The Theology of Hathor of Dendera

Aural and Visual Scribal Techniques in the *Per-Wer* Sanctuary

Barbara A. Richter

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Brown University

Department of Egyptology and Assyriology

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For Roger

West Wall of the Southern Niche in the Per-wer sanctuary of the Temple of Hathor at Dendera. (Photo by Erik Gustafson, 2009.)

Among the ruined temples there,
Stupendous columns, and wild images
Of more than man, where marble demons watch
The Zodiac's brazen mystery, and dead men
Hang their mute thoughts on the mute walls around,
He lingered, poring on memorials
Of the world's youth; through the long burning day
Gazed on those speechless shapes; nor when the moon
Filled the mysterious halls with floating shades,
Suspended be the task, but ever gazed
And gazed, till meaning on his vacant mind
Flashed like strong inspiration, and he saw
The thrilling secrets of the birth of time.

—Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Alastor,* 1816

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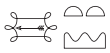
5.1.1.1 Excursus: Discussion of the Toponyms, and  132
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PREFACE

The Ptolemaic temples are some of the best-preserved examples of Egyptian religious architecture. In addition to their outstanding artistic value, they represent the culmination of a long line of temple development, particularly in the writing and reliefs used to decorate their walls. During the Ptolemaic period, the number and polyvalency of hieroglyphic signs and iconographic elements increased dramatically, thereby widening the scribal playing field for creating expressions that function on multiple aural, visual, and thematic levels.

There have been few scholarly studies of these plays on words, signs, and iconography; despite the intrinsic relationship of texts, reliefs, and architecture in Egyptian monuments, there have been no comprehensive studies of these techniques within a unified architectural space. I was therefore motivated to study these scribal methods within the most important cult chamber of the Temple of Hathor at Dendera: the Per-wer sanctuary. Building upon the work of Gutbub, Guglielmi, and Derchain, I extended their approaches to the material in several ways: examining these techniques on both micro- and macro-levels, from their smallest details to their broadest thematic connections; foregrounding individual techniques to determine the words and phrases singled out for emphasis; synthesizing their use in the interconnections formed between scenes and texts within the three-dimensional space of the cult chamber.

I found that these scribal techniques support the three main themes of the Per-wer: Hathor as Creator and solar goddess; the Myth of the Distant Goddess; the King as Intermediary between the human and divine worlds. The myth creates the context for the king's interaction with the goddess, allowing his ritual actions to restore cosmic balance and activate the creative process. By communicating across boundaries, the scenes link complementary pairs, creating a network of interrelationships that mirrors the perfection of the divine Creation.

The results of my study suggest that this three-pronged approach could profitably extend to those of other cult chambers at Dendera, and to other Greco-Roman temples, whose reliefs also contain plays on words, signs, and iconography. By studying these complex techniques of the ancient scribes, we can thereby come closer to understanding how they envisioned the universe and the place of humankind within it.

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I owe a debt of gratitude to my long-time teacher and mentor, Cathleen Keller, who first encouraged me to pursue graduate studies in Egyptology at the University of California at Berkeley. Besides laying the foundation for my future research with her many courses in the art, architecture, and language of ancient Egypt, she also impressed upon me the importance of the intrinsic relationship between texts, reliefs, and architecture in Egyptian monuments. This idea motivated me to explore these connections in the Temple of Hathor at Dendera.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

General

BM	British Museum
BoD	Book of the Dead
CT	Coffin Texts
D	Dendera
E	Edfu
EEF	Egypt Exploration Fund (London)
EES	Egypt Exploration Society (London)
DeM	Deir el-Medina
FIP	First Intermediate period
GN	geographical name
GR	Greco-Roman period
LP	Late period
MK	Middle Kingdom
NK	New Kingdom
OK	Old Kingdom
Pap	Papyrus
PT	Pyramid Texts
QV	Queen's Valley (designates royal tomb in the Valley of the Queens)
SIP	Second Intermediate period
TIP	Third Intermediate period
TT	Theban Tomb

Bibliographical

ÄA	Ägyptologische Abhandlungen
ÄAT	Ägypten und Altes Testament
AcOr	Acta Orientalia: Societates Orientales Batava Danica Norvegica
ADAIK	Abhandlungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Institus Kairo, Ägyptologische Reihe
ÄF	Ägyptologische Forschungen
AH	Agyptiaca Helvetica
AHAW	Abhandlungen der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften
AO	*Acta Orientalia*
APAW	Abhandlungen der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften
ASAE	Annales du Service des antiquités de l'Égypte
ASE	Archaeological Survey of Egypt
BA	Bibliotheca Aegyptiaca

BACE	*Bulletin of the Austrialian Centre for Egyptology*
BdÉ	*Bibliothèque d'étude*
BE	Bibliothèque égyptologique comprenant les oeuvre des égyptologues français dispersées dans divers recueils et qui n'ont pas encore été réunies jusqu'à ce jour
BES	*Bulletin of the Egyptological Seminar*
BIFAO	*Bulletin de l'Institut française d'archéologie orientale*
BiOr	*Bibliotheca Orientalis*
BSEA	British School of Egyptian Archaeology
CASAE	*Cahiers.* Supplements aux ASAE (Cairo)
CDD	Chicago Demotic Dictionary (Chicago), ed. Janet H. Johnson
CdÉ	*Chronique d'Égypte*
CGC	Cairo General Catalogue (= Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire)
CHANE	Culture and History of the Ancient Near East
CHE	*Cahiers d'histoire égyptienne*
CNI	Carsten Niebuhr Institute of Near Eastern Studies
CRIPEL	Cahier de recherches de l'Institut de papyrologie et égyptologie de Lille
DAWB	Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin
DAWW	Denkschriften der kaiserliche Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien, Philosophisch-historische Klasse
D	Chassinat, Émile, *Le temple de Dendara*. Vols. 1–5, Cairo: IFAO, 1934–47; Chassinat, Émile, and François Daumas, *Le temple de Dendara*. Vols. 6–8, Cairo: IFAO, 1965–78; Daumas, François, *Le temple de Dendara*. Vol. 9, Cairo: IFAO, 1987; Cauville, Sylvie, *Le temple de Dendara.* Vol. 10, Cairo: IFAO, 1997; Vol. 11, Cairo: IFAO, 2000; Vol. 12, Cairo: IFAO; Vols. 13–14, 2007; Vol. 15, 2008.
DE	*Discussions in Egyptology*
Deir Chelouit	Zivie, Christiane M., *Le temple de Deir Chelouit.* 4 vols. Cairo: IFAO, 1982–92
Diodorus	Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History: Books I and II*, trans. C. H. Oldfather. LCL 279. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933.
DÖAWW	Denkschriften der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien
E	Cauville, Sylvie. *Le temple d'Edfou.* Vols. 1–2; Cairo: IFAO, 1984–90; Chassinat, Émile. *Le temple d'Edfou.* Vols. 3–15, MMAF 20–32, Cairo: IFAO, 1928–85.
Esna	Sauneron, Serge. *Esna*. 6 vols. Cairo: IFAO, 1959–75.
FIFAO	Fouilles de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale
GOF	Göttinger Orientforschungen, IV. Reihe: Ägypten
GM	Göttinger Miszellen: Beiträge zur ägyptologische Diskussion
HÄB	Hildesheimer Ägyptologische Beiträge
IFAO	Institut français d'archéologie orientale
JAC	*Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JARCE	*Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt*
JE	Journal d'entrée du Musée du Caire
JEOL	*Jaarbericht von het vooraziatisch-egyptisch Genootschap, Ex Orient Lux (Leiden)*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JSS	*Journal of Semitic Studies*
JSSEA	*Journal of the Society of the Study of Egyptian Antiquities*

KO	de Morgan, Jacques, et. al. *Catalogue des monuments et inscriptions de l'Égypte antique,* 3 vols. Kom Ombos. Vienna: Holzhausen, 1894-1909.
KSG	Königtum, Staat, und Gesellschaft früher Hochkulturen
KV	Kings Valley (designates royal tomb in the Valley of the Kings)
LÄ	*Lexikon der Ägyptologie*
LÄS	Leipziger Ägyptologische Studien
LD	Lepsius, Richard. *Denkmaeler aus Aegypten und Aethiopien,* Plates: parts 1–6 in 12 vols., Berlin: Nicolai,1849–58; Text: 5 vols., Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1897–1913.
LGG	Leitz, Christian, ed. *Lexikon der ägyptischen Götter und Götterbezeichnungen,* 8 vols. OLA 110–16, 129. Leuven: Peeters, 2002–3.
Mariette, D	Mariette, Auguste. *Dendérah: Description générale du grand temple de cette ville*, 6 vols. Paris: Franck, 1870–75.
MÄS	Münchner Ägyptologische Studien
MH	Epigraphic Survey. *Medinet Habu,* vol. 8: *The Eastern High Gate* OIP 94. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970.
MIFAO	Mémoires publiés par les membres de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale
MMAF	Mémoires publiés par les membres de la Mission archéologique française, IFAO
MPSNB	Mitteilungen aus der Papyrussammlung der Nationalbibliothek in Wien
MVÄG	Mitteilungen der vorasiatisch-ägyptischen Gesellschaft
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OIMP	Oriental Institute Museum Publications
OIP	Oriental Institute Publications
OLA	Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta
OLZ	*Orientalistische Literaturzeitung*
Opet	de Wit, Constant. *Les inscriptions du temple d'Opet, à Karnak,* vol. 1. BA 11. Bruxelles: Fondation égyptologique Reine Élisabeth, 1958.
ORA	Orientalische Religionen in der Antike: Ägypten, Israel, Alter Orient
PÄ	Probleme der Ägyptologie
PIFAO	Publications de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire
PM	Porter, Bertha, and Rosalind L. B. Moss. *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs and Paintings,* 8 vols., Oxford: Griffith Institute and Ashmolean Museum, 1934–95.
PSBA	*Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*
RAPH	Recherches d'archéologie, de philologie et d'histoire
RdÉ	*Revue d'égyptologie*
RecTrav	*Recueil de travaux relatifs à la philologie et à l'archéologie* égyptiennes et assyriennes
RevEg	*Revue égyptologique*
SAGA	Studien zur Archäologie und Geschichte Altägyptens
SAK	Studien zur altägyptischen Kultur
SAOC	Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization
SSR	Studien zur spätägyptischen Religion
SDAIK	Sonderschrift, Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Abteilung Kairo
SAWH	Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Klasse
Tôd	Bisson de la Roque, Fernand. *Tôd (1934 à 1936).* FIFAO 17, Cairo: IFAO, 1937.
WAW	Writings of the Ancient World

Wb.	Erman, Adolf, and Hermann Grapow. *Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache*, 5 vols. (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1926–31)
WVDOG	Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft
YES	Yale Egyptological Studies
ZÄS	*Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde*

Symbols and Conventions

Underline = reversal
Gray Font = special indication for a particular scene: parallelism; alliteration, Late Egyptianisms, words highlighting solar aspect, etc.
Gray Highlight = sign play
Bold = word play
Bold and Gray Highlight = overlap of word and sign play

[ ] marks a restoration of the original text
< > shows that a word omitted in the original has been supplied
( ) marks English words inserted to clarify the sense
[…] marks lacunae
…. indicates inability to translate
{ } indicates scribal error that should be omitted
* uncertain

Notes on the Transliterations and Translations

In transliterations, proper names of divinities (e.g., *Ḥ.t-ḥr*, "Hathor") and toponyms (e.g., *ʾIwn.t*, "Iunet") are capitalized. Compound names are hyphenated in transliteration but not in English, e.g., *Wbn.t-m-nbw,* "She who shines like gold." Except for a few epithets, like *Nbw.t* (Golden One), *Wbn.t-m-nbw* (She who shines like gold), and *ʾIr.t-Rᶜ* (Eye of Ra), most epithets and titles are capitalized only in the English translation; longer epithets capitalize only the first word in English. The epithet, "the Great," is capitalized, but not separated from the main name by a comma, e.g., "Hathor the Great," as it is usually considered a unit in English. "Ka" and "Ba" are always capitalized in English, though not in transliteration.

As far as possible, I try to reflect in the English what is happening grammatically in the Egyptian. To this end, prepositional nisbes (adjectives made from prepositions) functioning as substantives are translated to reflect their role, e.g., *ḫnt*, derived from the preposition meaning "at the head of," is translated as "foremost one"; if feminine, "(f.)" is added, e.g., *ḫnty.t ʾIwn.t*, "Foremost One (f.) of Iunet" (D III, 50.12).

In order to convey more meaning and allusions, some words are transcribed into English, rather than translated. For example, the male and female sun disks, *ʾItn* and *ʾItn.t* are always given as Aten and Atenet; the male and female suns, *Rᶜ* and *Rᶜy.t*, as Ra and Rayt. Occasionally, the words will be rendered so that they replicate in English the word play present in the Egyptian, e.g., *Rᶜyt n Rᶜ.w*, "Female sun of suns." The four main names of Dendera, *ʾIwn.t*, *ʾIꜣ.t-di, Tꜣrr, Ḳꜣb-tꜣ.wy,* and *Nṯry.t,* are given as "Iunet," "Iatdi," "Tarer," "Qab-Tawy," and

"Netjeryt," respectively, to maintain their distinctions.[1] "Iunet," being especially ubiquitous, is discussed in a footnote only in the first text in which it appears (Doc 2). Likewise, the two types of eternity, *ḏ.t* and *nḥḥ*, are translated as "*ḏ.t*-eternity" and "*nḥḥ*-eternity," rather than the more traditional (and imprecise), "forever," and "eternally."

The masculine and feminine titles, *ḥm* and *ḥm.t*, respectively, are translated as "Incarnation," rather than "Majesty," in order to convey the idea that the deity is manifest in the physical vehicle of the statue of the god or the body of the living king.

1. Kockelmann (2002, 65, 221–32) notes that the different designations for Dendera (Iunet, Iatdi, and Tarer being the most frequent) function as synonyms, chosen to provide variation between parallel texts and to make word plays in epithets. The frequent occurrence of word plays with toponyms suggests that the scribes used toponym lists in their construction. Thus, the epithet in a text seems to determine the choice of the toponym, e.g., in the repetition in these two epithets: *Nbw.t m-ḫnt pr-Nbw.t*, "The Golden One (f.) in the Sanctuary of the Golden One (f.)" (D III, 72.5); *rmn.n=i ꜣḫ.t r-tp pr-ꜣḫ.t*, "I carry the *ꜣḫ.t* (cow) to the House of the *ꜣḫ.t* (cow)" (D VII, 181.2).