

IMAGES, PERCEPTIONS
AND PRODUCTIONS
IN
AND OF ANTIQUITY

Maria Helena Trindade Lopes (Editor)
&
André Patrício (Co-editor)

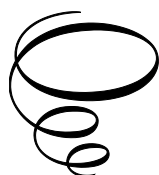
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Preface

“The past is never dead. It’s not even past.”

William Faulkner, Requiem for a Nun

“It may be argued that the past is a country from which we have all emigrated, that its loss is
part of our common humanity.”

Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991*

“The past is the present, isn’t it? It’s the future too.”

— Eugene O’Neill, *Long Day’s Journey into Night*

This work I present you compiles a large ensemble – geographic, temporal and thematic – of reflections, that intend to call to the present, forms, topics, paradigms, and narratives of civilizations both ancient and structuring in the shaping of the so-called Occidental Civilization.

During the XIX and yet part of the XX century, these civilizations – the ones considered the cradle of civilization – constitute that that was designated as the Ancient History and that was translated in a said Greco-Roman antiquity, justified on the texts of Classical Tradition.

With the consecration of Egyptology and Assyriology, that came to place the origins of civilization in Africa and Asia, would have been possible to break this construction. Still, some authors, defenders of a past too much consecrated, quickly created an “Ancient Oriental Age” or some “Pre-Classic Civilizations” to which was given the status of a sort of antechamber for the birth of civilization traits “per excellence”.

And so, Antiquity and the own idea of Antiquity was kept a prisoner of a vision that served the European criteria of civilization.

To counter this reality, several authors profoundly inspired by cultural studies came to restore the Ancient History atwart the deconstruction of its hypothesis and traditional themes. To do so, many contributed with linguistic and literary studies, which led to a more excellent care towards the language and a new wave of questioning of the fonts, that resulted on an investigation about Antiquity profoundly more informed about the limits of its assumptions and generalizations.

Other significant contribution to this change, was the intensification and ampliation of the “scope” of archaeological studies about Antiquity on the second half of the XX century:

Classical Archaeology and the archaeological branches of Assyriology and Egyptology led to a discussion regarding material culture in Antiquity and a new threshold. Finally, by the end of the XX century, with the emergence of the field of study of the reception of the “classics” and the use of the past in the contemporary world, the final blow was given on the reports that nationalized origins and legacies. The Eurocentric character of Ancient History fell, definitely. The world grew, widened, and Africa and Asia emerged as structuring, by their own right, in the construction of the so-called Occidental Civilization.

Maria Helena Trindade Lopes

CHAPTER ONE
ANCIENT EGYPT

SECTION 1.
ANCIENT EGYPTIAN STUDIES

ON THE BEGINNING OF MONUMENTAL STONE BUILDING IN ANCIENT EGYPTIAN PROVINCIAL TEMPLES

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Abstract

Although in the Old Kingdom the Egyptians erected giant pyramids made of stone for their pharaohs, their gods' temples in the provinces were still constructed of nondurable mudbricks. It is considered that building in stone was initiated in provincial temples at the behest of the early XI Dynasty kings, Wahankh Intef and Nakht-Nebtepnefer Intef (XXI century BC). But what could be their incentive for such a grand and labour-intensive innovation, especially as it happened amidst the First Intermediate Period turmoil at the very moment when their fledgeling Theban monarchy only controlled ten of the southernmost nomes?

The Intefs' stone building in the provinces was mainly confined to the construction and redevelopments of the chapels of the goddess Satet and the god Khnum on the island of Elephantine. Scrutiny of the inscriptions from the chapels proves that Satet and Khnum were invoked therein primarily as lords of the sources of the Upper Egyptian inundation, which were believed to be located at the First Cataract. This correlates well with the fact that deficient Nile floods and acute food shortages are mentioned in the First Intermediate Period and early Middle Kingdom writings far more often than in any other period of Egyptian history. It seems probable that the Intefs undertook innovative stone building on Elephantine first and foremost for the sake of deliverance from such calamities. Later, "The Book of the Temple" and the famed "Famine Stela" also emphasised that it had been the

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deficiency of the Nile floods that had once forced kings to dramatically increase royal favours to provincial temples.

Keywords: Egyptian temples; Elephantine; Khnum; famine.

*The peasant won't cross himself
till the thunder is roaring*
—Russian saying

While erecting huge stone pyramids and mortuary temples for their pharaohs, the Egyptians of the Old Kingdom usually built their gods' provincial temples of inexpensive and non-durable mudbricks. It is considered that in the early XI Dynasty, kings Wahankh Intef and his son Nakht-Nebtepnefer Intef were the first ones to extend building in stone to provincial temples of their Theban kingdom.² But what could be their incentive for such a grand and labour-intensive innovation, especially as it occurring during Intermediate Period turmoil and at the very moment when their fledgeling monarchy controlled a small part of Egypt (only ten of the southernmost nomes)? Surprisingly, this issue of great interest has never been discussed at length³ until this article.

Surveying the Intefs' inscribed stone pieces in the provinces, one sees that none of them were found north of the island of Elephantine in the extreme south of Egypt. The sole exception is an octagonal column at Karnak, which in the eyes of the Intefs was surely not a provincial, but a capital, metropolitan temple.⁴ Meanwhile, at the Elephantine temple of the goddess Satet, no less than seventeen inscribed massive stone pieces made by them were found: doorjambs, columns, etc. It is also likely that some of its mudbrick walls were faced with limestone panels.⁵ Based on this, it seems logical to assume the Intefs' stone building in the provinces to be concentrated almost solely on Elephantine.

Due to peculiarities of its topography, the Satet temple site is likely to have retained a uniquely full set of remains. Hence, it has been widely alleged

² E.g., Grallert 2001, 420; Grajetzki 2006, 15.

³ Now cf. Bussmann 2015; however, see Демидчик 2019.

⁴ Postel 2004, 72–78, 315, no. 51, 411, fig. 7; Bußmann 2010 I, 171–172, II, 50, Abb. 4.75; the date and function of tablet Turin Suppl. 1310 are not clear yet, see Mathieu 2008; Bußmann 2010 I, 69–70, 161, 476.

⁵ See below, nt. 6.

that the Intefs' stone blocks simply have not survived at other provincial temples. The fact is, however, that, whereas inscribed stone pieces from Mentuhotep I, who ruled right after the Intefs, are also found at Abydos, Dendera, Armant, and Tod, El-Kab, none of these sites contained such traces from the Intefs. And, on the other hand, an inscribed lintel for Nakht-nebtepefer by the Intefs was not only found in the sanctuary of Heqaib with its rather ordinary topography, but also on Elephantine, behind the Satet temple.⁶ Does this not indicate that the latter was the Intefs' main construction site in the provinces?

Their persistence in constructing at the Satet temple is also conspicuous. According to W. Kaiser, two chapels with inscribed stone blocks erected by Wahankh Intef for Satet and the god Khnum were then twice relocated and re-planned. Thus, all in all, six chapels with stone blocks were built for these deities during the Intefs' reign, to which Nakht-nebtepefer also added a chapel for his cult.⁷ What a striking contrast to the total absence of the Intefs' stone blocks in the provinces north of Elephantine! Shortly afterwards this same temple would be entirely rebuilt by Mentuhotep I.

So, does this not all suggest that, for the early XI Dynasty, the Elephantine cults of Satet and Khnum's were deemed overwhelmingly important? And do not the frequent redevelopments of this temple indicate that the Intefs had to repeatedly beg for Satet and Khnum's mercy as if they felt some lack of it? Does not the erection of Nakht-nebtepefer Intef's mortuary chapel imply his firm conviction that these cults would enjoy great prestige eternally? To find the answers, one has to thoroughly scrutinize the Intefs' inscriptions from the Satet temple, even though there are only a few of them and these are badly damaged. To date, only L. Morenz has discussed some of them at some length. Still, his conclusion that Satet and Khnum were celebrated therein mainly as lords of the southern Egyptian borderland hardly provides comprehensive explanations to all our questions.⁸

⁶ Habachi 1985, 111–112, no. 100, pl. 190; Bußmann 2010 I, 41, 59–62.

⁷ Kaiser *et al.* 1993, 145–151; Bußmann 2010 I, 25–30, 119, II, Abb. 2. 2–4. On the attribution of the stone blocks to the seven chapels see also Kaiser *et al.* 1993, 146–147; Kaiser *et al.* 1999, 91, Taf. 21a; Grallert 2001, 185–187, 582–583, Taf. 19; Morenz 2004; Postel 2004, 309–310, 313–314; Bußmann 2010 I, 27–29, 160–161, 168, 171.

⁸ Morenz 2004, 107–119; cf. Grallert 2001, 185–186.

In Egyptian cosmology, the sources of the Nile inundation-Hapi (namely those of Upper Egyptian Hapi) were believed to be located at the First Cataract. In the third millennium BC, the Satet temple at the southern end of Elephantine was the nearest sanctuary. Hence, Satet's function of protectress of the borders was always tied to that of guardian of the Nile flood and its resultant fertility. On a doorjamb granted by Wahankh Intef, the Satet's power over the inundation is invoked with the epithet *nbt anx* "the Mistress of life" celebrating not the local, but the universal benevolence of the goddess.⁹ Later, the *anx* spelt with the "water-determinative" would mean not only "life", but also something like "the water of life" and ultimately "flood".¹⁰ In the temple of Nektanebos II on Elephantine, Satet is described as a goddess "pouring the inundation from its underground cavern to revive Egypt, (the goddess) rich in grain, profuse in cereals and creating food".¹¹ The Intefs' inscription is the earliest occurrence of the combination "Satet, Mistress of life".

The inscriptions of the Intefs are also the oldest written evidence of the establishment of the cult of Khnum on Elephantine. In three of them, he is invoked as either *nb qbHw* "the lord of qbHw" or *xnty qbHw* "who is in front of qbHw".¹² And again, it is the oldest occurrence of the epithet "who is in front of qbHw".

Although the initial meaning of the noun *qbHw* is "fresh, cool water", "qbHw-water", in such epithets, it is usually translated as Toponym, the name of the region of the First Cataract where the rapids and whirlpools seemed colder and clearer: "the Fresh Water Region", "the Region of the qbHw-waters". However, in the inscriptions under examination, the spellings of *qbHw* are somewhat odd: they are devoid of the usual determinatives "hill-country" or "three-ripples", and one of them even ends with the sign

⁹ Kaiser *et al.* 1976, Taf. 16 b; 1993, Taf. 28 a; Bußmann 2010 II, 42, Abb. 4.38; on the reading see Grallert 2001, 186; Postel 2004, 309, nr. 27; for more detail see Демидчик 2019, 554 nt. 42.

¹⁰ Valbelle 1981, 62, no. 408 J, 135, § 38; Erman, Grapow 1955 I, 204.9.

¹¹ Ricke 1960, 18–19; Jenni 1998, 135–137, Abb. 18, Taf. 122b, 123b.

¹² *nb qbHw*: Kaiser *et al.* 1975, Taf. 23a; Kaiser *et al.* 1976, Taf. 16c; Kaiser *et al.* 1993, Taf. 28b; Bußmann 2010 II, 42, Abb. 4.39; *xnty qbHw*: Kaiser *et al.* 1975, Taf. 19c, d; Kaiser *et al.* 1993, Taf. 28d; Morenz 2004, 115, Abb. 3; Bußmann 2010 II, 42, Abb. 4.40; [...] *qbHw*: Kaiser *et al.* 1975, Taf. 20a; Bußmann 2010 II, 36, Abb. 4.14.

“sky” as a determinative, as if the makers of the inscription emphasised the celestial, otherworldly origin of these *qbHw*-waters.¹³

In Egyptian cosmology, the created world existed inside a kind of “bubble” surrounded by the infinite *primaeva* ocean Nun. Filling the sky and the so-called “under-sky”, which were believed to be of a watery nature, the fresh and cool *qbHw*-waters of Nun periodically flowed into the earthly world through subterranean bottomless caverns—the most important of which were located at the First Cataract and near Heliopolis. It was at these two points that the *qbHw*-waters welling up to the Nile were believed to generate their annual Upper and Lower Egyptian inundations, respectively. Hence on Elephantine, the epithet *xnty qbHw* spelt significantly with the “sky” determinative invoked Khnum primarily as lord of the sources of the flood. Since the Middle Kingdom, it had been the temple of Khnum that was the very first point of the annual celebration of the Nile flooding on Elephantine and thus in the whole of Egypt.¹⁴

The above interpretation also jars against the triple occurrence of Khnum’s epithet *xnty snmt* “who is in front of Senmet”.¹⁵ In the third millennium BC, the island of Senmet (modern Bigga) had neither political nor military importance. However, it was precisely Senmet that was believed to be the locale of two caverns through which the (*qbHw*) waters filled up the Nile to generate the Upper Egyptian inundation. And it is undoubtedly these two sources of the flood that are referred to in Khnum’s proclamation addressed to Wahankh Intef on two limestone tablets from the chapel “D”: “I have opened for you two mountains of Senmet”.¹⁶ From the Middle Kingdom on, these sources of the flood were also referred to as cave(s) (*TrH(w)t*),¹⁷ two bottomless caverns (*qrty*),¹⁸ and two mountains (*mnty*);¹⁹ there is also the famed depiction of the source of the flood beneath “the high mountain of

¹³ Kaiser *et al.* 1975, Taf. 19c, d; Kaiser *et al.* 1993, Taf. 28d; Morenz 2004, 115, Abb. 3; Bußmann 2010 II, 42, Abb. 4.40. On this spelling see also Демидчик 2019, 557-558 nt 68, 70.

¹⁴ Kaiser *et al.* 1997, 145, 152–157, 161; Kaiser *et al.* 1999, 108–110.

¹⁵ Kaiser *et al.* 1975, Taf. 19a–d; Kaiser *et al.* 1993, Taf. 28d, 29b; Morenz 2004, 115, Abb. 3; Bußmann 2010 II, 42, Abb. 4. 40–42.

¹⁶ Kaiser *et al.* 1975, Taf. 20b; Kaiser *et al.* 1993, Taf. 28e; Morenz 2004, 108, Abb. 1, 115, Abb. 2; Bußmann 2010 II, 36, Abb. 4. 12, 4. 11.

¹⁷ E.g., van der Plas 1986, 68.

¹⁸ E.g., Schenkel 1975, 112, Abb. 3 (S 183); Pécoil 1993, 102–103.

¹⁹ Erman, Grapow 1955, II, 69.6; Pécoil 1993, 102–103; on *Herod.* II. 28 see El-Dissouky 1969, 49–50.

Senmet” on the Gate of the emperor Hadrian on Philae.²⁰ Thus, in the Intefs’ inscriptions, the epithet “who is in front of Senmet” invokes Khnum first and foremost as the god of the sources of annual flooding.

At the end of the tablets, Khnum proclaims Intef HqA anw “Ruler of the Living”. It is the sole occurrence of attributing this pompous epithet to a king before the New Kingdom, and it looks all the more surprising here since the Intefs ruled just a small part of Egypt. However, to explain this, one may recall that in the “Hymn to Hapi” the inundation is said to be “fashioned” by Khnum, and the king beloved by the Inundation is called nb-r-Dr “the All-Lord”, “Lord of the Universe”.²¹ Thus, Khnum’s declared will to grant the Intefs an annual flooding could turn even this minor king into “The Ruler of the Living”.

The aforementioned features of the Intefs’ inscriptions indicate that Satet and Khnum were invoked therein first and foremost as lords of the floods. And this seems understandable, considering that acute food shortages are mentioned in First Intermediate Period writing far more often than in any other epoch of Egyptian history.²² The causes of crop failures were often specified as Ts “bank”,²³ presumably referring to the clay banks and masses of dry earth that showed up stretching on the riversides when the water level in the Nile was low; there were also direct references to rnpT Hapi nDs “the year of low inundation”²⁴ and Hapi Sri “low inundation”.²⁵ Food insecurity seems to have alarmed Wahankh Intef, who made his official Djari “fare north to procure food consisting of Upper Egyptian barley for this whole land, from Elephantine to the Aphroditopolite nome”.²⁶ And Nakht-Nebtepnefer Intef is probably the only pharaoh in the third and second millennia BC who is said to have been concerned about the availability of food even at the local level. One of his officials buried at the Abydos

²⁰ Junker 1913, 37, Abb. 8; El-Dissouky 1969, 42; Pécoil 1979, 103, fig. 2; de Maré 2016, 21, fig. 7, 38, fig. 12.

²¹ Van der Plas 1986, 153-157.

²² Vandier 1936; Moreno García 1997, 88-92; Morenz 2010, 531-578; now see Morris 2019, 78-83.

²³ Vandier 1950, 220 (IV,10); Černý 1961, pl. I; Brunner 1937, 65; Gabolde 2018, 186, fig. 127; Anthes 1928, Gr. 20.8-9, 20.11, 23.5, 54-56, 24.9.

²⁴ Stela UCL 14333; Stewart 1979, 20, no. 86, pl. 18.

²⁵ Petrie 1900, pl. XI B; Morenz 2010, 562, 572.

²⁶ Cairo JdÉ 41437; Clère, Vandier 1948, 14, §18; Morenz 1998, 8, Abb. 1.

cemetery boasts that the king personally approved the plan to nourish his town.²⁷

Judging by this, the Intefs were aware of the high level of food insecurity. Hence, it would be logical for them to make the distinctive lavish gifts of stone blocks to the lords of the sources of the inundation as well as to Satet and Khnum of Elephantine to save them from such calamities. This suggestion might also explain the frequent redevelopment of their shrines by the Intefs and then by Mentuhotep I. As the crop failures seem to have recurred for quite a long time, the kings had to attempt to win the gods' mercy by repeatedly perfecting their shrine.

Significantly, two later compositions, "The Book of the Temple", which was reconstructed by JF Quack,²⁸ and the famed "Famine Stela" at the First Cataract also emphasise that it was the deficiency of the Nile floods that once forced pharaohs to rapidly increase royal favours to provincial temples. Although the copies of the "The Book of the Temple" came from the first century AD, Quack dates it to the Middle Kingdom,²⁹ which was not too long after the XI Dynasty.

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²⁷ CG 20502, 20503; Lange, Schäfer 1908, 93, 94; Schenkel 1965, 109–111, Nr. 78, 80.

²⁸ Quack 2012, 348–352; 2013b, 64–81.

²⁹ Quack 1992–1993, 129.

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