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## KINSHIP AND DECORUM: (RE-)CONSTRUCTING THE MEROITIC ÉLITE

In 1969, Professor and Mrs. Hintze visited the Archaeological Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Budapest where they intended to recruit for their planned next excavation season at Musawwarat es Sufra a young archaeologist with a knowledge of architecture. Since at that time I had just started to work on the publication of the Hungarian excavations at a Christian townsite in Lower Nubia, it was suggested to them that I might be suitable for the job. As it turned out shortly after Professor Hintze's Budapest visit, however, field work at Musawwarat could not be resumed, and the situation did not change for several years. Instead of field work, I was invited to join the Musawwarat publication project.

It was obvious to me from the first moment that participation in this project will demand an enormous amount of learning from me. But I was not prepared for the actual kind of school at which I was going to matriculate and I could not foresee how radically it would change my professional outlook, either. During my working periods in Berlin, which started in 1970 in the Bereich Ägyptologie und Sudanarchäologie of the Humboldt University, I was granted admission to a workshop where every single moment of academic activity was permeated by the overwhelming presence of a most extraordinary mind. That everybody who came into a working contact with Professor Fritz Hintze submitted him/herself to his intellectual influence was not only because he obviously knew everything that was there to know about the history and the cultures of the Nile Valley. His irresistible intellectual fascination lay in the unique synthesis of the perspectives of a mathematician, a social scientist, and a linguist. Once I became able to have a notion of it, his way of thinking opened completely new vistas for me. Thus when in 1971 I received from him an invitation to attend the first International Meroitic Conference – where I was confronted not only with the attraction of Meroitic Nubia but also with the splendor of the great generation of scholars who carried through the UNESCO Nubian Campaign –, I have definitively decided to venture into Meroitic Studies.

Thirty years after the Berlin conference and my most fateful working period in the Bereich Ägypto-

logie und Sudanarchäologie, it is now a great honour for me to be allowed to deliver the Hintze Lecture of the year 2001. In my lecture I intend to return to a particular question of Meroitic social history which started to attract me in the early 1970s chiefly as a result of the lecture of Professor Hintze's *Struktur der "Deskriptionssätze"*<sup>1)</sup> and of his *Meroitische Verwandtschaftsbezeichnungen*,<sup>2)</sup> namely, to the investigation of Meroitic mortuary inscriptions as evidence for the social structure and identity of the élite in the Meroitic kingdom. Berlin and the early 1970s: it was the best place and the best time for developing an interest in these texts. My experience of the First Meroitic Conference,<sup>3)</sup> with Karl-Heinz Priese's lecture on the *Entstehung der meroitischen Schrift*,<sup>4)</sup> was followed by the experience of the Second Meroitic Conference<sup>5)</sup> where I not only could attend Nicholas Millet's lecture on *Social and Political Organisation in Meroe*<sup>6)</sup> but where I also got acquainted with the first results of the Paris team organised by Jean Leclant and André Heyler for the works of the *Répertoire d'Épigraphie Méroïtique*.<sup>7)</sup> In the 1970s

1) F. Hintze: *Die Struktur der "Deskriptionssätze" in den meroitischen Totentexten*. MIO 9 (1963) 1-29.

2) Hintze 1974.

3) 1. Internationale Tagung für meroitische Forschungen in Berlin 1971. The proceedings were published in *Meroitica 1* (1973).

4) Priese 1973.

5) *Seconde Session des Journées Internationales d'Études Méroïtiques*, Paris 1973.

6) Published as N.B. Millet: *Social and Political Organisation in Meroe*. ZÄS 108 (1981) 124-141.

7) The published Meroitic inscriptions were collected and analysed by J. Leclant and A. Heyler in the *Centre Documentaire d'Histoire des Religions de l'École Pratique des Hautes Études*, Ve section, Paris, cf. MNL 1 (1968) ff.; the first computer outprint of the REM: *Enregistrement des Textes 0001-1137; Index Simple; Répertoire Descriptif; Répertoire Bibliographique des Études Méroïtiques*. Paris 1975. See subsequently J. Leclant (ed.): *Répertoire d'Épigraphie Méroïtique*. Computer outprint, Paris 1982 (transcription of texts REM 0001-1152B). For the present stand of the Paris *Répertoire* see Leclant et al. 2000 (complete documentation of texts REM 0001-1278 without transcriptions).



and the early 1980s I also had the precious privilege to discuss with Professor Hintze various problems that were, and remain, inherent in the interpretation of Meroitic texts.

In the Preface of his 1911 *Meroitic Inscriptions of Shablul and Karanog* Griffith voiced the hope that “the material .. provided [in his work] has been so far verified, classified, and dealt with that any further spark of light will quickly spread its illumination. If new eyes, whether of trained decipherers or of scholars expert in North African Philology, will exert themselves upon it, the secrets of Meroitic should soon be yielded up.”<sup>8)</sup> Indeed, under the gaze of expert eyes the texts revealed more and more of their linguistic secrets during the course of the subsequent decades and they began to present themselves for prosopographical investigations, too. Nevertheless, Millet’s above-mentioned pioneering 1973 paper, and Abdelgadir Abdalla’s<sup>9)</sup> and Inge Hofmann’s studies<sup>10)</sup> on the extended family, and my essays on Meroitic administration<sup>11)</sup> remained isolated attempts at the historical and sociohistorical analysis of the Meroitic stela and offering table inscriptions. While important studies were devoted to the iconography of the offering tables and thus to significant aspects of Meroitic mortuary religion,<sup>12)</sup> less attention seems to have been paid to the study of the social and intellectual identity, the composition and stratification of the milieu in which the texts inscribed on these monuments had been created.

The emergence of Meroitic literacy is viewed traditionally in connection with what is usually supposed to have been the transfer of the royal capital from Napata to Meroe City and as part of the articulation of new, “southern” accents in Meroitic culture.<sup>13)</sup> In the period of the “shift to the south” of Meroitic

policy and culture, a process which is generally believed to have been a deliberate practical and ideological moving-away from Egypt, the creation of the Meroitic cursive script was nevertheless based on the model of contemporary Egyptian “abnormal hieratic”.<sup>14)</sup> It is also obvious that the articulation and re-articulation of “southern” concepts was not interconnected with any decline of the traditional “northern” intellectual and power centres: on the contrary, the articulation of “southern” concepts frequently bears the stamp of the intellectual workshops in the Amûn temples of Napata and Kawa.<sup>15)</sup> In order to better understand the social context and the proportions of this “shift to the south”, let us have a look at the historical moment in which these remarkably complex developments began to take shape.

The Meroitic kingdom reacted to the news of the conquest of Egypt by Alexander the Great and the changes in Egypt during the first decades of the new rule by incursions into Egyptian territory. In return, a punitive expedition had already been dispatched by Ptolemy I to Nubia<sup>16)</sup> and around 274 BC Ptolemy II acquired full control over Lower Nubia between the First and Second Cataracts.<sup>17)</sup> The intimidation of Kush prepared the way to the establishment of large-scale trade contacts between Egypt and the Middle Nile Region. In Kush, the impact of these contacts was decisive. The Egyptian occupation of Lower Nubia and the organisation of the trade route along the Nile contributed to the development of a settlement chain in the Nile Valley north and south of the Second Cataract,<sup>18)</sup> while the unfolding of the trade with exotic animals and goods originating from the southern territories of Kush or acquired from African territories south of Kush brought about a rapid development of the political and socioeconomic

8) Griffith 1911 vi. Also quoted in Hofmann 1981 347.

9) Abdelgadir M. Abdalla: *A Study of a Meroite Extended Family from Inscriptions*. in: J.M. Plumley (ed.): *Nubian Studies*. Warminster 1978 6-24; Abdalla 1982; id.: *Meroitic Social Stratification*. *Meroitica* 7 (1984) 23-84.

10) I. Hofmann: *Zu einigen Nominalausdrücken in den Descriptionsphrasen der meroitischen Totentexte*. *MNL* 14 (1974) 33-47; Hofmann 1977.

11) Török 1977; id.: *Some Comments on the Social Position and Hierarchy of the Priests on Karanog Inscriptions*. in: E. Endesfelder – K.-H. Priese et al. (eds): *Ägypten und Kusch. Schriften zur Geschichte und Kultur des Alten Orients* 13 [Fs Fritz Hintze]. Berlin 1977 401-420; Török 1979; id.: *Meroitic Religion: Three Contributions in a Positivistic Manner*. *Meroitica* 7 156-182.

12) E.g., Yellin 1978; Yellin 1982; ead.: *Meroitic Funerary Religion*. in: W. Haase – H. Temporini (eds): *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt* II.18.5. Berlin-New York 1995 2869-2892; and see also I. Hofmann: *Die meroitische Religion. Staatskult und Volksfrömmigkeit*. *ibid.* 2801-2868.

13) Cf. the historical overviews presented in W.Y. Adams: *Nubia Corridor to Africa*. London 1977; F. Hintze: *The Meroitic Period*. in: S. Hochfield–E. Riefstahl (eds): *Africa in Atiquity. The Arts of Ancient Nubia and the Sudan I. The Essays*. Brooklyn 1978 89-105.

14) Cf. Priese 1973; A. Loprieno: *Linguistic Variety and Egyptian Literature*. in: A. Loprieno (ed.): *Ancient Egyptian Literature. History and Forms*. Leiden-New York-Köln 1996 515-529 528.

15) Cf. L. Török: *The Image of the Ordered World in Ancient Nubian Art. The Construction of the Kushite Mind 800 BC-300 AD*. Leiden-Boston-Köln (forthcoming) Chs 2.8, 2.9.

16) Around 319/8, *Satrap Stela*, *Urk.* II 11 ff.

17) For the evidence see FHN II No. 97; G. Hölbl: *A History of the Ptolemaic Empire*. London-New York 2001 55 ff.

18) This process could not have been correctly understood without K.-H. Priese’s analysis of the ancient toponyms of the Nubian Nile Valley, cf. his *Orte des mittleren Niltals in der Überlieferung bis zum Ende des christlichen Mittelalters*. *Meroitica* 7 (1984) 484-497.



structure of the Kushite South, i.e., the Butana and the Gezira regions.<sup>19)</sup>

The maintenance of the contacts with Egypt necessitated a re-structuring of the contacts between the central power and the provincial élites which, in turn, determined an increased home production of prestige goods as, e.g., pottery and faience.<sup>20)</sup> It also brought about a territorial expansion through the establishment of new allegiances with polities at the southern fringes of Kush.<sup>21)</sup> The quantitative and qualitative development of redistribution also resulted in an increase of building activity all over the kingdom.<sup>22)</sup>

The restructuring of Egyptian-Kushite relations coincided with the emergence of a new Kushite royal dynasty in the second quarter of the 3rd century BC. As we may conclude from Agatharchides's famous Ergamenes story,<sup>23)</sup> the dynastic change was a bloody event. The new rulers stressed their connections with the Meroitic-speaking region of the City of Meroe by transferring the royal burial ground from Napata to Meroe City, more precisely, to the South Cemetery at Meroe where, as it would seem, also some of their ancestors had been buried before.<sup>24)</sup> Though the details of the process remain unknown, the emergence of the fully developed Meroitic literacy about seventy years later was in all probability determined, as to the actual language, by the ethnic context of the new royal line and the élite that supported it.

In Egypt the hieroglyphic script, *mdw.w-nṯr*, "god's words" (a meaning preserved in the Greek word *hieroglyph*), was created for the most elevated sphere of literacy, i.e., for royal and temple texts,

while the cursive one was for administration and for non-royal use. The creation of a Meroitic hieroglyphic script indicates that a similar distinction was intended in Kush too. The actual practice was, however, different from the very outset. A sharp dividing line between the hieroglyphic and cursive scripts was observed only in the mortuary realm insofar as the hieroglyphic script could be used only for royal mortuary texts. Yet while a private mortuary text could not be written in hieroglyphs, royal ones were written from the earliest period,<sup>25)</sup> and in increasing numbers, in the cursive script, too. The case of the monumental royal inscriptions is similarly remarkable. Hieroglyphs continued to be used only for short dedications and temple scene legends, while all longer monumental royal documents were written, from the very outset, i.e., from Taneyidamani's Gebel Barkal stela,<sup>26)</sup> in the cursive script.

The reservation of hieroglyphs for royal use, or rather the "prohibition" of their use for private documents, follows from the initial Egyptian inspiration in the creation of the two scripts. The liberal use of the cursive script for monumental royal documents indicates, however, that this inspiration was only technical and that the Meroites soon abandoned the sharp distinction between the two separate categories of literacy, i.e., between the quasi-secret sacred script used for monumental royal communication and the cursive script created for administrative and private use. The vague distinction between the two Meroitic scripts may be explained by the fact that the Meroitic hieroglyphic script was simply an alphabet. It was thus divided by a world of difference from the contemporary Egyptian hieroglyphic script which, in its enormous intricacy, functioned by this time not only as a means of monumental communication but also as vehicle and purpose of the success of the literate priesthood as a social and intellectual élite.<sup>27)</sup> It cannot be forgotten, either, that in Ptolemaic Egypt the language of the royal inscriptions and documents was no longer exclusively Egyptian. Yet this is only a partial explanation for the peculiarities of Meroitic literacy. In order to understand the situation somewhat better, we must focus our attention on the cursive script.

The use of a simple cursive system consisting of only 23 signs for monumental royal communication is very telling as to the underlying motivation and

19) Cf. Török 1997 420-531.

20) For the significance of gift exchange between the king and the provincial élite cf. D.N. Edwards: *The Archaeology of the Meroitic State. New Perspectives on Its Social and Political Organisation* (Cambridge Monographs in African Archaeology 38). Oxford 1996 86 ff.

21) As is shown by the Hellenistic prestige goods found at Sennar-Makwar some 200 km south of Khartoum. See D.M. Dixon: *Meroitic Cemetery at Sennar (Makwar)*. Kush 11 (1963) 227-234; for the dating see Török 1989 Appendix No. 53.

22) For a complex discussion of Meroitic art and architecture see S. Wenig: *Africa in Antiquity. The Arts of Ancient Nubia and the Sudan II. The Catalogue*. Brooklyn 1978 and cf. also Török 1997 516-531; id.: *Meroe City An Ancient African Capital*. John Garstang's Excavations in the Sudan. With contributions by I. Hofmann and I. Nagy I-II (Egypt Exploration Society Occasional Publications 12). London 1997 *passim*.

23) FHN II No. 142.

24) L. Török: *Amasis and Ergamenes*. in: U. Luft (ed.): *Intellectual Heritage of Egypt. Studies Presented to László Kákosy* (Studia Aegyptiaca 14). Budapest 555-561.

25) The earliest preserved royal mortuary text inscribed in Meroitic cursive is represented by two fragments from King Taneyidamani's faience offering table, late 2nd century BC, REM 0805, Hintze 1959 36, fig. 5.

26) REM 1044=FHN II No. 152.

27) On the correlations between the stylization of the hieroglyphic script in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt (cryptography) and the social status of the priesthood cf. J. Assmann: *Ägypten. Eine Sinngeschichte*. München-Wien 1996 452 ff.



social context. Such a use of a cursive script reveals that the creation of Meroitic literacy was motivated by the necessity of an easily accessible monumental royal *communication* and *display*. Evidently, this monumental communication had to be in the language that was spoken and understood by the particular group of the population to which the communication was primarily addressed. The demands of royal display were closely connected with, or even subordinate to the language of this particular group, i.e., of the particular élite from which also the new dynasty itself must have originated.<sup>28)</sup>

The character of this élite concerns us here first of all because it was not a passive audience of monumental communication. On the contrary: from the moment of the creation of the Meroitic cursive script, the élite tried to put it to use in its own mortuary cult in order to shape its burials as places of the monumental *textual* formulation of its own social identity. The rapid unfolding of an élite variant of royal self-formulation in the realm of mortuary religion indicates, together with the special relationship between the Meroitic hieroglyphic and cursive scripts, a new type of nexus between the royal and the élite spheres.

As I already have alluded to it in the foregoing, the emergence of Meroitic as language of monumental communication gives the impression that this process was also influenced by the ethnic composition of the ruling dynasty and the élite. This is apparently contradicted by the continuous tradition of assuming a Meroitic Son of Rê name by the Kushite rulers from the Napatan period to the end of the Meroitic kingdom, yet behind the continuity of a name-giving tradition we may well imagine all sorts of dynastic changes, also including changes in the ethnic composition of the dynasty.<sup>29)</sup>

28) Evidently, the creation of the cursive script was equally influenced by the necessity of a script for administrative use. The earliest preserved Meroitic texts written in Meroitic hieroglyphs are two scene legends in Shanakdakheto's Temple F at Naqa (FHN II No. [148]), while the earliest known cursive texts are ostraca from her burial Beg. N. 11 (REM 0804B-D). What is very significant, they were discovered in the company of a Demotic ostrakon (REM 0804A) and all of them also contain lines written in Demotic. The earliest known texts in Meroitic cursive were written for Shanakdakheto's successor King Taneyidamani (REM 0127, 0405B, 1044=FHN II No. 152, REM 1140). It cannot be excluded that Shanakdakheto's lost offering table and mortuary stela were inscribed in Meroitic cursive, too.

29) Indeed, cultural changes with a possibly ethnic background occur in royal and élite funerary customs during the course of the 2nd and 1st centuries BC (cf. Török 1999 137 ff.). Namely, human sacrifices begin to occur in the 2nd century BC in the tombs of the Begarawiya West cemetery (Beg. W. 5, for the dating see Török 1989 131 Nos 77-87)

The private mortuary inscriptions appear in the remarkable context of private burials with a pyramid superstructure<sup>30)</sup> which is complemented with a miniature mortuary cult chapel, an inscribed stela, and an inscribed offering table.<sup>31)</sup> It seems furthermore that, as a rule, all élite burials with a mortuary stela and an offering table also contained a *ba* statue.<sup>32)</sup> The offering table was placed on a low base in front of the chapel. The stela was probably placed in

and animal sacrifices appear in élite burials (Beg. W. 20, for the dating see Török 1989 126 f. Nos 50-53) from the early 2nd century BC onwards, and in royal burials at Begarawiya North from the late 2nd century BC (Beg. N. 11, 12, 20. - For a comprehensive discussion of animal sacrifice in Meroitic mortuary religion see P. Lenoble: *La sacrifice funéraire de bovinés de Méroé à Qustul et Ballana*. in: C. Berger - G. Clerc - N. Grimal (eds): *Hommages à Jean Leclant II. Nubie, Soudan, Ethiopie*. Le Caire 1994 269-283; id.: *Du Méroïtique au Postméroïtique dans la Région méridionale du Royaume de Méroé*. Recherches sur la période de transition. Unpubl. Ph.D. Dissertation Paris 1994). It cannot be excluded that these unusual burial rites may be brought into some connection with the immigration of Nubian-speaking nomadic peoples who are first mentioned by Eratosthenes in the 3rd century BC as living west of the Nile (Eratosthenes in Strabo 17.1.2=FHN II No. 109). It would also seem that, from the early 2nd century BC onwards, Lower Nubia was settled by Nubian-speaking ethnic groups who arrived there from the south (cf. Adams 1976 21 ff.). The new type of funerary rites also foreshadows the large-scale human and animal sacrifices at the burials of the post-Meroitic rulers of Lower Nubia (cf. L. Török: *Late Antique Nubia. History and Archaeology of the Southern Neighbour of Egypt in the 4th-6th c. A.D.* With a Preface by Sir Laurence Kirwan. Budapest 1988). It remains, however, completely obscure if, and how, was connected the appearance in the Meroitic élite context of burial rites that may have been inspired by the traditions of immigrant Nubian-speakers (?) with the new self-articulation of the Meroitic élite.

30) On account of the poor preservation or complete destruction of the overwhelming majority of the tomb superstructures in the cemeteries of the Meroitic period, the complete range of superstructure types cannot be established. It is supposed that, besides pyramids (of various types) of stone, brick, or mixed technique, there existed also mastaba types of stone or brick as well as tumulus superstructure types. Cf. next note and see Fuller 1999.

31) Cf. Hofmann 1991 26 f.

32) In the Karanog cemetery 132 mortuary inscriptions and 96 (completely or fragmentarily preserved) *ba* statues were found. It is to be noted that several persons possessed both a stela and an offering table, and it is of course also important to note that the majority of the inscriptions as well as of the *ba* figures were discovered removed from their original tomb context.

the chapel. The *ba* statue stood on the top of the chapel or above it in a niche in the pyramid superstructure. Several élite pyramid chapels also had door jambs decorated with the relief images of libating deities, viz., Anubis and Nephthys or Isis,<sup>33)</sup> and a door lintel with the winged sundisk.<sup>34)</sup>

The pyramid superstructure was originally introduced, together with the mortuary cult chapel, in the royal burials of the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty. Along with the chapel, the pyramid was adopted in the burials of the closer royal family during the Napatan period. Inscribed stelae and offering tables remained, however, a prerogative of the kings and sometimes of their principal wives.<sup>35)</sup> The imitation of the pyramid superstructure and the mortuary cult chapel and the introduction of mortuary texts in élite burials manifested a so far unimaginable appropriation of royal prerogatives by non-royal persons. The actual process of appropriation of elements of the royal mortuary cult deserves our particular attention.<sup>36)</sup>

Discussing mortuary inscriptions, we are concerned with the liminal area of the tomb where the contact between the dead and the living was secured. The mortuary cult chapel with the stela and, in front of it, the offering table was the place where, on the one hand, the dead could receive the offerings and incantations which were necessary for his survival in the afterlife and where, on the other hand, the dead could be expected to respond to the request of their descendants for assistance in danger. The mortuary stela and offering table inscriptions were the most important agents of the interactions between the dead and the living. In an assessment of Egyptian mortuary religion, Alan Lloyd writes thus: "A survey of the religious systems of any society would probably indicate that the nature of funerary beliefs and practice is determined by at least five factors: [1] the concept which a society holds of the nature of man, i.e. the component parts of his personal identity; [2] the society's concept of the relationship between the individual and his social context; [3] the

society's concept of the position of man within the cosmos; [4] basic human reactions to the phenomenon of bereavement which modern psychological and anthropological research has shown to follow a consistent pattern irrespective of culture; and, finally, [5] the society's beliefs on the nature of the afterlife."<sup>37)</sup> While I cannot discuss here the last three issues in relation to Meroe, the inscriptions present an excellent opportunity to gain an insight into the relationship between the individual and society and they may also illuminate (together with the pictorial representations of the dead in the tomb which I shall also briefly discuss) the Meroitic concept of man's identity. Mortuary cult in its entire complexity cannot be addressed here, of course. It may be relevant to advance, however, without any further arguments that, while we shall encounter in the following several features in Meroitic mortuary display that point towards Egyptian inspiration or appear to be borrowed from Egyptian funerary cult, the texts will reveal that the mortuary religion of the Meroitic élite was divided by a world of difference from contemporary Egyptian mortuary religion.<sup>38)</sup>

The earliest preserved Meroitic funerary inscriptions made for non-ruling persons can be divided into two categories. In the first we find texts written for the members of the royal family. The standard text contains an Invocation of Isis and Osiris, a nomination of the deceased, his parentage, and a non-royal Benediction (to the only exception we shall return in a moment). The second category consists of texts written for members of the non-royal élite. The structure of these latter represents an extended version of the first category; the extension will be discussed in greater detail in the following. The chronological assessment of the monuments<sup>39)</sup> suggests that the formation of these two types was based on a Meroitic cursive funerary inscription type created for a ruler, probably for Queen Shanakdakheto, or, at the latest, for King Taneyidamani. The first mortuary inscription for a member of the royal clan was composed shortly after, and it was followed very soon by élite funerary inscriptions.

33) At Karanog, from four preserved door frames with libating deities, three belonged to tombs of pesetos: G. 183 (Hwitor, see Table 7); 187 (Maloton); 203 (Netewitar, W-R Pl. 13/7078, cf. Table 8).

34) Cf. W-R 7 ff.; F. Geus: *Enquêtes sur les pratiques et coutumes funéraires méroïtiques. La contribution des cimetières non-royaux. Approche préliminaire*. RdE 40 (1989) 163-185 168-173.

35) For an overview see Abdalla 1982 65 ff.

36) For the interpretation of a similar process in Egypt cf. J. Assmann: *Sepulkrale Selbstthematization im Alten Ägypten*. in: A. Hahn-V. Knapp (eds): *Selbstthematization und Selbstzeugnis. Bekenntnis und Geständnis*. Frankfurt am Main 1987 208-232; id.: *Religion und kulturelles Gedächtnis*. München 2000 105 ff.

37) A.B. Lloyd: *Psychology and Society in the Ancient Egyptian Cult of the Dead*. in: W.K. Smith (ed.): *Religion and Philosophy in Ancient Egypt*. New Haven 1989 117-133 117.

38) For a comparison as to tomb types and the iconography of mortuary religion cf., e.g., the Egyptian evidence surveyed in I. Kaplan: *Grabmalerei und Grabreliefs der Römerzeit. Wechselwirkungen zwischen der ägyptischen und griechisch-alexandrinischen Kunst* (Beiträge zur Ägyptologie 16). Wien 1999.

39) Cf. Griffith 1911 21, F.L. Griffith: *The Inscriptions from Meroe*. in: J. Garstang et al.: *Meroe the City of the Ethiopians*. Oxford 1911 74; Hintze 1959 Table I; Hofmann 1991 122-179.



Projecting this chronological sequence on the broader context of the pyramid tomb superstructure with chapel and mortuary inscriptions, we come to the conclusion that, when adopting royal features, the élite burial was shaped under the direct influence of the pyramid burials of the non-ruling members of the royal family. The burials of the latter represented a modified variant of the royal burial and they presented, in turn, models for the élite which, again, could not be copied without conceptual alterations. Let us see now these alterations in order to follow the path that led from the royal burial type through the tombs of the royal clan to the élite burial.

In this, it is very helpful that one of the burials that actually served as direct models for the élite can be concretely identified. It is the late 2nd century BC burial of a man called Tedeqene. The earliest known non-royal mortuary stela and offering table inscriptions in Meroitic cursive come from his pyramid tomb in the Begarawiya West cemetery.<sup>40)</sup> Tedeqene was doubtless a royal prince for the relief scene on his stela, which represents the deceased performing an offering before Osiris and Isis, was borrowed from the iconographic program of the royal tombs. A royal character is also prevalent in the material of his inscribed monuments: his stela as well as his offering table were carved from granite.<sup>41)</sup>

Tedeqene's texts present us with a snapshot from the temple scriptorium where the new, hierarchically clearly defined, canonical Meroitic mortuary inscription formulae were just being created for the rulers, for the non-ruling members of the royal family, and for the non-royal élite. The task was solved by first creating a royal type with Invocation of Isis and Osiris, Nomination of the deceased ruler, his/her Parentage, and a special royal Benediction formula. A second inscription type was then created for the extended royal family. It consists of an Invocation of Isis and Osiris, the Nomination and the Parentage of the deceased, and a non-royal Benediction. Finally a third inscription type was formulated for the non-royal élite, which we are going to discuss in a moment. Tedeqene's inscriptions are clearly documents of the initial phase of the formulation of these types for they consist of unique Benediction formulae which represent a transition between the royal and non-royal types. The slightly later, still late 2nd century BC, stela of another royal prince, Takatidamani by name, from Meroe City,<sup>42)</sup> is already inscribed with the Invocation of Isis and Osiris,

the name and Parentage of the deceased, and a completely new type of Benediction which we may call a *non-royal* Benediction. The text type created for the non-royal élite was to consist of a similar Invocation, the name and the *qualification* of the deceased, his/her Parentage usually with the *qualification of his/her father*, and a non-royal Benediction. Once the non-royal Benediction formulae were created, the members of the extended royal family also ceased to use the royal-type offering scene on their stelae. In the terms of their mortuary stela and offering table texts and scenes they were no longer distinguished from the non-royal élite. They preserved, however, the privileges of being buried in a separate necropolis (Meroe West cemetery) and in tombs with more elaborate sub- and superstructures.

We have to consider here also another interesting detail of the formation process leading from the royal tomb to the élite tomb. If we take a closer look at Tedeqene's mortuary offering table, we find a highly significant innovation as compared with the traditional royal offering tables.<sup>43)</sup> Namely, on Tedeqene's offering table a figural scene is introduced which represents Anubis and a goddess performing a mortuary libation offering. Late 2nd and early 1st century BC analogues<sup>44)</sup> demonstrate that the type not only quickly spread among the members of the extended royal family buried at Meroe City but that it was also adopted concurrently by the most outstanding members of the new non-royal élite. Around the turn of the 2nd and 1st centuries we find the divine water libation scene on the offering table of Tasemerese, the first Lower Nubian *peseto* Viceroy known by name<sup>45)</sup> and shortly after it appears on the offering table of his (first?) successor Halalaharora.<sup>46)</sup> It is important to note that this particular scene type remained reserved for the non-ruling members of the royal family and the highest echelon of the non-royal élite.

42) REM 0049. It still has a royal-type scene. Takatidamani's royal descent is indicated by his name as well as by that of his mother: both names contain the theonym Amûn.

43) Cf. for an overview Abdalla 1982 78 ff.

44) REM 0425 (secondarily in Meroe City tomb no. 302, with two Anubises libating!), REM 0427 (secondarily in Meroe City tomb 307), REM 0428 (secondarily in Meroe City tomb no. 307), REM 0429 (ibid.), REM 0430 (ibid.), REM 0431 (ibid.), REM 0442 (secondarily in Meroe City tomb no. 326), REM 0445 (secondarily in Meroe City tomb no. 362), REM 0449 (secondarily in Meroe City tomb no. 307), REM 0839 (Beg. W. 3), 1008 (provenance unknown).

45) REM 0543=FHN II No. 154. From Faras tomb 2800; for the dating cf. the painted vases from the burial equipment, Griffith 1925 Pls XVII/iii d, XXII/xi a,b.

46) REM 0521=FHN II No. 155.

40) REM 0832, 0833, Dunham 1963 82. For the tomb see Dunham 1963 82 and figs 59-61.

41) The table was placed originally on a granite column on tripod base in Alexandrian Hellenistic style. Cf. Török 1989 122 Appendix Nos 22-24.

From the twenty-nine published offering tables with water libation scene,<sup>47)</sup> sixteen (including Tedeqene's table) were made between the late 2nd century BC and the early 1st century AD,<sup>48)</sup> and thirteen from these sixteen (including again Tedeqene's monument) were associated with burials of the extended royal family and other members of the élite in Meroe City. Besides the two early tables from Faras, the third early, i.e., late 1st century BC, exemplar from a cemetery outside Meroe City was discovered at Sedeinga.<sup>49)</sup> Considering now the geographical distribution of all tables with water libation scene from the period between the late 2nd century BC and the 2nd half of the 3rd century AD, we find that seventeen monuments come from the cemeteries of Meroe City,<sup>50)</sup> three from Sedeinga,<sup>51)</sup> four from Faras,<sup>52)</sup> three from Karanog,<sup>53)</sup> one from the island of Sai,<sup>54)</sup> and one is of unknown provenance.<sup>55)</sup> I have little doubt that, in spite of the loss of monuments and the incomplete excavations, these data mirror chronologically as well as geographically fairly precisely the distribution of the highest stratum of the governing élite in the land.

As to the mortuary religion of the royal clan, the divine water libation scene seems to compensate for the loss of the royal-type offering scene on the stela. On the other hand, however, its adoption by the élite presents another example for the successful

attempts at the diminution of the differences which divided élite status display from the mortuary religion of the extended royal family.

On the offering table of a ruler, the scene with the water libation performed by Anubis and a goddess occurs first in the early 1st century AD.<sup>56)</sup> In the same period the scene also appears in royal mortuary chapel reliefs.<sup>57)</sup> Yet while the scene became standard in the royal chapel reliefs, we know of altogether two royal offering tables which are decorated with this scene.<sup>58)</sup> Summing up our review of the early phase of developments in Meroitic mortuary display, we may conclude that the changes in the burials of the royal clan and the new élite cannot be regarded separately from each other or as cultural "imitations". The earliest mortuary stela and offering table inscribed in Meroitic cursive of a non-ruling person signal the appropriation of royal prerogatives by the royal clan. The concurrent adoption of the same textual monument types by the non-royal élite suggests that the mortuary religion of the royal clan and the élite was transformed as a consequence of the same social process. We may perhaps best describe this process in the terms of an expansion and restructuring of the kingdom which brings about the emergence of mighty local élite families. These élite families, while being successfully integrated into a centralised power machinery, at the same time also considerably modified the Meroitic governmental and societal structure and they constituted a new social class between the royal clan and the professional administrative/priestly class.

It is not insignificant, either, that it was from the mortuary religion of the royal clan and the non-royal élite that, at a much later date, the scene with the libating deities was elevated into the sphere of the royal mortuary cult, whereas an iconographic type travelled from offering table to monumental chapel relief. Yet the journey of the iconographic type and of the concepts behind it did not end here: the libating deities of the royal pyramid chapels were copied, in turn, from the 2nd century AD onwards on the door jambs of the miniature pyramid chapels in élite cemeteries.<sup>59)</sup>

47) For their overview see Leclant et al. 2000 1964–1967, types B1–B2. The scene type with water libation must be carefully distinguished, however, from the scenes with milk libation modelled on a Philaean type and occurring on royal offering tables from the AD 1st to 3rd centuries, see Yellin 1982. Abdalla 1982 and Hofmann 1991 do not make this distinction; the overview in Leclant et al. 2000 includes both the offering tables with water libation and Abaton-type milk libation scenes and distinguishes subtypes B1 and B2 traditionally according to the position of the spout of the table.

48) Dating based primarily on Hofmann's paleographical analyses (Hofmann 1991 122 ff., for a tabular overview see *ibid.* 170–179). I have deviated from Hofmann's datings on the basis of the archaeological context and other considerations in the case of REM 0521 and 0543, for my arguments see FHN II 672 ff. and in my review of Hofmann's book in *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 50 (1993) 631–639.

49) REM 1092.

50) Twelve early (2nd–1st centuries BC and early 1st century AD, REM 0425, 0427–0431, 0442, 0445, 0449, 0812, 0833, 0839), five later exemplars (REM 0432, 0443, 0837, 0843, 1200).

51) One early (REM 1092), two late (REM 1144, 1240, 2nd half of the 3rd century AD) exemplars.

52) Two early (0521, 0543) and two late (REM 0520, 0530) exemplars.

53) REM 0278, 0296, 0321/1088, all from the 3rd century AD.

54) REM 1241, late.

55) REM 1008.

56) REM 0812 from Bar. 9. For the dating of Bar. 9 cf. L. Török: *Meroitic Art–Informations and Illusions. Meroitica* 10 (1989) 535–548 541 f. – Hofmann 1991 124, 171 dates the fragments of a faience royal offering table (REM 0073A) with the figure of a libating goddess to the period between c. 50 BC–AD 50 on the basis of the presumed find place. This dating is, however, not supported by the paleography of the inscription.

57) Yellin 1978; Abdalla 1982 64, 89 ff.

58) REM 0812 (Bar. 9) and 0837 (Beg. W. 130).

59) For a list see Hofmann 1991 33 f.



Let us now turn to the *ba* statue. According to the fragmentary evidence from the cemeteries of Meroe City, the earliest *ba* statues appeared in Begarawiya North 11, the burial of the late 2nd century BC Queen Shanakdakheto,<sup>60)</sup> and in Begarawiya West 145.<sup>61)</sup> The actual chronological sequence of the two, approximately contemporary, monuments remains obscure. It is not at all unlikely that the emergence of the *ba* statue was similarly part of the innovations occurring in the mortuary religion of the extended royal family. Yet the opposite cannot be excluded, either.

The early *ba* statues from the cemeteries of Meroe City were carved in the form of a hawk figure. Significantly, the mummy of King Arqamani is represented in his mortuary cult chapel with a hawk's head.<sup>62)</sup> The earliest non-royal *ba* statues, among them that of the earliest known *peseto*-Viceroy Tase-merese,<sup>63)</sup> repeat the same type.<sup>64)</sup> It may be supposed, however, that in non-royal burials the hawk was replaced before long by a traditional Egyptian-type *ba* figure, i.e., by a bird with human head. The *ba* statues from the subsequent centuries display a remarkable development in the course of which the human-headed bird was transformed into a human figure with bird's wings and a sun disc rising from the statue's head. The transformation was determined by the demand of establishing and articulating the individual identity of the *ba* figure with the tomb owner and it was, as to the figure types, gradually, but altogether rapidly performed. The bird received first a human head and then also human feet.<sup>65)</sup> A male *ba* of this latter type from Faras<sup>66)</sup> also displays

two necklaces which belong to the insignia of princes and high officials. A *ba* statue from Faras grave 2984<sup>67)</sup> representing a winged woman with pendulous breasts can be dated on the basis of the associated funerary equipment to the first half of the 1st century AD or earlier.<sup>68)</sup>

The above-mentioned human-headed male *ba* bird with the necklaces defines precisely the social identity of the deceased as *peseto* or Viceroy of Lower Nubia. The same is true for the female *ba* figure with its pendulous breasts, for it represents the deceased in her principal social role as wife and mother. The transformation of the *ba* figure culminated in the *ba* statues of AD 3rd century *pesetos* buried at Karanog. They are represented as winged human figures wearing their official costume and rank insignia.<sup>69)</sup> The iconographic models of the fully developed male and female *ba* statues clearly transpire: the official dress and necklaces of the *pesetos* were modelled on the insignia of certain male members of the royal clan, while the female *ba* type had its origins in the representation of the queen as wife of the ruler and mother of the heir to the throne.<sup>70)</sup> Here, again, we are confronted with the special associations between the social display of the non-ruling members of the royal clan and the élite.

If we want to understand the motifs behind the socialization of the *ba* bird, it must be realized that when receiving human head and human feet, the *ba* statue started to fuse the *ba* of the tomb owner with his/her *ka*.<sup>71)</sup> The *ba* is the soul of the deceased which is provided with the faculties of getting released from, and reunited with, the corpse; of moving freely between heaven and underworld, enabling the deceased to join the sun god in his celestial process, and to accept the mortuary offerings. The sun disc surmounting the *ba* statue reinforces the participation of the deceased in the solar journey and secures, in the likeness of Rê, the re-integration of his/her person, i.e., it secures the reunification of the *ba* with the dead body.<sup>72)</sup> While the *ba* belongs to the corporeal sphere of the deceased and grants him or her mobility and the ability of re-embodiment, the *ka* belongs to

60) E.A.W. Budge: *The Egyptian Sûdân. Its History and Monuments I*. Philadelphia 1907 387 ff.; Dunham 1957 72. – *Ba* figures from the royal necropoleis as well as from Begarawiya West are only sporadically preserved. See Dunham 1957 137, Pl. XXXVIII/D (Beg. N. 16, King Aryesebohe, late 1st-early 2nd century AD, hawk figure); 182 (Beg. N. 38, queen, early 4th century AD, uninterpretable faience fragments); 192, Pl. XXXVIII/E (secondarily [?] in Beg. N. 51, King Yeseboheamani, late 3rd century AD, hawk figure); Dunham 1963 244, fig. 164/2 (W. 225, bird with human head?); 269 (W. 384, in the company of offering table REM 0850, with milk libation scene).

61) Dunham 1963 112, fig. 83/b.

62) S. Chapman – D. Dunham: *Decorated Chapels of the Meroitic Pyramids at Meroe and Barkal*. Boston 1952 Pl. 18/F; Hofmann 1991 36.

63) Griffith 1925 163.

64) Faras: Griffith 1924 175 f., Pl. LXVI/2-4, 6; Karanog: W-R 240, Pls 6/1 (no. 7032, from tomb G 376), 9 (no. 7041, unprovenanced).

65) Cf. W-R Pl. 6 (no. 7008, from tomb G 174); bird with human head, pendulous breasts, and human feet: Pl. 7 (no. 7006).

66) Griffith 1925 135, Pl. LXVI/5.

67) Griffith 1925 171, Pl. LXVI/1.

68) An earlier stage of the development of the female *ba* figure is represented by a bird statue with large head, human feet but no legs, and pendulous breasts: W-R Pl. 7/7006.

69) W-R Pls 1-2 (tomb G. 187, Cairo 40232, Maloton, REM 0277=FHN II No. 269), 3 (tomb G. 183, no. 7001, Ówitorr, see Table 7), 5 (tomb G. 203, no. 7000, Netewitar?).

70) For the necklaces cf. L. Török: *The Royal Crowns of Kush. A Study in Middle Nile Valley Regalia and Iconography in the 1st Millennium B.C. and A.D.* (Cambridge Monographs in African Archaeology 18). Oxford 1987 30-34.

71) Cf. also O'Connor 1993 104 f.

72) *Ibid.* 123.

his/her social sphere and restores and perpetuates his or her status, social integrity and dignity.<sup>73)</sup>

As is also corroborated by certain gestures<sup>74)</sup> and attributes of the statues,<sup>75)</sup> the rendering of the *ka* aspect was not independent from Egyptian models, both as to formal and conceptual aspects of the figure. The main driving force behind the creation of a pictorial and conceptual synthesis of the *ba* and *ka* concepts in one single representation was, however, Meroitic: namely, the articulation, display, and perpetuation of the social self, the social identity, and the social integrity of the tomb owner—a purpose which was achieved in the royal burials by means of the relief program of the mortuary cult chapel and by the corresponding royal mortuary cult rites.

By means of the mortuary cult, social identity was defined, manifested, and perpetuated in the tomb in its entire human and social complexity. Here I cannot discuss the place and functions of the individual grave within the cemetery and the interaction between the living and the deceased halves of the society. I touch upon briefly only one aspect thereof. From the second half of the 1st century BC,<sup>76)</sup> in the élite necropolis at Sedeinga mortuary texts were inscribed also on the elaborately carved lintels of mortuary cult chapels instead of, or besides, the mortuary stelae.<sup>77)</sup> Through the transformation of its front, the chapel received the character of a sanctuary built for the cult of the deceased. The shift from individual mortuary offering place to cult shrine may be interpreted as a sign for attempts aimed at drawing private mortuary cult closer to royal mortuary cult. It is, however, also a sign for the orientation of personal piety towards the cemeteries in general and towards certain individual tombs as special foci of personal religiosity, in particular. Indeed, in front of the tomb of the distinguished siblings Saḥiye and Taysiye at Arminna West<sup>78)</sup> footprint graffiti were incised which were intended to perpetuate the worshipful presence of visitors and pilgrims who came to pray at the grave.<sup>79)</sup>

Let us now turn to élite identity as it is reflected by the mortuary inscriptions. As we have seen, the texts were inscribed on stelae and offering tables and, as a local tradition at Sedeinga, on chapel door lintels. We also have discussed the earliest type of the offering table decoration; the discussion of the subsequently emerging types<sup>80)</sup> must be omitted here.<sup>81)</sup> Before the discussion of the texts, however, I shall briefly touch upon the problem of the stelae with figural decoration.

As remarked earlier in this paper, the royal stela scene type depicting the deceased before Osiris and Isis was not copied in private burials. The figural decoration of mortuary stelae erected in élite mortuary cult chapels was restricted on the representation of the deceased. There are stelae with high relief as well as painted or incised representations of the deceased. Though the relief stelae and the stelae with paintings or drawings are typologically different (the reliefs depict the deceased frontally, while the painted and incised scenes show him/her in profile view), both types were modelled ultimately on Egyptian Late Period mortuary statue and stela types. The representations, be they in high relief, painting, or incised drawing, articulate the *ka* aspect of the deceased by emphasizing iconographic elements that describe the social rank and functions of the deceased. The fact that it was the *ka* that was intended to be represented according to Egyptian mortuary iconography is also suggested by the lack of a mortuary inscription on several relief stelae and on ten from eighteen published stelae of the second category.<sup>82)</sup> It would thus seem that the figural stelae were complementary parts of the tomb equipment. They further reinforced the particular aspect of mortuary religion which was articulated, on the one hand, by the *ba* figure which united in fact the *ba* and the *ka* figures, and by the mortuary inscriptions, on the other. This function of the figural stelae may also explain why was their majority associated with burials of people of lower rank<sup>83)</sup> or of children.

We have seen that one of the earliest non-royal mortuary inscriptions was composed in the late 2nd-early 1st century BC for the offering table of the first

73) Cf. J. Assmann: *Tod und Jenseits im Alten Ägypten*. München 2001 120–139. For the Egyptian conceptions see also J. Zandee: *Death as an Enemy According to Ancient Egyptian Conceptions*. Leiden 1960; L.V. Úabkar: *A Study of the Ba Concept in Ancient Egyptian Texts*. Chicago 1968 and cf. the post-modern survey presented by L. Meskell: *Archaeologies of Social Life. Age, Sex, Class et cetera in Ancient Egypt*. Oxford 1999 107–135.

74) W–R Pl. 5 (no. 7028).

75) W–R Pls 1 (Cairo 40232, Maloton): scroll; 5 (no. 7000, Netewitar): flower garland in the right hand.

76) REM 1115.

77) For a discussion of REM 1033, 1042, 1061, 1091, 1115, 1146 see Hofmann 1991 31 ff.; see furthermore REM 1114, 1121, 1122, 1124.

78) REM 1063, cf. Table 14.

79) Fuller 1999 204, fig. 4.

80) The earliest of these is type A1 with amphorae on stands flanking a lotus flower, REM 0434–0436 etc. from the cemeteries of Meroe City, for the type see Leclant et al. 2000 1947, for its chronological position cf. Hofmann 1991 170 ff. (Hofmann's types 8, 9).

81) Cf. Hofmann 1991 77–111.

82) For an overview see Hofmann 1991 112–116.

83) The most notable exceptions are two stelae with frontal figures in high relief from Serra West: REM 1030, stela of a man with three enigmatic titles and REM 1031, stela of a lady who was related to a pqr in Meroe City and a mreperi (estate overseer?) of the Candace (the same person as the pqr?).



known *peseto*, a man called Tasemerese.<sup>84)</sup> With the introductory Invocation of Isis and Osiris, the naming of the deceased Tasemerese *pesto*, the recording of his parentage, i.e., the name of his mother and father—the latter's title, *ant*, prophet,<sup>85)</sup> is also recorded—, and the concluding Benediction, the text presents the canonical mortuary text structure that was to be followed in the subsequent centuries. The social identity of Tasemerese is defined by his own title and by the profession of his father who belonged to the priesthood of a cult temple. These data are basic elements of social display as it is conveyed by a mortuary inscription which is composed in the form of a condensed autobiography. The text type represented by the Tasemerese inscription was flexible: without the alteration of its basic structure, it could also provide ample space for the display of broader social and biographical dimensions. Indeed, the offering table of the *peseto* Halalaharora,<sup>86)</sup> who seems to have been Tasemerese's direct successor, includes an extensive list of Halalaharora's titles which presents his biography in the form of a *cursus honorum*. The Benediction is appended here with the phrase *qor mlo-lo mk-l mlo-lo s-lh mlo-lo*. According to Karl-Heinz Priese,<sup>87)</sup> the phrase may be translated as "good with the ruler, good with the deity, good with the great person". However epigrammatically, the phrase presents a splendid summary of the justification of Halalaharora's identity and moral integrity in front of divine as well as social order. Variants of the phrase in later texts also would refer to justification in front of more concretely named representatives of the society.<sup>88)</sup>

In the subsequent two centuries the Description section of the elite mortuary texts served increasingly the display and perpetuation of the social identity of the deceased. This process was running parallel to the growth of the elite cemeteries themselves where the spatial relationships between the individual burials, i.e., the spatial order of the necropolis, as well as the size and the execution of the individual tombs directly mirrored the social relationships, i.e., the social order.<sup>89)</sup> It is a more difficult task to establish the exact chronology of this development. The constant growth of the cemeteries of Faras from the mid-second century BC and of Sedeinga and Karanog

from the early 1st century BC onwards may be archaeologically verified but, beyond the two inscriptions from Faras mentioned above, there are only very few early, i.e., 1st century BC and early 1st century AD, inscriptions preserved the dating of which could be safely established on the basis of both their archaeological context and paleographical characteristics.

Two early 1st century BC inscriptions from Karanog may, however, give us an idea of the broader social context in which the earliest *peseto*-inscriptions can be placed. The first<sup>90)</sup> presents no more than the name and the title of the deceased, yet the title refers to an office that was subordinate to the *peseto*. The second<sup>91)</sup> records, framed by an Invocation and a Benediction, the name of the deceased and qualifies him as prophet of Isis and priest of Amûn. Significantly, his parents are not named. Inscriptions which may be dated in broader terms to the late 1st century BC and the 1st century AD<sup>92)</sup> reflect, if my approximate datings are not wrong, a continuous trend of giving increasingly detailed definitions of social identity. From this point of view the mortuary inscriptions where the deceased him- or herself is not a titleholder are especially relevant. Namely, in texts of this type the identity of the deceased was defined alone by his or her relation to family members whose status was obvious to every member of the community. The mortuary inscription of a lady from Karanog names her parents and refers to her brother, a man called Areqebbar, by his name.<sup>93)</sup> More telling is the poorly executed stela of the lady Hahoteli from the 1st century AD.<sup>94)</sup> Hahoteli describes herself as the daughter of *peseto* Dadokar and the sister of a priest (Table 1). She does not give the name of her brother whom we know, however, from his

90) REM 0280. – Dating too late in Török 1988 247.

91) REM 0326.

92) Hofmann 1991 170–179 presents a chronological table of all inscriptions published up to 1982 and divides them into six approximate chronological units, viz., I: 150–50 BC, here 12 texts of archaic paleography; II: 50 BC–AD 50, 12 texts of similarly archaic paleography; III: AD 50–100, 5 texts; IV: AD 100–150, 25 texts, among them several of an archaic paleography; V/1: AD 150–200, 74 texts; V/2: AD 200–250, 101 texts; V/3: AD 250–300, 70 texts; VI: AD 300–350, 14 texts. If we confront this chronology with Hofmann's meticulous paleographical analysis of texts which are, or are thought to be, independently dated the limits between the period compartments become blurred and one gets the impression that paleographical dating after the period of Griffith's archaic inscriptions is entirely subjective. Hofmann herself (1991 122–130), too, is fully aware of the improbability of a linear process of paleographical changes after the period of the archaic inscriptions.

93) REM 0236.

94) REM 0208.

84) REM 0543=FHN II No. 154.

85) Cf. Hintze 1963 10 no. 51.

86) REM 0521=FHN II No. 155.

87) K.-H. Priese: Notizen zu den meroitischen Totentexten. WZHU 20 (1971) 275–285 285; cf. Hofmann 1981 69, 93 f.

88) See REM 0327 (Table 4), 1020, 1067, 1116.

89) On this issue cf. the analysis of the Karanog cemetery by O'Connor 1993 94 ff.; and cf. also S.E. Alcock: *Graecia Capta. The Landscapes of Roman Greece*. Cambridge 1993 174.

own mortuary inscription in which, in turn, he refers to his father only by his title. The anonymity of the relatives who are mentioned only by their titles reveals that in the context of mortuary display there existed two different interpretations of the human person. On the one hand, the deceased was identical with his or her name the survival of which secured, together with his/her *ba* and *ka*, his/her survival after death. Therefore, no mortuary inscription can be imagined without naming its owner. On the other hand, however, the survival of the *social identity* of the deceased was increasingly supported, besides his/her *ba* and *ka*, by certain relatives who existed in the given context only in their relation to the deceased insofar as they were putting the power of a particular, social, aspect of their full identity at his or her disposal. Their title was able to carry this particular social aspect by itself, even without adding their personal name.<sup>95)</sup> In this special context, the identity of the title with its owner is poignantly demonstrated by inscriptions in which the father of the deceased has no name, only (a) title(s).<sup>96)</sup>

By the second half of the 1st century AD the mortuary texts begin to display, besides giving the title(s) of the deceased and referring to the title(s) of his/her father and/or the title(s) of his/her brother, also references to other family members. They are defined as being in *mde*-relationship with the deceased. According to Fritz Hintze,<sup>97)</sup> the relationship word *mde* denotes one's maternal uncle; it was also suggested, however, that it may refer to one's maternal great-uncle, too.<sup>98)</sup> Moreover, a reference made by a child<sup>99)</sup> of the lady Boḥeye in the family tree in my Table 7 reveals that it also may have designated the husband of one's maternal aunt.

The earliest preserved evidence for the *mde*-relationship may be illustrated by inscriptions made in the second half of the 1st century AD.<sup>100)</sup> They refer to the three children born from the three marriages(?)<sup>101)</sup> of the lady Natakili. My Table 2 shows that Natakili's daughter from her first marriage defined herself as related to *pqrs*, i.e., owners of the highest known rank title, and sister of *pesetos*. Her child from the second marriage referred to no titleholder, while the child from Natakili's third marriage defined him- or herself

as related to a *slegene*, i.e., a priest of a cult temple. The inscriptions of the children from the second and the third marriage seem to indicate that Natakili was transferred by her later marriages into a different, less elevated social milieu in which reference to *pqrs* and *pesetos* was not possible or not appropriate.

By the reference to the maternal uncles and great-uncles of the deceased, the definition of one's social identity is expanded in a most significant manner. The extended lists of relatives shift the identity of the deceased from the dimensions of his/her nuclear family and his/her own achievement to the dimensions of his/her extended family, putting it into the centre of a clan identity. The extended lists convey an exact definition of the family's place in élite rank hierarchy or even define its degree of *ancienneté*. In general terms, the emphasis put on the "historical" dimension in the justification and perpetuation of social identity is a logical development in the formation process of hereditary aristocracies in centralised states. The actual Meroitic form of reference requires, however, further explanation. In Late Period Egypt, the priests kept records of their descent on the paternal line for periods spanning over several centuries. Though it was similarly male predecessors to whom the reference was made in Meroe, yet these were relatives of one's mother or grandmother. This peculiar form of prestige display recalls an ancient Kushite concept of legitimacy and inheritance: in the early 6th century BC, King Aspelta was legitimated concurrently as the son and elect of Amûn and the descendant of a line of female members of the royal family. This female lineage started with Aspelta's mother and went back in time for another six generations, including real as well as adoptive ancestresses.<sup>102)</sup>

The date of the earliest preserved references to *mde*-relatives is significant. With Queen Shanakdakheto's accession to the throne in the second half of the 2nd century BC and then with the regency of three further queens during the course of the late 1st century BC and the first half of the 1st century AD, the concepts and iconography of kingship were adjusted to the regency of female rulers. This process culminated around the middle of the 1st century AD in the period of the co-regency of Natakamani and his consort (?) Amanitore.<sup>103)</sup> We have every reason to

97) Hintze 1974 20 ff.

98) Török 1977 407 note 11, with reference to the family tree in my Table 16.

99) Reference to Sweyibr made by Arilnemks.

100) Dated by a painted vessel from G. 301, the tomb of Nsyedḥeto, W-R Pl. 49.

101) Following Hintze 1959 13 ff., I presume that the repetition of the filiation words ([t]edḥe, born by; [t]erike, begotten by) indicates the second, third, etc. marriage of a woman or a man. There are also other possibilities (cf. Hofmann 1981 171 ff.) which seem to me less likely.

102) FHN I No. 37. – For an identification of the female ancestors see my comments *ibid.*; for alternative views see literature quoted there and see also recently A. Lohwasser: *Die königlichen Frauen im antiken Reich von Kusch* 25. *Dynastie bis zur Zeit des Nastasen* (Meroitica 19). Berlin 2001 249 ff.

103) Cf. L. Török: *The Image of the Ordered World in Ancient Nubian Art. The Construction of the Kushite Mind 800 BC-300 AD*. Leiden-Boston-Köln (forthcoming) Chs 2.14-2.16.



suppose that the ideology of the dualism of male and female regency exerted a profound influence on the élite interpretation of family structure as well as on élite decorum.<sup>104</sup>) It is important to remember here that the traditional sequence according to which the Parentage section of the texts records in the first place the mother, and in the second the father of the deceased was modelled originally on the mortuary texts of the rulers and the extended royal family.<sup>105</sup>) Yet it is also worth noting that this tradition is not exclusive. In a number of inscriptions commemorating priests and members of the higher clerical officialdom, among them relatives of *pesetos*, it is the father whom we find named in the first place.<sup>106</sup>)

During the subsequent two centuries or so the recording of the *mde* relationship became central to the decorum of the higher echelons of titleholders. The marked tendency of recording more and more *mde*-relatives who are referred to with their titles in the plural describes the unfolding of the élite's conscience of hierarchical affiliation. The inscriptions define the social identity of the deceased on the ground of her being sister<sup>107</sup>) or his being brother to holders of a particular title,<sup>108</sup>) or being nephew or niece (grandnephew or grandniece) to a class of people characterized by one or more titles in the plural:<sup>109</sup>) e.g., "related to *pel moss*, related to envoys",<sup>110</sup>) "related to scribes",<sup>111</sup>) "related to prophets of Amûn of Napata",<sup>112</sup>) "related to *p q r s*, related to *pesetos*"<sup>113</sup>) etc. In other words, the association with concrete persons was complemented with, or shifted to, an association with abstracted rank categories: in this way, social identity became thoroughly conceptualized and encoded. The direction of this process

is clearly indicated by idiosyncratic details as, e.g., references made to one's unnamed brother(s) by his (their) title only, or the lack of parentage in texts that otherwise contain ample reference to titleholding relatives,<sup>114</sup>) or the recording of the *mde*-relatives before the parents,<sup>115</sup>) or, what is even more telling, the listing of the titles of the deceased before his name.<sup>116</sup>)

Thank to the individuality of Meroitic personal names<sup>117</sup>) and the references made to maternal uncles and other relatives, some important families can be studied for several generations. The geographical distribution of the titles also reveals that by the later 2nd century AD the great necropolises of Lower Nubia were associated with powerful local extended families and with individual official realms.<sup>118</sup>) Karanog was the necropolis of the *pesetos* and their relatives, first of all clerical officials and members of the higher priesthood. The cemetery of Shablul was the burial ground of families (or of one extended family) producing a number of envoys to Roman Egypt,<sup>119</sup>) while at Gebel Adda the members of the Wayekiye clan (cf. Table 6) were buried.<sup>120</sup>) The necropolis of Sedeinga was the traditional burial ground of the *sleqenes*<sup>121</sup>) who may be identified as the highest titleholders of the region between the Second and Third Cataracts. Among the titleholders buried in the 3rd century AD at Arminna West, we find people connected to an Apedemak temple in the region (Table 14). They belonged, however, to an extended family the male members of which were officials in the clerical administration of the region of Arminna. The local aspect of social identity comes to expression through the honorific (?) title *mlo mrse* which is frequently complemented with a placename: in inscriptions from Karanog with *Nlote*, i.e., Meroitic Karanog,<sup>122</sup>) from Shablul with *Tene*, the Meroitic name of Shablul.<sup>123</sup>)

104) R. G. Morkot: *Economic and Cultural Exchange between Kush and Egypt*. Unpubl. Ph.D. Dissertation University College London. London 1993 336 f. argues against a matrilinear system in Dyn. 25-Napatan royal succession, also quoting G. Robins (*A Critical Examination of the Theory that the Right to the Throne of Ancient Egypt Passed Through the Female Line in the 18th Dynasty*. GM 62 [1983] 67-77) according to whom the record of female ancestry in New Kingdom Egypt indicates nothing else than that the female line of descent was as important as the male lineage.

105) For examples see Hintze 1959 36 ff.

106) REM 0130, 0253, 0297, 0317, 0319, 0373, 1020, 1057, 1063 (see Table 14), 1064A, 1064B, Gebel Adda 4, 22.

107) E.g., REM 0298, 1049 (see Table 15).

108) E.g., REM 1090, 1091.

109) REM 0129, 0130, 0211, 0215, 0222, 0253, 0254, 0273, 0298, 0306, 1020, 1049, 1057, 1063-1067, 1090, Gebel Adda 4, 29.

110) REM 0130.

111) REM 0211.

112) REM 0215.

113) REM 0253.

114) REM 0227, 0241, 0287, 0300, 0306, 0516.

115) REM 0227, 0253, 0312, 0327, 0504.

116) REM 1020.

117) For researches on the structure of the Meroitic personal names cf. Abdelgadir M. Abdalla: *Beginnings of Insight into the Possible Meanings of Certain Meroitic Personal Names*. MNL 13 (1973) 21-30; id.: *Some Examples of Incremental Repetition in Meroitic Personal Names*. in: E. Endesfelder-K.-H. Priese et al. (eds): *Ägypten und Kusch. Schriften zur Geschichte und Kultur des Alten Orients* 13 [Fs Fritz Hintze]. Berlin 1977 17-40; for a classification of theophoric personal names see L. Török: *Meroitic Religion: Three Contributions in a Positivistic Manner*. *Meroitica* 7 (1984) 156-182 166 ff.

118) Cf. Millet 1968 167 ff.

119) REM 0370, 0373, 0386, 0387.

120) For their epitaphs see Millet 1968 304-362.

121) REM 0083, 1090, 1091.

122) REM 0273, 0297, 0298.

123) REM 0368, 0370, 0373, 0386, 0387.

A broader, and doubtless more elevated, association of social decorum with a particular territorial unit of the kingdom is conveyed by the honorific (?) title *mlo mrse Akinete*, i.e., *mlo mrse* in (the province of) Lower Nubia.<sup>124</sup> Nevertheless, officials of the highest echelons, whichever region they originated from, occupied offices subsequently in several regions, thus also associating the decorum of their family with other regions as well.<sup>125</sup> No doubt, the highest provincial officials were strictly controlled by the ruler who resided in the southern part of the kingdom and “separatist” tendencies were successfully curbed until the 4th century AD.<sup>126</sup>

At Masmas-Nag Gamus the priests of the Amûn temple at Qasr Ibrim were buried. Their inscriptions<sup>127</sup> constitute a special class insofar as they never refer to *mde*-relatives, indicating thus that there existed élite milieus in which social status and identity was determined exclusively by the association with the priesthood of certain cult temples. Closed priestly milieus are also attested from Karanog, e.g., by the family represented in my Table 5. It is worth noting that the priests buried at Nag Gamus repeatedly refer to their priesthood in the cult of Amûn of Napata as guest in Meroe City<sup>128</sup> which may be in some connection with their special traditions.

The display of the decorum deriving from the *mde*-relatives of the deceased predominates in the preserved texts. More than sixty inscriptions illuminate the range, variants, and development of the display of social identity as a synthesis of the personal rank of the deceased, of his or her being the son or the daughter of somebody whose social status is precisely defined by a title or a *cursus honorum*, and his or her being the nephew, grandnephew, or niece, grandniece of titleholders. Though with the deceased in the centre of their context, these references define, as a whole, not an individual but the hierarchical position of a whole extended family or clan. Let us briefly survey some families as they are reflected in their mortuary inscriptions.

Around AD 100, the lady in the centre of Table 3 records no parents, what is rather peculiar concerning the fact that she claims to have been the sister

of a *pqr*<sup>129</sup> and the mother of a *peseto*. She is similarly silent about her husband. Before we would conclude that it was herself rather than her father and/or her husband who was the vehicle of her family's career we must also consider the possibility that both her father and husband died young and still untitled. Altogether, it must be emphasized that many of the untitled people commemorated in the mortuary texts were children: their social status was properly manifested and perpetuated by the fact alone that they were commemorated in inscriptions.

Table 4 illustrates the mobility of the élite. The first husband of the lady Malatekeli was a clerical official in ed-Derr and her son from his marriage refers as maternal uncles to officials in Sedeinga (*Atiye*) and in Wadi es-Sebua (*Sdose*), and mentions furthermore an envoy to Egypt.

Table 6 presents the family tree of the Wayekiy-es. Their line of descent spans over eight generations from c. AD 120 to the years around 300. The title *pelmos* which reappears frequently in this extended family is usually translated as “general” and interpreted as a military term.<sup>130</sup> The Demotic documents of the family do not leave any doubt, however, that in the period spanned over by the family tree the title (which is indeed the Meroitic form of *mr mš*, originally the equivalent of strategus) denotes a sort of district commissioner, i.e., a high clerical official who is responsible for the estates of one or, more usually, several cult temples. The Meroitic *pelmos* also exerted an administrative authority over the population living in the territory where the estates in question were situated.<sup>131</sup> The family tree visualizes the special double cultural linkage of the élite families which served the Meroitic ruler in the Lower Nubian border region. On the one hand, the identity of the Wayekiye family absorbed the traditions of the Egyptian cult temples of the Egyptian-Meroitic frontier region which came, thank to their effective assistance, under Meroitic control during the 2nd half of the 3rd century AD. The members of the family were appointed into priesthoods in the Isis temple at Philae and the Thoth temple at Dakka according to Egyptian tradition, i.e., as sons of their

124) REM 0229, 0247, 0287.

125) Cf. for Arminna West D.Q. Fuller: *The Confluence of History and Archaeology in Lower Nubia: Scales of Continuity and Change. Archaeological Review from Cambridge* 14 (1997) 105–128 116 f.

126) It is interesting to note that the conferment of the highest rank title, viz., *pqr*, on a *peseto* removed him from Lower Nubia to the court. Cf. Török 1977 36 f. For the situation in the 4th cent. AD see Török 1999.

127) REM 1073–1087, 1149. Titles recorded in 1075–1079, 1082, 1083, 1149.

128) REM 1076, 1149.

129) If *pqor* in the inscription is a mis-spelling of *pqr* (or is it a writing of the title that associates it from some reason with *qor*(e), ruler?).

130) The interpretation suggested by Hintze 1963 27, Millet 1968, and D. Meeks: *Liste des mots méroïtiques ayant une signification connue ou supposée. MNL* 13 (1973) 3–20 16 was generally accepted. Hofmann 1981 65 f. suggested, however, that *pelmos* *adblise*, “*pelmos* of the water”, was a Meroitic variant of the title *nauarchos* in the Hellenistic Greek Isis cult.

131) Cf. the Comments on FHN II Nos 180–185 by R.H. Pierce and by this writer.



fathers. They also intermarried with Egyptian priestly families. On the other hand, they had deep roots in their Meroitic hinterland. The Meroitic epitaphs of the couple Wayekiye (A) and Taêse as well as the inscriptions of their more remote relatives who were buried at Gebel Adda clearly demonstrate that, as to the context of mortuary religion, the family adhered to the Meroitic conception of identity and decorum.

Table 7 presents five generations of a family related to several *pesetos* and dated between c. AD 150–300.<sup>132</sup> The identity of this family, as it is formulated in the mortuary inscriptions of its members, was established by *pqr*s and *pesetos*, who are referred to in most cases in the plural. A particularly important *pqr* in the family, namely, Yetametane senior of Generation 1, seems to be referred to by his title in the epitaph of his grand-niece Tameyakadiye. Furthermore, Yetametane is referred to with name by his great-grand-nephew Hawitarora and still two generations later he is mentioned in the mortuary text of Tameyakadiye's grandson the estate governor Tapohidat. Tameyakadiye as well as her brother Tapotemaḥer also refer, yet only by his title, to their brother the *peseto* Hawitarora, and the lady Boḥeye refers to her own son in the same manner. Another *pqr* is referred to by his sister Boḥeye. Thus, the superior level of elite hierarchy which is referred to in almost all of the epitaphs is actually present in the first generation in the person of Yetametane, in the second generation in the person of Boḥeye's brother, and in the third in the persons of Hawitarora and the unnamed son of the lady Boḥeye. Except these four family members, the rest of the family's male members occupy less exalted priesthoods and clerical offices. The career of the family clearly demonstrates the fact that the hierarchical status of an extended family was determined and secured for several subsequent generations by the highest position that had been reached by one of its members. It remains obscure, however, whether the elevation of subsequent family members into the high dignity of a *pqr* was the consequence of the family's hierarchical status gained by the first *pqr*, or was it – similarly to the emergence of other family members into the office of a *peseto* – a matter of personal ability.

The picture presented by the family in Table 7 is also corroborated by the relations of *peseto* Netewitara in Table 8 and the lady Balekewiteke in Table

9. It is suggested by the texts of Netewitara's siblings and Balekewiteke's family that the demonstration of social identity was carefully formulated according to a traditional hierarchy of references. The first reference is to one's own rank, or to the rank of the husband of a female deceased; the next to the maternal uncle(s) or grand-uncle(s) who define(s) the clans's hierarchical position, then to one's siblings, and in the case of a woman to her son(s). The references may conclude with the honorific title *mlo mrse* manifesting the position of the deceased in his/her local community. As illustrated by Tables 10 and 13, the structure of decorum and its display were construed in an identical manner in the inscriptions of medium level clerical officials and cult priests too. Table 11 indicates again the geographical mobility of the elite: the two children of Pesilikara from his two marriages were buried at Faras and at Karanog, respectively, while Pesilikara himself belonged to the priesthood of an Amûn temple<sup>133</sup> in Gezira Dabarosa. Table 12 indicates that the increasingly hereditary character of elite decorum did not prevent the emergence of new families. The siblings of *peseto* Abratoye – one of the successful Meroitic officials who were instrumental in the late Meroitic expansion in Lower Nubia<sup>134</sup> – occupied in the second half of the 3rd century AD rather insignificant positions, or were untitled. The impact of Abratoye's rank on the family's position is indicated, however, by the fine painted figural stela of his nephew Marosikali who died in his boyhood.<sup>135</sup> Inscriptions and representations of children buried separately or in family tombs are the best indications for a family's status and its conscience of decorum. The absence of references to *mde*-relatives in Abratoye's own mortuary inscription is also prevalent in the mortuary texts of several other *pesetos*.<sup>136</sup> It may well indicate that it was them who have first promoted their families to the highest stratum of elite hierarchy. It is equally significant, however, that *pesetos* who were already born into the highest echelon record, as a rule, only relatives of the *pqr*-rank.<sup>137</sup>

Tables 14, 15, and 16 demonstrate the final development of elite display in the circles of high officials (14 and 15) and the higher priesthood (16) of the later 3rd century AD. The mortuary inscriptions of the period are characterised by an excessive listing of *mde*-relatives. The phenomenon in itself, and particularly the reversal of earlier tendencies – namely, now a growing accent is laid again on the listing of titled relatives *with* their

132) *Peseto Hwitrar* (REM 0247) is dated to the middle decades of the 3rd century by REM 0544 (cf. FHN III No. 268). This dating conforms with the dates of painted pottery from Karanog G. 665, the burial of Tpotemḥer, W–R Pls 51, 57, 61, 97 (two pots marked G. 665, Pls 67 f., must come from an earlier burial in the same tomb: W–R 220 note that in the chamber there was a “disturbed” male skeleton and “one bone” from another skeleton) as well as with decorated vessels from G. 153, the burial of Tmeykdiye (ibid. Pls 54, 60) and from G. 60, tomb of Tpoḥidat (ibid. Pl. 65).

133) The title *beloloke/beliloke* is associated with Amûn/Amûn of Napata, cf. Hofmann 1977 207 f.

134) Cf. FHN III Nos 265–267, 270, 271.

135) REM 0251, W–R Pl. 12/7076.

136) In chronological order: REM 0543 (Tasemerese), 0521 (Hllḥror), 0277 (Mloton).

137) REM 0247 (Hwitrar), 0278 (Netewitr).

personal names<sup>138)</sup> – reflect, however indirectly, the decline of élite prestige. The prestige secured by hierarchical association was no more sufficient in itself. It had to be reinforced by an association with concrete “great men”. In the eyes of one’s own local community, the charisma of abstracted office and rank had to be increasingly supported by the personal charisma and authority of certain exceptional individuals. Behind these changes we may discern the weakening of central power, the emancipation and then the decline of the local élites, and, as a final stage of the decline of late Meroitic social structure, I also suppose the emergence of local charismatic authority.<sup>139)</sup> This is a process which we may compare to the rise of the “holy men” in the world of Late Antiquity.<sup>140)</sup>

During the last century or so that preceded the end of the tradition of inscribed Meroitic stelae and offering tables we encounter pathetic cases of the growing discrepancy between the decorum articulated in the texts and the monuments themselves that carry the inscribed message. Mortuary texts from Karanog written for priests,<sup>141)</sup> or relatives of pqr,<sup>142)</sup> pesetos,<sup>143)</sup> and priests<sup>144)</sup> were inscribed on the slightly smoothed surface of undressed, sometimes completely shapeless pieces of sandstone the lower part of which was probably dug into the earth of the tomb approach. One may of course comment on the irreality of these monuments and point out the abyss gaping between the decorum suggested by the text and the miserable reality of the monument that carries it. I prefer, however, to look at these monuments as proofs for the pathetic faith of a sinking élite in the power of literacy. Meroitic literacy, once the mighty vehicle of its emergence and the medium of its glory, was going to die together with the élite.

138) See also REM 1067: five envoys listed by name; Gebel Adda 28: thirteen clerical officials, one pqr, three belolokes, and one ateqi listed by name.

139) It cannot be excluded that the survival of Meroitic literacy in post-Meroitic Kalabsha was partly a consequence of the charismatic role played by the priests of Mandulis during the Blemmyan occupation of the region around Kalabsha between c. 394 and 452 AD. For the historical context cf. my comments on FHN III Nos 300-305, 308-314, 317-322.

140) Cf. P. Brown: *The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity*. in: P. Brown: *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity*. London 1982 103-152; D. Frankfurter: *Religion in Roman Egypt. Assimilation and Resistance*. Princeton 1998 204 ff.

141) REM 0238, W-R Pl. 13/7085, stela of a priest of Masa.

142) REM 0329 (*Kdiqebts* in Table 7).

143) REM 0306.

144) REM 0308, 0318, 0319.—Cf. also REM 1126, 1127; an offering table of this quality: REM 1213.

Let us conclude our survey of Meroitic élite decorum with a particularly impressive example of the projection of status conscience into the eternal dimensions of mortuary religion. In the second half of the 3rd century AD a man was buried in a wooden box coffin in the subterranean chamber of a pyramid tomb in the Begarawiya West cemetery. Next to his coffin five other persons were laid to rest, some, or perhaps all of them, being subsequent burials in a family tomb.<sup>145)</sup> After the digging of the tomb chamber into the bedrock was completed, but apparently before the construction of the pyramid, the builders of the tomb dug a vertical shaft into the earth above the centre of the burial chamber so that a decorated piece of stone could be lowered through it and inserted artfully into the roof of the chamber (fig. 1).<sup>146)</sup> The piece of the stone was the offering table of King Amanikhedolo<sup>147)</sup> from the first half of the 3rd century AD.<sup>148)</sup> It was fixed in the roof in a way that the scene on it, with the libating Anubis and Nephtys,<sup>149)</sup> looked down on the dead who lay in the chamber. Such a unique reuse of a royal offering table hardly aimed at anything else than the establishment, magical demonstration and perpetuation of the contact between the original owner of the table and the dead buried in the chamber who were in all likelihood his descendants or relatives.

The magical power of Meroitic literacy associated with mortuary religion was still felt when the Moslims of Faras re-erected the mid-3rd century AD stela of the high official Mafleye<sup>150)</sup> upon the sand above one of the ruined pyramids<sup>151)</sup> of the Meroitic necropolis. According to Griffith, he found it in the early years of the twentieth century “standing as a ‘sheikh’, with a modern incense burner in front of it... The sand-wear and decay of the surface proved that it had stood so, erect but half-buried, for a considerable period. We were informed that the coffins taken to the [Moslim] cemetery were set down at this spot while prayers were repeated and incense burned to the ‘sheikh’. With the permission of the natives, a stone pillar was substituted for the very pagan stela, but it was removed soon afterwards and apparently the spot lost its interest for the people.”<sup>152)</sup>

145) Beg. W. 109, Dunham 1963 199.

146) Dunham 1963 fig. 143/a.

147) REM 0838.

148) For Amanikhedolo’s chronological position cf. FHN III No. (235).

149) *Performing an Abaton-type milk libation*, cf. Yellin 1982.

150) REM 0544.

151) “Mastaba” 1055, Griffith 1925 124 f.

152) F.L. Griffith: *Meroitic Funerary Inscriptions from Faras, Nubia*. in: *Recueil d’Études Égyptologiques dédiées à la mémoire de Jean-François Champollion*. Paris 1922 565-600 598.

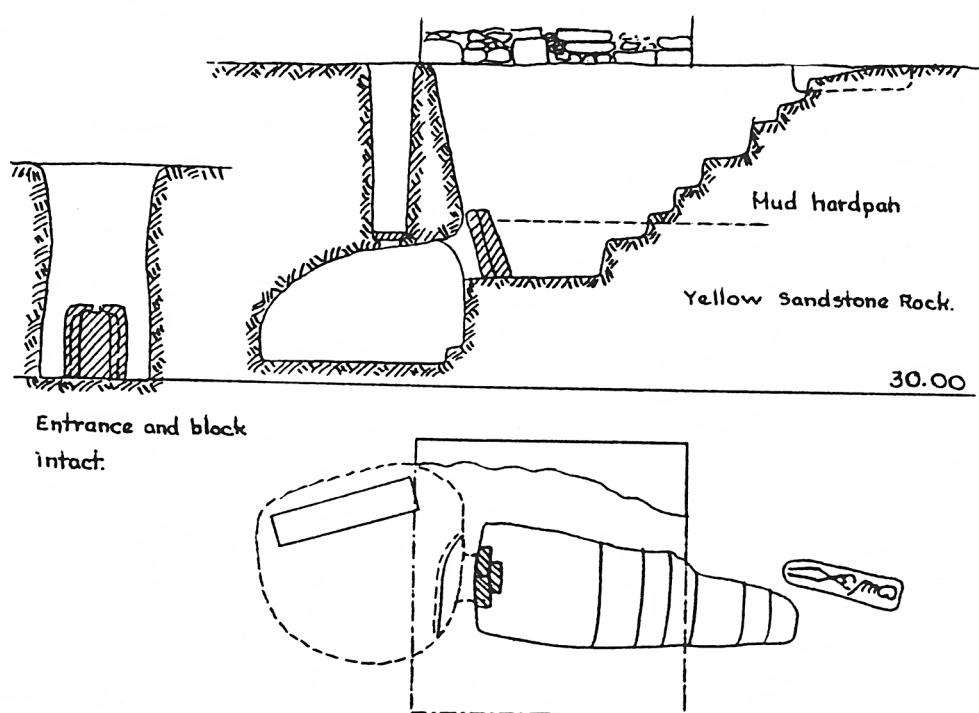


Fig. 1: Beg. W. 109. After Dunham 1963 fig. 143/a.

Table 1. Family of the *peseto* Dadokara. AD 1st century  
(REM 0208, 0303)

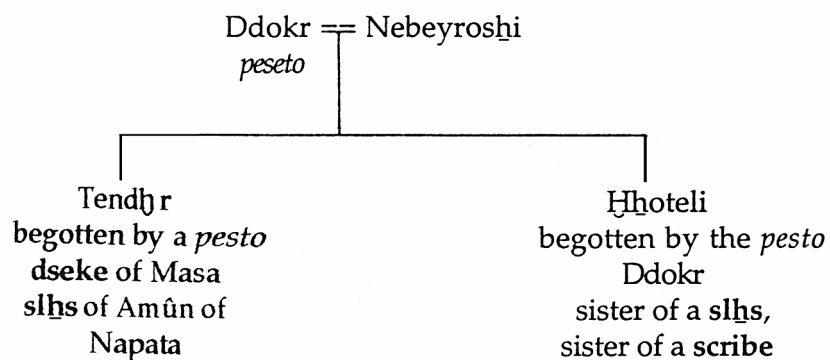


Table 2. The relations of the lady Natakili. Second half of the AD 1st century  
(REM 0295, 0296, 0298)

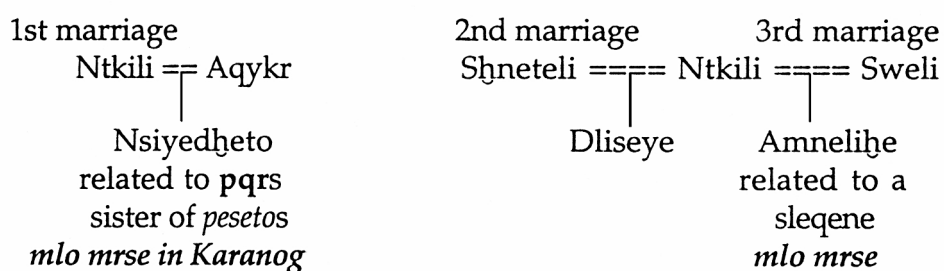
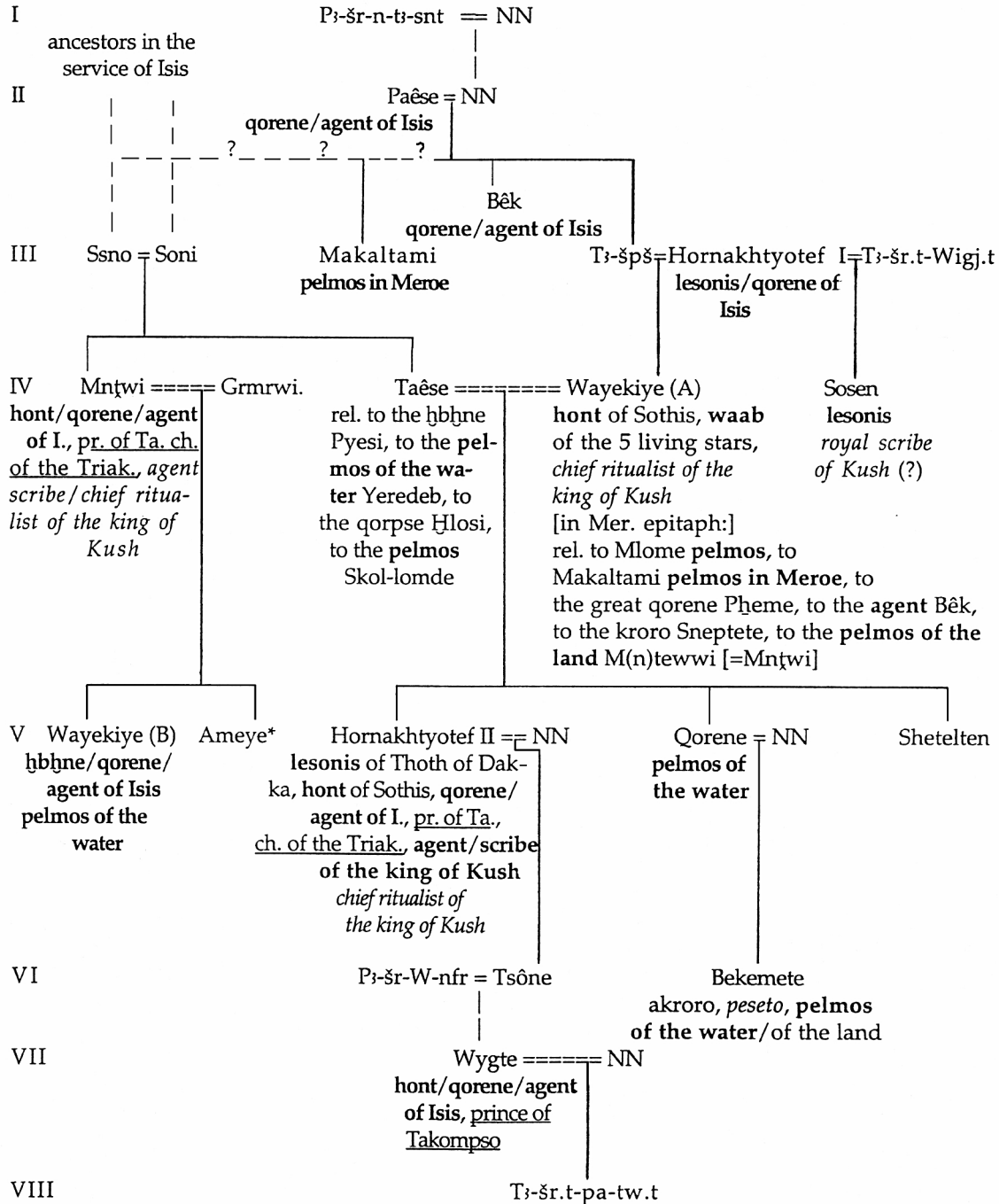






Table 6. Family tree of the Wayekiye family. Between c. AD 120-300  
(FHN III Nos 231, 232, 243-247, 249-252, 254, 255, 261-263; Gebel Adda 20)

Generation



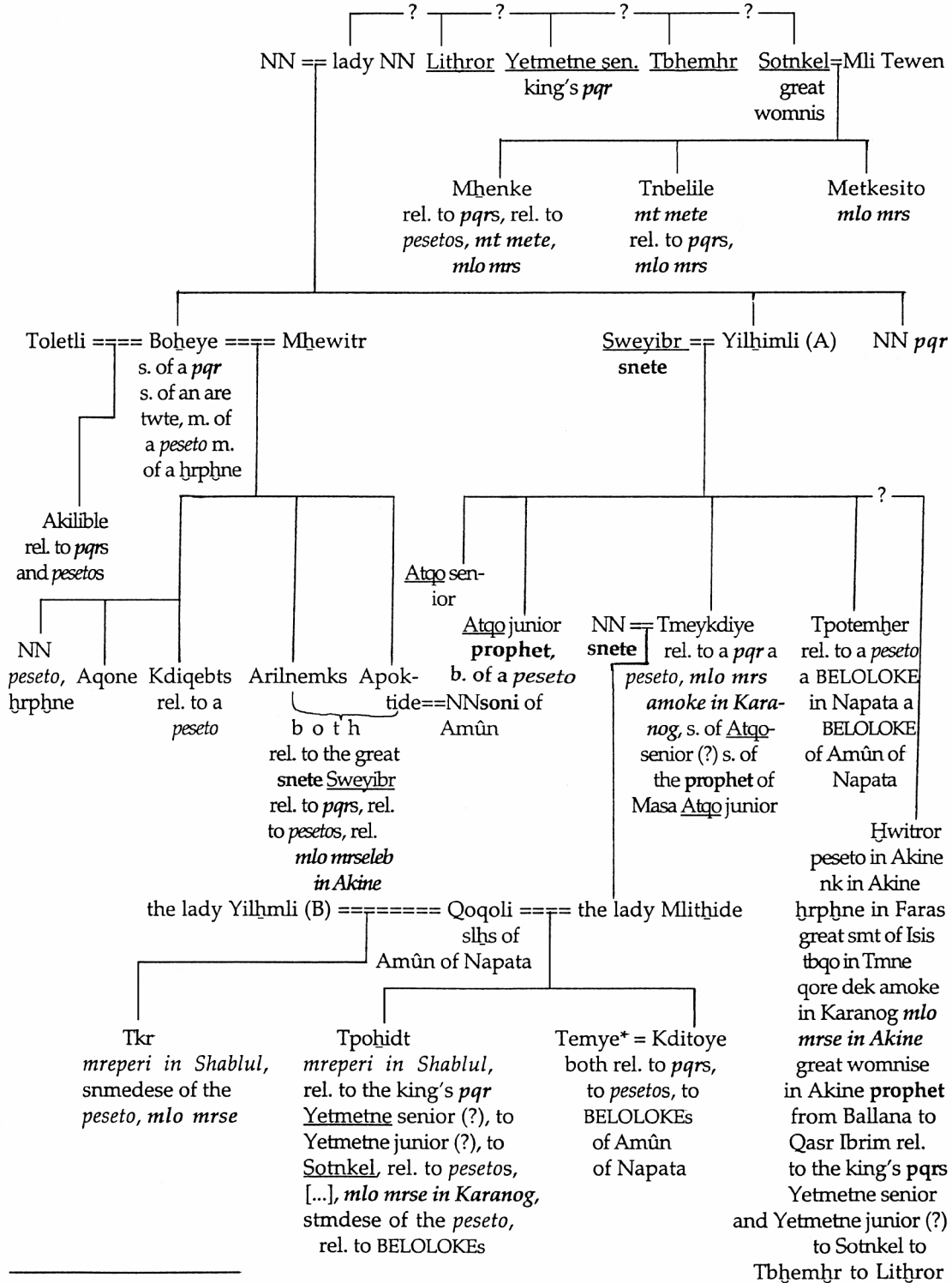
ch. of the Triak. = chief (?) of the Triakontaschoenus; I. = Isis; Mer. = Meroitic; pr. of Ta. = prince of Takompso

\* in Gebel Adda 20 Ameye is sister of pelmosleb of the water



Table 7. Family tree of Saweyibara and Boheye. Between c. AD 150-300

(REM 0204, 0216, 0217, 0218, 0223, 0231, 0232, 0239, 0249, 0250, 0259, 0271, 0272, 0275, 0316)



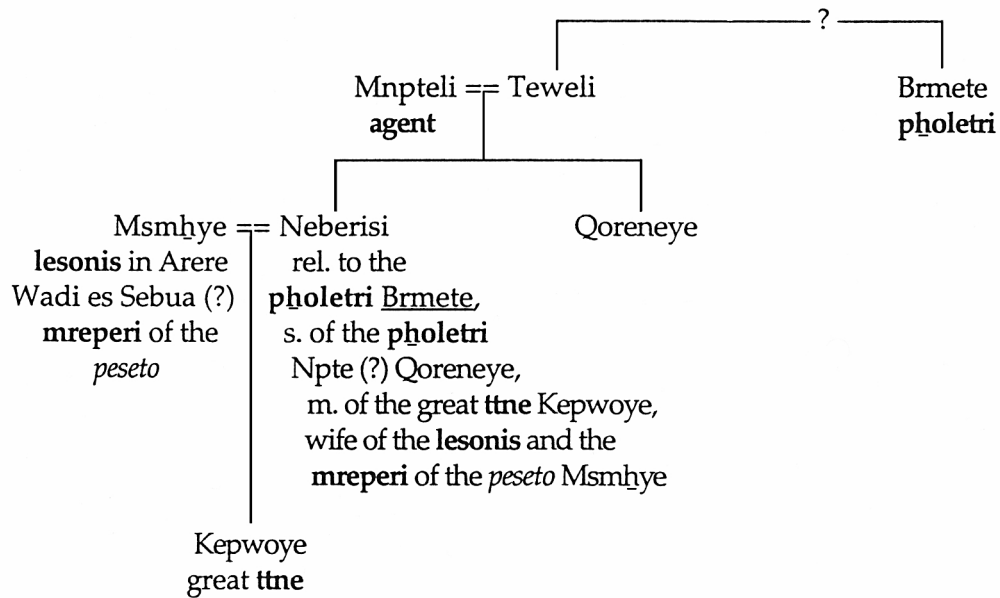
b. = brother; m. = mother; rel. to = related to; s. = sister

\* According to REM 0223, Temye's father is the *mshto* Trebit, his mother is Tobye.





Table 10. Family relations of the lady Neberisi. Between c. AD 200-300  
(REM 1019)



m. = mother  
rel. to = related to  
s. = sister

Table 11. The descendants of the lady Pesilikara. Between c. AD 200-300  
(REM 0375, 0537)

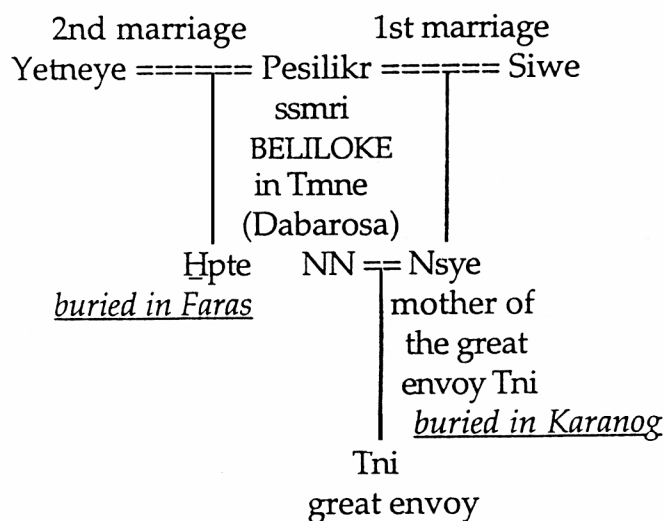




Table 12. Relations of the *peseto* Abaratoye. Around AD 250-270  
(REM 0251, 0252)

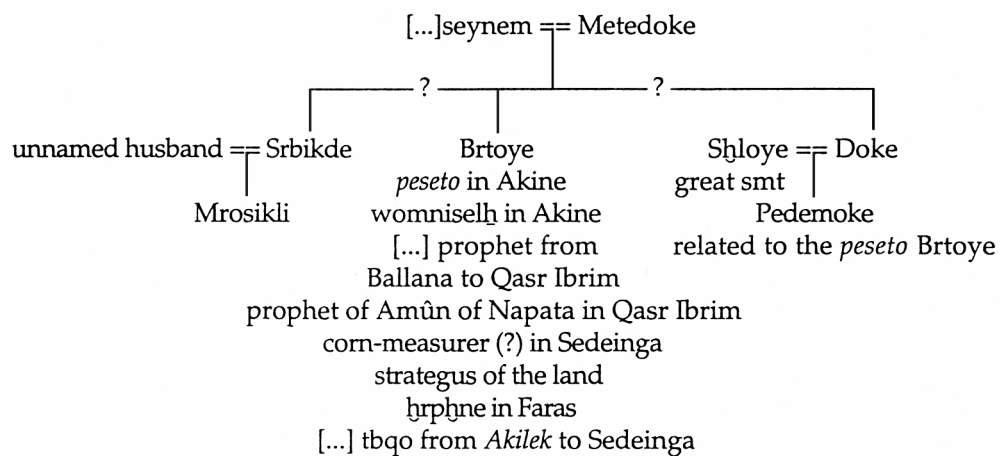


Table 13. Family relations of the prophet Nahasaniye. Between c. AD 250-300  
(REM 0234, 0260)

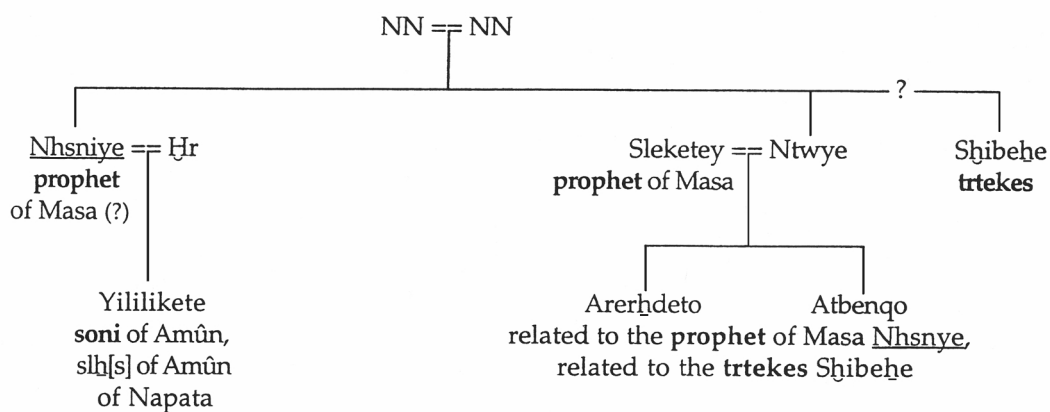




Table 14. The descent of Sahiye and his sister Taysiye. AD 3rd century  
(REM 1063=FHN III No. 291)

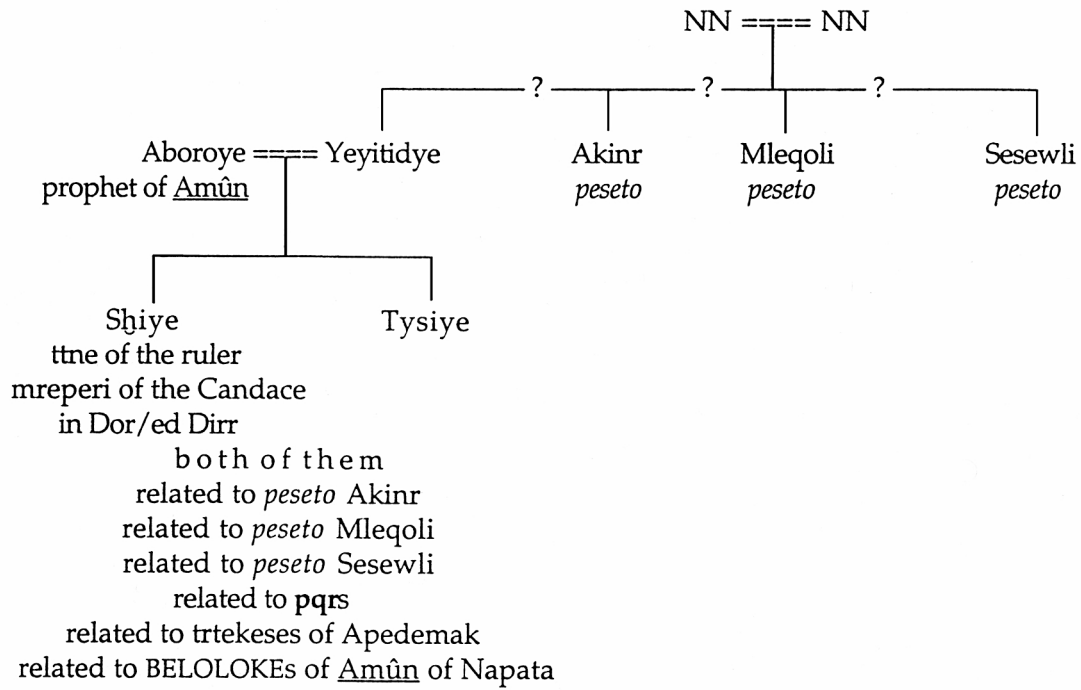


Table 15. Relations of the lady Maliwose. AD 3rd century  
(REM 1049)

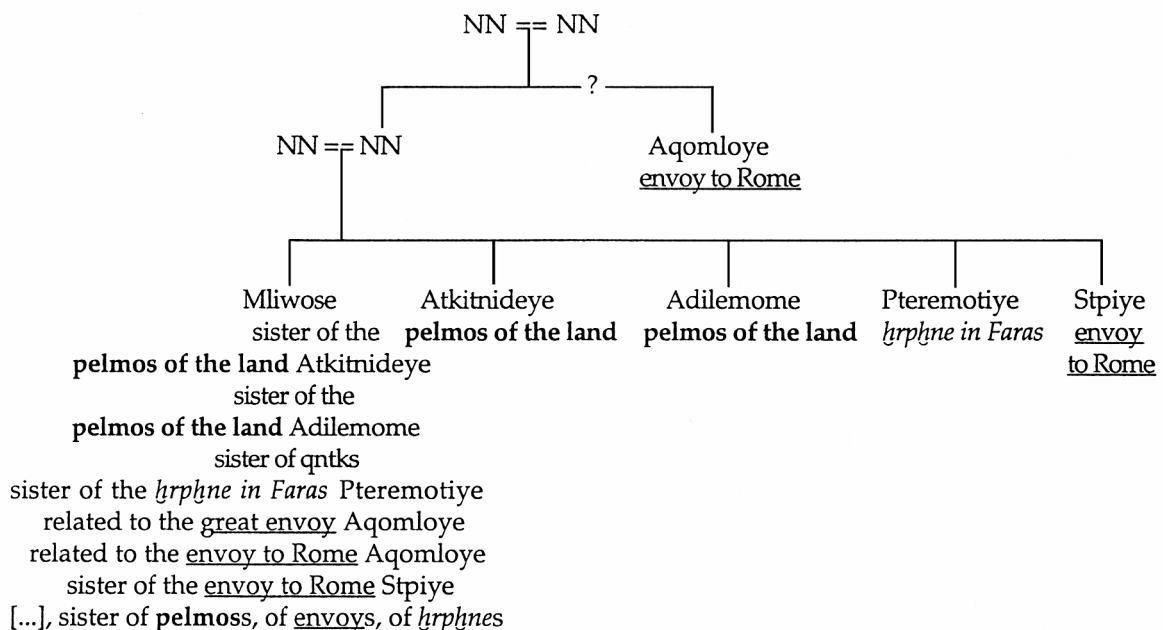
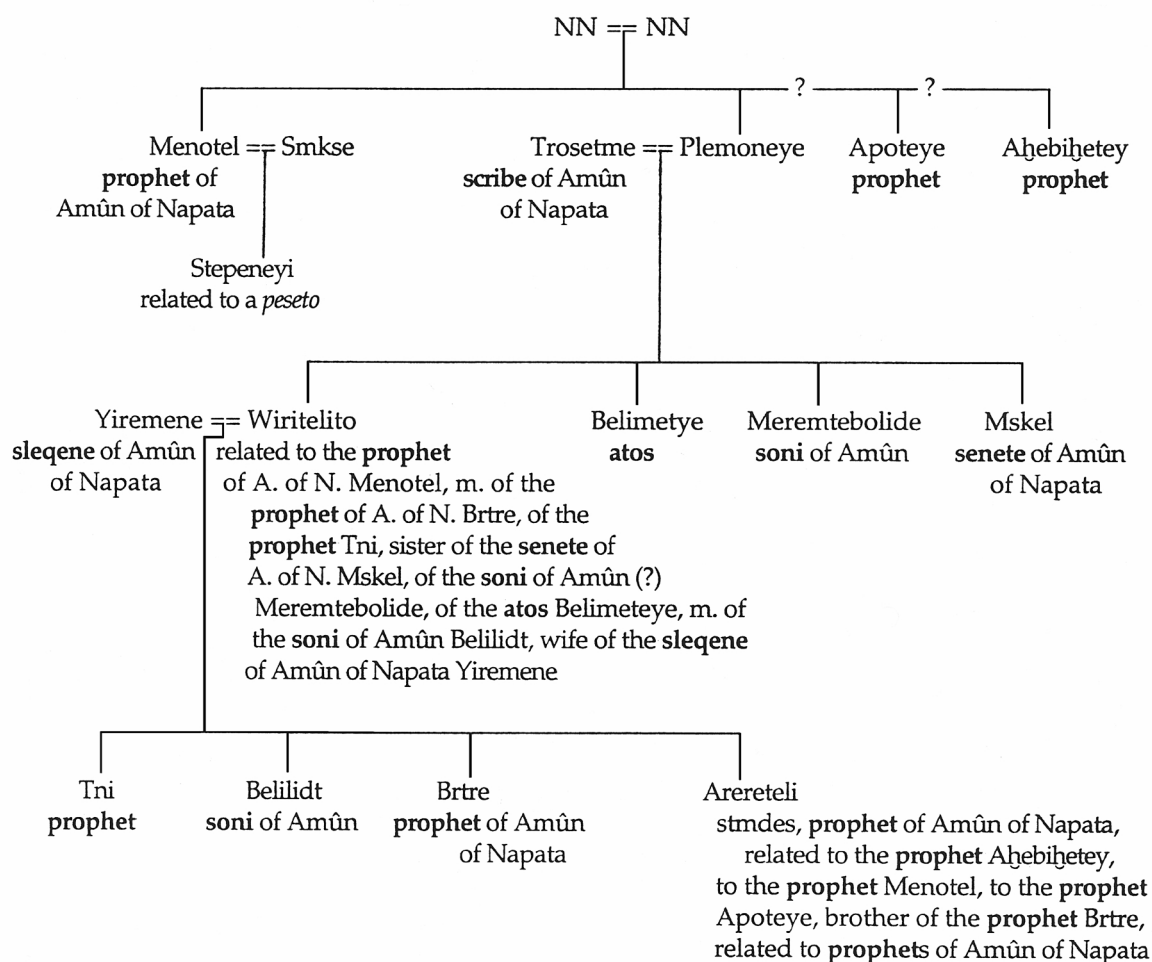




Table 16. **Relations of the lady Wiritelito.** About AD 270-320.  
(REM 0219, 0220, 0221, 0289, 0320)



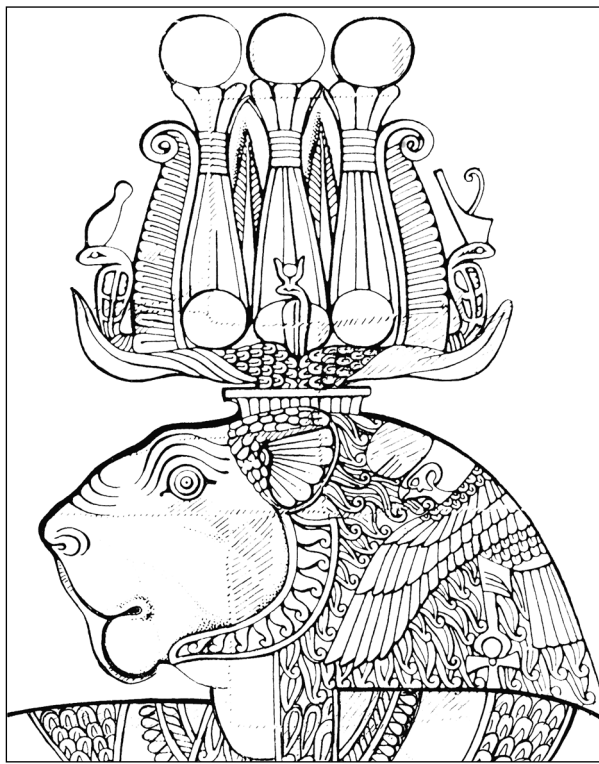
A. of N. = Amûn of Napata  
m. = mother



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