

PTOLEMAIC QUEENS IN EGYPTIAN TEMPLE RELIEFS: INTERCULTURAL REFLECTIONS OF POLITICAL AUTHORITY, OR RELIGIOUS IMPERATIVES?

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Introduction

Egyptian queenship was complementary to kingship, both in dynastic and Ptolemaic Egypt: No queen could exist without a king, but at the same time the queen was a necessary component of kingship¹. The royal mothers and wives played a fundamental role in the mythological renewal of kingship, but only in very rare cases, the queen could assume the power and surpass her traditional role as king's wife, mother, sister, or daughter.

Research on the queens' role and their status has become more and more popular over the last decades. This is confirmed by the most recent exhibition "Egyptian Queens", held at the Grimaldi Forum, Monaco, from 12 July to 10 September 2008. The last part of the exhibition is devoted to Cleopatra VII, since "in the Western imagination, the Queen of Egypt is incarnated in Cleopatra ... Paradoxically, however, the best-known Queen of Egypt is a Greek descendant of Alexander's generals"².

But is it in fact so paradoxical? Researching her on the basis of sources as diverse as hieroglyphic temple inscriptions, demotic and Greek papyri or epigraphic evidence, Classical authors, Egyptian or Egyptianizing statues, and Hellenistic images reveal a dazzling figure who substantially influenced Egypt and the development of the Roman Empire. Cleopatra VII was a Hellenistic monarch of Macedonian origin, but she was also the queen of Egypt which is why the Monaco-exhibition sets her at the end of a long development and describes her as following: "She is heir to a long line of attested sovereigns from the end of the fourth millennium BC"³. This emphasizes that Ptolemaic

¹ L. TROY, *Patterns of Queenship in Ancient Egyptian Myth and History*, Boreas: Uppsala Studies in Ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern Civilizations 1 (Uppsala, 1986), 12. M. MINAS, 'Macht und Ohnmacht. Die Repräsentation ptolemäischer Königinnen in ägyptischen Tempeln', *Archiv für Papyrusforschung* 51 (2005), 127-54. EAD., 'Cleopatra II and III. The queens of Ptolemy VI and VIII as guarantors of kingship and rivals of power', in: A. JÖRDENS and J.F. QUACK (eds.), *Ägypten zwischen innerem Zwist und äußerem Druck. Die Zeit Ptolemaios' VI. bis VIII. Internationales Symposium Heidelberg 16.-19.9.2007* (Wiesbaden, 2011), 58-76.

² See the Exhibition homepage (accessed July 2008), 'Exhibition's synopsis, I. The myth of Cleopatra': http://www.grimaldiform.com/eng/culturel/expo_info.aspx?r=119&ID=28. Exhibition catalogue: C. ZIEGLER (ed.), *Reines d'Égypte. D'Hétéphères à Cléopâtre* (Monaco/Paris, 2008).

³ Ibid.

queens combine traditional Egyptian and Hellenistic aspects – not only Cleopatra VII, but all Ptolemaic queens.

Although Ptolemaic queens participated decisively in religious and political developments, few scholars focus(ed) on them, for example R. Hazzard who explained, from a Classical point of view, the role of the queen in Ptolemaic propaganda⁴, or Sabine Albersmeier and Sally-Ann Ashton who discussed both their Egyptian and Egyptianizing royal sculpture⁵. Jan Quaegebeur was one of the very few scholars who interpreted their images and titles in indigenous temples⁶ and vitally contributed to our understanding of Arsinoe II⁷. Dorothy Burr Thompson analysed the ruler cult in the Hellenistic art⁸, Erich Winter in the Egyptian temples⁹. His study was complemented by a monograph on the Ptolemaic ancestor lines in the Egyptian temples in comparison to the eponymous priesthood, in which the queens played a decisive role¹⁰.

Ptolemaic queens were depicted in Egyptian temples accompanying the king in various ritual scenes, as deceased queens from Berenike I onwards and as living or acting queens from Arsinoe II. They usually wear traditional Egyptian royal insignia and stand behind the king, generally in a passive role, with an *ankh*-sign, a sistrum, or a flower in the hand. In the later Ptolemaic period the queen could occasionally present specific offerings like the king¹¹. She could even present them by herself, as did queen Nefertari in Nineteenth Dynasty. However, a figure of a king always complemented the Ptolemaic queens, if not in the same ritual scene then at least in an adjacent one. Like the dynastic pharaoh, the Ptolemaic king, by contrast, was shown by himself in the large majority of ritual scenes.

⁴ R.A. HAZZARD, *Imagination of a Monarchy: Studies in Ptolemaic Propaganda* (Toronto, 2000), 103-59.

⁵ S. ALBERSMEIER, *Untersuchungen zu den Frauenstatuen des ptolemäischen Ägypten*, *Aegyptiaca Treverensia* 10 (Trier, 2002). S.-A. ASHTON, *Ptolemaic Royal Sculpture from Egypt: the Interaction between Greek and Egyptian Traditions*, BAR international series 923 (Oxford, 2001).

⁶ J. QUAEGBEUR, 'Reines ptolémaïques et traditions égyptiennes', in: H. MAEHLER and V.M. STROCKA (eds.), *Das ptolemäische Ägypten. Akten des Internationalen Symposions, 27.-29. September 1976 in Berlin* (Mainz, 1978), 245-62.

⁷ J. QUAEGBEUR, 'Ptolémée II en adoration devant Arsinoé II divinisée', *Le Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale* 69 (1971), 191-217. ID., 'Documents Concerning a Cult of Arsinoe Philadelphos at Memphis', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 30 (1971), 239-70. ID., 'Arsinoé Philadelphie, reine, 'roi' et déesse, à Hildesheim', *Göttinger Miscellen* 87 (1985), 73-8. ID., 'Documents égyptiens anciens et nouveaux relatifs à Arsinoé Philadelphie', in: H. MELAERTS (ed.), *Le culte du souverain dans l'Égypte ptolémaïque au III^e siècle avant notre ère. Actes du colloque international, Bruxelles 10 Mai 1995*, *Studia Hellenistica* 34 (Leuven, 1998), 147-108.

⁸ D.J. BURR THOMPSON, *Ptolemaic Oinochoai and Portraits in Faience. Aspects of the Ruler-cult* (Oxford, 1973).

⁹ E. WINTER, 'Der Herrscherkult in den ägyptischen Ptolemäertempeln', in: H. MAEHLER and V.M. STROCKA (eds.), *Das ptolemäische Ägypten. Akten des Internationalen Symposions, 27.-29. September 1976 in Berlin* (Mainz, 1978), 147-108.

¹⁰ M. MINAS, *Die hieroglyphischen Ahnenreihen der ptolemäischen Könige. Ein Vergleich mit den Titeln der eponymen Priester in den griechischen und demotischen Papyri*, *Aegyptiaca Treverensia* 9 (Trier, 2000).

¹¹ See MINAS, *Archiv für Papyrusforschung* 51 (2005), 127-54.

The way Ptolemaic queens were depicted demonstrated that queenship was a religious and political complement to kingship, as it had been in dynastic Egypt. However, in comparison to dynastic queens, developments and changes in their depiction and in their titles are noticeable. In addition, the depiction of Ptolemaic queens in the Egyptian temples and their titles in the accompanying hieroglyphic inscriptions reflect different aspects than the Hellenistic images or in Greek textual evidence. Their titles in the native context, in particular, have not been studied properly for their political and religious meaning, with very few exceptions, such as “female Ra” and “female Horus”¹². Only through a thorough analysis of their depictions together with the titles and a comparison with papyrological evidence we will be able to understand the image of the Macedonian queens in the Egyptian temples and their status as Egyptian queens¹³. A complete analysis of the Ptolemaic queens is necessary, a synopsis that takes into account *all* the evidence, written and iconographic, Greek and Egyptian.

For such a comprehensive study research from the perspective of Egyptology, Classical archaeology, papyrology, and ancient history is vital. In this paper, three specific Egyptian ritual scenes will be considered, posing the question: Are they intercultural reflections of political authority, or religious imperatives? In other words, how far was the political authority of the Ptolemaic queens mirrored in Egyptian temples?

Case study 1, Deir el-Medineh: The co-regency of Ptolemy VI, Ptolemy VIII, and Cleopatra II (fig. 1)

The first example dates to the joint rule of the three offsprings of Ptolemy V Epiphanes, Ptolemy VI Philometor, his sister-wife Cleopatra II, and Ptolemy VIII. In preparation for the war against Syria and the recovery of Coele-Syria, the duality of reign of Ptolemy VI and Cleopatra II was replaced by a triple rule: in October/November 170, their younger brother, the future Ptolemy VIII joined his siblings Ptolemy VI and Cleopatra II in ruling Egypt¹⁴. The co-regency of the three *Theoi Philometores* was commemorated with a new sequence of regnal years, replacing Philometor’s own.

¹² D. DEVAUCHELLE, ‘Brèves communications: notes ptolémaïques, §3’, *Revue d’Égyptologie* 40 (1989), 190 (Rait). G. HÖLBL, ‘Ptolemäische Königin und weiblicher Pharaos’, in: N. Bonacasa *et al.* (eds.), *Faraoni come dei, Tolemei come faraoni. Atti del V Congresso Internazionale Italo-Egiziano, Torino, Archivio di Stato, 8-12 dicembre 2001* (Torino/Palermo, 2003), 88-97.

¹³ The queen was considered to be a manifestation of Hathor, the female prototype of creation. The kingship was not complete without a queen who could be designated as a female Horus. See MINAS, *Archiv für Papyrusforschung* 51 (2005), 130. For further information about the Ptolemaic queens as female Horus see M. EL DAMATY, ‘Die ptolemäische Königin als Weiblicher Horus’, in: A. JÖRDENS and J. QUACK (eds.), *Ägypten zwischen innerem Zwist und äußerem Druck. Die Zeit Ptolemaios’ VI. bis VIII. Internationales Symposium Heidelberg, 17.-19.9.2007* (Wiesbaden, 2011), 24-57.

¹⁴ G. HÖLBL, *A History of the Ptolemaic Empire* (London/New York, 2001), 144.

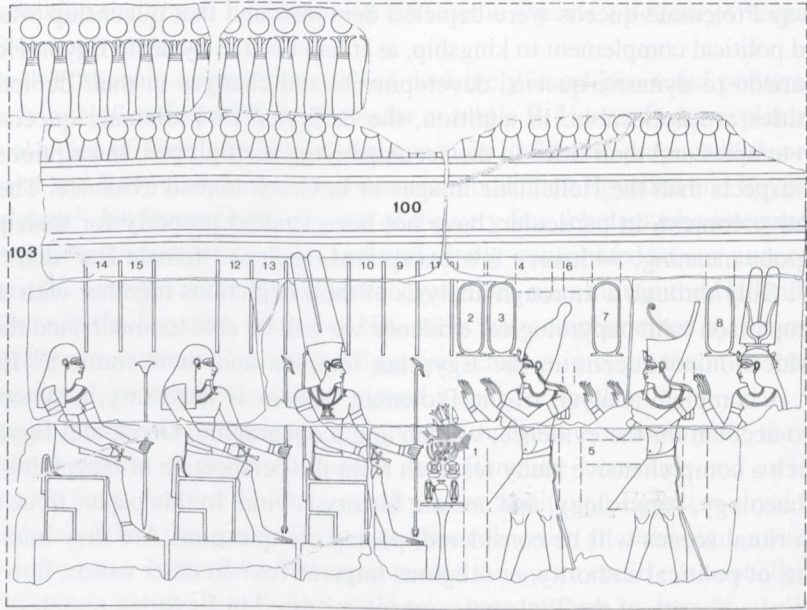


Fig. 1. Deir el-Medineh, Hathor temple, pronaos: Ptolemy VI, Ptolemy VIII, and Cleopatra II offer to Amun-Ra, Amun and Amaunet, members of the ogdoad [from P. DU BOURGUET, *Le temple de Deir al-Médîneh*, Mémoires publiés par les membres de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire 121 (Cairo, 2002), 97, no. 103].

The three siblings are depicted in the Egyptian temples only once together, in the pronaos of the Hathor temple at Deir el-Medineh where they offer to Amun-Ra, Amun and Amaunet (fig. 1)¹⁵. Cleopatra II is placed behind *both* brothers, although she was married to Ptolemy VI and had ruled with him before their younger brother joined them. Ptolemy VI wears the white crown, Ptolemy VIII the red crown. This iconography displays the joined reign of both kings whereas Cleopatra II complemented the male element(s), very much according to Egyptian tradition and not according the political reality.

Coregency is an attested phenomenon in Ancient Egypt, often established to avoid subversion when the old king died¹⁶. Thus, the royal ka could be transferred to the new

¹⁵ B. PORTER and R.L.B. MOSS, *Topographical bibliography of ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic texts, reliefs, and paintings*, Vol. II: *Theban temples* (Oxford, 1972²), 403 (15). P. DU BOURGUET, *Le temple de Deir al-Médîneh*, Mémoires publiés par les membres de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire 121 (Cairo, 2002), 97, No. 103. See also MINAS, *Archiv für Papyrusforschung* 51 (2005), 137-8.

¹⁶ See W.J. MURNANE, *Ancient Egyptian Coregencies*, *Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilisations* 40 (Chicago, 1977). For the origin of coregencies as a principle of legitimation in the First Intermediate Period

king who would be protected and reign legitimately. Ptolemy VI, Ptolemy VIII, and their sister, however, were not ruling jointly in order to sort out the legitimate succession, but to unify the royal family and their followers, and to gear up against Syria. The coregency's aims were therefore substantially different to those of their dynastic predecessors. The royal ideology that only one king and his wife should or could rule Egypt was not suspended for the sake of a legitimate and controlled succession, but for the sake of practical and political reasons. It served a propagandistic purpose in order to strengthen the royal family and to re-conquer Ptolemaic possessions from Syria. During the years 170-164 very few temples were only decorated, due to the politically unstable situation¹⁷. But when the Hathor temple at Deir el-Medineh was decorated during these years, the Egyptian priests needed to reflect the untypical royal combination in a ritual scene, although it was against Egyptian traditions to depict two equal kings plus one queen.

Case study 2, Kom Ombo: The joint rule of Ptolemy VIII, Cleopatra II, and Cleopatra III (fig. 2)

In the second case, yet another unusual example of Ptolemaic joint rule is commemorated. In the pronaos of the temple of Sobek and Haroeris at Kom Ombo, Ptolemy VIII, Cleopatra II, and Cleopatra III are depicted before Haroeris, confirmed by him as rulers of Egypt (fig. 2)¹⁸.

When Ptolemy VI died in Syria in 145, Cleopatra II could not – according to both the Greek-Macedonian and Egyptian understanding of kingship – rule by herself or for her young son (as had her mother Cleopatra I for Ptolemy VI)¹⁹. But Cleopatra II wanted to retain her powerful political position and her status, and at the same time her brother Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II, once again king over Egypt, was looking for a

see A. SCHAEFER, 'Zur Entstehung der Mitregentschaft als Legitimationsprinzip von Herrschaft', *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* 113 (1986), 44-55.

¹⁷ See M. MINAS, 'Die Dekorationstätigkeit von Ptolemaios VI. Philometor und Ptolemaios VIII. Euergetes II. an altägyptischen Tempeln', 1. Teil, *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 27 (1996), 51-78; 2. Teil, *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 28 (1997), 87-121.

¹⁸ J. DE MORGAN, *Catalogue des monuments et inscriptions de l'Égypte antique*, Tome 2: *Kom Ombo*, 1^{re} Partie (Vienne, 1895), no. 462. B. PORTER and R.L.B. MOSS, *Topographical bibliography of ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic texts, reliefs, and paintings*, Vol. VI: *Upper Egypt: chief temples (excluding Thebes); Abydos, Dendera, Esna, Edfu, Kôm Ombo and Philae* (Oxford, 1970), 189 (74).

¹⁹ For the discussion whether there existed a son of Ptolemy VI and Cleopatra II when Ptolemy VI died in 145, see M. CHAUVEAU, 'Un été 145', *Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale* 90 (1990), 135-68; ID., 'Un été 145: Post-scriptum', *Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale* 91 (1991), 129-34. H. HEINEN, 'Der Sohn des 6. Ptolemäers im Sommer 145. Zur Frage nach Ptolemaios VII. Neos Philopator und zur Zählung der Ptolemäerkönige', in: B. KRAMER *et al.* (eds.), *Akten des 21. Internationalen Papyrologenkongresses, Berlin, 13.-19.8.1995*, Archiv für Papyrusforschung Beiheft 3 (Stuttgart/Leipzig, 1997), 449-60.

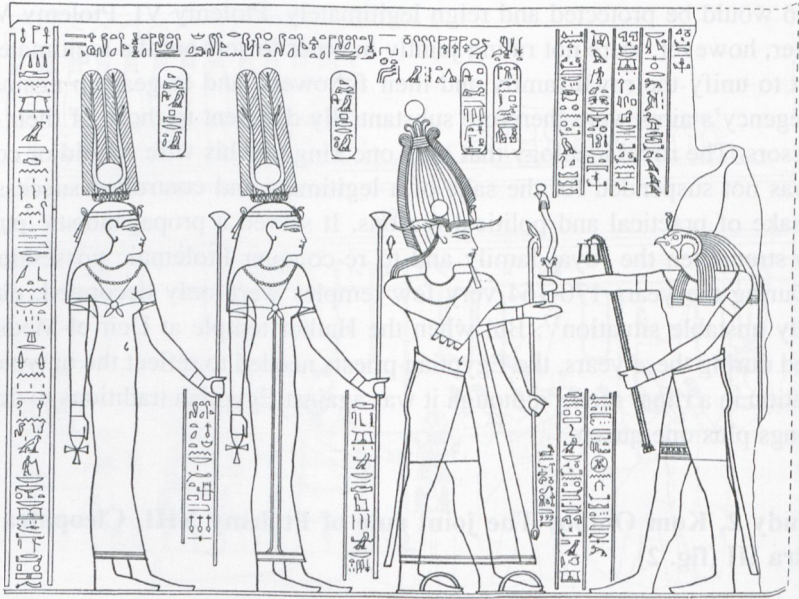


Fig. 2. Kom Ombo, Sobek and Haroeris temple, pronaos: Ptolemy VIII, Cleopatra II, and Cleopatra III before Haroeris [from J. DE MORGAN, *Catalogue des monuments et inscriptions de l'Égypte antique*, Tome 2: *Kom Ombos*, 1^{re} Partie (Vienne, 1895), no. 462].

suitable wife in the dynastic sense. The obvious solution was that Cleopatra II now married her second brother, with whom she had already ruled from 170 to 164, as discussed above. Thus, the Egyptian requirement for a duality of kingship and queenship was fulfilled.

Only three years later, in 142, Ptolemy VIII weakened Cleopatra II's position as wife and coregent by also marrying his niece Cleopatra III, the daughter of his two elder siblings, Ptolemy VI and Cleopatra II. With the joint rule of Ptolemy VIII and his two wives, the ancient Egyptian concept of duality disappeared once again. In contrast to our first case, the joint reign of the three offsprings of Ptolemy V (170-164), this triple combination of rulers was not intended to strengthen Egypt in its external affairs (i.e. against Syria), but arose from Ptolemy VIII's personal ambitions. This political grouping – one king and two queens – found its ways into the ritual scenes of numerous Egyptian temples²⁰. It was a religious imperative to depict the queen in

²⁰ See M. MINAS, *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 27 (1996), 51-78, and *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 28 (1997), 87-121.

certain ritual scenes, but no doubt, it was also a reflection of political authority in such important scenes as confirming the rule of Egypt, as here in Kom Ombo.

In contrast to the eponymous priesthoods in the Greek ruler-cult, Cleopatra III was only introduced into the Egyptian temple reliefs after her marriage with Ptolemy VIII in 142. In the dynastic cult, Cleopatra III was already included under her father Ptolemy VI Philometor as the princess "Cleopatra, the daughter of the king"²¹. P. dem. *Schreibertrad.* 42 and P. dem. Strasb. 21, the two earliest sources for her eponymous priesthood at Ptolemais, date from 146/5, the last regnal year of Ptolemy VI. The priestess is mentioned directly after that of her mother, queen Cleopatra II. For the first time, a member of the royal household was included into the dynastic cult without being a coregent. This reflects the considerable importance and exceptional status of "Cleopatra, the daughter of the king". This might have resulted from the fact that no male heir existed at the end of Philometor's reign, as Michel Chauveau proposes²². If there had been a male heir, as Heinz Heinen suggests²³, the creation of the princess' eponymous priesthood was even more exceptional. Why would Cleopatra III receive her own priesthood as "Cleopatra, the daughter of the king" while the male heir did not receive one? If there was no male heir, the priesthood was no doubt created mainly for dynastic purposes rather than to please Cleopatra, the daughter.

Case study 3, Edfu: Ptolemy VIII, Cleopatra II, Cleopatra III, and the male heir (figs. 3-6)

The question about the male heir brings us to our third case study, the depiction of Ptolemy VIII's male heir at Edfu. There are three scenes only that include him, two corresponding ones on the outside naos walls of the Horus temple and one in the birth house at Edfu.

On the naos of the Horus temple, the male heir accompanies Ptolemy VIII and Cleopatra II on one side and Ptolemy VIII and Cleopatra III on the other (figs. 3-4)²⁴. The heir's identity is still unresolved. Some scholars have suggested Memphites²⁵, the

²¹ MINAS, *Ahnenreihen*, 140.

²² CHAUVEAU, *Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale* 90 (1990), 135-68. ID., *Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale* 91 (1991), 129-34.

²³ HEINEN, in: KRAMER et al. (eds.), *Akten des 21. Internationalen Papyrologenkongresses*, 449-60.

²⁴ PORTER and MOSS, *Topographical bibliography* VI, 157 (291)-(294) and 159 (301)-(305); Eastern and western external walls of the naos (second register, sixteenth scene in both cases): É. CHASSINAT, *Le temple d'Edfou* IV (Cairo, 1929), 91, 17-93, 5 (Cleopatra III); 248, 8-249, 9 (Cleopatra II); *Edfou* X (Cairo, 1928), pl. 87, 93; *Edfou* XIII (Cairo, 1934), pl. 439, 446. See MINAS, *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 28 (1997), 93, n. 17.

²⁵ S. CAUVILLE and D. DEVAUCHELLE, 'Le temple d'Edfou: Étapes de la construction et nouvelles données historiques', *Revue d'Égyptologie* 35 (1984), 50-2.



Fig. 3. Edfu, Horus temple, western external wall of the naos: Ptolemy VIII, the heir (Ptolemy IX?), and Cleopatra III before Thot [from É. CHASSINAT, *Le temple d'Edfou XIII* (Cairo, 1934), pl. 439].

son of Cleopatra II and Ptolemy VIII, but why should he be depicted with Cleopatra III? It seems more likely that this person is the later Ptolemy IX Soter II, who ruled after Euergetes' death from 116 onwards, first with Cleopatra II and III (116/115), then, after Cleopatra II's death, with Cleopatra III only.

A similar scene is depicted in the birth house at Edfu (fig. 5)²⁶. This time, Ptolemy VIII, Cleopatra II, and Cleopatra III are shown together in one single ritual scene, and the heir is placed between the king and the queens. Again, as in the Horus temple, it is a ritual that proves their legitimate rule over Egypt since Thot denotes the regnal years, thus confirming the three rulers and their heir.

²⁶ PORTER and MOSS, *Topographical bibliography VI*, 173-4 (85); É. CHASSINAT, *Le Mammisi d'Edfou*, Mémoires publiés par les membres de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire 16 (Cairo, 1939), 14,9-15,14, pl. 13. See Minas, *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 28 (1997), 95, n. 27-8.

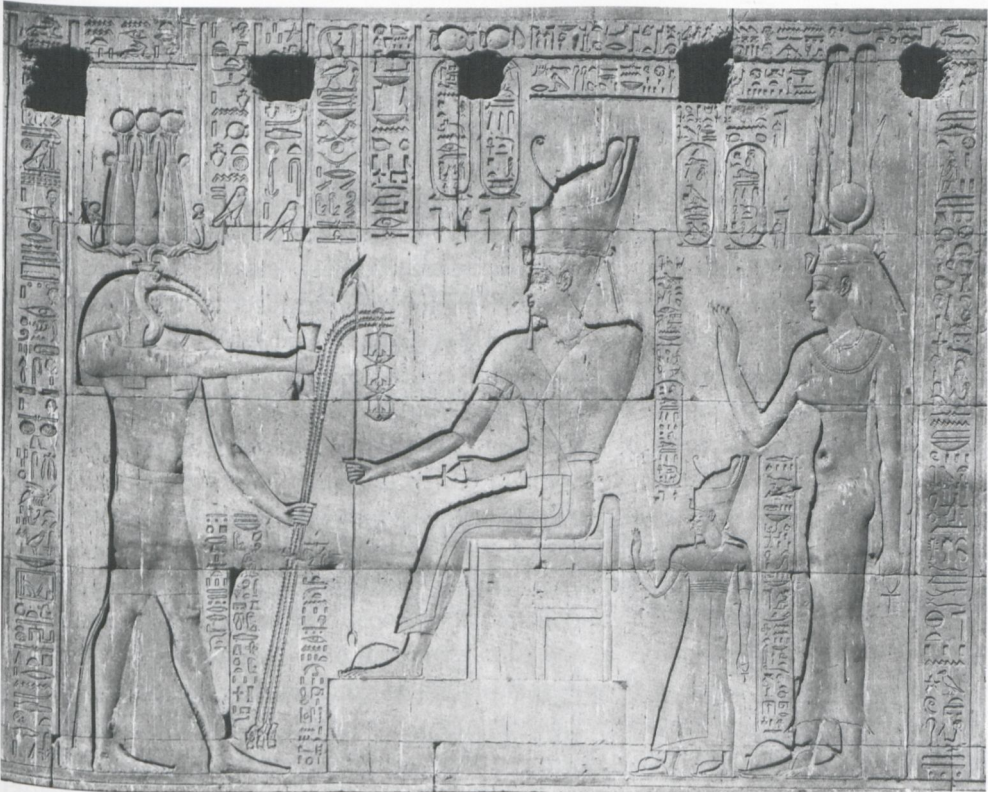


Fig. 4. Edfu, Horus temple, eastern external wall of the naos:
Ptolemy VIII, the heir (Ptolemy IX?), and Cleopatra II before Thot
[from É. CHASSINAT, *Le temple d'Edfou XIII* (Cairo, 1934), pl. 446].

It was extremely unusual to show Ptolemaic heirs in Egyptian ritual scenes²⁷. Except for the three Edfu ritual scenes discussed above, a *living* Ptolemaic heir is only depicted

²⁷ Before Ptolemy IX, Ptolemy Eupator, Ptolemy VI's son who died before him, had been included into the hieroglyphic ancestor lines several times (MINAS, *Ahnenreihen*, 142-3), but he had been depicted only once as a *deceased* predecessor in the exceptional ancestor veneration scene at the temple of Montu at Tod (MINAS, *Ahnenreihen*, 24-5, Dok. 51, Taf. 17). He was never depicted as a *living* heir in an Egyptian ritual scene. Ptolemy Neos Philopator, another of Ptolemy VI's sons who has wrongly been counted as Ptolemy VII (see above n. 19, 22-23), has posthumously been included into the eponymous cult and subsequently into hieroglyphic ancestor lines (MINAS, *Ahnenreihen*, 153-4), but he is not attested in Egyptian temple scenes. See also M. MINAS-NERPEL, 'Koregentschaft und Thronfolge: Legitimation ptolemäischer Machtstrukturen in den ägyptischen Tempeln der Ptolemäerzeit', in: W. HELD *et al.* (eds.), *Orient und Okzident – Antagonismus oder Konstrukt? Machtstrukturen, Ideologie und Kulturtransfer in hellenistischer Zeit. Akten des Würzburger Symposions, 10.-13. April 2008* (Marburg, 2012), 179-200.



Fig. 5. Edfu, birth house:
Ptolemy VIII, the heir, Cleopatra II, and Cleopatra III before Thot
[from É. CHASSINAT, *Le Mammisi d'Edfou* (Cairo, 1939), pl. 13].

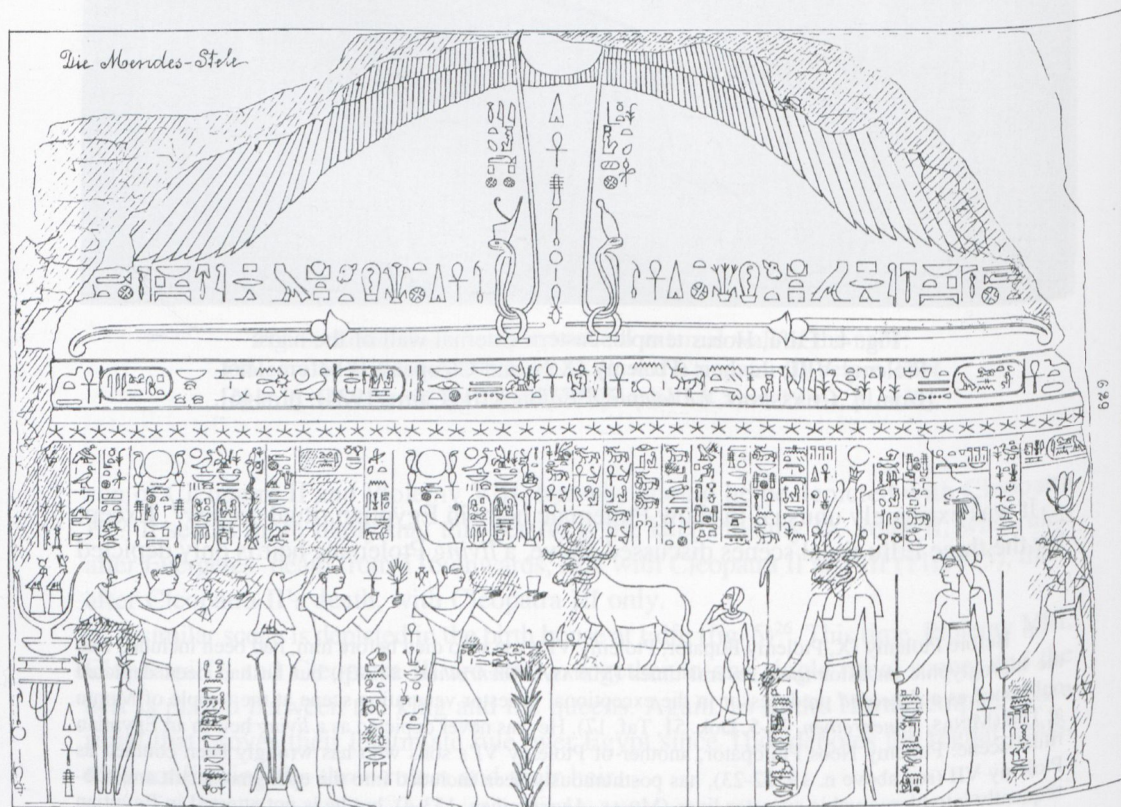


Fig. 6. The Mendes Stela:
[from H. BRUGSCH, *Thesaurus Inscriptionum Aegyptiacarum. Altägyptische Inschriften IV: Mythologische Inschriften Altägyptischer Denkmäler* (Leipzig, 1884), 629].

once on the Mendes Stela, dating to the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphos (fig. 6)²⁸. According to this inscription, the king visited the temple of the ram of Mendes in the eastern Nile delta soon after his accession to the throne, thus fulfilling his religious duties as pharaoh²⁹. His son Ptolemy, crown prince from 267-259³⁰, performed the dedication of the temple of Mendes³¹. This seems to be the reason why he is depicted in the lunette of the Mendes stela behind Ptolemy II and Arsinoe II. The queen, already deceased, appears twice on the stela in both the opposite scenes, once behind the triad of Mendes on the divine side of the lunette, and once on the royal side, represented by a priestess, most probably the *kanephoros*³².

Similar stelae might have existed in other sanctuaries, but they have not survived. The evidence of the often well-preserved Ptolemaic temples, however, proves that it was not a common habit to add the heir to the royal couple (or triple) in ritual scenes. The Edfu scenes are therefore quite out of character; dynastic requirements and conflicts were incorporated metaphorically into the temple reliefs, but still within Egyptian conventions, although it was not typical for the dynastic period either to depict the heir to the throne. His presence was apparently considered important in the Horus temple and the mammisi at Edfu, especially in the ritual scene, in which Thoth confirms the legitimate Ptolemaic rule and records the regnal years³³. The temple at Edfu was central to the royal ideology, and the birth house was an obvious place for emphasizing the legitimate heir and the unity in the royal family. In contrast to the scene at Deir el-Medineh, our first example, the legitimate succession and dynasty's continuation into the next generation was a crucial issue in this scene, but also the unity of the Ptolemaic family.

It was uncommon to depict the heir in temple ritual scenes, not only for the Ptolemaic period but also for dynastic Egypt. The only example is the famous offering scene in the temple at Abydos where Seti I offers incense to seventy-six of his ancestors, starting with

²⁸ K. SETHE, *Hieroglyphische Urkunden der griechisch-römischen Zeit*, Urkunden des ägyptischen Altertums 2 (Leipzig 1916), 30, 46 (Nr. 6). G. ROEDER, *Die ägyptische Götterwelt* (Zürich/Stuttgart, 1959), 172-3. See also P. DERCHAIN, 'Une mention méconnue de Ptolémée "le fils"', *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 61 (1985), 35-6.

²⁹ HÖLBL, *History of the Ptolemaic Empire*, 84.

³⁰ Idem, 35. See also W. HUSS, 'Noch einmal: Ptolemaios der Sohn', *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 149 (2004), 232.

³¹ SETHE, *Hieroglyphische Urkunden der griechisch-römischen Zeit* (Urk. II), 46, 8-9 (l. 19). The heir's cartouches are the same as his father's: *ibid.*, 29, 8-9 (Ptolemaios II.), 30, 4-5 (Ptolemaios der Sohn).

³² For the identity of the priestess see M. MINAS, 'Die Kanephoros. Aspekte des Ptolemäischen Dynastiekults', in: H. MELAERTS (ed.), *Le culte du souverain dans l'Égypte ptolémaïque au III^e siècle avant notre ère. Actes du colloque international, Bruxelles 10 mai 1995*, *Studia Hellenistica* 34 (Leuven, 1998), 43-60, 50-3.

³³ Noting the regnal year usually involved the queen under Ptolemy VIII, but never the heir, see for example the ritual scene at Kom Ombo (J. DE MORGAN, No. 462), discussed above (n. 18).

Menes.³⁴ In front of the king, the heir Ramesses II recites from a papyrus. The *ka* force is transferred from the previous kings onto Seti and his son who is authorized to rule over Egypt after his father³⁵. The young Ramesside dynasty obviously wanted to legitimize itself, as did the Ptolemaic dynasty, especially under Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II.

The only further example of heirs depicted with the reigning king dates to the early third century AD: In the fourth register of the inner south wall of the hypostyle of the Khnum temple at Esna, Septimius Severus receives the life and *heb-sed* from Khnum, Nebet-uu, and Heka. The king is accompanied by his wife Julia Domna and his two sons Caracalla and Geta³⁶. The Severan dynasty suffered from unstable relations and family feuds, not unlike the Ptolemaic dynasty, especially under Ptolemy VIII. It is therefore not surprising to find the heirs depicted in both cases (Edfu and Esna).

After the politically turbulent years of alternating allegiances, the three rulers, Ptolemy VIII, Cleopatra II, and Cleopatra III, were unified once again from 124 to 116. The demonstration of dynastic unity by showing both his wives *and* the heir in Edfu was obviously the reason behind this atypical “*ménage à trois* with heir”. The heir seems to have been introduced ideologically in order to claim the stability of succession and legitimization, only limited to the own dynasty, not the dynastic predecessors as far as the mythical Menes in the Abydos list. Both in the Edfu mammisi and the temple at Abydos, the ruling king and his son are legitimized, but in Edfu the queens are included, putting emphasis on their importance and status.

Conclusion

The Ptolemies exploited Egyptian conventions and integrated the royal wives, sisters, and daughters into temple decoration. Where necessary, they modified earlier Egyptian traditions, for example when the heir to the throne was depicted or when the king was married to two powerful wives at the same time, as is the case with Ptolemy VIII. Some of the requirements and conflicts of the Ptolemaic dynasty were incorporated into the temple reliefs by means of Egyptian metaphors, reflecting the political authority of both the dynasty and the queens. In this way, not only the figures of the kings but also those of the queens contribute vitally to our understanding of Ptolemaic Egypt.

³⁴ PORTER and MOSS, *Topographical bibliography* VI, 25 (229)–(230). D.B. REDFORD, *Pharaonic King-Lists, Annals and Day-Books. A Contribution to the Study of Egyptian Sense of History*, The Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities Publications 4 (Mississauga, 1986), 18–20 (with bibliography).

³⁵ For the meaning of offering incense for the cult of the Ka, especially under Seti I and Ramesses II and in the Ptolemaic period, see MINAS, *Ahnenreihen*, 76–7.

³⁶ PORTER and MOSS, *Topographical bibliography* VI, 114 (16)–(17); S. SAUNERON, *Le temple d'Esna IV* (Cairo, 1975), 68–70, no. 496. The Esna-scene needs further research in its context, especially since Geta and Caracalla are depicted – each by himself – in the neighbouring ritual scenes, carrying out the offerings as kings.

In the Egyptian temples the priests had to be creative in order to adapt to the new political situation and to incorporate the foreign rulers in traditional, but also innovative ways. They followed religious imperatives, for example, to include the wife in ritual scenes where the legitimate rule was confirmed, but it was a reflection of political reality and authority to include *both* wives and the heir under Ptolemy VIII. Politics and religion interacted, as it had always been the case in Egypt.

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Introduction

Ever since their discovery by Gaston Maspero in 1880-1881¹, the pyramid texts have aroused great interest and animated debate, which shows no signs of dying down today. In returning to the subject, it must be borne clearly in mind that semantic and philological data should never be separated from the archaeological and architectural context. This is certainly the case when it comes to relating the individual spells to specific walls in the funerary chamber, an aspect investigated, with excellent results,

¹ I am very grateful to Prof. Rossana Pirelli for her useful references and suggestions. I am also particularly indebted to Dr. Harold M. Heys who drew my attention to several aspects of the topic. Any mistakes are, of course, of my own responsibility.

² Most of the texts of Unas, Teti, Pepi I, Merneptah and Pepi II were published by their discoverer in the excavations reports on fieldwork in the Saqqara pyramids, published in *Bulletin de missions religieuses et de philologie et d'archéologie égyptiennes et assyriennes* n. 3-12, from 1881 to 1892, and later arranged in a general volume (G. MASPERO, *Les inscriptions des pyramides de Saqqarah* [Paris, 1894]). The first complete edition of the texts (*Die altägyptischen Pyramidentexte*, 3 vols., Leipzig), prepared by Kurt Sethe as a concordance of these five corpora, appeared in 1908-21 and was later revised and updated by the same author for *Übersetzung und Kommentar zu den altägyptischen Pyramidentexten*, 6 vols. (Göttingen, 1925-30). Although incomplete (other pyramids with pyramid texts were discovered in the first half of the 20th century – Neith, Iphig. II, Djehhotep and Ibi – and a new one as recently as 2001 – Antefnesperet II) Sethe's work is still considered the standard edition of the texts. Other important translations of the texts, which also include the most recently found texts (apart from those ones in Antefnesperet II's pyramid) are: S.A.B. MUNK (ed.), *The Pyramid Texts in Translation and Commentary* (New York, 1952); and see: R.O. FAULKNER, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts* (Oxford, 1969) (which is generally accepted as the standard translation of the texts); J.P. ALLEN, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, Society of Biblical Literature (Atlanta, 2005) (contrary to Faulkner, where the texts are arranged according to the topographical number established by Sethe, in Allen they are set out in chronological order. For this reason Allen's publication has been used in this paper for references to the translations of the texts). The only case of pyramid texts in a private tomb, namely the mastaba of Senwosert III, comes from Luxor and dates back to the Middle Kingdom (see W.C. HAYES, *The Texts in the Mastaba of Senwosert III at Luxor, Middle Kingdom*, Museum of Egyptian Art Egyptian Expedition 12 [New York, 1931]). However, the fragmentary character of these texts and their non-royal nature, besides the fact that they are almost contemporary of the first examples of Coffin Texts, suggest to consider them in a separate context.