

Offerings and libations for the king and the question of ruler-cult in Egyptian temples*

INTRODUCTION

In Ptolemaic Egypt, the king could be venerated as a god in various social and ethnic contexts: in Alexandria, in the Greek milieus of the *chōra*, and in Egyptian temples. Much more often, however, he was not equated to the gods but would receive honours clearly showing that he was a man, whose life and success depended on the grace of the Greek and Egyptian gods. In many cases, moreover, rituals directly equating sovereigns to the gods could coexist with others being addressed to the gods for the well-being of the rulers (with the formula *hyper* + the genitive, or alike). If such a synchronic combination of religious representations of a political leader both as a saving god and as a man in need for divine protection might seem confusing to the modern eye, it was in fact a current practice in Hellenistic Egypt, in both Greek and Egyptian ritual contexts, and as such, it cannot be regarded as an inconsistency at the level of religious representation and political practice.¹

In compliance with the Greek dedicatory tradition, the *hyper*-formula, which is used when a person accomplishes a dedication or offering to a god *for* the king—or, as we shall see, when a person (re)builds a temple for him—played a special role in the ritual and linguistic construction of the relationship between the honoured monarchs and the divine sphere. In the present article I will first discuss the function of this formula in ruler worship, that is, in rituals whereby the ruler is honoured in a religious way, but nevertheless *not* equated to a god. I will then explore the types of relationship existing between this formula and the ruler cult proper, where the ritual honours addressed to the ruler equate him to a god. I will do this by reassessing the scholarly debate with a specific focus on religious practice in Graeco-Egyptian milieus.

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1. See CANEVA (2016b), p. 126; on this topic, see also his paper in this volume, focusing on Attalid Pergamon.

In order to study the entanglement between language and practice in a specific and concrete ritual environment, I begin my discussion by reviewing the use of the *hyper*-formula in two Egyptian temples in Euhemeria in Fayum.

SETTING THE CONTEXT: TWO *ASYLLA* PETITIONS FROM EUHEMERIA AND GREEK AGENTS IN EGYPTIAN TEMPLES

In 69/68 BC, king Ptolemy XII received two petitions, one in his 12th and another in his 13th regnal year, asking him to grant the right of inviolability to two Egyptian temples in Euhemeria, a small village situated in Fayum. One of the temples was dedicated to the Egyptian god Ammon, the other one to the three crocodile gods Psosnaus, Pnepheros and Soxis. The king ordered that the *asyllia* should be granted and thereafter “no one was allowed to intrude by force and to bother the priests, pastophores and the rest of the personnel.”²

The privilege of inviolability had already been conferred on other temples in the same village, a village that seems to have had more temples than houses.³ It is interesting that the king himself did not formulate these decrees, but that he just took the two letters of petition and approved them with a short notice: ἐπιχωρήσαι—“it should be conceded.” The two stelae with the petitions followed by the approval of the king were undoubtedly placed at the entrance to the temple precincts. Both stelae were in typical Egyptian style with a round-topped lunette. One lunette also shows a pharaoh performing a ritual in front of a crocodile lying on a pedestal.

Both inscriptions show the procedure to be followed in order for an Egyptian temple to be granted inviolability by the king. The two sanctuaries had lain in decay. Two benefactors wanted to rebuild them on their own initiative and at their own private expense. To promote a resurgence of the economic activities of the temples, the two financiers wanted to make them immune to royal functionaries who were eager to extract revenues from the temples. Two explanations are possible as to why the benefactors saw it necessary to request the king’s grant of inviolability to these sanctuaries. The first hypothesis is that, between the end of the cultic activities and the rebuilding of temples, it had become a common practice for the sovereign to grant the right of immunity to temples in the Egyptian *chōra*. In this case, the *asyllia* would be conceded to the two sanctuaries in Euhemeria for the first time at the moment when their ritual activity was resumed thanks to the initiative of the two benefactors. The alternative hypothesis is that these temples had already enjoyed *asyllia* in the past, but the interruption and reactivation of the cult made it necessary to grant this right once again.

Be that as it may, it is both highly interesting and significant for our purpose that the two benefactors of the Egyptian cults were neither Egyptian priests nor members

2. *I.Fayoum* II 136 (= *SB* III 6155), lines 16–19.

3. *I.Fayoum* II 136, lines 14–15: μενούσης καὶ τῆς παρὰ | τῶν πλησίων ἱερῶν συνεκχωρημένης ἀσυλίας.

of the local Egyptian elite, but were, in fact, Greeks trying to re-establish the local cults in the Egyptian village: one was an Athenian called Dionysodoros and the other, an Antiochenian, was called Apollophanes. The latter also had the aulic title of “one of the first friends” of the king, being officer of the royal guard in Alexandria,⁴ which meant that he seemingly belonged to the inner circle of the king.

If we look at the arguments used by the two Greek petitioners, they naturally point out that the *asylia* would increase the well-being of the gods. Dionysodoros wanted the right of inviolability “so that one can perform the rites of the gods in a much better way”. However, the king himself also played a very important role in the discourse of both petitioners: Apollophanes, for example, puts forward the argument that, at the time, it was not possible “to perform the burnt offerings and libations for you and your children.”⁵ Dionysodoros argues in a similar way. He wants to establish the new temple with an inscription for the king “so that the burnt offerings and libations can be performed, the temple being founded for you and your ancestors.”⁶

We can see how such a foundation inscription might have looked like in the neighbourhood of Euhemeria, more precisely in Theadelphia, where more than two generations earlier, in 137 BC, an Alexandrian soldier had built a temple for the crocodile god Pnepheros. The building inscription of this temple, which was put on an architrave measuring two meters, has the following content:

For king Ptolemy, the queen Kleopatra his sister, the queen Kleopatra, his wife, the Theoi Euergetai and their children, Agathodoros son of Agathodoros, the Alexandrian, from the second hipparchy, and his wife Isidora, daughter of Dionysios, and their children (have dedicated) the *propylon* and the *dromos* to Pnepheros, the twice great god, as fulfilment of a vow, year 34, 9th of Thoth.⁷

As in the aforementioned cases of the Athenian and Antiochian petitioners, here we encounter once again a Greek financing an Egyptian temple.⁸ Agathodoros seems to have been stationed in Theadelphia with his squadron.

The temple re-founded by Apollophanes, moreover, already contained images of the king’s ancestors. Apollophanes then wanted to erect “also for you, greatest

4. On the context see: HEINEN (1994); SCHEUBLE-REITER (2012), p. 306–308.

5. *I.Fayoum* II 135, lines 11–13: καὶ τῶν εἰθισ|μένων ἐπιτελεῖσθαι ὑπὲρ τε ὑμῶν καὶ τῶν τέκνων | θουσιῶν καὶ σπονδῶν.

6. *I.Fayoum* II 136, lines 11–14: ὅπως αἵ τε [θ]υσίαι καὶ αἱ [σπ]ονδα[ι] | ἐπιτελῶνται, κτ[ι]σθέντος τοῦ σημαι|νομένου ἱεροῦ ὑπὲρ τε σοῦ καὶ τῶν προ|γόνων σ[ο]ῦ.

7. *I.Fayoum* II 107, with BINGEN (1991), p. 85: ὑπὲρ βασιλέως Πτολεμαίου | καὶ βασιλίσσης Κλεοπάτρας τῆς ἀδελφῆς | καὶ βασιλίσσης Κλεοπάτρας τῆς γυναικός, | θεῶν Εὐεργετῶν, καὶ τῶν τέκνων αὐτῶν, | Ἀγαθόδωρος Ἀγαθοδώρου Ἀλεξανδρεὺς | τῆς β' ἱπ(παρχίας) (ἐκατοντάρουρος) καὶ Ἰσιδώρα Διονυσίου ἡ γυνὴ καὶ τὰ τέκνα | τὸ πρόπυλον καὶ τὸν λίθινον δρόμον Πνεφερῶι θεῶι μεγάλῳι μεγάλῳι, εὐχῆν (ἔτους) λδ Θῶυθ θ.

8. *Pros.Ptol.* II 2185 + 2747 + VI 16975; see also SCHEUBLE-REITER (2012), p. 304–305.

kings, statues at the best visible point of the temple.”⁹ By coincidence, a statue-base of Ptolemy XII, with this exact title of “Great King”, has been excavated in Fayum, unfortunately not in Euhemeria but in Tebtunis.¹⁰

In their letters to the king, the two petitioners used the so-called *hyper*-formula with regard to both their offerings for the kings and the foundation inscription. This means that the deity instead of the king was the recipient of both the offering and the temple, whereas the king was in some way related to the initiative of the petitioners as the party benefiting from their offering. The two Greeks were not alone in strengthening their petition to the king by claiming that, within the temple, offerings were made for him. The priests of Egypt very often used exactly this *hyper*-formula in petitions to the king or his staff, to make it explicit that they performed offerings for the king.¹¹ A priest of Isis from Philadelphiea speaks of “offerings to Isis and Arsinoe Philadelphos for the king.”¹² The priests of Philae make a complaint to Ptolemy VIII that they have to host royal officials and that therefore “the sanctuary is suffering and we are in danger of running out of means for the burnt offerings and libations, which are performed for you and your children.”¹³ The priests of Mandulis in Philae write to Ptolemy VI that they are lacking in revenue which they “should normally have, for the sacrifices and libations in the temple of Mandulis, the greatest god, and for the other customary rites in the region of Philae for you, the queen and your children and ancestors”.¹⁴ With such an argument that offerings are made to the gods for the king and his family, the priests could normally expect to achieve the fulfilment of the

9. *I.Fayoum* II 135, lines 16-17: ἀναθεῖναι δὲ καὶ ὑμῶν τῶν μεγίστων βασιλέων | [εἰκ]όνας.

10. *SEG* XXXIX 1705 (55 BC): βασιλέα μέγαν Πτολεμαῖον θεὸν Νέον Διόνυσον Φιλοπάτορα καὶ Φιλάδελφον (ἔτους) κς', Φαρμο(ῦθι) ιβ'. cf. RONDOT (2004), p. 137-138; STANWICK (2002), no. E3.

11. Cf. BINGEN (2007), p. 266-274. Texts on p. 266, n. 10; p. 267, n. 11; *I.Fayoum* II 112, lines 29-33 (93 BC) (with *I.Fayoum* II 113); *I.Fayoum* II 114, lines 15-31 (70 BC); *I.Fayoum* II 116, lines 14-20 (57 BC) (with *I.Fayoum* II 117 and 118); *I.Fayoum* III 152, lines 13-18 (95 BC): ἐν δὲ τούτῳ ἀνακειμένω[ν] | σοῦ τε, μέγιστε βασιλεῦ, καὶ τῶν προγόνων | ἰκόνων γραπ<τ>ῶν, τῶν τε θυσιῶν καὶ σπονδῶν | καὶ τῶν ἄλλων τῶν νομιζομένων ὑπὲρ τε σοῦ, | [ν]ικηφόρε βασιλεῦ, καὶ τῶν τέκνων διὰ νυκτὸς | καὶ ἡμέρας συντελουμένων; *UPZ* I 14, lines 27-31 (158 BC): ὅπως διευσχημονῶν δύνωμαι | ἐπιτελεῖν τὰς θυσίας ὑπὲρ τε ὑμῶν | καὶ τῶν τέκνων, ὅπως κυριεύητε | πάσης χώρας, ἧς ὁ Ἥλιος ἐφορᾷ, τὸν | ἅπαντα χρόνον; *UPZ* I 19, lines 2-4 (163 BC): Θαυῆς κα[ι] Ταῦς διδύμαι λειτου[ργουῶς] \αι/ ἐν τῷ | πρὸς Μέμφει μεγάλῳ Σαραπιείῳ, τῷ Ὅσοράπει χοὰς σπενδουσῶν ὑπὲρ τε | ὑμῶν καὶ τῶν ὑμετέρων τέκνων; *UPZ* I 41, lines 22-25 (163/162 BC): ἵνα πᾶν τὸ ἐξῆς ἔχουσαι ἐπιτελῶμεν | τὰς χοὰς τῷ μεγίστῳ θεῷ Σαράπει καὶ ἄλλα τὰ | νομιζόμενα συντελῶμεν ὑπὲρ τε ὑμῶν καὶ τῶν | ὑμετέρων τέκνων; *UPZ* I 42, cl. 2, lines 48-51 (162 BC): ἵνα πᾶν τὸ ἐξῆς ἔχουσαι πολλῶι μᾶλλον | τὰ νομιζόμενα τῷ Σαράπει καὶ τῇ Ἰσει | ἐπιτελῶμεν ὑπὲρ τε ὑμῶν καὶ τῶν | ὑμετέρων τέκνων; *P.Sorb.* III 107 (219 BC); *P.Enteux.* 6, line 6 (220 BC); *P.Enteux.* 80, line 13 (217 BC); *W.Chrest.* 68, lines 50-53 (132 BC).

12. *PSI* V 539, line 3 (3rd cent. BC): τὰς θυσίας τῇ Ἰσι καὶ Ἀρσινόῃ Φιλαδέλφῳ ὑπὲρ τοῦ βασιλέως.

13. *I.Philae* I 19, lines 28-31 = *OGIS* I 137-139 = PFEIFFER (2015), no. 29: καὶ ἐκ τοῦ τοιοῦτου συμβαίνει ἐλαττοῦσθαι τὸ ἱερὸν καὶ | κινδυνεύειν ἡμᾶς τοῦ μὴ ἔχειν τὰ νομιζόμενα πρὸς τὰς | γινομένας ὑπὲρ τε ὑμῶν καὶ τῶν τέκνων θυσίας | καὶ σπονδὰς.

14. *I.Philae* I 12bis, lines 8-11 = PFEIFFER (2015), no. 26.

requests, because the Ptolemies were themselves very much interested in such kinds of offerings. Ptolemy VIII formulated it explicitly in a *prostagma*:

[...] permit no one under any circumstances to exact payment of any of the above-mentioned revenues (of the temples) or to drive away by force the agents of the priests, in order that the priests may obtain all their receipts in full, and may be able, without hindrance, to pay the customary offerings to the gods for us and our children.¹⁵

THE PROBLEM OF THE *HYPER*-FORMULA

A debated question in research concerns the exact meaning of an offering made to the gods *for* the king. More precisely, what does it mean when a temple hosts an inscription *for* the king, as the aforementioned *asylia*-petition stated? As seen before, in Greek both statements are phrased in the grammatical construction *hyper* with the genitive.¹⁶ The meaning of the preposition *hyper* is as ambiguous as the meaning of the English preposition *for*: it can denote that the offering or dedication is made for the well-being of the king just as it can mean that the offering or dedication is made by proxy of the king, which means that he is thought of as the virtual agent of the offering.

The formula was especially popular in Greco-Roman Egypt and was used in every religious context of its multicultural society, which means not only in the Egyptian, but also in the Greek and Roman ritual environment. In both Greek and Jewish dedications and ritual contexts, the meaning of the formula is undisputedly understood by scholars as “for the well-being of the king”. Following the words of J. Bingen, one can say that the formula “means ... ‘in favour of, for the salvation and prosperity of.’”¹⁷ To the monotheistic Jews, for example, the formula offered a perfect opportunity to show their close friendship to the ruler without putting him on the same level as their god. Thus, we have inscriptions concerning the dedication of synagogues which go like this:

For King Ptolemy and queen Kleopatra, Ptolemaios, son of Epidydes, the overseer of the wardens and the Jews of Athribis have dedicated the house of prayer to the highest god.¹⁸

This clearly means that the house of prayer was erected for the well-being of Ptolemy, since the prayers made inside the synagogue—like those in the temple of

15. *P.Tebt.* I 6, lines 47–49 (BAGNALL – DEROW [2004], no. 136).

16. On this see JIM (2014), p. 617–638.

17. BINGEN (2007), p. 276; NILSSON (1961²), 182.

18. *OGIS* I 96 = *SB* V 8872 = *CIJ* 1443: ὑπὲρ βασιλέως Πτολεμαίου | καὶ βασιλίσσης Κλεοπάτρας | Πτολεμαῖος Ἐπιδύδου | ὁ ἐπιστάτης τῶν φυλακῶν | καὶ οἱ ἐν Ἀθρίβει Ἰουδαῖοι | τὴν προσευχὴν | θεῷ Ὑψίστῳ. On *hyper*-dedications in Jewish milieus, see also PAGANINI in this volume.

Jerusalem¹⁹—were addressed to the Jewish god to guarantee the safety of the ruler. This point is made explicit in Philo's *Legatio ad Gaium*, where Caligula, who wanted a cult for himself, complains that the Jews only pray “for him” (ὕπερ ἑμοῦ).²⁰ This shows that the *hyper*-formula was used to construct a close relation between god and ruler, the latter being not represented on the same level with the gods.²¹

Outside Egypt, the religious meaning of making offerings for the king is, for example, explained in an honorific decree of Pergamon. Following a successful military campaign of Attalos III, the civic institutions decided that

the *stephanēphoros* of the twelve gods and of the god King Eumenes together with the priests and priestesses shall open the temples of the gods, and pray while offering incense that the gods may now and for all time bestow on king Attalos Philometor Euergetes health, safety and victory, [both on land and on sea,] when he attacks and when he repulses those who attack him, and that his kingdom may endure unimpaired [for] ever in complete security.”²²

The Hellenistic king could even request that an autonomous city make such an offering. This is shown by the letter from Seleukos Nikator to the Milesians from 288/287 BC. Seleukos had sent gold and silver cups to be dedicated in the temple of Apollo of Didyma and suggested: “you may use them for libations and other uses for our health and fortune and for the lasting safety of the *polis*, as this is my own and your will.”²³ Although here the king uses a *genitivus absolutus* instead of the *hyper*-formula, the general meaning of his statement is identical: offerings are to be performed for the well-being of the king and *polis*, following a formula commonly attested in contemporaneous civic decrees.

In the Greek world, the *hyper*-formula generally means that the offering is made for the well-being of mortals, upon whom protection should be bestowed by the gods who are the direct recipients of the offerings.²⁴ Not only kings and their families, but

19. See 1 *Makk.* 7.33.

20. Phil. *Leg.* 357.

21. See PRICE (1984a), p. 210 and 229.

22. OGIS I 332, lines 27–33 = *IvP* I 246, with the new integrations proposed by CANEVA (2018a): τὸν στεφανηφόρον τῶν δώδεκα θεῶν καὶ θεοῦ βα|σιλέως Εὐμένου καὶ τοὺς ἱερεῖς καὶ τὰς ἱερε[ί]ας ἀνοίξαντας τοὺς ναοὺς τῶν θε|ῶν καὶ ἐπιθύοντας τὸν λιβανωτὸν εὐχεσθαι νῦν τε καὶ εἰς τὸν αἰὲ χρόνον | διδόναι βασιλεῖ Ἀττάλῳ Φιλομήτορι καὶ Εὐεργέτῃ ὑγίειαν σωτηρίαν νίκην | κράτος καὶ ἐπὶ γ[ῆ]ς κα<ι> [ἐπὶ] θα|λάσσης καὶ ὑπ|άρχοντι καὶ ἀμυνομένῳ, καὶ τὴν βα|σιλείαν αὐτοῦ διαμ<έ>ν[ε]ιν [εἰς] τὸν ἅπαντα αἰῶνα ἀβλαβῇ μετὰ πάσης ἀσφα|λείας. On this decree, see CANEVA (2018a) and in this volume.

23. OGIS I 214, lines 18–21 = RC 5 = RICIS 304/1101: ἵνα ἔχητε σπένδειν | καὶ χρᾶσθαι ὑγιαίνοντων ἡμῶν καὶ εὐτυχούν|των καὶ τῆς πόλεως διαμενούσης, ὥς ἐγὼ | βούλομαι καὶ ὑμεῖς.

24. FRASER (1972), I, p. 226: “by it the dedicant ‘recommended’ the monarch to the god”; TAEGER (1957), I, p. 299: “*Kultakt, der den göttlichen Schutz gewinnen oder dankbar bezeugen sollte*”; KYRIELEIS (1975), p. 146.

also private individuals, can benefit from offerings by being attached to this formula.²⁵ This last case is shown by a petition written by a certain Zoilos of Aspendos to Apollonios, the *dioikētēs* of the king. Zoilos wants to build a temple for Sarapis but lacking the money necessary for it, he asks Apollonios for financial support. If the *dioikētēs* provides it, the temple shall be erected, and “a priest shall preside and sacrifice at the altar for you.”²⁶

No one disputes that the formula *hyper* with the genitive means “for the well-being of” in Greek or Jewish rituals and temples. However, in the two *asylia*-inscriptions we have discussed above, the formula is used in Greek texts concerning Egyptian rituals and temples. Here things might become more complicated. Some scholars maintain that since in Egyptian religious ideology, priests are mere substitutes of the pharaoh and therefore every offering made in Egyptian temple rituals is virtually ascribed to the pharaoh himself, the use of the *hyper*-formula would have another meaning, and should therefore be translated in another way, when occurring in these contexts. Accordingly, quoting Bernand, “toute dédicace est ainsi un hommage aux souverains, en ce sens que le roi ... est censé faire l’offrande au dieu”.²⁷ Similarly, in a recent contribution S. Caneva surmises that the formula is used to mark the pharaoh as a virtual agent of the rituals, in compliance with the old Egyptian idea of the priest as a proxy for the pharaoh: “ritual intercession by priests would assume a particularly strong significance: customary rites were not only celebrated in favour of the members of the royal family, but following Egyptian traditions, more specifically on their behalf, i.e. as if they were performed by them as the virtual agents in the temples.”²⁸ According to Caneva, the requests for inviolability cited above, which state that offerings are performed ‘for the king and his ancestors’ would constitute proof that “the king should be considered as the virtual agent of this euergetic initiative.”²⁹

Although such a translation and interpretation of the *hyper*-formula is grammatically possible and has parallels in Greek funerary practice, I would argue that such an interpretation poses more difficulties than the traditional translation of the formula with the phrase “for the well-being of”, especially in Egyptian contexts. First of all, Greeks like the two petitioners from Athens and Antioch would have meant something different in the case of the inviolability requests than they would have meant in a purely Greek context. Secondly, following this reasoning we might conclude that even the king himself would easily get confused by what the meaning of a petition from a Greek or an Egyptian background could be. Finally, if one looks into the

25. See *P.Cair.Zen.* I 59034 = *PSI* IV 435 = *SB* III 6713 (257 BC), with CANEVA (2016b), p. 130.

26. *P.Cair.Zen.* I 59034, lines 7-8: κα[ι] [ἐ]ρεά[ς] ἐπιστάτεϊν κα[ι] | ἐπιβωμίζειν ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν.

27. BERNAND (1969), I, p. 91.

28. CANEVA (2016b), p. 146.

29. CANEVA (2016b), p. 146, and 148: “rituals hyper the royal house were felt as acts virtually performed by them as the traditional ritual agents in the temples, rather than more generally as rites celebrated by priests in their favour”.

papyrological and epigraphic documentation, it can easily be seen that it is not just the king, but also the queen, the family and ancestors, that the offerings are performed for. If one presupposes an Egyptian adaptation of the formula and looks at the Egyptian side of ritual, it is obvious that the pharaoh is the only one considered as a ritual agent in the temples. Therefore, when the family of the king is mentioned, the formula cannot mean that the pharaoh is the virtual agent, as neither his children nor especially his ancestors are imagined as ritual agents according to Egyptian religious tradition.³⁰ Moreover, I do not know any pre-Ptolemaic example where a priest or another individual states that he is performing the rituals in the name of the pharaoh.

Therefore, I would propose that we stick to the principle of Ockham's razor: being presented with two competing hypothetical answers to a problem, one should select the answer requiring the fewest assumptions, which in my view is to consider that, in Egyptian contexts, the *hyper*-formula would have the same meaning as in Greek and Jewish ones. In other words, in Egyptian temples too, *hyper* would be used to state that the gods should grant the well-being of the pharaoh, his wife, ancestors, and children in exchange for the offering or building they have received. The importance of the well-being of the king granted by such dedications is explicitly stated by Kleopatra VII. In an *asylia*-inscription, the queen grants the right of inviolability to a temple of Isis and uses a fuller variant of the *hyper*-formula: "let the relevant persons be told that the temple of Isis built for our well-being (ὕπερ τῆς ἡμετέρας σωτηρίας) by Kallimachos, the *epistratēgos* south of Ptolemais, is to be tax-free and inviolable."³¹ Similarly, in the above-cited *asylia*-inscription, Dionysodoros wrote to the king that "the temple is founded for you and your ancestors."³² Although one cannot exclude that some priests might have had second thoughts about using the formula and tried to combine it with the "virtual agency motif", nevertheless such a motif cannot be confirmed by independent Egyptian sources.

If this interpretation is correct and the offerings in Egyptian temples were indeed performed for the well-being of the king, this implies that I have to prove that such kind of offerings was part of traditional Egyptian religion. According to Egyptian religious ideals, the pharaoh is the sole and only ritualist of every temple who upholds *Maat*—a fundamental category of Egyptian theology which we can roughly translate as 'world-order'—, by performing the offerings and rituals of the gods. In exchange, the gods give him what we may define as a counter-donation: the Nile flood, the prosperity of Egypt or a stable rule, as it is stated in the ritual formulae of Egyptian

30. See BINGEN (2007), p. 276: "Moreover, in many inscriptions, 'on behalf of' applies to the queen and to the royal children, who have no religious function."

31. SB I 3926, lines 11–15 = *I.Prose* 36 = *C.Ord.Ptol.* 67 = *I.Asyliā* 226: τὸ κατεσκευασμένον ὑπὲρ τῆς ἡμετέρας σωτηρίας | ὑπὸ Καλλιμάχου τοῦ ἐπιστρατήγου | Ἱσίδειον ἀπὸ νότου Πτολεμαΐδος | ἀτελὲς καὶ ἄσυλον εἶναι.

32. *I.Fayoum* II 136, lines 12–14: ὅπως αἱ τε [θ]υσίαι καὶ αἱ [σπ]ονδαί | ἐπιτελῶνται, κτ[ι]σθέντος τοῦ σημαι | νομένου ἱεροῦ ὑπὲρ τε σοῦ καὶ τῶν προ | γόνων[ν σ]οῦ.

temple reliefs.³³ By using Egyptian texts, in what follows I will first deal with offerings in Egyptian temples. As we shall see, offerings for the well-being of a pharaoh are an integral part of Egyptian temple rituals and therefore every Egyptian temple was built for the pharaoh's well-being. I will then move to the last topic I discuss in this paper: the relationship between ruler cult, which consists of offerings made *to* the ruler as to a god, and offerings for the well-being of the king in Egyptian temples. As we shall see, these apparently alternative ways of honouring the monarchs are in fact not contradictory in Ptolemaic times and provided agents with a flexible set of religious initiatives in line with Egyptian temple traditions.

EGYPTIAN RITUALS FOR THE WELL-BEING OF THE PHARAOH

Some Greek papyri help us understand what is meant when a priest performs rituals *for* the king. In 99 BC, for example, Petesis, son of Chenuphis, the chief of the embalmers' guild of "the greatest, immortal gods" Osorapis and Osormnevis, wrote to the "ever-living greatest gods" Ptolemy X and Berenike III. He addressed a complaint to them stating that there were certain men who harassed him a great deal, which was not good. He underlines his complaint with the following explanation:

Though furnishing great services and all the necessary things to the aforementioned gods, holding out my hands to them, and performing prayers and sacrifices for you, o greatest gods and bringers of victory, so as to grant you health, victory, power, strength and lordship over the lands under heaven, still I am being mistreated.³⁴

In this formulation, we learn in concrete terms how the relation between the immortal gods and the mortal, but nevertheless greatest god, the king, is to be seen: Osorapis and Osormnevis are prayed in order to grant the salvation and rule of king and queen. Although the king and queen are explicitly called gods, as in the *asylia*-inscription mentioned above³⁵, the gods Osorapis and Osormnevis are nevertheless those who guarantee the well-being of the rulers. This subordination of the rulers to the Egyptian gods is totally in line with the official status of the Ptolemaic king in Egyptian temples as it was promulgated by the Egyptian synodal decrees, like the famous decree of Rosetta from 196 BC. By this text, the priests installed the king into the Egyptian temples as a veritable god with his own statues, rituals and feasts. Nevertheless, the priests pointed out that, as a god, the king was dependent on the

33. Cf. HUSSY (2007), p. 70.

34. UPZ I 106, lines 11–15: *χρείας πλείους καὶ ἀναγκαί[ας] | [π]αρεχόμενος τοῖς προγεγραμμένοις θεοῖς τὰς χ[ε]ῖ[ρ]ας αὐτ[ῶν] πρ[ο]σφέ[ρων] καὶ τὰς ὑπὲρ | [ὑ]μῶν, μέγιστοι θεοὶ καὶ νικηφόροι, εὐχὰς καὶ θυσί[ας] ἐπιτελῶν διδόναι ὑμῖν ὑγίειαν | [ν]ίκην κράτος σθένος κυριείαν τῶν [ὑ]πὸ τὸν οὐρανὸν χωρῶν σκυλλόμενος δὲ καὶ | διασιόμενος.* (cf. UPZ I 108).

35. *I.Fayoum* III 152, lines 29–31: *τὸν εὐχά[ρι]στον καὶ θεότατον βασιλέα, καθ' ἣν ἔχεις | πρὸς τὸ θεῖον εὐ[σ]έβειαν; I.Fayoum* II 112, lines 16–18: *θεότατε βασιλεῦ, πρὸς τὸ θεῖον εὐσέβειαν, | μάλιστα πρὸς τὴν θεὰν Ἰσιν, διὸ δέομεθά σου τοῦ νικηφόρου θεοῦ, εἰ δοκεῖ, ἐπιχωρῆσαι ἄστυλον; I.Fayoum* II 136, lines 20–21: *δέομαι σοῦ τοῦ νικηφόρου θεοῦ, εἰ δ[οκ]εῖ.*

Egyptian gods. Indeed, after the report of the good deeds of the king for the temples and Egypt, the priests state:

[...] in return for which the gods have given him health, victory, power and all other good things (ὕγεια, νίκη, κράτος καὶ τὰλλ' ἀγαθ[ὰ πάντα]), his kingdom remaining for him and his children for all time.³⁶

In the hieroglyphic version we can read:

[...] in reward for this the gods give him victory, strength, life, salvation, health and everything good in total (*knw nht 'nh wd3 snb hn 'jht nfr r 3w=sn*).³⁷

The gods obviously give their favour to a king who is doing his job as pharaoh by protecting Egypt and supplying the temples. This was his principal duty as the main ritualist of all temples. Thus, although the priests established Ptolemy as a god of their temple, they made it clear that the new god was dependent on the immortal Egyptian gods.³⁸

This formulation already shows that the ritual performed by the pharaoh does not only guarantee the well-being of Egypt, but that the Egyptian gods ensure the well-being of the king as a counter-donation.

It is remarkable how these clearly Egyptian prayers resemble those of the Greek priests in Pergamon cited above. Did the Egyptian priests just copy and paste Greek prayers? I do not think so: correlation does not mean causality or dependency. On the contrary, we will now see that offerings for the salvation, health, and so on of the king are in complete accordance with Egyptian royal ideology and are an integral part of Egyptian temple religion. In my view, the priests just translated into Greek an old Egyptian concept, which can be found in pharaonic texts. For example, in the famous Brooklyn hieratic papyrus, coming from the Saitic period, and containing a ceremony called “confirmation of the royal power”, we learn of a ritual that the pharaoh has to perform at certain times:

The king goes to do the offering to all gods of the temple for the life, salvation and health of the pharaoh (*wdn hr-tp 'nh wd3 snb*), may he live, prosper and be well.³⁹

In the announcement of the coronation of the pharaoh Thutmosis I it is stated:

You shall perform sacrifices for the gods of the south in Elephantine by doing praise for the life, salvation and health of the king of Upper and Lower Egypt Thutmosis.⁴⁰

36. OGIS I 90, lines 35–36: ἀνθ' ὧν δεδώκασιν αὐτῷ οἱ θεοὶ ὑγίαν, νίκην, κράτος καὶ τὰλλ' ἀγαθ[ὰ πάντα], | τῆς βασιλείας διαμενούσης αὐτῷ καὶ τοῖς τέκνοις εἰς τὸν ἅπαντα χρόνον.

37. *Urk.* II 187, lines 6–7.

38. Cf. POSENER (1960), p. 27, n. 4: “Il suffira de rappeler ici toutes les oraisons, toutes les offrandes aux dieux qui se faisaient pour le salut du roi.”

39. *Papyrus Brooklyn* 47.218.50, cl. III, line 20.

40. *Cairo CG* 34006, lines 5–6 = *Urk.* IV 80, lines 15–16; BEYLAKE (2002), p. 415.

The same kind of praise and sacrifices are known for the daily ritual in the temples.⁴¹ I take a very intriguing example from the temple of Esna from the Roman period. Visitors entering the *pronaos* of the temple may see a columned hall. Some of these columns are inscribed with litanies addressing different gods. All litanies have the same structure. The litany for Osiris states:

Chanting a litany of offerings to Osiris on this day, like on every day, saying:
litany of offering to Osiris-Onnophris, justified, king of the gods, in all his names,
for the life, prosperity and well-being of the king of Upper and Lower Egypt
(Domitian, who is August).⁴²

What follows is a long list of the Osirian names and emanations, and the chant ends with the sentence “they shall give all life, all endurance, all might, all prosperity and all stability to the son of Re, the pharaoh, like Re in eternity.”⁴³

To sum up, it is obvious that the counter-donation of the pharaoh’s offerings and ritual practice in the temple is not only *inter alia*, but rather *especially* the well-being of the pharaoh himself, which is to be equated with the well-being of Egypt in its whole.

THE MEANING OF TEMPLE DEDICATIONS USING THE *HYPER*-FORMULA

Offerings for the well-being of the pharaoh are a fundamental and integral part of Egyptian temple rituals. This point is perfectly consistent with the argument of Egyptian priests when they state in Greek petitions that they perform the offerings *for* the king. The next question that demands clarification is how temple dedications *for* the king are related to Egyptian royal ideology. Since, according to the Egyptian understanding, only the pharaoh can build temples, it is an obvious contradiction to royal ideology if a temple shows an inscription where someone else is declaring that he has financed the project. Thus, the idea that the Greek preposition *hyper* is used to show the pharaoh as the “virtual agent”⁴⁴ is at first sight quite convincing. We nevertheless learn from hieroglyphic biographies of the late period that priests could also dedicate and finance temples. The famous Petosiris, for example, states:

When I became controller for Thoth, lord of Khmun, I put the temple of Thoth in its former condition.⁴⁵

41. *Esna* III (= SAUNERON [1975]), no. 209, line 27; no. 216, line 1; no. 217, line 19; see DERCHAIN-URTEL (1997), p. 47–53; KOPP (2003), p. 49–53; SCHOTT (1955), p. 289–295.

42. *Esna* III, no. 217, line 19.

43. *Esna* III, no. 209, line 73.

44. CANEVA (2016b), p. 146: “Dionysodoros uses the *hyper*-formula in a context clearly meaning that the king should be considered as the virtual agent of this euergetic initiative.”

45. LEFEBVRE (1923–1924), I, p. 33–35.

Similarly, Hor, prophet of the god Herishef at Herakleopolis, wrote:

I have renovated the temples of Upper and Lower Egypt, the ones of the South and the North at this place and the temple of Nehebkau.⁴⁶

It is clear that Egyptian priests were proud of financing their temples and wanted to show this in public. In my view, the *hyper*-formula was perfectly fitted for this purpose: the dedicator could highlight his euergetism towards the temple and at the same time show his loyalty towards the king, since inside the building the offerings were performed for the king's well-being. This is demonstrated by the above-mentioned *asylia* inscription of Kleopatra.⁴⁷ It was therefore also possible that a king himself could dedicate a sacred building for his own well-being. In Herakleion, for example, a foundation plaque was found that belonged to the temple of Khonsu, called Herakles in Greek. Ptolemy III built a procession house for the god and the small gold dedicatory plaque was inserted into the foundation with the following inscription:

King Ptolemy, son of king Ptolemy and Arsinoe, the Theoi Adelphoi, (has dedicated) the *kōmastērion* to Herakles for himself, queen Berenike, his sister and wife, and his children.⁴⁸

Since dedications using the *hyper*-formula are very often related to Egyptian cults—they are indeed an epigraphic habit of Ptolemaic Egypt⁴⁹—some scholars have argued that the use of this formula would point to a properly Egyptian dedication (or another ritual activity) expressed in a Greek way.⁵⁰ I am rather sceptical about this assumption, since Egyptian dedicatory inscriptions—at least in the Demotic script, which more closely reflects contemporaneous linguistic usages—do not present any expression providing a fitting counterpart of the Greek *hyper*-formula. On the other hand, hieroglyphic texts occasionally employ a formula bypassing the problem: *hr rn n*, meaning “with/in the name of”, by which the donor of a temple may perform a dedication by naming

46. *Statue Louvre* A 88; THIERS (1995), Doc. 5 = GORRE (2009), Nr. 41.

47. *SB* I 3926, lines 11–15 = *I.Prose* 36 = *C.Ord.Ptol.* 67 = *I.Asylia* 226: τὸ κατεσκευασμένον ὑπὲρ τῆς ἡμετέρας σωτηρίας ὑπὸ Καλλιμάχου τοῦ ἐπιστρατήγου Ἰσίδειον ἀπὸ νότου Πτολεμαΐδος ἀτελὲς καὶ ἄσυλον εἶναι. Cf. also *SB* I 684, below, n. 62.

48. *SEG* LVI 1986 = F. KAYSER, *BÉ* 2007, no. 544; illustration in GODDIO – CLAUSS (2007), no. 158: Βασιλεὺς Πτολεμαῖος Πτολεμαίου | καὶ Ἀρσινόης θεῶν ἀδελφῶν τὸ | [κω]μαστήριον Ἑρακλεῖ ὑπὲρ | αὐτοῦ καὶ βασιλίσσης Βερενίκης | τῆς ἀδελφῆς αὐτοῦ καὶ γυναικὸς | καὶ τῶν τέκνων.

49. BINGEN (2007), p. 274; cf. MA (2013), p. 17–24; CANEVA (2016b) convincingly argues for a sociological explanation of the particular success that this formula met in Ptolemaic Egypt: unlike in other parts of the Hellenistic world, where the political and religious life was dominated by *polis* institutions, administrative interactions in the Egyptian *chōra* primarily took the form of interpersonal negotiations between various degrees of the royal and/or temple hierarchy; in this context, the use of the *hyper*-formula could function as a *captatio benevolentiae* promoting fruitful interactions between various agents.

50. IOSSIF (2005); FASSA (2015), p. 136: “The Egyptian background and its creative exploitation by the Ptolemies probably contributed significantly to the shaping of the mentality behind the dedications.”

the pharaoh on the wall of the religious building he has personally dedicated.⁵¹ In the time of Philip Arrhidaeus, for example, the hieroglyphic inscription on a statue of the Egyptian priest Teos stated that he had built a temple for the falcon of Athribis and made an inscription on the portal “with/in the great name of his majesty” (*hr rn wr n hm=f*).⁵² We may surmise that, if Teos’ inscription on the portal had been in Greek, the dedication would have been written ὑπὲρ βασιλέως etc. Confirmation of this correspondence comes from a bilingual foundation plaque found only a few years ago in Alexandria, in a deposit of the temple of Bubastis. Here we see the hieroglyphic preposition “with/in the name of” used as a rendering of the Greek *hyper*. The Greek inscription bears the following dedication:

Queen Berenike (has dedicated) for king Ptolemy, her brother and spouse, and their children, the temple, the *temenos* and the altar, to Bubastis.⁵³

In relation to this typical Greek dedication, the hieroglyphic version presents the following text:

Lady of the two lands, Daughter of Re (Berenike) | dedicated ... [this] *temenos* ... [and this] chapel and this altar *with the name of* (*hr rn n*) the king of Upper and Lower Egypt (Ptolemy, living forever, [beloved of Ptah]) | and with her name together with the name of their children.⁵⁴

Thus, we learn that the *hyper*-formula was rendered in hieroglyphs with the wording “with/in the name of”. Although the name of the queen is missing in the Greek *hyper*-formula, she nevertheless appears in the hieroglyphic version of the dedication.

Only from the Roman period do we have different possibilities to translate the dedicatory formula into Demotic script. The best-known example of its usage comes from a dossier of dedications of a certain Parthenios, son of Panas, who had financed building activities for Geb in the time of emperor Tiberius.⁵⁵ In the lunette of these stelae, we can see the winged sun with two uraei, under which the pharaoh—the Roman emperor Tiberius—is performing the foundation ritual in front of Geb. Below this, on both stelae appears a hieroglyphic dedicatory inscription; one of the stelae also bears a Greek inscription, whereas the other has a Demotic text. The hieroglyphic dedication states:

51. WILSON (1997), p. 584.

52. *Cairo CG* 46341, line 19 = GORRE (2009), no. 70.

53. ABD EL-MAKSOUDE *et al.* (2015), p. 125–144, Inv. no. E211, 3 (BÉ [2016], no. 550): βασιλίσσα [Βε]ρενί[κη ὑ]πὲρ βασιλέως Πτολεμαίου [τοῦ] αὐ[τῆς] ἀδελφοῦ καὶ ἀν[δρὸς καὶ τῶν] τούτων τέκνων [τὸν ναὸν καὶ τὸ τέμενος] καὶ τὸν [β]ωμὸν Βουβάσται.

54. ABD EL-MAKSOUDE *et al.* (2015), p. 125–144, Inv. no. E211, 3: *nb.t t3.wj sz.t R' (Brnygj) | rd.jt [...] hmw.t [hn'] gzy.t [...] hn' h' w.t tn hr rn n nswt-bjt [(Ptwlmys 'nh d.t my Pth) | [...] hn' hr rn=s hn' rn n ms.w=sn.*

55. FARID (1988), p. 13–65; VLEEMING (2001) = *Short Texts* I 179–202; PASQUALI (2007), p. 187–192; cf. the entire text corpus in REINACH – WEILL (1912), p. 1–24; with SPIEGELBERG (1914), p. 75–88.

May live the Horus, strong-armed, king of Upper and Lower Egypt, master of the two lands, Tiberius, son of Re, master of crowns, Caesar, who is August. He has made as his monument for his father Geb, prince of the gods, great god, resident in the southern sanctuary, a very great gate in place (?) which he has made, being endowed with life.⁵⁶

This is a typical hieroglyphic dedicatory formula, showing the pharaoh as founder of a building. The depiction on the lunette, where the pharaoh is performing a ritual of foundation, corresponds to the hieroglyphic text. Nevertheless, in fact the monument was not dedicated by the pharaoh, but by Parthenios, as the Greek subscription using the *hyper*-formula shows:

For Tiberius Caesar Augustus, in year 18, 11th Epeiph, to Kronos, the very great god, Parthenios, son of Paminis, president of Isis (has dedicated).⁵⁷

On the second stela, we have a nearly identical depiction on the lunette and the same hieroglyphic text, but a different Demotic version:

Before (*j.jr-hr*) Tiberius^{l.p.h.} Claudius^{l.p.h.} Caesar^{l.p.h.} Sebastos^{l.p.h.} Germanicus^{l.p.h.} Autokrator, before (*m-b3h*) Geb, prince of the gods, the great God, who gives life to Parthenios, son of Pamin, his mother Tapchoy, the representative of Isis, unto eternity. Year 9, 4th month of Parmouthi, day 1.⁵⁸

Since a dedication to a god in Egyptian language is always written with the preposition (*m-b3h*),⁵⁹ the author had to choose another preposition for the translation of *hyper*—he took *j.jr-hr* which means the same but is obviously a rendering of the Greek *hyper*. The use of *j.jr-hr* in the context of such dedications in combination with the name of the pharaoh is new. The preposition can either have a temporal meaning or a local one.⁶⁰ Thus eventually, the dedicator did not even want to translate the *hyper*, but to express that he had done his construction “in the time” of Tiberius.

The same problem of translation can be detected in a dedication by a certain Apollonios for the well-being of the same emperor Tiberius. Here the *hyper* is translated with *n p3 h.j*.⁶¹ The translation of this preposition is as unclear as that of *j.jr-hr*.

56. VLEEMING (2001) = *Short Texts* I 186; FARID (1988), p. 48.

57. SB V 8812: ὑπὲρ Τιβερίου Καίσαρος Σεβαστοῦ (ἔτους) ιη' Επειφ ια Κρόνῳ θεῷ μεγίστῳ Παρθένιος Παμάνεως προστάτης Ἰσιδος.

58. VLEEMING (2001) = *Short Texts* I 196; on Parthenios, see PASQUALI (2007), p. 187–192; GRENIER (2009), p. 171–176; PASQUALI (2009), p. 385–395.

59. See LIPPERT – SCHENTULEIT (2006), no. 43.

60. *Chicago Demotic Dictionary*, s.v. “j”, p. 23; SPIEGELBERG (1925), § 340–344; SPIEGELBERG (1914), p. 83: “deshalb wird die ägyptische Präposition etwa für, zum Heile von‘ od. ä. bedeuten”; see also GLADIĆ (2007), p. 124; 128; 135.

61. SB I 684: ὑπὲρ Τιβερίου Καίσαρος Σεβαστοῦ Ἀπο[λλ]ώνιος κωμογραμματεὺς ὑπὲρ ἑαυτοῦ καὶ γυναιξί (sic) καὶ τέκῃ (sic) ὅλα ἐποίησεν τὴν οἰκοδομὴν ἔτους ιζ' Τιβερίου Καίσαρος Σεβαστοῦ, Τῦβ[ι] ιη']. For the Demotic text see VLEEMING (2001) = *Short Texts* I 175 A.

W. Spiegelberg thinks that *h'j* is derived from *h3.w*,⁶² which would have a similar meaning as *j.jr-hr*—"before." On the other hand, S. Vleeming does not relate the preposition to the Greek inscription and the formally corresponding *hyper* and translates with a question mark: "in the time(?)".⁶³

The last possibility of presenting the *hyper*-formula in a Demotic way also comes from the time of Tiberius. It is a statue of an enthroned man with the following Demotic inscription:

Year 19, 4th month of Pharmuthi, day 16: to accomplish a thing for Tiberius Caesar Sebastos, before Pekosh, the god, (by) Hor, son of Harpaiat, his wife (and) his children, for ever and eternally.⁶⁴

Although this time the Greek *hyper*-formula is missing, this would provide the most fitting translation of the Egyptian "to accomplish a thing for" (*ir md.t hr*).

As no Egyptian genre of text exists for a dedication in favour of a person, I think we should suppose an Alexandrian origin of the *hyper*-formula, as already proposed by Bingen.⁶⁵ The high degree of popularity of the *hyper*-formula in Greek inscriptions from Egyptian cultic contexts can be explained by the fact that it provided donors with the freedom to claim their euergetic role in Greek dedications, or in the Greek version of bilingual dedications, while reproducing through the hieroglyphic dedicatory formulae the Egyptian traditions considering the pharaoh as the only ritualist and founder of temples. As we have seen, according to the Egyptian religious traditions, only the pharaoh was allowed to dedicate temples, and only his name and agency were inscribed on temple walls in the sacred hieroglyphic script. Nevertheless, people wished to show their own prestige and to let other people know that it was not the king, but they themselves who had spent enormous amounts of private means for the gods. Therefore, a person like Parthenios chose the *hyper*-formula in the Greek text of his traditional Egyptian stela: by using this formula he could show how generous he had been towards the gods—something he did in the Demotic script, too. Thus, in both living languages Parthenios accentuated his personal prestige and at the same time showed his loyalty to the king.

However, in the hieroglyphic text, a script only used for the communication with the gods and which nearly nobody other than the priests could read, everything is expressed in the traditional way: it is the pharaoh, not the donor who is performing the rituals, as everybody could have seen in the depiction of the stela itself. Moreover, since such depictions of rituals have a performative character, the ritual is enacted by depicting it. Accordingly, everybody could see that the traditions were fully respected and this was apparently not perceived as a contradiction to the Greek and Demotic

62. SPIEGELBERG (1914), p. 84.

63. VLEEMING (2001) = *Short Texts* I 175.

64. VLEEMING (2001) = *Short Texts* I 129 A–B.

65. BINGEN (2007), p. 276.

inscription. Besides, that the presentation of the donor's own prestige was not an act of insubordination against the pharaoh is confirmed by Dionysodoros' *asylia* stele from Euhemeria, which I have discussed at the beginning of this paper: the lunette of this stele depicts the pharaoh performing the ritual, while the text clearly shows that it is Dionysodoros who has financed the building.

For the author of the dedication, such discrepancy between the inscription and the depiction had a further advantage: depicting the pharaoh would make it clear that the temple was under the protection of the ruler, and was therefore an official building against which one should not act.⁶⁶

THE RELATION OF THE *HYPER*-FORMULA TO RULER CULT IN EGYPTIAN TEMPLES

As seen above, priests often stated that they performed rituals to the gods for the king in Egyptian sanctuaries. In the context of the Ptolemaic ruler cult, this is, at least at a first sight, quite astonishing, as according to the synodal decrees of the Egyptian priests, the living king was also a temple-sharing god of the Egyptian gods in every Egyptian temple. The above-mentioned decree of Rosetta clearly exemplifies this equation between the ruler and the Egyptian gods. To begin with, a statue of the king is to be set up and the priests should "pay homage to the images thrice daily and put on them the sacred adornment and perform the other rites just as for the other gods at [the] festivals [in the country]."⁶⁷ Furthermore, "a statue and a golden shrine" must be established "[in each of the] temples and set up in the inner sanctuaries with the other shrines."⁶⁸ This shrine of the king is "to join in the procession at the great festivals, during which the processions of the shrines occur."⁶⁹ Moreover, the priests are requested to hold on the king's birthday and coronation day "feasts [and festivals in the] temples of Egypt, each month,⁷⁰ and to perform in (the temples) sacrifices and libations and the other rites, just as at the other festivals."⁷¹ In addition to these monthly celebrations, a yearly festival of five days is to be held for Ptolemy, starting on the first of Thoth: on this occasion, the priests "shall wear garlands as they perform

66. LANCIERS (1986b), p. 84, n. 21: "*Es ist zu beobachten, daß auch bei den privaten Weibinschriften der König im ägyptisch inspirierten Stelenbild vor den Göttern erscheint, wodurch der falsche Eindruck erweckt werden kann, daß es sich um eine offizielle Weihung handelt*"; see I.Fayoum I 6, 14, 34, 35.

67. OGIS I 90, lines 40–41; translation by BAGNALL – DEROW (2004), p. 272

68. OGIS I 90, lines 41–42.

69. OGIS I 90, lines 42–43.

70. In the Hellenistic period, birthdays of sovereigns and of other benefactors could be celebrated either with a yearly rhythm (see, for example, IC III iv 4, with an annual celebration for Ptolemy III at Itanos) or every month (cf. IK Erythrai 207 A, lines 27–28, 33–35 for Antiochos I).

71. OGIS I 90, lines 46–48.

sacrifices and libations and the other things that are proper.”⁷² Finally, the priests shall add to their priesthoods for specific gods their new tasks as priests of Ptolemy.⁷³

The decree makes Ptolemy a *synnaos theos* in Egyptian temples. Accordingly, offerings must have been performed not only for the well-being of the king but also to him as a god. However, why did the priests never mention something like this in their petitions to the king, but only referred to offerings for his well-being? There are two possibilities to explain this. One could assume that the condition of Ptolemy as temple-sharer of the gods only meant that he was involved in rituals for his well-being. This would mean that, despite his title and the linguistic equation between him and the gods, he was not venerated as a deity. The other possibility, which seems to me more likely, is that since in the decrees the Egyptian priests equated the living king with the gods (a novelty in relation to pharaonic traditions), the sovereign did indeed partake in the daily temple rituals at least with regard to the ceremonies regulated in the decrees.

This brings us back to the question of why the priests only referred to the offerings for the well-being of the king in their petitions. If we want to solve this problem, we must first take into consideration how the offerings and dedications for the well-being of the king were connected to the ruler cult in Egyptian temples, since this point is debated in research. G. Hölbl, for example, thinks that “the dedications to certain gods which begin with the formula ‘on behalf of’ (*hyper*) the royal house, mark the transition to the worship of the ruler as a divinity.”⁷⁴ According to H. Heinen, these offerings are even part of ruler cult.⁷⁵ Some scholars, on the other hand, think that the Egyptians simply did not know that the Greek formula clearly marked the difference between god and man.⁷⁶

If one nevertheless assumes that ruler cult means the equation of the king with gods in ritual and language—a point supported by the decree of Rosetta—we must conclude that the *hyper*-formula does exactly the opposite: it shows that the well-being of the king should be granted by the gods. There must therefore be a difference between the immortal gods and the mortal ruler.⁷⁷

Eventually, the solution to the problem may lie in the fact that the Ptolemaic king was only a *synnaos theos* in Egyptian temples. This implies that the ruler was but

72. OGIS I 90, lines 49–50.

73. OGIS I 90, lines 50–52.

74. HÖLBL (2001), p. 96.

75. HEINEN (1994), p. 161.

76. GLADIĆ (2007), p. 109; cf. CANEVA (2016b), p. 144: “Egyptians recording a ritual act concerning the Ptolemies in their own language seem to have simply by-passed the problem by ignoring the nuances expressed by *hyper* in Greek.”

77. See FRASER (1972), I, p. 226: “Such dedications are only indirectly indications of ruler-worship, but they are far more frequent than those direct dedications in which the name of the king, with or without that of his consort, occurs in the dative case.”

one of the many deities worshipped in a sanctuary and, except for the specific festivals related to monarchic power, he was not the main recipient of the offerings but rather a guest occupying a secondary position in the hierarchy of those who could take part in the distribution of the sacrificial goods in Egyptian temples.⁷⁸ However, besides rituals addressed to the king as to, and together with, the gods, every offering in the Egyptian temple was still performed, following the ancestral traditions, for the well-being of the pharaoh. This practice must have been of great importance for the king, as we learn from the *prostagma* of Ptolemy VIII cited above. Since we can assume that petitioners would take the strongest argument to support their reasoning, we must conclude that the reference to offerings for the well-being of the king was stronger than the fact that the king would take part, as a temple-sharing deity, in the distribution of offerings to the gods.

The fact that offerings in Egyptian temples are performed for the well-being of and at the same time to the king is not so unusual as it might seem in modern eyes. If we look, for example, into the Greek world of Hellenistic and Roman times, we see that this was common practice since the appearance of ruler cult. In a decree from Ilion, for example, offerings addressed directly to the king are mentioned together with others made to Athena for the king's well-being.⁷⁹ In a decree of Cyrene for Ptolemy IX and Kleopatra Selene, it is stated:

[It has been decided] [...] that the [...] , by the prescribed [annual feasts] should step forward dressed in white and carry out on the [altars] built [on the agora sacrifices and libations] and utter wishes and [vows] for the health and [safety] of the king, the queen [and their son] Ptolemy, while expressing gratitude about the privileges granted by them to the city.⁸⁰

These are the offerings for the well-being of the royal couple, after which one of the following regulations states:

That the *damiergoi* and the *hiarothytes* let the prytaneion be decorated and accomplish sacrifices for the city to king Ptolemy, queen Kleopatra, his sister, Theoi Soteres, and to their son Ptolemy, to their parents, to their ancestors, as well as to all gods and all goddesses, to each the regular offering.⁸¹

That this synchrony of offering to the king and for his well-being was not specific to Hellenistic ruler cult can be shown by the famous speech *On Rome* of Aelius Aristides. He states:

78. On the criteria and procedures concerning the hierarchical partition of offerings in Egyptian temples, known in Egyptology as *Opferumlauf*, see ALTENMÜLLER (1982).

79. OGIS I 212, lines 5–9 and 20 (281/280 BC); IOSSIF (2011), p. 244–245; cf. CANEVA (2016b), p. 123–124.

80. SEG IX 5, cl. 1, lines 8–13 = IGCyr011100 (109/108 BC).

81. SEG IX 5, cl. 1, lines 19–26; see also MARQUAILLE (2003), p. 25–42.

No one is so proud that he can fail to be moved upon hearing even the mere mention of the ruler's name, but, rising, he praises and worships him and breathes two prayers in a single breath, one to the gods on the ruler's behalf, one for his own affairs to the ruler himself.⁸²

Eventually, therefore, the priests most probably did not refer to the offerings to the god Ptolemy in their petition because as a *synnaos* god, he would only be one among many, and more precisely the last god benefiting from the libations and sacrifices accomplished in the sanctuary. In contrast to this, all the offerings to the gods were meant to guarantee his health, strength and victory, which seems to have been a much more important sign of allegiance to the king.

CONCLUSIONS

The starting point of this paper concerned two inscriptions, which record the granting of *asylia* to two Egyptian temples in the small village Euhemeria. Two Greeks wanted to rebuild the local sanctuaries on their own expenses and therefore petitioned the king to grant the temples the right of inviolability. A central argument of both petitioners was the fact that offerings were performed for the king and his family inside the temple, that there were statues of the king and his ancestors in the temple, or that the temple was erected for him. The preposition "for" in these arguments is expressed in Greek by using the well-known and nevertheless problematic *hyper*-formula.

The analysis of these specific settings has raised the question of what exactly the preposition *hyper* may mean in the context of Egyptian ritual practice. As seen above, no decisive criticism based on grammar can be made against the hypothesis that, when used in Egyptian ritual contexts, *hyper* could take a different meaning than in Greek and Jewish ritual milieus, by pointing to the pharaoh as the virtual agent on whose behalf the priests or other agents performed offerings. However, papyri and inscriptions clearly show that, since oldest times, the offerings in Egyptian temples were performed with the same function expressed by *hyper* in Greek and Jewish dedications, that is, for the well-being of the king.

According to the religious traditions, the pharaoh was the sole ritualist who performed the sacrifices to the gods for his own life, strength and health. These divine gifts are the so-called counter-donations (*Gegengaben*) of the gods. In Philae, for example, we have a Ptolemaic inscription showing Ptolemy II offering ointment to Isis. The goddess replies: "I have given to you all life, all power and all health".⁸³ Thus, every Egyptian priest who performed rituals as a real agent in substitution for the pharaoh automatically included the well-being of the pharaoh in his ritual practice, which was in danger if the king did not grant privileges to the temple. Normally, there was no need to state such an obvious matter of fact. However, the priests could

82. Ael. Arist. 26.32.

83. BÉNÉDITE (1893-1895), I, 72,11-13; Berl. Photo 1044, CASSOR-PFEIFFER (2017), 173-174.

decide to make this point explicit in their petitions to the pharaoh. In this case, the *hyper*-formula would allow them to express in Greek language the argument that by ensuring the continuity of Egyptian rituals, the king would profit from divine protection as such rituals were accomplished to the gods for his well-being. As two priestesses serving in the Serapeum in Memphis wrote in 163 BC, the king would better grant them a favour, so that “we can perform our liturgy without hindrance for the great god Sarapis, who together with Isis should confer on you victory and rule over the whole earth.”⁸⁴ All this can be reduced to the formulation “the rituals to the gods for you” (τὰ νομιζόμενα τοῖς θεοῖς ὑπὲρ σου).⁸⁵

The function of the *hyper*-formula to describe traditional temple rituals also helps us understand the logic of inscriptions concerning the (re-)dedication of Egyptian temples. By using the *hyper*-dedicatory formula, private persons, priests and royal functionaries, or even cult associations, could bypass the problem raised by the fact that according to traditional religious ideals, only the pharaoh was allowed to build and finance a temple. This traditional concept was still expressed via the typically Egyptian mediums of depictions on stelae and hieroglyphic inscriptions. At the same time, however, the semantics of Greek *hyper*-dedications allowed these benefactors to stress the prestige of their euergetic initiatives while also manifesting their allegiance and veneration towards the king.

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84. UPZ I 20, lines 61–64: τούτου δὲ γενομένου δυνησόμεθα τὴν καθ’ ἡμᾶς | λειτουργίαν ἀμέμπτως τῷ μεγίστῳ θεῷ Σαράπει | ἐπιτελεῖν, ὃς διδοίη σοι μετὰ τῆς Ἱσιος νίκην κράτος τῆς | οἰκουμένης ἀπάσης.

85. *I.Fayoum* III 152, line 18; cf. *I.Fayoum* II 112, lines 29–33 (93 BC) (with *I.Fayoum* II 113): ὅπ|ως πολλῶ μᾶλλον αἶ τε θυσαίαι καὶ σπονδαίαι | καὶ τᾶλλα τὰ νομιζόμενα ὑπὲρ τε σοῦ | καὶ τῶν τέκνων καὶ τῶν προγόνων καὶ Ἰσι|δι καὶ Σαράπιδι ἐπιτελεσθῆ.