further embellished with projecting, decorative moulding, crowning the architectural feature (Arnold 2003: 46, 74-75).

<sup>27</sup> While this fragment is designated as a cornice by the British Museum, its appearance better fits the definition of a lintel as it lacks any sort of decorative moulding.

This possibility is suggested by the discovery of some curved fragments of red painted mud brick at Mut to the north of these panels, which are analogous to curved fragments found in Ranefer's house at Amarna (N.49.18), where the tops of the niches in the transverse hall most likely incorporated lintels fashioned from mud brick<sup>28</sup> (Kemp and Stevens 2010: 131-133, figs. 2.22-23, 145-146, fig. 2.28, 166, fig. 2.41, 170, 625, colour plate 1). This finding will continue to be explored in future seasons.

At Deir el-Medina, Bruyère (1936: 336) notes that lintels or cornices would have topped niches, similar to doorways. The inclusion of a cavetto cornice with torus roll as part of the niche frame is evidenced in House N.E. XV, the only published extant niche with a preserved top (Bruyère 1939: plate 12), with the large number of similarly embellished stone niche frames found at Deir el-Medina further attesting to this design typology (Bruyère 1934: 8; 1939: 195, 326, fig. 196, plates 15-16). The use of cavetto cornices on niche frames further appears in the house of Meryka (Smith 1993: 497-499, plates 15, 17-18; 1995: 103, 141, fig. 6.3, plates 15-17; 2003: 129-130, fig. 5.26, 132, fig. 5.29) and in room 12 in the barracks (Smith 1995: 66, plate 7; 2003: 128-129) at Askut and in Houses E.12.1, D.14.5, D.14.13a, D.14.17d, and E13.7.6 at Amara West (Spencer 1997: 125, 134, 154, 175, plates 78, 90b, 95a, 111b; Spencer 2015: 179, fig. 8.11). It thus seems reasonable to conjecture that features 18, 20, 24, and 27 may alternately relate to lintels set above niches but without the intricate moulding found on cavetto cornices, similar to the simple bands proposed for these emplacements at Amarna, possibly augmented by a torus roll. However, because the original appearance of the tops of niches is uncertain, a definitive relationship is difficult to establish.

Therefore, based on form, two different interpretations for features 18, 20, 24, and 27 are possible, i.e. that they may have originated from a balustrade or side wall on a *lit clos* style altar, and/or from a projecting lintel surmounting a niche, however, further fieldwork is required to more fully investigate this identification. Further, these two assessments are not necessarily mutually exclusive as the origin of these panels could be split between these two architectural elements.

Overall, the diagnostic painted mud brick uncovered to date can be attributed to a niche and some form of an altar. Because these two emplacements can be related, a discussion of niches is helpful in developing a more complete understanding of the Mut context.

### Niche emplacements

An investigation into niches at Deir el-Medina and Amarna provides insight into their construction and composition, as well as their function in the domestic setting.<sup>29</sup> The comparable niches are recesses in the wall that extend to the floor, one or two bricks deep, painted solid red or with three vertical bands of red, yellow, and red on the rear panel, which also incorporates a small yellow square at the top with anthropomorphic figures of gods and people (Bruyère 1939: 68; Peet and Woolley 1923: 42). These niches typically measure 170 cm high by 115 cm wide and include a threshold, two jambs, and a lintel/cornice (Bruyère 1939: 67-68; Meskell 2002: 119). The red ochre painted jambs and lintels are often inscribed and include dedicatory passages to gods and/or ancestors, alluding to their possible cultic function

<sup>28</sup> Due to the absence of any extant remains of the tops of niches at Amarna, a definitive conclusion about this is not possible, but some type of lintel/cornice element is probable, as further indicated by their inclusion in reconstructions by Newton, Lloyd, and Borhardt and Breit (Borhardt and Ricke 1980: 15, Farbabb. S.16; Frankfort and Pendlebury 1933: plate 16; Peet and Woolley 1923: 10, plates 4, 8, no. 5, 9, no. 3).

<sup>29</sup> Niche emplacements have also been found at the Ramesseum (Quibell 1898: 8-9, plates 1-2, 20), the Malkata palaces (Koltsida 2011: 201, fig. 1, 203, 208-209, plate 8; Tytus 1903: 11, 18-19, fig. 11), Elephantine (Kaiser *et al.* 1999: 73, Abb. 3, 76, 85-90, Abb. 7, Tafeln 19a-d, 20a; Pilgrim 2006: 405, Abb. 2-3, 406-407, Tafel 1b), the inner fort of Mirgissa (Dunham 1967: 147-149, plates 78A-B, 79A-B, map 16), and Avaris (Bietak 1991: 137-138, Abb. 94-95, Plan 5; Müller 1998: 799-803). However, these emplacements have all been excluded from the current study due to insufficient publication, disparate appearance, and/or discordant context.

(Bissing 1926: 175-176; Bruyère 1939: 68, 195; Demarée 1983: 186-187; Friedman 1985: 87; Harrington 2013: 77-79; Peet and Woolley 1923: 42-43; Seidlmayer 1983: 183-184, 186; Weiss 2011: 199; 2015: 93-108). Additionally, at Amarna, unlike Deir el-Medina, they are frequently placed directly opposite the doorways, with the number depending on the number of entryways, indicating an architectural purpose as well (Borchardt and Ricke 1980: 49; Bruyère 1934: 81; Frankfort and Pendlebury 1933: 9; Peet and Woolley 1923: 42; Stevens 2006: 236, 294). In terms of final form, the niches at Deir el-Medina are either recessed or projecting, as defined by the style of their jambs, while only recessed niches are attested at Amarna, where double-niche emplacements can also be found.

The three most applicable emplacements at Deir el-Medina are in Houses N.E. XV, S.E. VIII, and S.O. V, generally decorated as described above, incorporating the yellow vertical band in the centre of the rear panel. The recessed niche in room 3 of House N.E. XV, with a height of 155 cm, further includes a mud brick lintel with a moulded cavetto cornice and torus roll. A low platform abuts the niche, and a column base appears nearby (Bruyère 1939: 261, plates 7, 12; Weiss 2015: 36-38, fig. 3, 40). The projecting niche in room 2 of House S.E. VIII (Figure 13) is positioned opposite a stone *divan*, with a column base in the centre of the room. An 18th-dynasty amphora is embedded in the ground in front of the niche (Bruyère 1939: 275-276; Weiss 2015: 43-44, fig. 6). Finally, room 3 in House S.O. V (Figure 14) contains a *divan*, a column base, and four projecting niche structures, measuring 165 cm high, all of which have platforms in front of them. Only one niche is well preserved, but it is reasonable to assume that the other three niches would have been similarly decorated (Bruyère 1939: 325-329, figs. 196-197, plates 7, 12; Harrington 2013: 69, fig. 20; Weiss 2015: 50, fig. 10). Containing the same major elements, this room in particular appears very analogous to the context being excavated at Mut.<sup>30</sup>

At Amarna, the large house of Ranefer (N49.18) features multiple niches in three front rooms. In the transverse hall (room 1), two red niches flank a stone double doorway, with some evidence of yellow appearing over the red and exhibiting religious dedicatory inscriptions written on yellow vertical bands on the jambs. A column base is located in the centre of the room (Kemp and Stevens 2010: 129-132, fig. 2.23, plates 2.22-23, 180-181, 625, colour plate 1; Peet and Woolley 1923: 10, plates 1, 8, no. 5, 9, no. 3). In the *tiefe Halle* (room 6) of House Q46.1, the decoration on a double niche mirrors the door frame, with the jambs containing dark red and yellow inscriptions on a red background. A *mastaba* bench and two column bases are also present (Borchardt and Ricke 1980: 24, Tafel 2B, Plan 2). Numerous niches appear in the house of Ramose (P47.19) as well, as illustrated in Figure 14. In particular, the *tiefe*

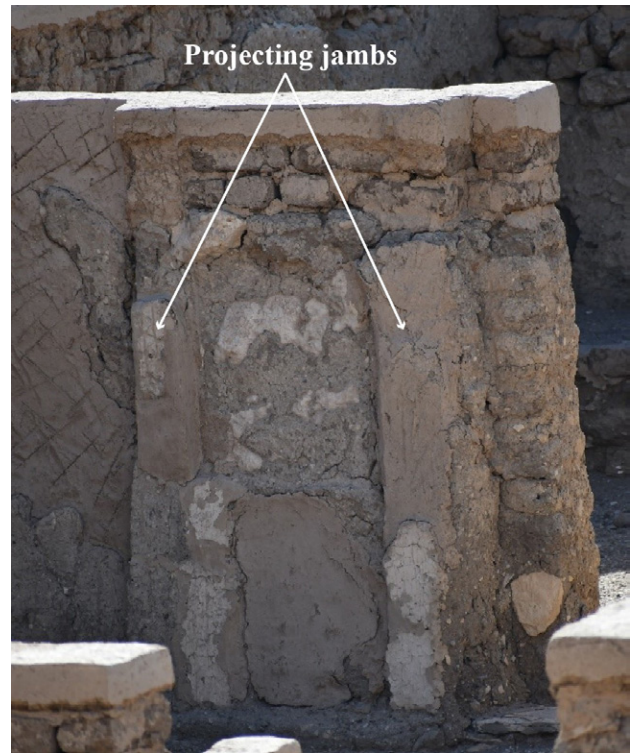


Figure 13. Projecting niche shrine in room 2 of House S.E. VIII at Deir el-Medina (photograph by author).

<sup>30</sup> While the niches in Houses S.E. V, S.E. VII, N.O. II, N.O. VI, and N.O. XII also seem to share similarities with the features at Mut, no published photos exist (Bruyère 1939: 270, 272, 280, 282, 286-287, plate 7; Meskell 2002: 119; Weiss 2015: 41-45, figs. 4-5, 7). A careful inspection of niches in Deir el-Medina houses is necessary to document their characteristics for a more complete comparative analysis, which can hopefully be performed at some point in the future.

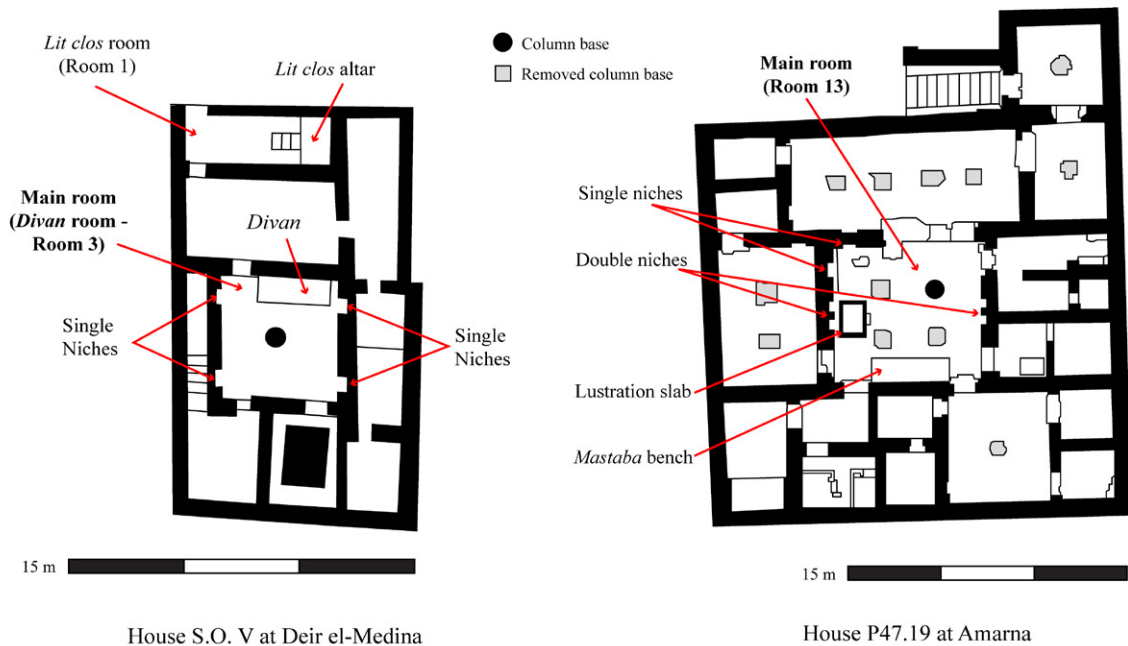


Figure 14. Layout of House S.O. V at Deir el-Medina (left; drawing after Bruyère 1939: plate 7) and House P47.19 at Amarna (right; drawing after Borchardt and Ricke 1980: Plan 23); note variation of features in terms of size, typology, and count in the main rooms.

Halle (room 13) contains two 170 cm tall red and yellow double niches, one with a lustration slab in front of it; two single niches; a mastaba bench; and, at one time, four column bases arranged in a square<sup>31</sup> (Borchardt and Ricke 1980: 124-126, Abb. 12, Tafeln 10A-B, 11A, 11C, 12A, Plan 23). Additionally, niches at Amarna sometimes have other elements positioned in front of them, like a vase in House K.50.1 or altars in Houses N.49.21, O.48.8, and U.37.1 (Frankfort and Pendlebury 1933: 12, plate 18, fig. 4; Peet and Woolley 1923: 24, 43; Stevens 2006: 236-237).

As the above accounting illustrates, niches in close proximity to seating areas, along with the presence of columns, are quite common in Deir el-Medina and Amarna houses, supporting the interpretation of the painted mud brick at Mut originating from a niche in a domestic setting. Further, the predominantly red painted surfaces found at Mut, combined with some evidence of yellow and black, correlate with the typical decoration scheme evidenced on niches. Moreover, the length of the niche jambs identified as features 1040 and 17 is comparable with the height of all these niches. Finally, incorporating cultic features, such as altars, into or near niches also provides more evidence for the assessment of other mud brick elements as coming from a balustrade or rim of an altar and indicates the connection of niches to domestic religious practices.

### Identification of Mut context

While the context at Mut bears some similarity to houses at Amarna, it correlates closer with domestic structures at Deir el-Medina. The typical floor plan of a Deir el-Medina style house (Figure 15) consists of two large rooms in the front, followed by two smaller rooms, and then the kitchen in the back (Stevens 2009: 5, fig. 4; Valbelle 1985: 118-120; Weiss 2015: 31). The second 'divan room,' containing a divan, one or more niches, and one or two columns, most closely matches the Mut context, likely

<sup>31</sup> The plan marks the position of one column base and three square holes, the latter likely being the location of additional column bases that had been removed.

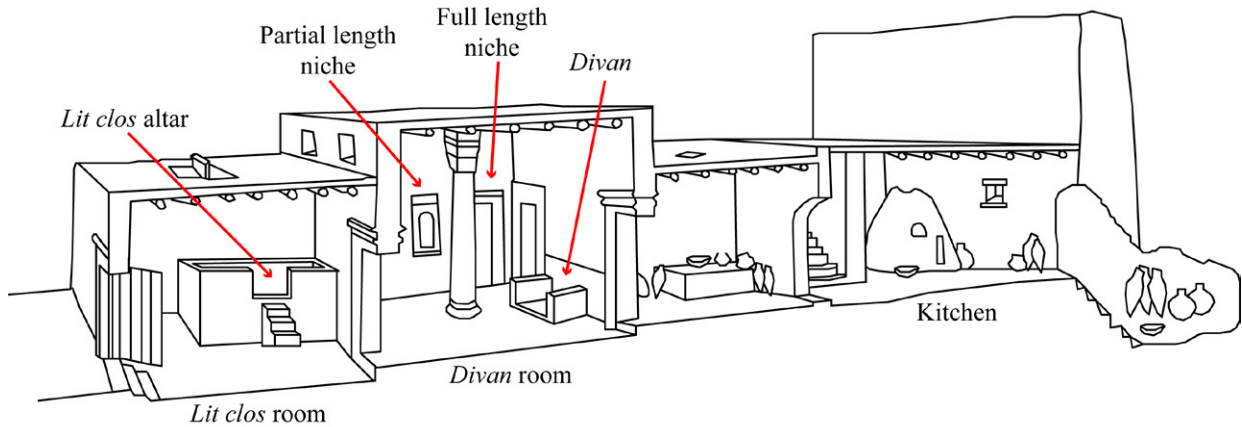


Figure 15. Reconstruction of a typical house at Deir el-Medina (after Stevens 2009: 5, fig. 4).

servicing as a ‘reception room,’ being the main, possibly central, room of the house (Bruyère 1939: 50-51; Valbelle 1985: 119). However, it should be noted that this identification does not serve to define the functionality of the room, which almost certainly accommodated multiple activities, related to both occupational and domestic endeavours (Hodgkinson 2018: 263-295, figs. 8.1-6; Moeller 2016: 194, 199, 309), creating a ‘hybrid household’ (Moeller 2015: 459; Piccardo 2015: 250).

Additionally, the large amount of red painted mud brick excavated at Mut is also consistent with a ‘divan room’ as the highest concentration of red colour occurs in this room, as documented by Meskell’s (1998: 227-228, fig. 10) spatial analysis of Deir el-Medina domestic structures. Lastly, the possibility of a *lit clos*-style altar being part of the Mut context is supported by its typical appearance in the first room,<sup>32</sup> indicating its commonality in the domestic setting (Bruyère 1939: 50-51).

Combining this contextual evidence with the architectural analysis, the Mut context can be identified as a ‘reception room’ located within a domestic structure, containing at least two columns, a *divan*, and some quantity of full-length niches with projecting jambs and lintel, potentially with a small *lit clos*-style altar either attached or in close proximity to at least one of the niche emplacements, ultimately serving as the main room of the house. The entire niche construction would have been decorated with red paint, applied either directly onto the mud brick or onto a very thin white preparatory layer or mud wash, with some yellow and black decoration possible. Moreover, the establishment of the context as a house is reinforced by the pottery excavated, which mainly consists of forms that occur in household settings. Most notably, the preliminary dating assigned, associated with the renewed excavation, being the first half of the 18th dynasty, would make this site the location of the earliest full-length niche shrine found in Egypt if this date is indeed correct.

In terms of the inhabitants of the Mut structure, the small finds unearthed (Figure 16), such as the carnelian *kheker* inlay (SF#17), scaraboid faience bead with an image of a king (SF#15), and Bes applique (SF#98), together with the architectural features, suggest that a relatively high-status individual lived in this structure. This is further indicated by this context’s close proximity to Karnak, as well as the well-planned layout of the stone features.

<sup>32</sup> Also of note, 12 small altars were found at Deir el-Medina, with six located in room 2, but their appearance is difficult to determine due to poor recording practices (Weiss 2015: 55-56, 237).



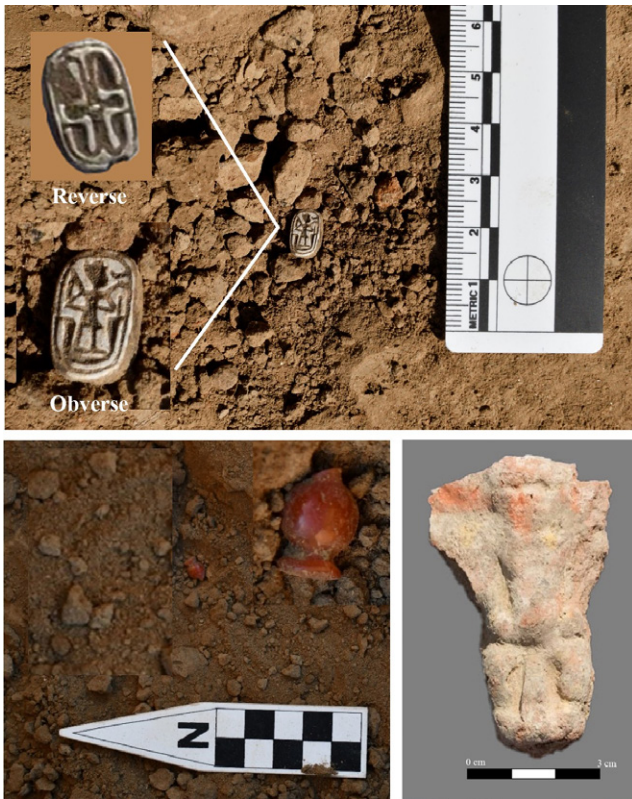


Figure 16. Small finds recovered at Mut. Top, two-sided scaraboid faience bead (SF#15) (photograph by James T. VanRensselaer); bottom left, carnelian kheker inlay (SF#17) (photograph by author); bottom right, ceramic Bes applique (SF#98) (photograph by Betsy Bryan).

present, as shown in Figure 14, the styles of the specific features exhibit marked differences from those in the Theban region. So, while household features seem to reflect a more widespread general design genre, their modification in different regions likely created 'local traditions' (Moeller 2016: 4). Until now, NK regional styles have remained undetected due to the lack of excavation and in-depth analyses of settlements from this time period.<sup>35</sup>

## Conclusion

While the findings presented are preliminary and subject to change following further excavation, they do contribute to the understanding of NK domestic life in the city of Thebes, at least in terms of building

## Regional style of domestic architecture

The discovery of a *divan*, niche(s), and altar(s) in a domestic context at Mut allows preliminary conclusions to be drawn regarding the style of these architectural features. The *divan* appears to be unique to the Theban area,<sup>33</sup> possibly being a regional style of the *mastaba* bench commonly found in domestic contexts. While both the *mastaba* bench and the *divan* consist of a raised surface constructed from stone or mudbrick, the armrests on the *divan* are notably absent from the *mastaba* and set the *divan* apart from this more basic seating platform.<sup>34</sup> Additionally, the flat top form of the altar's balustrades/side walls and the general projecting design of the Mut niche also seem to indicate a local Theban-style construction, until now only seen at Deir el-Medina, but the house at Mut does possess its own unique traits, most notably being the unparalleled painting style, perhaps accounted for by its early date.

Although Amarna houses seem to incorporate the basic concept of the 'divan room' in the central or transverse halls, being 'reception rooms' and differing only in terms of size, typology, and number of architectural features

<sup>33</sup> Somewhat comparable to a *divan*, the *quadratische Zimmer* (room 19) in House P47.28 at Amarna and room 6 in House E13.7 at Amara West contain a mud brick, raised, walled seating area, although both appear much longer and lack any embellishment on the armrests (Borchardt and Ricke 1980: 139-140, Tafel 13C, Plan 34; Spencer 2015: 177-179, figs. 8.9-8.10). Descriptions of these somewhat similar structures are also reported at Amarna in the 'central hall' (room 8) of House K.50.1 and in the 'living rooms' of Main Street House 12, Long Wall Street Houses 9 and 12, and West Street House 13 in the workmen's village (Peet and Woolley 1923: 6, 82, 84, 86).

<sup>34</sup> While Peet and Woolley (1923: 45) initially identify *divans* in the 'central halls' at Amarna, their definition clearly matches that of a simple *mastaba* bench, likely resulting in the abandonment of this designation in subsequent publications.

<sup>35</sup> In the MK to the SIP, a regional style of domestic architecture has been proposed mainly at Elephantine, the so-called *Hofhaus* (Moeller 2016: 347, 374; Pilgrim 1996a: 196-198, Abb. 85, 200-201; 1996b: 256-258, Abb. 4). In Thebes, Troche (2018: 465-466, 471-472) identifies 'local religious practices' at Deir el-Medina, with this architecture possibly being physical evidence of her theory, further indicating the presence of a local, Theban tradition.

construction. They may also help to support the premise that Deir el-Medina may be representative of Theban habitation sites from this era in terms of domestic architecture. By including styles that mimic those found in Thebes, the inhabitants of Deir el-Medina may be trying to ‘mark their connection with the city’ (ancient Thebes), attempting to make ‘a statement of affiliation and participation in the urban identity,’ linking the hinterland with the city (Magnoni *et al.* 2014: 164-165; see also Smith 2014: 317). Continued excavation efforts at Mut to determine the ground plan of the house under investigation and other houses in its vicinity will allow for more robust interpretations to be made. Unaffected by modern occupation, this area maintains excellent preservation and represents the largest section of ancient Thebes available for archaeological research, having the potential to significantly expand the understanding of both NK and TIP urbanism and allow for a more comprehensive and complete understanding of Egyptian life and practices that may be characteristic of the more general Theban region and perhaps NK Egypt itself.

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# Dams and Dispossession: Preservation as a Moral Project in Egyptian Nubia (1894-1902)

Robert Vigar

## Abstract

The construction of the Aswan Dam (hereon Khazan Aswan) inaugurated in December 1902, resulted in the displacement of 13 Nubian villages, destroying the homes, lands, and lifeways of thousands of Nubian people. When British engineers published plans for Khazan Aswan in 1894, fierce public debate emerged in Europe with both proponents and opponents of the dam centring their critiques around explicitly moral positions. The debate was not, however, on the humanitarian crisis which Khazan Aswan would enact but rather on the potential damage it would cause to the Ptolemaic Temples of Philae. Previous scholarship on the 'Philae controversy' has characterised it as a debate between two elements of late 19th century imperial ideology: modernity and preservation. Within this framework, the absence of humanitarian concern is incidental. This chapter contends that the Philae controversy and the concomitant omission of humanitarian concern can be better understood through the lens of *moral imperialism*. Drawing upon Ariella Azoulay (2019) and Ann Stoler (1995), moral imperialism is understood as the form of morality cultivated in Imperial Europe during the 19th century which managed the distribution of allowable moral sentiments to justify imperial world order. Moral imperialism centred 'universalist' cultural, religious, and aesthetic concerns surrounding the potential damage to the Temples of Philae to deliberately obfuscate moral discourse on the impending destruction of contemporary Nubia. This contribution demonstrates how moral imperialism deployed in furtherance of the colonial and postcolonial state had devastating effects for Nubian people, and how Egyptology is implicated in the dispossession of Nubia.

## Keywords

Khazan Aswan, Nubia, Moral Imperialism, Temple of Philae, History of Egyptology

## Introduction

The Temple complex on the Island of Philae, known colloquially in Arabic as *Anas el-Wajood* (أنس الوجود) lies c. 7 km south of the city of Aswan, and is situated among a collection of rocky islands which constitute the First Cataract of the Nile. The majority of temple structures was constructed from the 30th dynasty (c. 340-330 BC) through to the Ptolemaic Period (c. 330-30 BC). The Temple of Isis, erected during the reign of Ptolemy II (c. 280-245 BC) was the most prominent, and the structure around which subsequent Ptolemaic and Roman rulers of Egypt oriented their additions (Vassilika 1989: 20). The Island later became a seat for Coptic bishops, and a major centre for Christian worship in the region (Dijkstra 2008; MacCoull 1990).

The Temples of Philae featured prominently in Orientalist geographies of Egypt during the 19th and early 20th centuries. The Swiss explorer Johann Ludwig Burckhardt's description of Philae in his posthumously published work *Travels in Nubia* (1819) inspired further exploration by European travellers. The popularity and prominence of Philae continued to grow through the Victorian era. Paintings of the Temple by the famous Scottish artist David Roberts (1855) inspired further reverence for the Island among his bourgeois audience. Travel accounts throughout the mid to late 19th century, described

Philae in revelatory terms – a timeless island set apart from the rapid social, economic and political changes, resulting from industrial modernity. This attitude is exemplified in James Augustus St John's (1795-1875) description from 1845:

'The wind freshened, and ere long, the lovely Island of Philae, isle of Shehayl stole into sight, and flitted past like a dream, its palm trees waving in the breeze, and children sporting under them, naked as the day they were born; an Isle of the Blest it seemed – one of those happy islands where poets tell us the shades of heroes of old wander, under whispering groves, in sweet converse, placid and at rest, after the turmoils of life.' (John 1845: 412-413)

Later writers, such as the novelist, Egyptologist, and founder of the Egypt Exploration Fund Amelia Edwards (1831-1892), expounded upon the timelessness of the ruins of Philae:

'As the boat glides nearer between glistening boulders, those sculptured towers rise higher and ever higher against the sky. They show no sign of ruin or age. All looks solid, stately, perfect. One forgets for the moment that anything is changed. If a sound of antique chanting were to be borne along the quiet air – if a procession of white-robed priests bearing aloft the veiled ark of the God, were to come sweeping round between the palms and the pylons – we should not think it strange.' (Edwards 1889: 207)

The evocative, seemingly timeless land these European writers were describing was Nubia. A region culturally, ethnically, and linguistically distinct from the Arab and Sai'di neighbors to the north. Communities of Nubian language speakers (Kenzi, Fadijja and Dongolawi) in the 19th century were concentrated from the First to the Fourth cataract of the Nile, or Aswan to the Dongola Reach (Khalil and Miller 1996; Edwards and Bell 2000: 195-196). It was not until the early 19th century that Nubia became implicated in Egyptian imperial expansion following the conquering of Nubia and Sudan in 1821 by Viceroy of Egypt Mohammed Ali Pasha (1769-1849). By the time Edwards was writing in 1889, Nubia had been fragmented by a military border at Wadi Halfa. The anti-imperialist, Islamist *mahdiyyah* movement had risen to power in Sudan in the early 1880s and forced the Anglo-Egyptian Army into full retreat by 1885, setting up a military border at Wadi Halfa, or the Second Cataract. From 1885 until 1899 Egyptian Nubia was occupied and governed by the Anglo-Egyptian army, a managed military frontier. It was during this period of occupation that designs for the Aswan Low Dam (heretofore referred to by its colloquial name: Khazan Aswan) were drawn up and the destruction of Egyptian Nubia begun. Conceived by British officials in Egypt, this controversial infrastructure project promised economic salvation for an Egyptian state which was greatly indebted to European banking houses (Tunçer 2021: 76).

During the planning stages of the Khazan Aswan, it became clear that the temples of Philae would be inundated by the reservoir for most of the year, from October to June, which was forecast to damage the temples irreparably. The prospect that industrial modernity would be responsible for the destruction of these ancient temples caused a fierce debate among the chattering classes of Europe, with the height of the controversy occurring in 1894 following the official dam proposal and its subsequent condemnation by French engineer Auguste Boulé, a member of the International Commission set up to evaluate the project. Specifically citing the potential destruction of the temples of Philae, Boulé stated that if he were to agree to such a project he should be 'condemned by the public opinion of all of Europe' (Garstin 1894: 56).

Literature on the Khazan Aswan has primarily focused upon the project's role within broader imperial irrigation and hydraulic modernisation policies (Cookson-Hills 2013; Tignor 1963, 2015; Tvedt 2004), exemplifying the economic prerogatives of British technocracy in Egypt (Mitchell 2002), and how it not



only reshaped the socio-economic geography of the Nile but also restructured political and ecological subjectivities (Derr 2019).

The controversy around the temples of Philae that emerged because of the project has, on the other hand, been subject to limited academic discussion (Andersen 2011; Gange 2013). Gange (2013) centres the use of biblical imagery deployed by engineers debating the Khazan Aswan to explore how intervention in Egypt was cast as a religious responsibility, and how Philae became associated with biblical Joseph. Gange argues that engineers, rather than Egyptologists, were uncomfortable with the potential destruction of Philae, as they construed their responsibilities to both develop and preserve Egypt through the prism of religious responsibility. In the most cited article on the Philae controversy, Andersen (2011) argues that the debate which played out in 1894 around the dam project and its impact upon Philae represented a conflict between two competing ideological forces within late Victorian imperial Britain – modernisation and preservation. Unlike Gange, Andersen argues that the proponents of the dam were mostly engineers who represented a particular vision of ‘civilisation’, which imbued Victorian imperialists with an obligation to modernise non-European, non-industrial societies, apparently for the good of those populations. In opposition to this, Andersen argues that Egyptologists represented another mode of ‘civilisation’ which animated Victorians – the maintenance and reproduction of tradition. Andersen’s work presents a thorough historical description of the events which unfolded during the 1890s, providing sharp and substantive detail. This present contribution, however, contests Andersen’s representation of the Philae incident as a bifurcation of imperial ideologies into modernisation and preservation. Through an analysis of these arguments supplemented by evidence gathered during archival research in the UK and Egypt, we will demonstrate that rather than representing competing imperial ideologies, the discourse around the Philae controversy instead reflects a form of moral imperialism with both sides centring British moral authority, ‘universalist’ responsibility, and Eurocentric models of progress and preservation. Characterising the discourse in this manner allows us to understand how forms of moral imperialism structured colonial responses for and against the project, and how this discourse enabled the negation of the violence inherent toward Egyptian Nubia as a result of flooding their communities and ensured the dispossession of indigenous Nubian populations. Finally, we will consider how this discourse continues to impact contemporary Nubia.

### **The Dam Proposal**

The Khazan Aswan project was proposed soon after the occupation of Egypt by the British began. Egypt’s state finances had been controlled, since 1876, by the Caisse de la Dette – a foreign finance commission dominated by Britain and France, whose banking institutions were major beneficiaries of Egypt state debt. British administrators therefore tasked themselves with improving Egyptian state finances. Historian Jennifer Derr (2019) has argued that the British administration saw reformation of Egypt’s land tax regime as a method through which to bolster tax revenues. The problem, as British officials saw it, was the way in which land tax revenue was untethered to productivity. In reorienting land tax to productivity, the question of irrigation became central to state revenue streams. Indeed, as Derr notes, in an unusual manoeuvre Lord Cromer (Consul General of Egypt from 1883-1907) tasked irrigation engineers such as William Willcocks with rationalising the land tax regime across Egypt ‘to reapportion taxation with an eye toward the productivity of the land in question’ (Derr 2019: 47). Land, irrigation, and infrastructure therefore became key concerns for the British occupation.

Mitchell (2002: 34-35) notes, irrigation in the Nile valley presenting itself to British engineers at the start of the occupation was one which had been fundamentally conditioned by human activity and infrastructures. Mitchell (2002: 34-35) reiterates this point by describing the Egyptian Nile as a well-developed ‘technical and social phenomenon... Its waters were channelled, stored, raised, distributed,

and drained by the interaction of mechanical, human, animal, and hydraulic power'. Irrigation, the storage and subsequent provisioning of surplus flood water, had been practised in Egypt for millennia (Butzer 1976). Basin irrigation, which relied on mechanically capturing the floodwaters that swelled the Nile from July to November, directed the floodwater through networks of irrigation canals into storage basins. As the floodwaters subsided, leaving behind the nutrient-rich deposits from the Ethiopian highlands, winter crops such as wheat, barley, and beans were sown (Tignor 1963: 63). While the mechanics of basin irrigation changed across millennia, the rhythm of Nile flooding and winter crop cultivation remained relatively consistent. This agricultural rhythm was incompatible with the economic development agenda of Mohammed Ali Pasha, who sought to reform Egyptian land use and agricultural productivity – to harness the Nile for cash crops such as sugarcane and cotton.

In Lower Egypt, the Delta Barrage and other flood controls developed by Franco-Ottoman engineers Eugène Mougel Bey (1808-1890) and Louis Linant de Bellefonds Pasha (1799-1883) throughout the mid-19th century had demonstrated that through greater control of the Nile's annual flood, perennial irrigation could be practised. Regulating dams or barrages enabled irrigation engineers to manage the level of water in the Nile or the irrigation canals. This had the effect of negating the Nile inundation, reclaiming land which would otherwise be underwater for several months, and ensuring irrigation throughout the year. The primary benefits, as Mohammed Ali Pasha and the later Anglo-Egyptian administrations saw, was to greatly expand sugarcane and cotton production, as well as enabling the cultivation of two agricultural crops per year rather than one. The impacts of the perennial irrigation system introduced by Mohammed Ali Pasha and his successors to the Delta and Lower Egypt were manifold; the reformation of land tenure arrangements and the development of private property rights (Abbas and El-Dessouky 2011), the further inculcation of Egypt's agricultural economy with the industrial economies of Europe (Tignor 2015), and the conditioning of Egyptian bodies through exposure to dangerous parasitic diseases and exploitative labour regimes (Mitchell 2002: 19-53; Derr 2019).

Driven as it was by economic prerogatives, British officials within the Egyptian Department of Public Works identified the expansion of perennial irrigation as a key lever for extracting greater productivity from Egyptian cultivatable land. The primary strategic advocate for this expansion was Lord Cromer. Colin Scott-Moncrieff (1836-1916), undersecretary for Public Works was initially hesitant to develop the large infrastructure project necessary for the expansion of perennial irrigation, instead preferring to focus upon improving existing irrigation infrastructure across Egypt, including the Delta Barrage, which required extensive remediation to ensure its safe operation. As these projects wrapped up in the late 1880s, Cromer demanded ever more productivity from Egyptian agriculture, and Scott-Moncrieff's Department of Public Works was required to innovate a strategy for perennial irrigation expansion. William Willcocks, who like Scott-Moncrieff had worked extensively on irrigation projects in Northern India, was hired to oversee the further expansion and development of Egyptian irrigation. By 1890, Cromer and Scott-Moncrieff had become convinced by the idea of a large dam, or set of dams, located in Upper Egypt as the mechanism for exercising control of the Nile. Willcocks produced his report to Cromer and William Garstin (1849-1925), the new undersecretary of Public Works, in 1893. Willcocks and his engineers had identified three potential sites for the large dam – Silsila, Kalabsha, and Aswan. A dam at Silsila was deemed inappropriate due to the lack of secure rock upon which to set footings. Aswan and Kalabsha were the two viable options, with Willcocks suggesting that a dam south of the town of Aswan across the First Cataract of the Nile would be the most advantageous in terms of engineering complexity, structural integrity, and, most importantly to the British officials in charge, expenditure.

Willcocks' report in 1894 recommending Aswan as the preferred location for a dam, was followed by a report from the International Technical Commission set up by the Egyptian Government to consider Willcocks' proposals. The three-man commission, representing Great Britain, France, and Italy, agreed that Aswan provided the best site for the development of a dam, however the French representative,

Auguste Boulé, raised a series of concerns about the project. In the Technical Commissions report, Boulé argued that much of the British engineer's arguments around the suitability of Aswan as the location for the dam, were based on unsound methods, with Boulé particularly concerned about the rock upon which the dam was to be built. Willcocks and the other engineers had assumed that the bedrock was red granite, and thus suitable as a foundation. Once construction began it became immediately clear that the red granite bedrock was not as extensive as had been assumed, with much softer granite interspersed among the hard-wearing coarse-grained red granite. Boulé's most vociferous complaint regarding the project, however, was the damage it would cause to the ancient Egyptian temple complex on the Island of Philae. Willcocks' initial proposals for the dam in 1890 and 1894 planned for a height of 100 ft (30.5 m), which would have raised the level of the water downstream well above the level of the temples. Willcocks budgeted £ 250,000 within the project proposal for moving the temples to the adjacent island of Bigeh, which would remain above the waterline. The initial costs of the dam construction were c. £2,055,000, so an outlay of £250,000 was a significant investment. Boulé, however, was unconvinced by the idea of removal, which would require significant interventions, i.e. cutting the stone. Indeed, Boulé refused to approve the dam designs specifically because of the damage it would do to the temples at Philae – stating 'I absolutely refuse to be linked to such a proposal' (Garstin 1894: 56). Boulé took it as a moral affront.

Boulé's perspective was seemingly mirrored by many observers across Europe. Philae held strong sway in the Orientalist imaginings of Victorian imperialists. It was among the most painted, photographed, graffitied, and written-about ancient monuments in Egypt, and it was its aesthetic, religious, and supposedly 'universal' values which rendered it an object of reverence among European preservationists.

### Competing moral positions? Modernity

If we are to consider Andersen's bifurcation of the debate, then the stated moral objective for the modernisers was the emancipation of the Egyptian fellaheen – the peasant working population that constituted the majority of the eight million people in Egypt in 1894.

Sir Benjamin Baker, the British representative on the international commission set up to evaluate the dam project, and a primary advocate for the scheme, addressed the controversy by invoking the fate of the voiceless and oppressed fellaheen. During their initial occupation, the British had made efforts to represent their continued intervention as a form of pseudo-humanitarian emancipation. Positioning themselves in opposition to the supposedly tyrannical Ottoman administration, British officials often sought to ground their claims to political legitimacy and moral authority with the fate of the fellaheen (Jakes 2020: 38-57).

Baker argued that the fellaheen did not care about the temples and that they understood that Britain was 'in Egypt, not for her own benefit, but in the interest of Egypt herself' (Baker 1894), further stating that the fellaheen supported the dam project due to the 'vast material benefits' they were likely to inherit as a result (Baker 1894: 864). Baker situates the dam as a moral project to emancipate the fellaheen from material strife. This sentiment is echoed further by British aristocrat and traveller Eustace Reynolds-Ball (1897: 297), who wrote of the controversy in 1897:

'In such a question the welfare of the Egyptian people should be the first consideration, and as has been clearly demonstrated, the gain to a poverty-stricken and overtaxed population would be almost incalculable.'

The spectre of the impoverished fellaheen is a recurrent theme among advocates of Britain's imperial progression in Egypt. Winston Churchill, writing in 1898 as he travelled with the Anglo-Egyptian Army

to conquer Sudan, complained that the campaign to oppose the Khazan Aswan in order to protect Philae was ‘the most cruel, the most wicked, and the most senseless sacrifice ever offered on the altar of false religion... The State must struggle and the people starve, in order that professors may exult and tourists may find some place on which to scratch their names’ (Churchill [1898] 2015: 174).

Churchill’s perspective indexes the logics of progress, the driver of imperial modernity – i.e. the mode of modernity which sought to expand the zones of capitalist material relations into non-industrial and proto-capitalist spaces. Imperial modernity thus necessitated the expansion of global markets into imperial territories, in so doing imbricating the Egyptian peasantry within new labour regimes which demanded greater productivity and prioritised extractive industries, as well as inculcating new forms of material relations.

For proponents of the Khazan Aswan, their moral position was clear – as the political and moral authority in Egypt, it was Britain’s responsibility to ensure the promise of economic development which the dam represented, and the continued push of progress would raise living standards of the fellaheen.

### **Competing moral positions? Preservation**

Smouldering feelings within imperial Europe to the threat British planners were proposing for Philae erupted following Boulé’s dissent. Preservationist organisations across Europe were vexed by the notion of Britain as responsible for the potential destruction of ancient Egyptian monuments. A primary concern among the informed classes of Europe once Britain had occupied Egypt was the ushering in of a preservationist agenda to protect ancient Egyptian monuments from callous mistreatment by Egyptians (Gange 2015: 81). Preservationists in Britain had construed Britain’s moral responsibility in Egypt not primarily with economic development but rather with the preservation of the country’s ancient monuments.

The prospect of Britain being responsible for the destruction of a renowned and important monument was difficult for many to accept. Colonel ‘Urabi Pasha, whose nationalist uprising was quelled by the British invasion of Egypt in 1882, and before him Mohammed Ali Pasha, had been demeaned in European commentaries on Egypt due to their supposed antagonism towards ancient Egyptian cultural heritage (Colla 2007: 121-171). The spectre of greater European, and particularly British, management over ancient Egyptian antiquities was used as a lever in the popular press to advocate for British military intervention in Egypt. Centring notions of universalism and civilisation within the mandate for Britain’s occupation assumed a responsibility for British officials to steward Egypt’s antiquities for the benefit of the world. Indeed, this was the register within which those oppositional to the Khazan Aswan project sought to situate themselves.

French novelist Pierre Loti (1850-1923), author of *La Mort de Philae*, was later quoted in the *New York Times* espousing this form of moral universalism:

‘I do not understand how for commercial purposes the English Government could order and the English people sanction such a violation of beauty, but I do know that any gain which may result from it will be vastly outweighed by the loss to the world.’ (NYT 1912)

In Britain, Amelia Edwards sought to coordinate a response to any potential threat to the temples of Philae by engaging with prominent members of Victorian society, including famous artists such as Sir Edward Poynter, former politicians, civil servants, and even Sir John Fowler, a civil engineer famous for overseeing large infrastructure projects, viz. the Forth Bridge in Scotland, who was elected President of the Egypt Exploration Fund (EEF) and came out strongly in defence of the temples of Philae. A sister

organisation to the EEF, the Society for the Preservation of the Monuments of Ancient Egypt (SPMAE) founded in 1888, seemingly drew inspiration from William Morris's preservationist movement and his Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings founded a decade earlier.

Those calling for the cessation of the dam project, or at least its amendment to avoid the destruction of Philae, also grounded their response in the language of moral responsibility. A resolution from SPMAE signed in February 1894 sought to frame the controversy within the civilising discourse of imperialism, and the moral imperatives that it engendered, describing the destruction of Philae as: 'an act of vandalism...which would be viewed as a disaster by the whole civilized world'. Later in 1894, Sir John Fowler, then president of the EEF, wrote to the Foreign Secretary to urge caution with the Aswan dam scheme, situating Britain's responsibility for Philae as a universalist concern, stating:

[We] trust that in the adoption of any [dam] schemes the question of safeguarding monuments, which are of priceless value in the history of the world, may receive the fullest consideration.' (Fowler 1894)

Representatives of the EEF and the SPMAE orient their moral authority around Enlightenment sentiments and values of aesthetics and 'universalism'. The Temples of Philae were, for the preservationists, rendered important, valuable, and legible through the prism of Western, Egyptological epistemologies. In many ways, their moral advocacy for the temples was grounded in an understanding of them as colonised subjects or artefacts. Colla's (2007: 28-29) concept of *artefaction* provides a mechanism through which Europeans sought to collect, claim, and express authority over Egyptian monuments and antiquities. The emergent Egyptological episteme embodied a milieu of competing and interconnected facets, including nascent scientism, imperial politics, and aesthetics, to produce an artefact or monument as an object of European concern.

### **Moral imperialism**

It is unsurprising that the argument around the destruction or preservation of Philae would be conducted in the register of moral values; imperialist discourse in Victorian Britain was structured around the idea of moral responsibility – indeed Imperialism and Progress were the organising principles for much of the Victorian elite. Cultural theorist Azoulay has argued that liberal education in Europe during the Victorian era inculcated officials into a narrow spectrum of imperial moralities. This moral system provided a framework for 'what should be done and what should not'. Azoulay demonstrates how *moral imperialism*, the centring of bourgeois European morality, was utilised to further justify imperial world order through 'systems of justifications, the blurring of magnitudes of destruction, views taken from above or from the ground, modes of captivity of audiences, narrow and extended contexts, "hard" decisions about what is worth which costs' (2019: 491).

Stoler has demonstrated how the conditioning of morality by European officials in the colonial Dutch East Indies governed eligibility and access to power (1995: 44-45). She further discusses how morality, sentiment, and affect structured inequalities between colonial subjects. The colonial state, she argues, usually characterised as rationally minded and bureaucratic, was also invested in cultivating affect and sentiment. Drawing upon Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony and the role of educating consent, Stoler argues that the colonial State governed not only through cost-benefit bureaucracy and monopolised violence but also through 'shaping appropriate and reasoned affect, by directing affective judgments, by severing some affective bonds and establishing others, by adjudicating what constituted moral sentiments – in short, by educating the proper distribution of sentiments and desires' (2007: 9). The cultivation and maintenance of moral imperialism, its narrow strictures and deployment to reinforce racial, political, and social inequities had real effects for imperial and colonised subjects.

The debate around Philae, contested as it was through claims to moral authority, highlights this form of moral imperialism. The distribution of allowable moral sentiments within the framework of moral imperialism was narrowed to the question of whether progressive infrastructure could be responsible for damaging or destroying a set of ancient temples imbued with a 'universal' aesthetic value. In this instance, humanitarian concerns for the thousands of people who might suffer from the dam's construction were deliberately omitted from the moral discourse surrounding Philae. In his letter to the Foreign Secretary in 1894, Sir John Fowler makes it explicit that the concerns of the preservationists were not to challenge imperial hegemony in Egypt but rather to set preservation as a concern within existing imperialist frameworks. He states:

'I have first to beg that Your Lordship and the Egyptian Government will receive the assurance of the Committee that they desire to speak purely as archaeologists having the welfare of the monuments of Egypt at heart, and without presuming to set themselves up as judges on the relative merits of the different projects which have been put forward... They recognize that the material development of the resources of the country must properly engage the first attention of the Egyptian Government.' (Fowler 1894)

Irish scholar and classicist Sir John Pentland Mahaffy penned one of the few criticisms of the dam project that centred the humanitarian concerns of Nubian people. Writing in *The Nineteenth Century*, the same publication in which Sir Benjamin Baker had written his own apologia for the dam project a month earlier in 1894, Mahaffy addresses the limited grounds upon which the moral arguments from both sides were taking place: 'He [Sir Benjamin Baker] discreetly confines his estimate of the damage which the execution of this plan will cause to the loss of the temples and inscriptions at Philae, and most of his adversaries have been content to confine their opposition to the same ground.' (1894: 1013)

Mahaffy then queries why this is the case, and why there has been such little discussion about the 'ruthless expatriation of the inhabitants' of Nubia. Mahaffy goes on to attack Baker, and the apparent greed of the Anglo-Egyptian State, caustically suggesting that British officials in charge of Egypt were beholden to 'certain bondholders' rather than the Egyptian people. He dissects the argument that the dam is a pecuniary necessity for Egypt, and asks why it is that the Nubian people are being sacrificed 'to make people 500 miles off richer' (1894: 1015).

Mahaffy's criticism stands alone as a prescient critique of both sides in the Philae incident, highlighting the narrowed field of moral sentiments through which the debate was being argued, and demonstrating how proponents and opponents of the dam had abandoned the humanitarian concerns of Nubia in pursuit of their own moral posturing. It also illustrates the fallacy in Andersen's contention that the Philae incident merely presented contrasting moral values present within imperial ideologies in Britain. Andersen's somewhat apolitical stance elides the co-constitutive nature of preservationism, modernity, and imperialism which are embedded within Mahaffy's critique – the moral imperialism which bounded the arguments around issues of Eurocentric forms of knowledge and aesthetics, as well as the accusations of financial greed and fealty to bondholders, which were in many ways the motor for imperial modernity. Historian Astrid Swenson has further taken up this point, stating that, in the late 19th century, preservationism and imperialism were 'fundamentally linked on an ideological level. The likening of preservation with civilization...was increasingly fostered in the imperial age as a means to legitimize European domination' (2013: 14). Swenson describes the discursive practices through which European powers, particularly Britain, used the aegis of preservation as a political lever for continued imperial interventionism, while concomitantly developing an imperial identity connecting imperial territories with the European metropole. The Philae incident reiterates this point. Rather than undermine or seek to challenge the moral or political basis within which British imperial officials were

operating, the discussions at Philae reiterated Britain's political sovereignty over an imperial territory, and obfuscated the scale of destruction and violence which their project would enact.

### **Destruction of Nubia**

The magnitude of destruction which the Aswan dam would bring was certainly obfuscated by the moral posturing of 1894. This was a consequence of the form of moral imperialism deployed in the debates surrounding Philae but also a result of the discursive spatialisation of Nubia that developed throughout the 1890s thanks to Western travelogues, newspapers, and novels. Agha (2019) has argued that the accounts produced by European tourists and officials created a spatialised, colonial vision of Nubia for Western audiences, as a primarily empty land, a desertscape pocketed with ancient temples, where extant Nubian people faded into the background. She argues that this vision of Nubian space was later cultivated into a form of colonial nostalgia 'about a space they saw from a boat in the Nile' (Agha 2019: 3). This spatialisation of Nubia privileged the representation of ancient temples and sites and relegated the contemporary Nubian presence. The construction of Nubia within Western the colonial imagination as a desolate land, absent of significant culture or contemporary populations, conditioned Anglo-Egyptian responses to the subsequent negotiation of expropriation and compensation.

The narrow strictures of sentiment dictated by the moral imperialism demonstrated by both sides in the Philae debate ensured that the fate of contemporary Nubia was almost entirely absent from the discussions. The Khazan Aswan, in its originally proposed form, would flood 155 miles (250 km) of Nubian land when the reservoir was at its highest. This constituted a significant portion of contemporary Nubia, stretching from Aswan in the north to Korosko in the south. The few sources that did contend with the potential humanitarian disaster the Khazan Aswan might induce, sought from the outset to downplay the likely magnitude of destruction. One tool for this was to undercount and deliberately underestimate the size of the population likely to be impacted. A confidential British military report of 1890 quotes the population of the frontier province constituting much of the affected area as 150,000 (Grenfell 1890: 130). Public reports released in 1894 following the publication of proposals for the dam, however, stated that a maximum of 30,000 people would be impacted by the dam (Seymour Leslie 1894: 160).

The Khazan Aswan was eventually finalised, following a short struggle obtaining finance due to continued restrictions imposed upon Egyptian government spending by the Caisse de la Dette. Private investment from the Anglo-Prussian financier Ernest Cassel enabled the project to proceed and construction began in February 1898 in Aswan.

As construction proceeded, and the imminent threat to thousands of Nubians who would be caught in the wake of the dam began to materialise, compensation and expropriation had not been agreed. These issues were not fully considered at any stage of the planning, and it proved a deeply flawed process, rushed through by the Egyptian Senate and Ministry of Public Works. Existing legislation, in the form of Law 5 and Law 27, which governed how the Government should manage expropriations in its territory, were completely flouted. An article from *al-Mu'ayyad* in August 1902 outlines how the Council of Superintendents, in consultation with the Senate Council, only issued expropriation orders in June 1902 – four years into construction, and as the project was drawing to a close. The conditions of their offer almost ensured that compensation could not be rendered to the effected populations. In essence, the Egyptian government offered compensation only if residents within the thirteen villages identified as most at risk accepted the offer by September 1, 1902. The short turnaround meant that compensation was sparsely dispersed, and many Nubian homes, agricultural land, and livestock were lost under the rising Nile River – completely uncompensated.

Thirteen villages were destroyed, displacing tens of thousands of Nubians. Sheikh Waheed Younis (also referred to as Waheed el-Nubie), a prominent Nubian elder and historian, noted that as Western dignitaries laughed, shared pleasantries, and celebrated the opening of the dam in December 1902, at the famed Cataract Hotel in Aswan, Nubians were 'burying the bones of their relatives' who had died in the subsequent flooding (Abd el Latif 2017). Ramadan Osh Allah, a Nubian from Toshka, later recounted his grandfather's experience of the 1902 displacement. He stated that Nubians were not consulted at any point during the process, rather they were presented with an ultimatum from government agents, who said 'abandon [your] towns or...drown' (Al Ameer and Abdelrahman 2018).

While Nubians struggled against effects of slow State violence upon their land, homes, and lifeways the international campaign to preserve Philae had negotiated some compromises from the British administration. The moral posturing of 1894, played out within the narrow strictures of moral imperialism, had effected a change in the Khazan Aswan's construction. The temples at Philae would still be compromised by the reservoir, however the dam was to be lowered by 26 feet (8 m) from its originally proposed height, ensuring Philae would be only partially submerged. In his 1901 publication *The Nile Reservoir Dam at Assuan and After*, William Willcocks reflects upon what he described as 'the vexed question of Philae Temple' and described how 'in a moment of great weakness, the Egyptian Government, buoyed up by a succession of good summers, accepted the lowering of the level of the reservoir, so that only a part of Philae Temple should be drowned.'

The moral imperialism which conditioned the debates around the temples of Philae in the 1890s was re-ignited in postcolonial Egypt during the famed UNESCO Nubia Campaign (1960-1980). Situating antiquities and monuments within a Western, Egyptological episteme, and structuring moral arguments around supposedly 'universal' concerns, archaeologists from over fifty nations sought to 'save Nubia'. The Nubia Campaign reiterated the inequities of the moral frameworks within which discussions of ancient monuments in Egypt were conducted. In December 2021, the present author conducted several interviews with Nubians around Aswan, including Hajji Abdelrahman (a pseudonym), a 77-year-old Nubian man who recalled the final destruction of Nubia in 1964 following the construction of the Aswan High Dam (al-Saad-al-Ali). His reflections were wide ranging, falling upon issues of Nubian sovereignty, economic, social, and political deprivation, as well as reminiscences and nostalgia for what was taken from Nubians. Some of his most cutting remarks, however, were for the international responses to Nubian dispossession. While the Egyptian government and its international allies spent millions of dollars surveying, excavating, and removing ancient monuments from the Nubian landscape, Hajji Abdelrahman stated 'they did not make a single attempt to save the people of Nubia'. Antiquities and moral imperialism deployed in furtherance of the colonial and postcolonial state had devastating effects for the Nubian people, implicating Egyptology in the dispossession of Nubia.

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# Studying the Yellow Coffins: Towards a New Methodology

Jaume Vilaró-Fabregat

## Abstract

The yellow coffins stand out for their iconography, which features deep and complex meanings that are enhanced by the associated textual inscriptions. This contribution considers the challenges associated with the study of the materials, and the ways in which they can be mitigated by the development and manipulation of a computer-aided relational database. Comparative analyses of the database allow for the study of the coffins from multiple perspectives. An example of the outcomes of the manipulation and comparison of the annotated data incorporated in the database is discussed. Specifically, the provenance and recent history of a group of yellow coffins, which often appear completely decontextualised in museums and institutions, are analysed. The iconographic and textual information featured on a group of coffins suggests that they were produced in the same geographical area (Akhmim) from the middle to late 20th dynasty. The study sheds light on the scattering of objects around the world at the end of the 19th century AD, whose origins were otherwise lost to time due to inaccurate or insufficient documentation. Only contemporary studies like the present one, which couples the study of the modern history with analyses of the ancient material themselves, can further the reconstruction of the 'lost' origin of the materials and connect them once again to their original place in time and space.

## Keywords

Relational Database, Yellow Coffins, Akhmim, Reuse, Modern Re-assembling

## Challenges in the study of yellow coffins

The study of yellow coffins presents a number of pressing challenges that must be taken into consideration when dealing with the material as a whole, namely:

- *Diversity and plurality:* The known surviving elements belonging to the typology of yellow coffins exceed 1000 components (an element can be associated to an outer lid or box, inner lid or box, or mummy board). The overwhelming majority of these materials come from the Theban area, although some from Akhmim have also been identified. These elements feature diverse textual and iconographical compositions. This wide range of features allows for the thorough study of the compositions, including their variants, as well as diachronic changes between the materials. This large amount of data makes it difficult to analyse and classify the materials without the assistance of contemporary computer software-based data analysis applications.
- *Access and complexity:* With their large amount of complex iconographic and textual decorations, which occupy the entire exterior surfaces of the objects and sometimes their interiors as well, yellow coffins exemplify the *horror vacui* style. Access to all the decorations exhibited on the objects is sometimes complicated by the state of conservation as well as their display in collections, where curators are often resistant to moving them or subjecting them to comprehensive photography. The difficulties

in obtaining or producing the large amount of photographs necessary for the comprehensive study and comparison of the materials have resulted in a dearth of publications of the yellow coffins.

- *Conservation:* Some of the yellow coffins, especially those with gilded parts, were already damaged by tomb raiders prior to their modern discovery. Consequently, some of the objects are not preserved in their entirety and are fragmented, thereby posing significant challenges to their study. Post-discovery, contemporary challenges pose new conservation and fragmentation risks. These challenges include the transport of these objects from Egypt to myriad collections around the world; the application of inappropriate conservation techniques; and war events.
- *Missing elements:* Sometimes the yellow coffin sets are incomplete, allowing only a partial image to emerge of the materials as a whole. This is the result of various activities such as illegal trafficking; the sale of objects in the stores of Cairo and Luxor throughout the 19th and 20th centuries (Piacentini 2013-2014; 2017); the acquisition of objects by private collections; wars; and the disappearance of elements in museum warehouses due to theft or mismanagement. Furthermore, insufficient records detailing the discoveries of the objects, coupled with the haphazard diffusion of the materials across the globe, have resulted in frequent difficulties in identifying and associating the elements. This is especially the case for those elements from unknown collective burials, as well as those originating from Bab el-Gasus. Regarding the materials originating from Bab el-Gasus, the recent rediscovery of 21st dynasty coffins and coffin fragments in the basement of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo (Niwiński 2021) has somewhat attenuated the challenges associated with missing elements. Although this rediscovery has facilitated new information and insights regarding the Bab el-Gasus objects that were thought lost, there are still many objects from that tomb that remain unidentified.
- *Coffin reuse:* In response to an economic downturn at the end of the New Kingdom, the practice of coffin reuse became more prevalent. The identification of reuse marks on some of the yellow coffins suggests that they were reused throughout the 21st dynasty. This complicating feature must be taken into account when studying the materials (Cooney 2014; 2018; 2019). In particular, reuse practices render typology determination and analysis of the decorations significantly more difficult.
- *Modern practices and mistakes:* Following the discovery of some of the 21st dynasty burials, their associated yellow coffin ensembles were sometimes reassembled with mummies and funerary materials that originated from other sites. Antiquities dealers sought to create artificial coffin ensembles in order to more readily, and more profitably, sell them on art markets. These practices are clearly detected in yellow coffins originating from Akhmim, which frequently exemplify a kind of modern reuse of the objects and burial equipment. This reality points to the importance of considering the modern history of these objects in addition to their ancient context. Shipping errors have also contributed to the misidentification of yellow coffin objects, the best example of which may be the scattering of objects originating from Bab el-Gasus at the end of the 19th century AD. Following Daressy's (1907) discovery, there were some mistakes in shipping the materials from Egypt or in identifying the elements properly upon arrival at their destination, which caused the elements to become mismatched. These errors obfuscate the original burial contexts of the objects, creating new and fictive groups that were only assembled in modern times.

- *Insufficient publication of the materials:* Niwiński's (1988) publication remains the seminal reference work on 21st dynasty yellow coffins. He commenced that project by building a catalogue of the materials from collections around the world. Niwiński sought to address many of the aforementioned challenges, especially in relation to the materials originating from Bab el-Gasus. His pioneering work was an important step forward in advancing the research in this area. However, when the relevant research was conducted, the study of the coffins preserved at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, that is, the institution with the largest collection of yellow coffins in the world, was largely limited to viewing a subset of the relevant objects through the glass of dust-covered showcases, with little light, alongside limited access to the dusty storage rooms and the limited objects contained therein. Comprehensive access to the detailed decorative features was simply not possible for many, perhaps most, of the objects. In the circumstances, inaccuracies and incomplete information in this first major publication are unsurprising. Niwiński's primary goal was to create a typology of the materials, therefore the description and inclusion of some types of information, such as details about the coffin owners and the indicators of reuse, were not considered in depth in the volume. Furthermore, iconographic and textual references were only a secondary concern. At the time of Niwiński's study, Chassinat's work from 1909 constituted the only detailed publication of the iconography and texts of some yellow coffins. Some of the aforementioned research areas not addressed by Niwiński's study have only been meaningfully elaborated after his publication, perhaps most notably the prevalence of coffin reuse. Greater access to more photographic materials, many of them of superior quality to those that may have been available during Niwiński's research period, is now feasible.

Furthermore, since Niwiński's publication, new yellow coffins have been unearthed, others have been identified from minor collections around the world (for example, regarding the French yellow coffins, see Dautant and Jamen 2017), and, as previously mentioned, there has been a significant number of them (re)discovered in the basement of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. All of these 'new' materials can now be considered in addition to Niwiński's original corpus. Noteworthy current and ongoing research projects centered on the study of yellow coffins include the Vatican Coffin Project, directed by Amenta (2014), the Gate of the Priest Project, under the direction of Sousa, as well as an untitled project at the University of Warsaw led by Niwiński (Niwiński 2020). The database currently being developed by Jamen is intended to include all the items originating from Bab el-Gasus, including coffins. While only some of the objects have been populated in the database so far, this effort represents a significant advancement towards promoting open access to the materials originating from the tomb.<sup>1</sup> As the research field matures, it is imperative to revisit and reconsider some of the ideas and typologies that have been suggested in the past. From a technical point of view, there have been important scientific advances allowing for greater investigation of the material aspects of the yellow coffins. In this regard, one must note the scientific studies performed on multiple yellow coffins by the Vatican Coffin Project (Amenta 2014; Asensi Amorós 2017; Geldhof 2018; Pagès-Camagna and Guichard 2017). Although some subsequent publications of the yellow coffins have appeared since Niwiński's pioneering work (including from Niwiński himself; see Niwiński 1995; 1999), the majority of which are from international conferences and projects (Amenta and Guichard 2017; Sousa *et al.* 2021; Strudwick and Dawson 2019; Taylor and Vandenbeusch 2018), or as a result of the systematic study of specific yellow coffins, usually from Bab el-Gasus (Sousa 2017; 2018; Sousa and Hansen 2023), the majority of the materials have never been published and remain inaccessible to researchers. Especially lacking are publications that address the

<sup>1</sup> This database can be accessed at <https://invisu.cnrs.fr/project/jamen-bab-el-gasous/> and <http://beg.huma-num.fr/>

iconographical and textual models featured on the objects, as well as those that employ comparative methodologies.

### **A new database of the yellow coffins**

This section details the elaboration of a computer-aided relational database populated with voluminous and diverse data and images of the non-stola yellow coffins. The database concerns only non-stola yellow coffins because these are the objects of study for the present author's PhD research, not for any other limiting purpose. The fledgling database allows for more certain and comprehensive comparative analyses, both single variable and multivariable, in myriad constellations across the corpus.

#### ***Aims of the database***

As in many fields, Egyptology has undergone a seismic transformation in recent decades brought about by the widespread use of personal computers, the development and deployment of increasingly sophisticated software applications, and, of course, the Internet (Polis and Winand 2013). There are now large electronic databases, some accessible to the general public, others restricted to specialised researchers. To mitigate the impacts of the aforementioned challenges in the study of the yellow coffins specifically, we set out to design, build, populate, and manipulate a richly annotated database of the yellow coffins. The associated objects constitute complex materials, with a significant but finite number of properties that can be catalogued and compared in order to facilitate novel insights, correct prior mistakes, and encourage new research questions.

Digital technologies and computer database software allow for the identification and comparison of large data sets with the objective of efficiently and precisely discerning patterns and connections in both texts and iconography exhibited on the coffins. The population of an electronic relational database of the various features of the yellow coffins allows the researcher to collect, organise, and classify the enormous amount of data exhibited on, and associated with, the yellow coffins. Many parameters can be taken into account in classifying the heterogeneous information featured on the materials. These include textual and iconographical information, as well as historical (biography of the object) and technical. Computer database manipulation allows for faster, more comprehensive and more precise isolation of similarities and differences between and among the coffins and their attributes. The database organises and relates all kinds of data available in order to make the most comprehensive analysis of the yellow coffins in a coherent manner, taking into account the research needs. For the yellow coffins, this methodology is especially useful for relating multiple coffins featuring the same model, in some instances even relating them to specific individual craftspeople. Furthermore, the use of computer database software can be helpful in suggesting provenances where they are otherwise unknown. This allows us, in some cases, to relate elements now scattered across the globe but which originated at the same time and place, as exemplified further below in the case study concerning a group of coffins originating from Akhmim.

While the computer database can of course be manipulated for single variable analysis, it is especially helpful when undertaking any multivariable analysis type of comparative methodology. Two or more attributes can be more readily and more accurately compared across the corpus, both within and between coffin sets. This multivariable comparative approach strengthens investigations into both similar and divergent patterns in the texts and iconography depicted on the yellow coffins. The insights garnered from such analysis provide a basis to operationalise and consider novel questions, such as: Do the artistic choices reflect the preferences and circumstances of the coffin owner? Did each workshop in time and space use specific and incommutable patterns and models? Were variable individual factors, such as gender, class, or specific aesthetic and religious motivations, relevant to stylistic choices?

This novel comparative methodology, rendered accessible by contemporary computer database software, makes it possible to generate new analytical insights about the copying process, knowledge circulation and transmission mechanisms of the textual and iconographic motifs and patterns amongst the relevant artistic networks and craftspeople. The comparative analysis of the copying process allows for the isolation and observation of meaningful variations, adaptations, deletions, and additions. Identified deviations from the patterns may, possibly, derive from the complex interaction between appeals to tradition and the attraction of innovation that lies at the heart of the creative endeavour itself. Without any principled basis, ancient Egyptian craftspeople have largely been denied their agency as actors involved in, and relevant to, the creative process.

The most notable strength of computer-aided relational databases is their efficient and accurate identification of patterns and differences amongst voluminous and complex data points. The database created for this project is not necessarily concluded; it can be an evergreen catalogue to which new data can be added and existing data further refined. Importantly, given the volume and diversity of data points, multivariable comparative analysis can be undertaken manifold times by the addition or deletion of variables in the search for insights beyond just the scope of this project. It has the potential to be a useful tool for other diverse studies relating to yellow coffins.

Despite the myriad benefits of the development of the database, it is hardly a panacea. While advances in artificial intelligence and algorithmic design may supplement, or perhaps one day even replace, the meaning-making role of the researcher, for now, even with the database, the human researcher remains central to the interpretation of the data analysis results. The researcher also occupies an essential role in collecting and populating the database in a consistent manner that is capable of yielding meaningful comparisons. Building a large and richly annotated database of yellow coffins, the great majority of them still unpublished, involves considerable human resources and interdisciplinary collaboration. As no previous electronic data for the corpus is available as a whole, the digitisation and cataloguing of the objects must still be executed manually. The fields that have to be completed, including tags, labels and free text descriptions, must be semantically consistent. This keeps the data coherent and capable of being relationally analysed, thereby ensuring a higher degree of accuracy as compared with exclusively human comparison and interpretation. However, the researcher retains their interpretive role to a significant degree, especially at the point of recording and entering the data into the database.

Ideally, the database should contain all known yellow coffins, systematically including this predetermined group of objects. Of course, one individual scholar alone cannot feasibly realise such an enormous and time-consuming project, which would involve collaborating with numerous and diverse institutions and researchers across the world. For this reason, and according to specific criteria, a select subset of the yellow coffins and their associated materials was introduced and elaborated in the database and subjected to comparative analysis. This selection was guided by an effort to consider a broad and representative cross-section of the known surviving corpus. To identify these several distinct groups, a preliminary survey of all the coffins for which images were produced, or otherwise made available, was conducted. The groups are diverse in terms of chronology, geographical origins, and social status of the owners of the materials. This allows for some degree of comprehensive and representative samples, and therefore, superior results. One of these groups, which includes yellow coffins that originated from Akhmim from around the end of the 20th dynasty, is presented as a case study further below.

Once populated with as many yellow coffins as possible, the ultimate goal of the database is that it should serve as a fully implemented instrument that can facilitate all kinds of research in relation to the corpus. The database is intended to be a fully searchable, manipulable, and publicly accessible online tool. Such an application could facilitate diverse research into the materials from diverse points of view.

### ***Structuring and functioning of the database***

From the outset, the organisation and development of the database was guided by the decision to relate a multiplicity of different kinds of information. From a technical point of view, the relational database was organised into two main sections, both of which include multiple sub-sections. Each sub-section includes information on various types of data, using free text and/or fixed terms for the multiple fields. The two main sections are as follows.

#### *Section on coffin set information*

A complete coffin set identified today as belonging to the typology of the yellow coffins has five constituent elements: outer box, outer lid, inner box, inner lid, and mummy board, the last of which was placed directly on top of the mummy. This first main section includes general information regarding the coffin set. Some fields are pre-established, i.e. fixed options were identified and employed, while others can be filled using free text. A mechanism that tracks the introduction and subsequent modification of the data was implemented. Information about each purported set was populated in this section, including: the number of elements associated with the set, inventory number, location of discovery, gender, reuse marks, iconographic models, textual models, typology, and chronology (these later two variables were initially based on Niwiński's study). Where such information was available, the purported provenance of the objects, as well as their associated funeral materials, were also included in this section. Materials and primary documentation concerning the biography of the objects and their modern history have an important role for the database, as will be discussed further below with respect to the materials originating from Akhmim. All this information incorporated into the database is also associated with free text fields for comments, bibliographic sources, and other miscellaneous and *sui generis* information.

The first main section also includes data on the coffin owner's information. There are no comprehensive or systematic studies addressing the ownership of the yellow coffins based on the owner's name and titulary as featured on the objects. The majority of publications usually refer to the individual coffins as belonging to specific individuals, without noting or emphasising where the owner's information is actually featured on the objects. Names and/or titles rarely appear on all of the elements of the coffin set. Some coffin sets contain entirely anonymous elements. The database indicates the location on the objects of personal biographical details, including names, titles and known relatives. The elaboration of the section includes the phenomenon of the so-called 'parish coffins', i.e. coffins that feature a blank space where the information of the owner would typically be expected. These blank spaces suggest that the coffins were prepared in advance, following a serial production strategy. Sometimes the blank spaces were inscribed with the name of the deceased subsequent to the decoration of the coffin, while in other cases they were left blank.

The titulary of the owners is sometimes depicted differently between the different elements of set(s) associated with individual respective owners. Early career titles are sometimes featured on some elements, while more senior titles are featured on other elements. This phenomenon suggests that production of the elements in the same set occurred at different points in time.

#### *Section on the iconographical and textual program featured on each element of the set*

This second main section deals with the elements of the set individually. Therefore, it is divided into five sub-sections, each associated with a specific element of the coffin set. Each sub-section includes two main parts, the first detailing the iconography featured on the element (exterior and interior for the boxes; exterior and underside for the covers), and the second detailing the textual program. The



description and organisation of the formal components of the yellow coffins follows Sousa's vocabulary: head-board, upper section, central panel, lower section, and foot-board (Sousa 2014: 92, fig. 1). For the central panel and lower section, the number of registers is specified, and for the lower section the descriptions of the lateral and central partitions, if they exist, are also included. Each specific formal component is associated with a free text field that includes a basic description of the iconographic scenes and representations in the section, as well as the texts in the textual program. Regarding the inclusion of texts, each individual text is translated, transliterated, and transcribed. A further sub-section allows for further comments about the texts and iconography. The database is intended to contain encoded versions of both iconography and texts, which in the future will be helpful in making further types of comparisons between the materials.

Every data point and field description can be compared and corroborated with images associated with the specific elements, which are also included in the database. This is useful when relationships are being considered as they allow the researcher to easily see two or more actual images in order to confirm or reject the purported relationship identified by the application of a comparative analysis. The further development of the database might include representational images that might further contextualise the objects, such as drawings and plans. Burial plans would be especially useful for contextualising the coffins originating from Bab el-Gasus, a tomb that revealed 153 coffin sets. While the best research practice, of course, compels comprehensive in-person observation and recording of the objects, access to comprehensive high-quality images is frequently sufficient for many lines of inquiry. Unfortunately, the copyright restrictions for the majority of the existing images present a real impediment to the development of an accessible online database.

The result is a kind of coffin directory and an electronic catalogue of iconographies, texts, titles, personal names, origins, associated materials, etc., including bibliographic references.

### ***Potential results derived from the applied methodology and the manipulation of the data***

The creation of a structured multivariable database populated by a specific corpus of objects maximises their research potentialities. If the information is well ordered and defined, it is a tool that can provide answers to questions that would otherwise be extraordinarily difficult to resolve. As the database grows, with the introduction of more objects and information associated with them, more complex and diverse searches and analyses are possible. More information in the database strengthens research outcomes by providing a greater sample size with which to confirm or reject research hypotheses or tentative outcomes.

Potential results of single variable or multivariable manipulation of the database can include easing the challenges identified above and emphasised in contemporary coffin studies:

1. Considering the sheer volume of the materials, specific iconographic and textual models featured on the materials are often difficult to detect using only the naked eye. The database allows for the identification of new similarities and groupings between and among coffin sets and, sometimes, even the identification of individual craftspeople involved in the creation and decoration of the objects. This also facilitates new analytical insights into the operations and organisation of workshops in the 21st dynasty, including the production sequence of the elements. The identification of patterns that may reveal the factors that impacted the craftspeople's selection of texts and iconography is also possible.
2. The study of personal names and titulary reveals the social statuses of those who originally owned the funerary containers, as well as specific family lineages. Owners

with similar status and titles usually have similar textual and iconographical models decorating their coffins. Furthermore, studying the specific areas where the owner's information appears, as well as the number of times that the information is featured, is very useful for understanding which elements were more important. This research helps to understand coffin ownership, how coffins were decorated, and the ancient differential value accorded to specific elements.

3. Comparing iconographical, stylistic, and textual features yields significant insight into knowledge circulation and transmission of iconographic motifs and patterns among the relevant artistic networks and craftspeople. This also allows for the identification of relative chronologies and chronological sequences and developments of style, iconography, and texts between groups of coffins and within coffins groupings.
4. The associations of elements originally belonging to the same coffin set, but now scattered across several collections, have not been systematically considered. The presented methodology allows for the specification of the provenance and origins for the coffins, as well as the study of the recent history of the materials. The tomb of Bab el-Gasus is especially important in terms of this objective.
5. Reuse marks on yellow coffins and the phenomenon of the so-called parish coffins have been the subject of much contemporary debate. The consideration of this data sheds light on the economic dimensions of ancient Egyptian society, as well as on the organisation of the workshops where the coffins were constructed and decorated.
6. The textual and iconographical diversity featured on the elements of the corpus sheds light on when and how innovations impacted the decoration of the materials. The annotations regarding the diverse texts, their lexical analysis and morphology, as well as the variable iconographical compositions on the coffins, allow for the study of diachronic dimensions and changes in the evolution of the materials.
7. The frequency of specific iconographies, texts, titles, stylistic details, etc. on the objects can be related to produce statistical results. Such analyses can be performed on isolated specific groups of objects or on the entire corpus. These statistical results will be especially useful once the information featured on all the known yellow coffins has been included in the database.

The database, which is far from complete, currently contains 214 yellow coffin elements. The data populating the database allows for relatively expeditious and accurate testing of research hypotheses attempted thus far. Correlated data outcomes in relation to both individual objects, as well as groupings of objects, can be selected, saved, and exported to other applications.

#### ***Future development of the database***

The current database, still in its experimental phase, is a solid starting point from which it will improve. Efforts are still focused on the insertion, consolidation, and standardisation of the data entries, as well as the implementation of new functions and tag sets. At a future stage, the functionalities of the database will ideally expand to include other types of information, such as extensive information about the funerary equipment associated with the yellow coffins and the technical details of the coffins. For this latter aspect, access to scientific analyses provides information about the manufacturing techniques and the nature of the materials used for the construction and decoration of the objects, which are especially useful in relating coffins from the same workshop. Cross-referencing technical data with the textual and iconographic information may eventually allow for the attribution of specific decorative models to specific workshops of origin.

The database remains private, access being restricted to the present author and authorised individuals. As mentioned above, the end goal is to render the database publicly available online. If achieved, the availability of a comprehensive online catalogue would go a long way to addressing one of the most consequential research challenges, i.e. accessibility of the data. The adaptation of the database for general users would require a new mechanism by which new entries and data points could be submitted by users but subjected to verification and authorisation by a gatekeeper, whether personal or institutional. Furthermore, integration with other similar databases could dramatically expand the corpus for researchers engaged in comparative analyses of the yellow coffins with other types of coffins and materials from ancient Egypt.

### **Case study: A group of yellow coffins originating from Akhmim**

#### ***Defining the corpus***

This section analyses information and characteristics featured in a specific group of yellow coffins as identified by the application of the methodology. It includes an example of the outcomes of the manipulation of the data included in the database. Table 1 features some relevant aspects of the coffins and mummy boards that are compared. These attributes are: names of the owners and their relatives, titulary, acquisition date and assigned provenance as recorded in collection registries, available information about the mummy and associated funerary elements, and the reuse marks exhibited on coffin elements, if any. The analysis points toward an Akhmimic origin for the group of coffins. Similarities between some of the coffins have been previously identified by scholars (Cooney 2007: 224, 248-250, 462-475 [Group E]); Liptay 2011: 15-18; Niwiński 2017: 335; Taylor 2009: 376, n. 11; Varga 1987: 10, n. 6, 31, n. 47; van Walsem 2000: 337, 347). The proposed group in this study broadens the relevant corpus to include additional coffins and mummy boards associated with the group. However, this group excludes the fragments of the inner coffin of *Hr-htp* (Liptay 2011: 15-18) and the coffins of *'nt*, *Nsy-Imn*, *P3-nb-Mntw* and *Sty-msyw* (van Walsem 2000: 337-338, 347-349), which have been previously attributed to the same group by Liptay and van Walsem, respectively. These coffins will be considered separately elsewhere, as they may not have originated from Akhmim.

There are numerous and distinct stylistic, iconographic, textual, and even paleographic characteristics that are similar among and between the lids and mummy boards and boxes from the proposed group. It is not within the scope of this contribution to enumerate all the similar coffin attributes (some of which are mentioned in Liptay 2011: 12-13; Niwiński 2017: 336-337; Varga 1987: 28-29; van Walsem 2000: 337-338, 347). The selected similar attributes relate to the same iconographical and textual model. In some instances, unique details among subset clusters even allow for the attribution of some of the coffins from the group to specific individual decorators. The first such cluster constitutes the coffins of *Hwi(-wi)-ipwy* and *Hnmw-n-s3-n3-ph-sw*; the second constitutes the coffins of *'3f-n-Hr*, *'nhf* and the anonymous box preserved in Sydney; and the third constitutes the fragment of the anonymous inner box preserved in Southport and the coffin of *3st-nfrt*.

The motif of the halo of greenery drooping from the edges of the offering tables and stands is a distinct feature that appears consistently on each element of the coffin group. This detail facilitates an understanding of the chronological range of the coffins from the mid to late 20th dynasty (van Walsem 2000: 339-348, followed by Cooney 2007: 248, 462-475; Liptay 2011: 14; for a discussion of a later possible chronology of the objects, see Niwiński 2017: 338). In particular, there are two factors that support this chronological range: a lack of decoration on the interiors of the boxes, which is a typical feature of coffins from the late 20th dynasty (Niwiński 2019: 61); and the radiocarbon dating analyses performed on the coffins of *Ssh-nfrw* and *Wsir-f3y-Mnw-3*.

TABLE 1. THE COMPARED COFFINS AND MUMMY BOARDS

Coffin inv. number and publication	Coffin owner and relatives	Titulary	Acquisition date	Assigned provenance	Mummy (sex/chronology)	Associated funerary elements	Reuse marks (type/chronology)
NY Carlsberg Glyptothek, Copenhagen (AEIN 62). Cooney 2007: 468-470 (E.4); Jørgensen 2001: 56-91; Koefoed-Petersen 1951: 14-19; Liptay 2018: 410-411; Niwiński 1988: 136 (168); van Walsem 2000: 338.	Sšḥ-nfrw (♀) (inner coffin)	It-ntr n 3st n t3-ḥmrt	1884	-	Yes (female ♀, 800 BC)	Cartonnage plaques (Ptolemaic Period, of Theban origin)	Reuse marks dating after the decoration at the end of the 20th dynasty: 1) Name and title reuse (P3-3-n-kḥ, Wḥ) 2) Decorative reuse (end of the 22nd dynasty-beginning of the 25th dynasty, or 26th dynasty)
Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum, San Jose, California (RC-599, RC-609, RC-610, RC-611, RC-612, RC-613, RC-614, RC-615, RC-616, and at least three other fragments whose inventory numbers are unavailable). A detail of the fragment RC-615 appears, although misdated to the 19th dynasty, in Schwappach-Shirriff 2004: 13.	Ḥwi(-wi)-ipwy (♂) (inner coffin) His wife: Nḏm-3st His father: [...] 3st His grandfather: [...]	Sš kd n pr Mnw nb Ipw His wife: nbt pr His father: Sš pr-ḥḥ His grandfather: Sš [...]	1896	-	-	-	-
Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung, Berlin (8505). Cooney 2007: 248-250, 462-464 (E.1); Brech 2008: 27-29, 49; Germer et al. 2009: 116-119; Königliche Museen zu Berlin 1894: 134; 1899: 176; Niwiński 1988: 109 (29); Roeder 1924: 449-454.	Ḥmmw-n-33-n3-ph-sw (♂) (inner coffin)	Imy-r ḥw n pr Mnw	1884	Akhmim	Yes (insufficient information) <sup>1</sup>	-	Reused from a coffin of the Ramesside period: 1) Decorative reuse 2) Markers of Ramesside Period 3) Gender modification

<sup>1</sup> Germer et al. 2009: 119. In this study, the mummy is identified as Ḥmmw-n-33-n3-ph-sw, thereby indirectly suggesting its chronology and sex. However, no explanation is given for that identification.

Kunsthistorisches Museum, Ägyptisch-Orientalische Sammlung, Vienna (ÄS 6066). Egner and Haslauer 2009: 116-143; Nawiński 2010: 536-537.	Mrt-n-ḥt (♀) (inner coffin)	Šm'yt n 3st, ḥyt n 3st	1885	-	-	Yes (male ♂, Ptolemaic Period)	-	Reused from a coffin of the Ramesside period: 1) Decorative reuse
Bonham Lot n° 316, Auction 25388 (3/07/2019). Anonymous 2019: 186-187 (316).	Nsy-3st (♀) (inner coffin)	Šm'yt n 3st	-	-	-	-	-	Reused from a coffin of the Ramesside period: 1) Gender modification
Calvinist Collections, Pápa (A.1). László 1987; Liptay 2011; 2018: 409-411; Varga 1987.	Ḥry (♂) (inner coffin) His father: P3y=f-iry	W'ḃ n 3st, W'ḃ Ḥr-s3-3st His father: W'ḃ n 3st	1884	Akhmim	Yes (male ♂, somewhat earlier than the Ptolemaic Period)	1) Gilded cartonnage mask (30th dynasty, probably from Akhmim) 2) Cartonnage mummy trappings (around the beginning of the Ptolemaic Period)	-	-
Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago (31840 (catalogue number); 876 (accession number)).	Wsir-f3y-Mnw-3 (♀) (inner coffin)	Šm'yt n Mnw-Ḥr-3st m Ipw	1892	-	-	-	-	-
Victoria Museum for Egyptian Antiquities, Uppsala (VM 153). Nawiński 1988: 174 (397).	T3yw-ḥryt (inner coffin) (♀)	Šm'yt n 3st <sup>2</sup>	1892	-	Yes (male ♂, around 500 BC)	-	-	-
Musée du Louvre, Paris (AF 9592). Nawiński 1988: 167 (348), without considering the inner box. For the complete inner coffin, see Brunel-Duverger 2020: 149-151.	3-f-n-Ḥr (inner coffin) (♂)	W'ḃ, W'ḃ n ḥ3t n Ḥr-s3-3st n pr Mnw <sup>3</sup>	-	-	-	-	-	-

<sup>2</sup> Nawiński defines the title as 'Chantress of Amun' (Nawiński 1988: 174 (397), 191 (42), but the coffin features the title Šm'yt n 3st, 'Chantress of Isis' above the female deceased and preceding her name (Nawiński 2017: 343, pl. III, 345, pl. V).

<sup>3</sup> Nawiński does not mention the title (1988: 167 [348]), and Taylor (2009: 376, n. 11) only defines part of it.

Australian Museum, Sydney (E019466). Niwiński (2017: 335) attributes the object to the Macquarie University Museum of Ancient Cultures, Sydney, however it was there only as a temporary loan.	Anonymous (♀) (inner coffin box)	No titles preserved	-	-	Yes (female ♀, around 800 BC)	-	-
Putnam Museum and Science Center, Davenport (AR 21190).	Ḫst-nfrt (inner coffin) (♀)	Ḫm'yt n 3st	1896-1909	-	Yes (female ♀, perhaps the 21st dynasty or thereabouts)	Cartonnage mummy mask (30th dynasty, probably from Akhmim)	Reuse marks dating after the decoration at the end of the 20th dynasty: 1) Decorative reuse (mid 21st dynasty onwards)
Atkinson Art Gallery and Library, Southport (BOOMG: 1/08/84).	Anonymous (♀) (fragment of an inner coffin box)	No titles preserved	-	-	-	-	-
Ivanovo Regional Art Museum, Ivanovo (A-601) (inner coffin) (A-602) (mummy board). Berlev and Hodjash (1998: 8-10, 23, pl. 22-26, 51-52), but note the mistaken identification of the mummy board as a female lid; Bolshakov (2020a; 2020b), which correctly identified 'nḫw's mummy board, but misidentified 'nḫw's coffin set as originating from the Theban area (Bolshakov 2020b: 145, 173-174) and not from Akhmim as suggested in this present contribution.	'nḫw (inner coffin, mummy board) (♂)	Ḫr'(w)	1883-1886	-	-	-	Inner coffin and mummy board reused from a coffin of the Ramesside period: 1) Gender modification

The aforementioned iconographic detail of the halo of greenery is part of a unique formal tradition that originated in the Theban royal tombs (van Walsem 2000: 348). While it may have originated in Deir el-Medina and been used broadly there, the detail is attested in other locations around the same period, such as the Theban necropolises, Akhmim, Amarna, and El Kab. This sheds light on the mobility of craftspeople and the circulation of motifs around Upper Egypt during the end of the New Kingdom.

Comparative analyses of the style, layout and iconography of the coffins presented in Table 1 facilitate the identification of a relative chronological sequence within the grouping that is also within the time range suggested by van Walsem. The dissimilarities between the coffins suggest that the craftspeople innovated over time, exhibiting a decorative evolution of style, layout, and iconography, which points to the complexity and *horror vacui* associated with the typical coffin decoration of the 21st dynasty yellow coffins. It is unclear if this evolution reflects the choices of the owner or the choices and/or circumstances of the decorator. For example, the coffins of *Ssh-nfrw*, *Hwi(-wi)-ipwy*, *Hnmw-n-s3-n3-ph-sw*, *Mrt-n-ḥt*, *Nsy-3st* and *Hry* follow the iconographic tradition and particularities of earlier and traditional Ramesside coffin decoration, as exemplified by the four standing sons of Horus and the lack of adornment of the upper edge of the box walls. The coffins of *Wsir-f3y-Mnw-ʿ3*, *T3yw-ḥryt*, *ʿ3f-n-Ḥr*, *3st-nfrt*, *ḥḥf*, the anonymous inner box preserved in Australia, and the fragmented box preserved in Southport, all exhibit an increase in the number of registers on the central panel as well as on the vertical partitions on the lower section of the lids. Their associated boxes popularise the depiction of a frieze on the upper edge of the exterior walls, and the majority feature novel iconography, such as the depictions of the solar boat and the sacred falcon, which rarely featured on the boxes of the earlier coffins.

### **Coffin origins**

The temporal proximity of known discovery dates and dates of acquisition of the materials suggests a common provenance. In 1884, Maspero initiated an excavation that led to major discoveries at Akhmim (Maspero 1884: 66-68; 1886: 210-212; 1893 I: 215-216; Kuhlmann 1983: 53-63), lending further support to the idea that the coffins of the proposed grouping were discovered around that time and in that location. The sheer volume of objects, including coffins, arriving at different international museums and collections in and around 1884, reasonably implicate a possible Akhmimic provenance of the materials (Porter and Moss 1937: 23-24).

Some coffins feature their owner's respective name and, sometimes, the names of their wives and ancestors as well, in theophoric fashion, inclusive of either Min, Isis, or Horus, all of whom were gods venerated at Akhmim. In the case of *Hwi(-wi)-ipwy*'s name, there is even a reference to the city of Akhmim itself. All this information strongly suggests a relationship between the coffin owners and Akhmim. This is corroborated by the titulary featured on the coffins, which bear relation to geographically bounded religious cults specific to the Akhmimic region and devoted to Min, Isis, and Harsiese. The lone exception to this is the coffin belonging to *ḥḥf*, whose title refers only to a military role, that of shield bearer (Erman and Grapow 1971: Vol. V 59.10-14; Schulman 1962: 111-114). Akhmim's spatial proximity to an important military installation in the late 20th and 21st dynasties (Lacovara *et al.* 1989) might explain how a militiaman like *ḥḥf* came to be buried there, although there is no conclusive proof of this. The titulary depicted on the coffins of *Hwi(-wi)-ipwy*, *Wsir-f3y-Mnw-ʿ3* and *Ssh-nfrw* explicitly relates their respective owners to the city of Akhmim, where they held their positions. With respect to *Ssh-nfrw*'s title, the unique epithet of Isis further suggests the association of the goddess Isis with Akhmim. The epithet has been translated as *t3-ḥnrt*, 'the one of the harem' (Cooney 2007: 468 (E.4); Erman and Grapow 1971: Vol. III 297.15; Jørgensen 2001: 60, 70, 86; Liptay 2011: 11), and refers to the Harem of the god Min, a site which would have existed at Akhmim at the relevant time (Gauthier 1931: 110-112).

### ***Ancient coffin reuse and modern re-assembly***

The identification of reuse marks on some of the coffins suggests that they may be reused coffin elements from previous coffins of the Ramesside period. The reuse mark on other containers appear to date from after the end of the 20th dynasty to the Third Intermediate Period and thereafter. When the ensembles arrived at their current locations, the majority also contained mummies and, often, related funerary materials. In almost all the examples, the dates of the mummies and related funerary materials are inconsistent with the decoration, or redecoration, of the coffins. Furthermore, of those mummies whose sex has been determined, half do not match the sex of the original coffin occupant, or the ancient occupant of the reused coffin, as the case may be. Although this might suggest a second or further reuse of the coffins, this is unlikely, as in such cases one would expect coffin reuse marks contemporary with the mummies contained within the ensembles; however, there are no such contemporaneous marks on any of the coffins. Furthermore, additional funerary materials related to some of the mummies, such as funerary masks and cartonnage mummy trappings, are not contemporaneous with the dating of the mummies. In one such case, the coffin of *Ssh-nfrw*, the cartonnage mummy trappings appear to have been manufactured in Thebes, rather than Akhmim. The constellation of data suggests that the mummies and their (un)related funerary materials preserved inside the coffins have likely been incorporated into novel ensembles during modern times, in particular at the end of the 19th century, to artificially create coffin ensembles in order to more readily, and profitably, sell them on the market.

### **Conclusions**

This contribution defines the methodology involving the population of an electronic database of the various features of yellow coffins, and overcoming or mitigating some challenges researchers face when studying them. A computer-aided comparative analysis of large numbers of data points in the database allows for faster, more comprehensive, and more precise isolation of relevant similarities and differences between the coffins. This methodology is especially useful for relating multiple coffins and suggesting provenances where these are unknown for some of the objects.

The second section addressed the provenance of a unique group of yellow coffins dating from the middle to late 20th dynasty. The analyses of their texts and acquisition dates and circumstances allowed for, and corroborated, a posited common Akhmimic origin of the materials. The present study broadened the corpus of objects belonging to the group with additional coffins and mummy boards, allowing for better comparative analysis between the coffins of the group, facilitating new insights into their features, including the practice of reuse in the city of Akhmim, and the trading practices that occurred following modern discovery of the materials. Perhaps future discoveries and analyses will afford consideration of more objects that may be associated with the group. Going forward, the most useful study of these coffin sets would see them subjected to contemporary scientific analyses of the physical materials (pigments, plaster, wood, etc.) to better understand their materiality and common origins. These types of inquiries may provide meaningful insights by determining further similarities and differences between the coffins.

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# Silent Voices: Analysing Colour Remains on Rock Inscriptions in the Area of Aswân

Elisabeth Wegner

## Abstract

To this day, traces of colour are still visible on some of the numerous pharaonic rock inscriptions and images in the region of the First Cataract, suggesting an originally polychrome appearance of these media.<sup>1</sup> Both texts and figures could be highlighted by means of colour application, which most likely not only served to enhance visibility. Instead, these colours are rather likely to have been carrying a multi-layered meaning, complementing the commonly political or religious content and the various forms of communication and interaction of the rock inscriptions and images with their surrounding environment, recipients, and passers-by.

Sehel Island in the south of Aswân provides the basis for a case study on this topic: among the more than 600 published rock inscriptions dating from the Predynastic to the Graeco-Roman Period, 20 are reportedly exhibiting colour remains, consisting of 19 carved inscriptions and one *dipinto*.<sup>2</sup> The non-invasive analysis of these 20 inscriptions, using DStretch and a handheld XRF-device, led to the discovery of traces of colour on further eight inscriptions and of hitherto unpublished carved texts and *dipinti*. Red pigment is the most frequently attested one amidst these colour remains with a distinct variation in contexts of usage that arouse special attention in regards of the symbolic associations of this colour.

## Keywords

First Cataract, Rock Inscriptions, Colour Analysis, DStretch, XRF analysis

## Introduction

‘All eyes on me’ – this expression most certainly corresponds to the landscape in Aswân at the First Cataract, where at some places one inscription after another is trying to catch the attention of passers-by. Being quite scarce in the Old Kingdom and loosely distributed in the Middle Kingdom, the rock inscriptions and images of the New Kingdom in that region are characterised by being grouped in large clusters at focal locations (Seidlmayer 2014: 214-215, 220; 2003: 443-445; Herzberg 2012: 28), like the harbour area of the Khnum Temple in Elephantine, alongside the ancient road to Philae, or on Sehel Island. Large numbers of them are still clearly visible as many were carved into rocks of the famous Aswân pink granite with a dark patina, creating a sharp contrast to the original rock surface. But at the same time there are plenty of inscriptions that are hardly visible to the naked eye and are only revealed under certain light conditions or when being identified by the touch of a trained epigrapher. Now imagine that these inscriptions and images which appear mostly plain today were once colourful. This of course is a quite bold hypothesis, but it is not just made up out of nowhere. There are indeed inscriptions that still feature colour remains; some are clearly visible from afar, others can be only

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<sup>1</sup> The results presented in this contribution are augmented by the author’s recent discoveries made during a fieldwork season on Sehel Island from November to December 2022.

<sup>2</sup> The term *dipinto/dipinti* is used here for painted images and inscriptions as merely a technical distinction from carved inscriptions. An evaluation in terms of quality or style is not implied (cf. Vandekerckhove and Müller-Wollermann 2001: 10).

detected on close examination. The research of the present author's PhD project is focusing on the analysis of these colour remains from a theoretical, comparative point of view, as well as with a practical approach by means thus far of two non-invasive methods – Decorrelation Stretch (DStretch) and X-Ray Fluorescence (XRF).<sup>3</sup>

### **A brief exploration of colours and colour symbolism in ancient Egypt**

Before elaborating on the preliminary results, it is useful to turn for a moment to the protagonists of this whole study: the colour pigments employed in ancient Egypt. The ancient Egyptian colour palette consists of six main shades: white, black, yellow, green, blue, and red, with black and white being considered 'less colour' and the other four 'most colour' (Baines 2001: 150). According to Aufrère (2001: 160), colours were mostly associated with the sanctified minerals they partially derived from. Therefore, they have a strong divine and religious connotation.

White was obtained from calcite, gypsum or huntite (Heywood 2001: 5-9) and, as the substitute of silver, a symbol of purity and the divine light, but also of the mummy shroud and the divine skeleton (Taylor 2001: 165). Black indicates death and rebirth, as well as fertility (Blom-Böer and Warburton 2019: 234; Taylor 2001: 166). It is mainly produced by burning organic material such as plants and bones. Yellow is considered the most important pigment due to its association with gold (Aufrère 2001: 160; Tiradritti 2008: 58). It consists of the naturally occurring minerals yellow ochre or orpiment, and symbolises the golden flesh of the gods (Baines 2001: 154; Dumas 1956: 1-17; Taylor 2001: 165-166). As the colour of the sun, the source of life and generation, yellow also has a solar meaning (Baines 2001: 150; Tiradritti 2008: 58). Green was commonly generated either from malachite or feldspar, or synthetically produced with atacamite, resulting in the so-called green frit (Green 2001: 45). It is associated with vegetation and greenness (Aufrère 2001: 160; Blom-Böer and Warburton 2019: 234). The famous Egyptian Blue, a synthetic pigment containing cuprorivaite (Green 2001: 44; Rodler *et al.* 2017: 1), is identified with the precious lapis lazuli, which is considered the material the hair of the divine beings is made of (Baines 2001: 150; Taylor 2001: 167). Another, much paler blue pigment consists of cobalt and was mainly used during the Amarna Period (Green 2001: 45). It is associated with turquoise and, therefore, with rebirth (Aufrère 2001: 160). Red pigment could be derived from different natural sources. The most stable one is red ochre, but also the natural pigments realgar and vermillion were used. The employment of vermillion started in Roman times, during which red lead was also introduced as a fourth source of red colour (Green 2001: 44). Being the colour of Seth, red pigment is related to the minerals carnelian and red jasper (Aufrère 2001: 160), and mostly evokes negative connotations, e.g. danger, chaos, blood, and fire (Pinch 2001: 184). But it also has the solar aspect of sunset and sunrise.

### **Preliminary Results**

Work in season 2022 focused on Sehel Island, which is located roughly 3 km south of Elephantine Island. The granite formations in its south-eastern area, especially the hills Bibi Tagug and Hussein Tagug, contain more than 600 rock inscriptions and images that were comprehensively documented by the French-Egyptian mission under the direction of Annie Gasse and Vincent Rondot in the early 1990s and early 2000s and published in 2007.<sup>4</sup> Being known as the residence of the goddess Anukis from the Middle Kingdom onwards (Gasse 2004: 71; Gasse and Rondot 2007: 9), Sehel's inscriptions and images

<sup>3</sup> The measurements were conducted using a handheld XL3 hybrid analyser with helium flush, Ag-anode, and SDD-detector, manufactured by analyticon instruments gmbh (<https://www.analyticon.eu/en/xl3-hybrid.html>).

<sup>4</sup> The catalogue *Les inscriptions de Séhel* is the first in-depth publication of the island's epigraphic legacy and contains 551 rock inscriptions and images. A further 24 inscriptions, predominantly dating to the Old and Middle Kingdom, as well as 65 pharaonic rock images, were added to the corpus during two consecutive field seasons in Autumn 2014 and Spring 2015 as part of the project 'Survey and Salvage Epigraphy of Rock-Cut Graffiti and Inscriptions in the Area of Aswân' undertaken by the

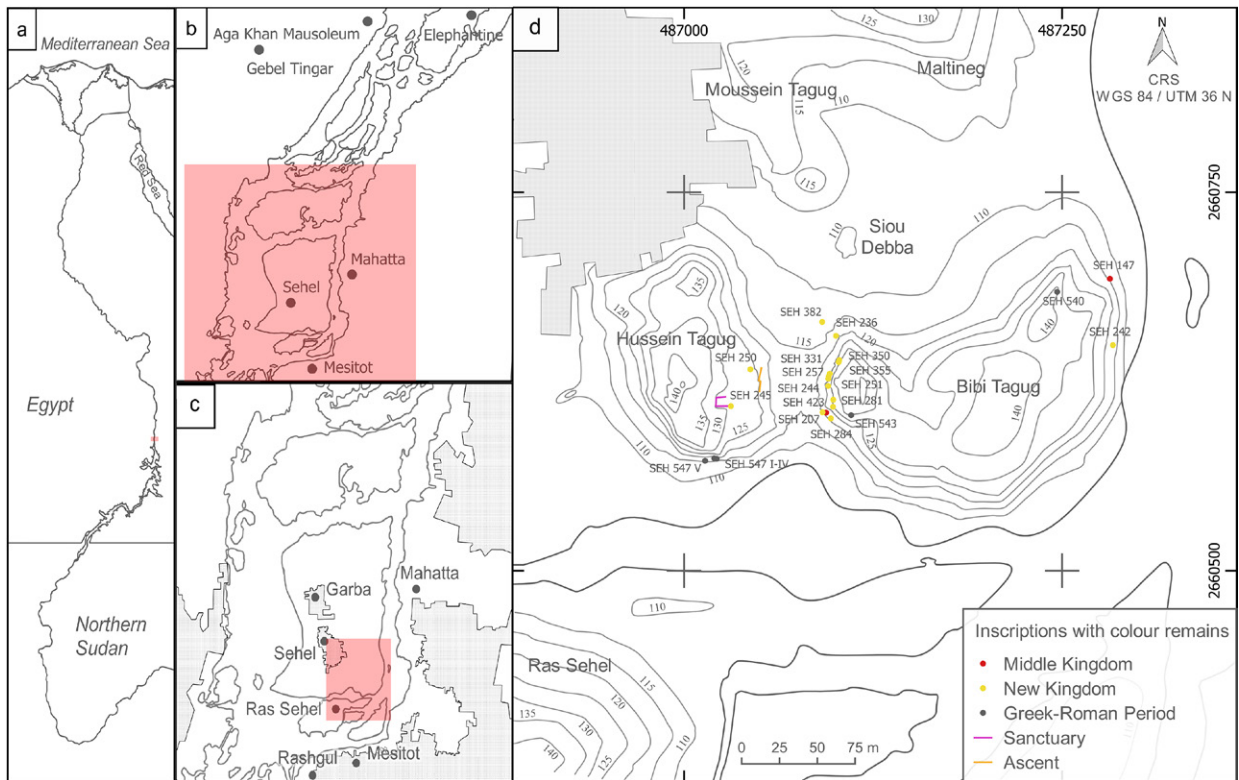


Figure 1. Map of Sehel Island showing the location of the published inscriptions with reported colour remains (scale 1:5000) (© E. Wegner after Gasse and Rondot 2007)..

thematically mainly address topics related to the local cult of the goddess. Nevertheless, the texts and images of the Old and Middle Kingdom refer in particular to the political significance of the island as a military checkpoint, not only by their content and iconography, but also by their spatial distribution (Borrmann 2016: 9-10).

Within their publication, Gasse and Rondot include information on colour remains, which, according to the researchers, are preserved on 18 carved inscriptions and one *dipinto* from varying time periods (Figure 1, Table 1). Additionally, Klug (2002: 165) has speculated on traces of colour on the inscription of Thutmose III commemorating the construction of a canal (SEH 242).

These inscriptions were the basis of the investigations undertaken with DStretch and XRF analysis. In terms of their spatial distribution, they are restricted to the hills of Bibi Tagug and Hussein Tagug, and cluster especially along the western hillside of Bibi Tagug.

One of the biggest obstacles when using XRF on the Aswân rock inscriptions is the wide range of varieties of the local granite that can differ within one single block. Since they naturally include calcitic, potassic, and ferrous minerals (Klemm and Klemm 2008: 252-253), peaks for calcium, iron, and potassium will most likely occur each time within the measured energy spectra. This, in turn, will make it difficult to distinguish the elemental ratio especially of calcitic and ferrous colour pigments, like gypsum or red and yellow ochres, from the natural elemental composition of the granite. According to the geological overview map of the area south of Aswân (Klemm and Kleem 2008: 234-235), the inscribed areas on Sehel

German Archaeological Institute Cairo under the direction of L. Borrmann (2016: 8-10), amounting to a total number of 640 at that time.

TABLE 1. LIST OF INSCRIPTIONS WITH COLOUR REMAINS ACCORDING TO GASSE AND RONDOT AND KLUG.

Inscription	Dating	Colour Remains
SEH 147	12th dynasty, regnal year 8 of Senwosret III	<b>Green:</b> protective spell behind the figure of the king; <i>hꜥ</i> mace in the right hand of the king <b>Red:</b> face, neck, torso and limbs, Red Crown, and apron of the king's figure; text of the dedicator's inscription
SEH 207	13th dynasty or later	<b>Red</b> ( <i>dipinto</i> )
SEH 236	18th dynasty, Hatshepsut	<b>Red:</b> hieroglyphs
SEH 242	18th dynasty, regnal year 50 of Thutmose III	<b>Yellow:</b> hieroglyphs
SEH 244	18th dynasty, Thutmose III	<b>Red:</b> limbs of the figure
SEH 245	18th dynasty, Thutmose III	<b>Green:</b> figures and hieroglyphs <b>White:</b> foundation
SEH 250	18th dynasty, Amenhotep II	<b>Red:</b> face, neck, and limbs (partially) of the figure
SEH 251	18th dynasty, Amenhotep II	<b>Red:</b> face, neck, and limbs (partially) of the figure
SEH 257	18th dynasty, Amenhotep II	<b>Red:</b> face, neck, and limbs (partially) of the figure <b>Yellow:</b> torches
SEH 264	18th dynasty, Thutmose IV–Amenhotep III	<b>Red:</b> face, neck, and limbs (partially) of the figure
SEH 281	18th dynasty	<b>Red:</b> face, neck, and limbs (partially) of the figure
SEH 284	18th dynasty	<b>Red:</b> remains of the preliminary ink drawing
SEH 331	18th dynasty	<b>Red:</b> face, neck, torso, and limbs of the figure
SEH 350	18th dynasty	<b>Red:</b> face, neck, and limbs (partially) of the figure
SEH 355	18th dynasty	<b>Red:</b> face, neck, and limbs (partially) of the figure
SEH 382	19th dynasty, Ramesses II	<b>Red:</b> on the garments of the figures
SEH 423	20th dynasty, Ramesses IV.	<b>Red</b> (areas not specified)
SEH 540	26th dynasty, Amasis	<b>Red</b> (areas not specified)
SEH 543	Graeco-Roman Period	<b>Red:</b> figure in the centre <b>Yellow:</b> left figure
SEH 547	Roman Period	<b>Red:</b> Greek letters

Island are mainly divided into coarse-grained (pink) granite on Hussein Tagug and fine-grained, young grey/grey-pinkish granite on Bibi Tagug. The map also shows that the quotient of  $K_2O/Na_2O$  values lies between 0.7 and 1.7 on Bibi Tagug, meaning that the ratio of potassium oxide and sodium oxide of this granite variety is quite balanced and less than 2:1. Although sodium is too light to be detected by the specific XRF model used, this information is beneficial for the interpretation of the potassium values within the measured spectra.<sup>5</sup> In contrast to the darker red-pink granite to which the variety of Hussein Tagug at least partially seems to belong, the proportion of potassium oxide within the fine-grained grey

<sup>5</sup> The lightest element that can be detected by the XL3 hybrid XRF analyser is magnesium (<https://www.analyticon.eu/en/xl3-hybrid.html>).



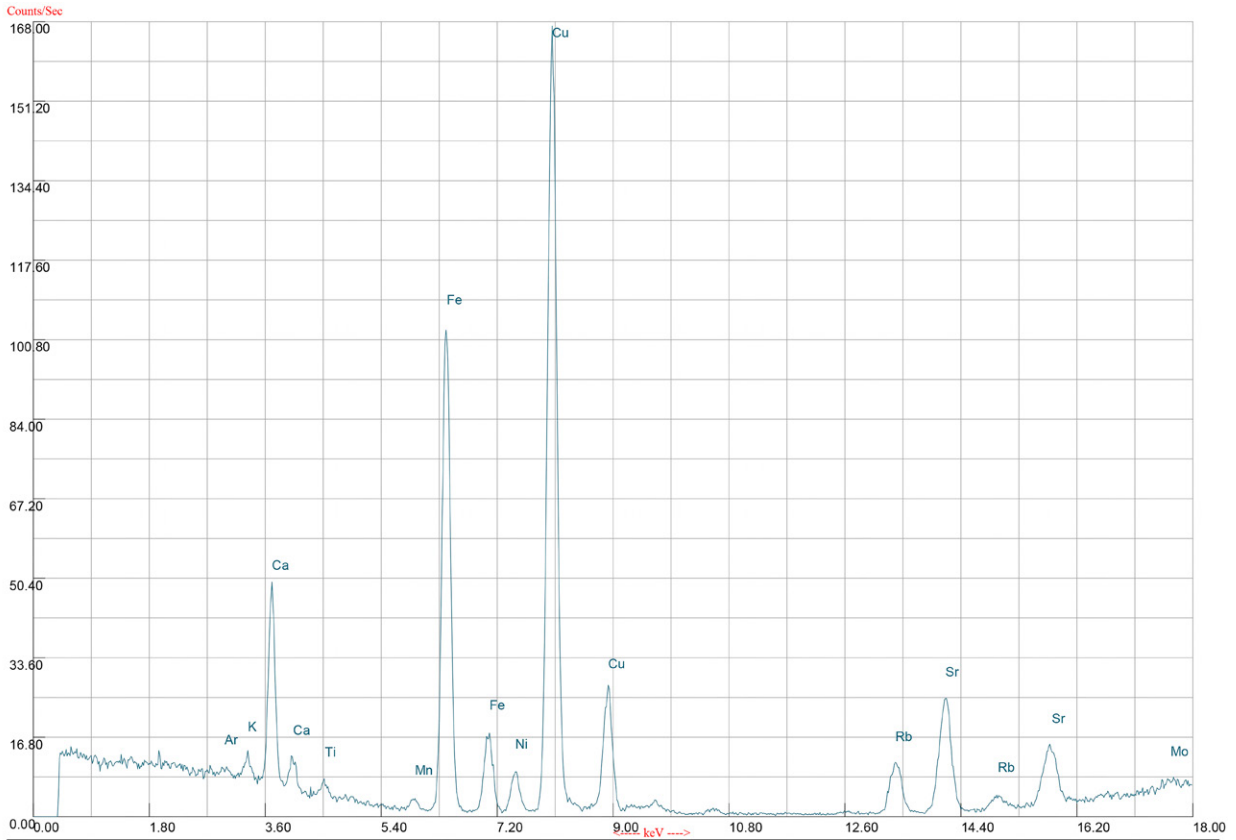


Figure 2. XRF spectrum of potentially green or blue pigment on SEH 245 (© E. Wegner).

granite can be assumed to be less due to its mineral composition (Klemm and Klemm 2008: 251, 255-256, 265-266). To increase the significance of the results, however, at each inscription exhibiting colour remains measurements were conducted at various points with visible pigments, including 'blank shots' around the sampled areas for comparison of the granite's elemental composition with and without patina.

Peaks of copper (Cu) within the XRF spectra of the documented green pigments on SEH 147 and SEH 245 leave room for two possible interpretations: as the main component of both Egyptian Blue and green frit, the pigment applied was either intentionally green or originally blue (Figure 2). In cases of the latter option, the nowadays greenish appearance would be the result of degradation processes (Castro *et al.* 2016: 121; Green 2001: 44-45).

The white pigments mentioned by Klug (2002: 162-164) on SEH 245 seem to be indeed visible, but the quantities were insufficient for conclusive results within the respective XRF spectra. A white foundation usually made of calcite or gypsum would be characterised by high concentrations of calcium (Ca) (Castro *et al.* 2016: 120).

The XRF spectra of the proposed yellow colour on SEH 242, 257, and SEH 543 do not confirm the assumptions and observations of Gasse and Rondot (2007: 152, 337) or Klug (2002: 165). This pigment is primarily consisting of the natural mineral yellow ochre (Castro *et al.* 2016: 120), hence one would expect to find high amplitudes of iron (Fe). The peaks of Fe within the spectra, however, are not considerably higher than those of the reference measurements on the blank granite surface. The impression of yellow

colour application might be implied by the natural shade of the granite or an early stage of patination caused by ferrous oxides (Butzer and Hansen 1968: 74).

On the other hand, the measurements of red pigments yielded different results. Most inscriptions with larger remains of pigment and sufficient colour intensity exhibit Fe levels that on average are c. 3.5%-5% higher than the Fe peaks of the reference measurements. Therefore, it appears that red ochre was used throughout the various time periods (Castro *et al.* 2016: 120).

As shown in Table 1, red is the dominating pigment among the attested colour remains. It can be found in three different contexts:

1. On the bodies, garments, and attributes of depicted figures
2. On carved texts, or serving as writing material itself
3. For the initial draft of the inscription prior to its carving

The usage of red pigment in these contexts is certainly well known in ancient Egyptian arts and crafts, and can likewise be found in relation to rock inscriptions outside the Aswân area. At the travertine quarry of Hatnub, or the Hagar el-Merwa at Kurgus, for instance, there are plenty of ‘graffiti’ – private and royal inscriptions – written or drawn with red colour (Davies 2001: 47, 52-53, 56-57; Davies 2003: 55, 57; Davies 2004: 153, 156; Gourdon 2014: 31-41; Klug 2002: 79-81, 210).

### Newly discovered colour remains and inscriptions

Though facing a somewhat challenging starting point for the usage of XRF in relation to the project’s practical objective, there is an additional non-destructive and completely contact-free method of detecting colour remains on rock inscriptions: DStretch, an image editing tool manipulating the colours of digital photographs (Gourdon 2014: 34).<sup>6</sup> With this method possible traces of colour can be visually highlighted. Its use in archaeology has predominantly been focused on non-textual pictographs and petroglyphs so far, but it also has a high potential for tracing colours on rock inscriptions with textual content.

When searching for the only published *dipinto* (SEH 207) on Sehel Island, written with red ink and dating to the Middle Kingdom, surprising discoveries were made thanks to DStretch. SEH 207 is to be found on the southern face of a large granite boulder at the south-western tip of Bibi Tagug, together with other inscriptions that are mainly dating to the Old and Middle Kingdom (Gasse and Rondot 2007: 117). Though visible with the naked eye, the application of DStretch clearly enhances its legibility (Figure 3). So far, the remaining illegible parts have not yet been fully identified, but hopefully a more thorough investigation will lead to its complete reading.



Figure 3. DStretch manipulation of *dipinto* SEH 207 (not to scale) (© E. Wegner).

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.dstretch.com/index.html>

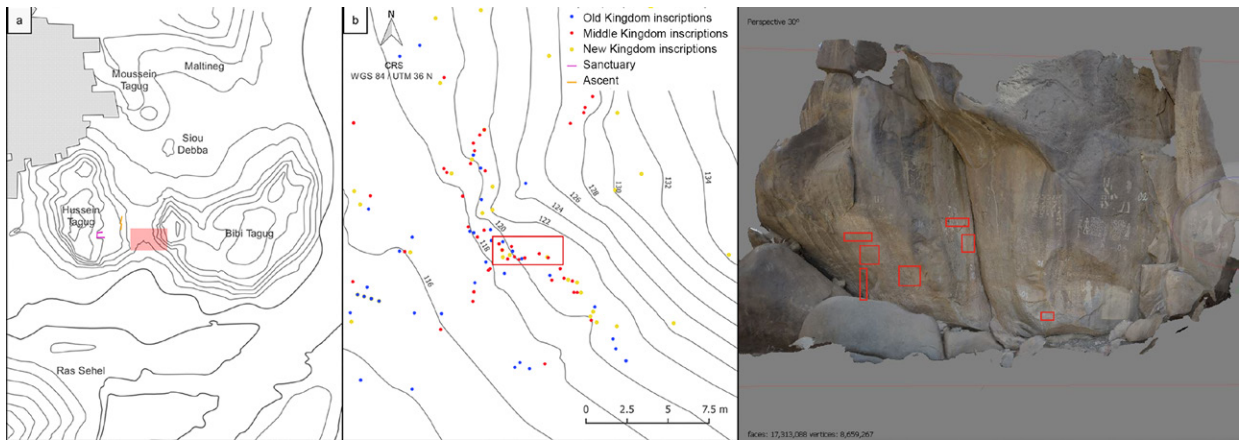


Figure 4. Left: map of Sehel Island showing the location of the granite boulder in the south-western area of Bibi Tagug (scale 1:500) (© E. Wegner after Gasse and Rondot 2007). Right: 3D model of the granite boulder with the positions of the newly discovered carved inscriptions and dipinti (© E. Wegner).

Unexpectedly, Dstretch unveiled four more, hitherto unpublished inscriptions on the same face of the granite boulder: two shallowly carved and two written with red ink as well. These are placed at a considerable height, only reachable with a ladder (Figure 4).

The first set of inscriptions is situated below the royal inscriptions of Senwosret III (SEH 146) and Neferhotep I (SEH 156). It consists of two carved inscriptions, one column and one line, and a *dipinto*, all grouped in very close proximity to each other (Figure 5).

#### ASW/SEH/A042 Inscription of the retainer It(i)-seneb

One line of shallowly carved hieroglyphic text, h. 14.4 cm, w. 48.1 cm, d. >0.1 cm

$\check{s}ms.w^{(a)} Jt(\check{s}j)-snb^{(b)}$

‘The retainer It(i)-seneb’

(a) Ward 1982: 175.1517. This title is attested several times on Sehel Island in ten inscriptions dating to the Middle Kingdom, and one 18th-dynasty example (Gasse and Rondot 2007: 369, 381).

(b) Ranke 1935: 51.6. The name is unique on Sehel Island. It points to a Middle Kingdom dating of the inscription.

#### ASW/SEH/A043 Inscription of a man named Ib

One column of shallowly carved hieroglyphic text, to the right of ASW/SEH/A042, h. 23.5 cm, w. 12 cm, d. >0.1 cm

$jrj.n Jb^{(a)}$

‘Made by Ib’

(a) Ranke 1935: 19.15. The name is unique among the inscriptions on Sehel Island published so far. It points to a Middle Kingdom dating of the inscription.

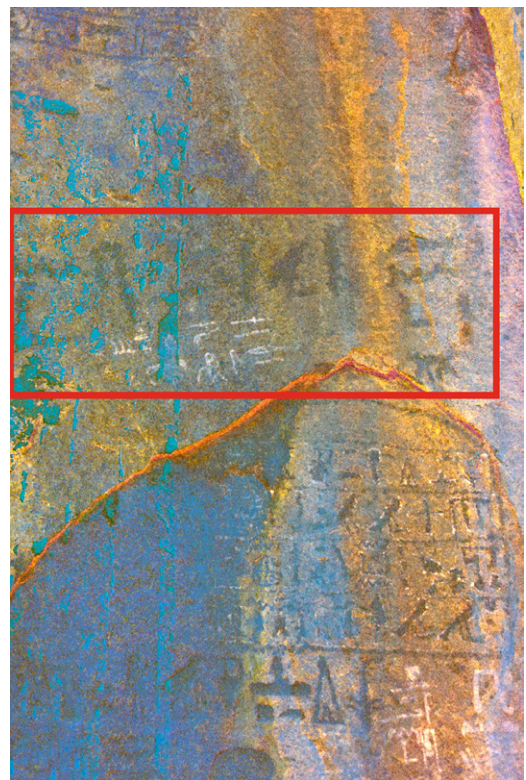


Figure 5. DStretch manipulation of inscriptions ASW/SEH/A042-A044 (not to scale) (© E. Wegner).



might be a hint to Nebsumenu's origin, which seems to be confirmed by the Theban location of the workshop where stela CG 20677 was probably fabricated (Ilin-Tomich 2012: 80-84).

- (d) Regarding the reading and palaeography of sign H8, see Möller 1909: 22.238.
- (e) The vertical sign before *snb* might be an unusually written S29 as well (Möller 1909: 40.482), but the name *Jt(ꜣ)-ssnb* is not listed in Ranke 1935.
- (f) It is currently not clear whether a female or male name is following the filiation introduced by *jrj.n*, as both possibilities are attested in the Middle Kingdom (Obsomer 1993: 170-199; Postel 2009: 332-334). It is dependent on the identification of the second part of the name, which might be read as *St.t* with signs F29 and Q7 (Möller 1909: 15.166, 37.394, 48.510). However, the name *Nb(.t)-St.t* is not listed in Ranke 1935.
- (g) There are three horizontal signs at the end of the column that could be still part of the personal name or of an honorific epithet typical for the Middle Kingdom, such as *mꜣ<sup>c</sup>-ḥrw* (Doxey 1998: 91-93; Möller 1909: 9.99, 36.381).
- (h) Although there are no clear traces of sign F31, the size of the lacuna and the following signs O34 and N35 point to the reading of *ms.n*.
- (i) Ranke 1935: 232.23. Only signs A50, F4, S 29, X1, and Z1 can be identified with reasonable certainty, with signs A50, S29, and X1 being already largely faded away. For the hieratic writing and palaeography, see Möller 1909: 2.26, 13.146.

Further application of DStretch on this face of the granite boulder likewise revealed traces of the preliminary ink text underneath the carved Middle Kingdom inscription SEH 177 (Gasse and Rondot 2007: 102). Prior to this discovery, remains of preliminary red ink were only detected on the New Kingdom inscription SEH 284 (Gasse and Rondot 2007: 172). The red colour around the signs of SEH 177 is reasonably visible to the naked eye on close examination. Due to its elevated position of c. 4 m above ground, however, the red pigment blends in almost completely with the natural shade of the granite from afar. The remains allow for a partial reconstruction of the barely recognisable signs at the end of each of the four lines that have hitherto remained illegible (Figure 6):<sup>8</sup>

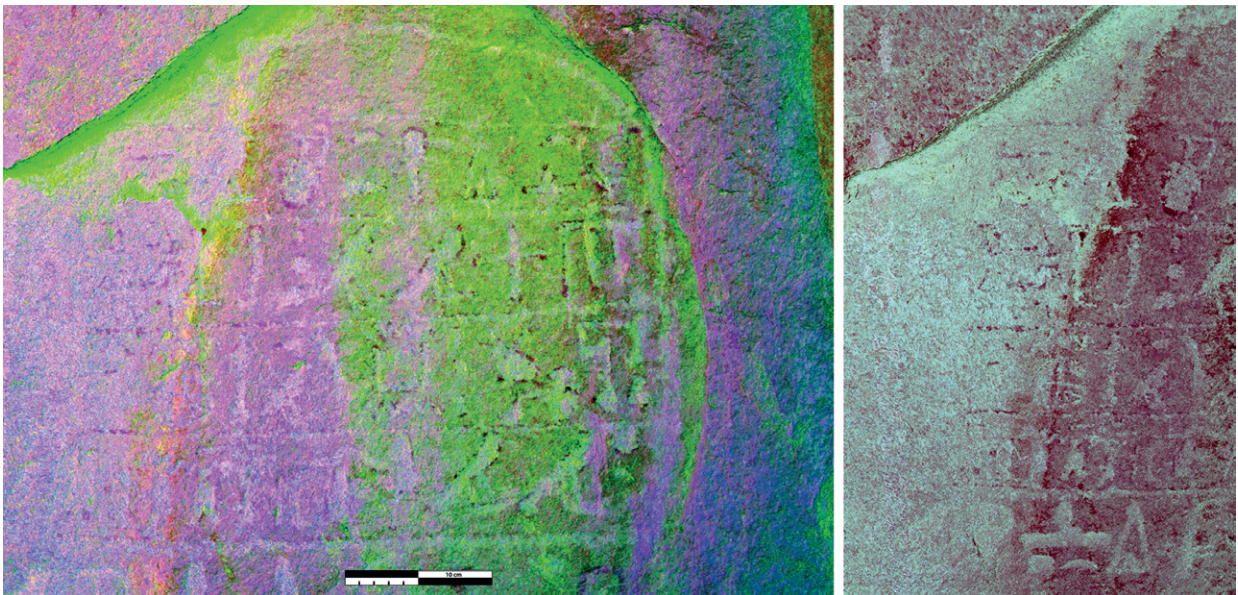


Figure 6. DStretch manipulation of inscription SEH 177. Left: complete inscription (scale 1:5). Right: detail of the end of each line (not to scale) (© E. Wegner).

<sup>8</sup> For the translation, see Gasse and Rondot 2007: 102.

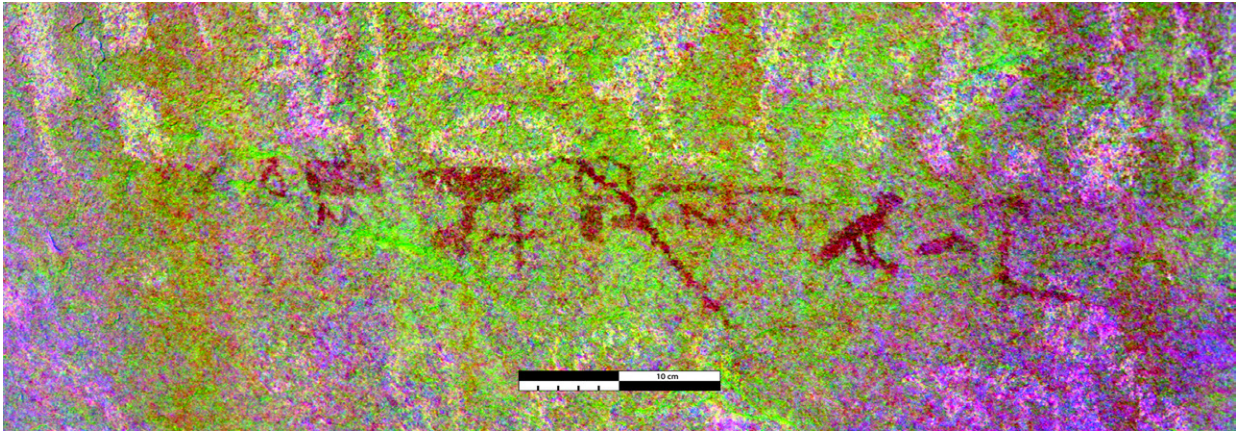


Figure 7. DStretch manipulation of dipinto ASW/SEH/A046 (scale 1:5) (© E. Wegner).

- (1) *h̄tp-dj-nswt St.t H̄nmw ḥnk.t* <sup>(a)</sup>  
 (2) *n̄tr.w jm.jw ʒbw dj̄sn*  
 (3) *pr.t-ḥrw tʒ ḥnk.t kʒ.w ʒpd.w n kʒ n ʒtw ʿʒ n njw.t* <sup>(b)</sup>  
 (4) [...]mmj <sup>(c)</sup> ḥmʒ-ḥrw <sup>(d)</sup> jrj.n Jmj[...] <sup>(e)</sup>

- (a) Gasse and Rondot (2007: 102) had already added the name of the goddess Anukis, which is to be expected as complementation of the triad of Elephantine.  
 (b) Only traces of sign X1 are discernible, which is most likely followed by the ideogram Z1.  
 (c) There is a round sign at the beginning of the fourth line that also exhibits traces of the preliminary ink text, but its identification remains unclear.  
 (d) The reading suggested by Gasse and Rondot is questionable, but an alternative interpretation of the signs cannot be proposed at this point.  
 (e) The reading of this name is still uncertain.

The discoveries on the southern face of the granite boulder prompted the examination also of its south-western faces for further inscriptions. On doing so, six more *dipinti* became visible with DStretch (Figure 4). As in the cases of ASW/SEH/A044 and ASW/SEH/A045, all were made with red ink. This group consists of two short hieratic texts and four sets of images.

The two hieratic *dipinti*, ASW/SEH/A046 and ASW/SEH/A048, will only be mentioned briefly here since they probably belong to the same Nebsumenu, with a similar textual content, as discussed in ASW/SEH/A045 (Figures 7-8).<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Although the owner of ASW/SEH/A046 is holding a yet unidentified title other than *sš n mšc*, palaeography and style, especially of the name Nebsumenu, point to the same individual.

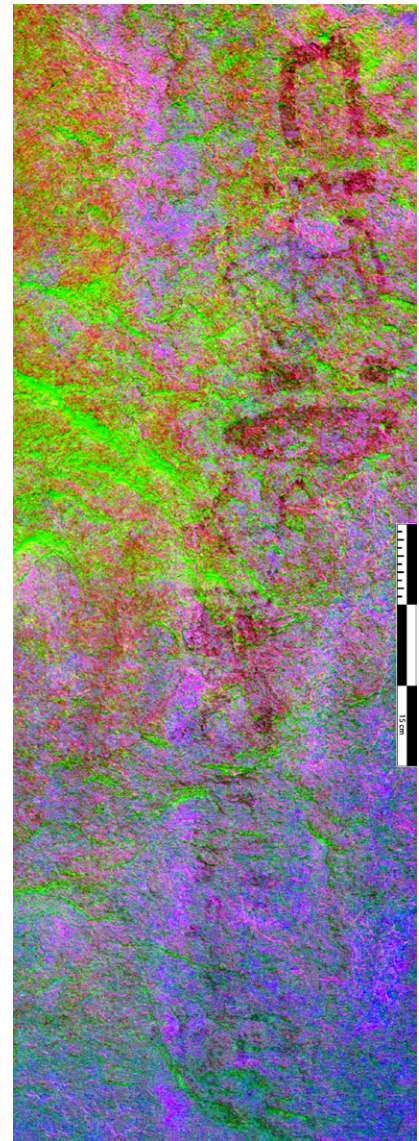


Figure 8. DStretch manipulation of dipinto ASW/SEH/A048 (scale 1:5) (© E. Wegner).

For the figurative *dipinti* (ASW/SEH/A047, ASW/SEH/A049-A051), they can be summarised as all depicting one or two male figures, 8.2-20 cm in height, standing or striding with a staff or stick in one hand, or arms raised in adoration (Figure 9). These male figures, usually carved into the rock surface, are typical for the Old and Middle Kingdom and are found in some quantity, not only among the inscribed areas in the south of the Sehel Island, but also elsewhere in the Aswân region (e.g. Borrmann 2016: 5-10; Fakhry 1952: 71-78).

The final *dipinto* presented in this paper (ASW/SEH/A053) is the only one combining figurative and textual elements (Figure 10). It is placed directly below the 18th-dynasty inscription SEH 281 at c. 130 m a.s.l., and its style indicates a dating to the Middle Kingdom or early New Kingdom.<sup>10</sup> Some of the traces of hieroglyphic signs can be identified as *nb kbhw*, ‘Lord of the Cataract region’, a common epithet of the god Khnum (Leitz 2002: 758-759), placing the intended content of the inscription into a religious context. In contrast to the *dipinti* described above, ASW/SEH/A053 clearly represents the drafting stage of an inscription that was once supposed to be carved. The reasons why this draft never made it into a carved inscription remain obscure, but the scaly and cracked structure of the granite surface might have been a crucial factor.

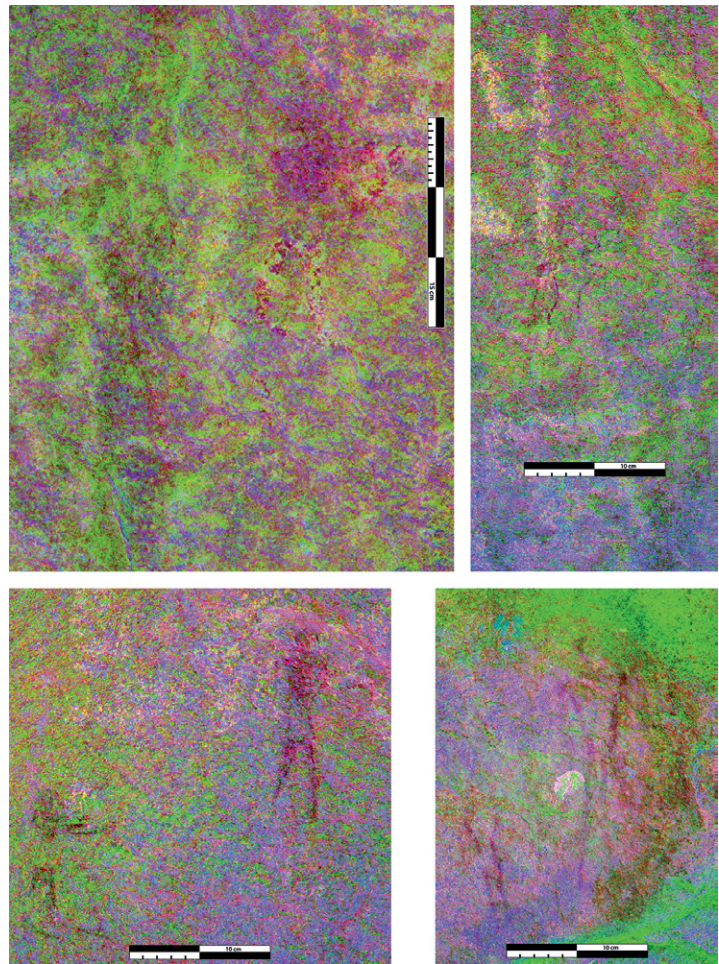


Figure 9. DStretch manipulation of dipinti ASW/SEH/A047 (bottom left), ASW/SEH/A049 (top left), ASW/SEH/A050 (top right), and ASW/SEH/A051 (bottom right) (scale 1:5) (© E. Wegner).

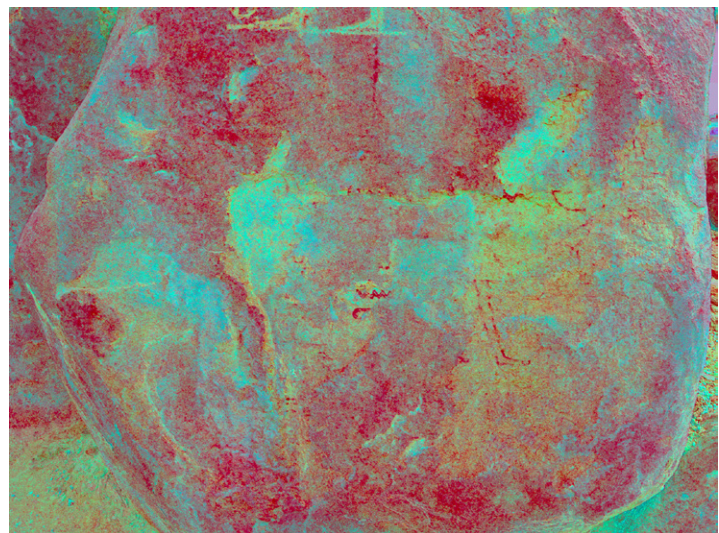


Figure 10. DStretch manipulation of dipinto ASW/SEH/A053 (not to scale) (© E. Wegner).

<sup>10</sup> The male figure's preserved left leg and the apron bear a strong resemblance to the royal inscriptions of Senwosret III (SEH 146 and SEH 147) and Neferhotep I (SEH 156), and even to the *shendyt* worn by Thutmose III in his inscription (SEH 245). However, male figures in private inscriptions of the Middle and early New Kingdom (e.g. SEH 154 and SEH 262) are depicted wearing a short apron (Gasse and Rondot 2007: 77-80, 86, 88, 139-140, 156).

Additionally, traces of preliminary sketches or red colouring can be detected on a further seven of the already published inscriptions (Table 2, Figure 11).

TABLE 2. LIST OF UNPUBLISHED INSCRIPTIONS AND COLOUR REMAINS DISCOVERED WITH DSTRETCH.

Inscription	Dating	Colour Remains
ASW/SEH/A042	Middle Kingdom	None
ASW/SEH/A043	Middle Kingdom	None
ASW/SEH/A044	Middle Kingdom	Red ( <i>dipinto</i> )
ASW/SEH/A045	Middle Kingdom	Red ( <i>dipinto</i> )
ASW/SEH/A046	Middle Kingdom	Red ( <i>dipinto</i> )
ASW/SEH/A047	Old Kingdom - Middle Kingdom	Red ( <i>dipinto</i> )
ASW/SEH/A048	Middle Kingdom	Red ( <i>dipinto</i> )
ASW/SEH/A049	Old Kingdom - Middle Kingdom	Red ( <i>dipinto</i> )
ASW/SEH/A050	Old Kingdom - Middle Kingdom	Red ( <i>dipinto</i> )
ASW/SEH/A051	Old Kingdom - Middle Kingdom	Red ( <i>dipinto</i> )
ASW/SEH/A053	Middle Kingdom - (early) New Kingdom	Red: remains of the preliminary ink drawing
SEH 177	13th dynasty or later	Red: remains of the preliminary ink drawing
SEH 180	Middle Kingdom (?)	Red: torso and limbs of the original figure (usurped by SEH 539)
SEH 252	18th dynasty, Amenhotep II	Red: cartouche, hieroglyphs, and separation lines
SEH 333	18th dynasty	Red: face, neck, torso, and limbs of the figure, hieroglyphs (?)
SEH 336	18th dynasty	Red: remains of the preliminary ink drawing (lunette)
SEH 380	19th dynasty, Ramesses II (?)	Red: figures and hieroglyphs
SEH 531	New Kingdom (?)	Red: remains of the preliminary ink drawing (grid?)
SEH 532	New Kingdom (?)	Red: remains of the preliminary ink drawing (grid?)

## Conclusion

Evidently there are still many open questions regarding the use of colour on rock inscriptions and images. Nevertheless, the new discoveries on Sehel Island allow to draw some preliminary conclusions. Among the inscriptions and images with visible colour remains, we have seen that colouring was used in at least three different contexts:

First: the functional context. Colouring is attested on royal-propagandistic inscriptions, on royal and private inscriptions with religious content, as well as on private non-religious texts or images. A restriction or limitation of colour application in regards of content or clientele cannot be observed.

Second: the drafting stage preceding the carving of an inscription or image. As with the functional context, remains of the draft and squared grid in red ink are found on both royal and private inscriptions. Once again, it became obvious that rock inscriptions were not just randomly carved on suitable surfaces, and, thus, are far from corresponding to the term 'graffito' (Vanderkerckhove and Müller-Wollermann 2001: 9-11). Not only were efforts made at times to smoothen and polish the rock



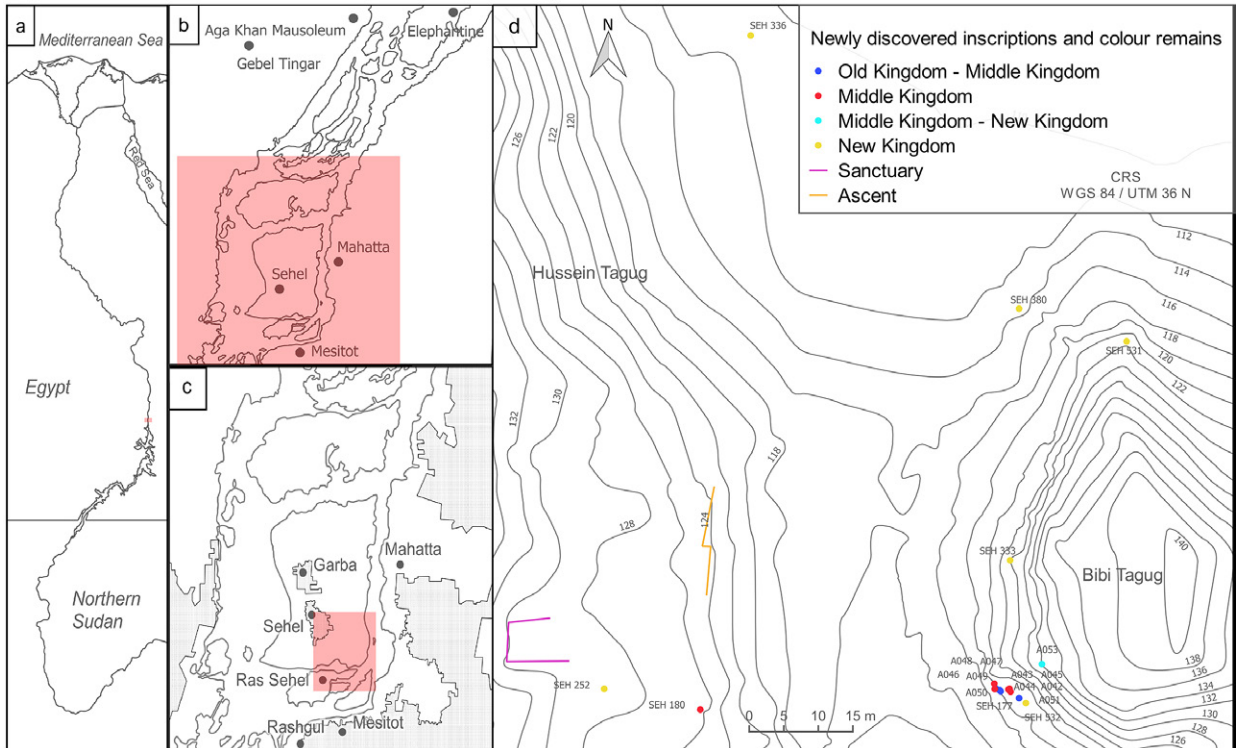


Figure 11. Map of Sehel Island showing the location of the newly discovered inscriptions and colour remains (scale 1:5000) (© E. Wegner after Gasse and Rondot 2007).



Figure 12. Inscription of Mentuhotep (© E. Wegner).

surface in preparation (e.g. Vanderkerckhove and Müller-Wollermann 2001: 23-24), but in many cases the execution of the inscriptions also followed the same steps as in temple or tomb-wall decoration, beginning with the application of a squared grid and a sketch (Capriotti 2008: 65-76; Robins 2001: 60-72).

Third: the use of red ink for drawing and writing non-carved inscriptions and images (*dipinti*). The reason might be a mere matter of availability and practicability, given the just described efforts required for carving rock inscriptions. Scribes, such as Nebsumenu, probably always had red ink with them, which came in handy for leaving one's own mark on focal places like Sehel Island.

Interestingly, although often possessing a negative symbolic connotation, red pigment is the most frequent colour encountered. Its application, apart from preliminary drafts and *dipinti*, raises several interpretations, depending on the locational or functional context of the inscription, or even on both. On the one hand, the red colouring could enhance the solar aspect of the pink granite. This, for instance, clearly seems to be the case with the Middle Kingdom inscription of the *whm.w* Mentuhotep on the ancient road to Philae (Figure 12). The tableau, consisting of an Appeal to the Living and several male figures representing Mentuhotep himself and his sons, is topped by a double-winged sun disk with two *uraei*. Red colour had been applied to the sun disk itself.

On the other hand, red colouring can be found on the male figures of several inscriptions on Sehel Island, specifically on body parts not veiled by clothing, and, thus, exposing skin (i.e. face and neck), as well as the limbs, and sometimes even the complete torso. It is well known that red was used to indicate the skin colour of male human beings (Tiradritti 2008: 50). Therefore, in these cases which additionally occur in a religious context, the application of red might be to reinforce that the men represented by the figures are indeed terrestrial beings (Baines 2001: 154), divine flesh being believed, in contrast to humans, to consist of gold.

A third meaning of red colouring could be an apotropaic function, in the sense of being a warning signal and potentiate the propagandistic content of an inscription (Pinch 2001: 184), as might be the case with the northern Aswân stela of Amenhotep III, dating to his 5th regnal year (Klug 2002: 422-424). This stela records a revolt in Nubia which had been successfully put down by the king. The separation lines of the text show traces of red colouring, perhaps used to intensify the message of the stela and communicate it better also to an illiterate audience.

The examples presented here shed light on the multi-layered significance of colour application, as is illustrated by the various employments of red pigment. It is to be hoped that further investigations will extend our knowledge and understanding in this regard and, thus, enable us to listen to the stories behind colour selection and the colouring of rock inscriptions.

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