

## MUT, THE EYE OF RE

von

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More than 20 years ago, the great egyptologist, the late Serge Sauneron, gave a lecture in the Institut d'Egypte in Cairo on "Les inscriptions ptolémaïques du temple de Mout à Karnak"<sup>1</sup>.

In this lecture he gave a survey of the main themes of these ptolemaic texts inscribed on the propylon and the portico of the Mut-temple, that is to say: 1. the problem of the evil demons and connected with it, 2. the performance of music and dancing in the rituals for Mut, moreover 3. elements of the traditional mythology concerning Mut and also 4. the processions of Mut at certain feasts.

The definitive publication of these interesting and important text in their archaeological and architectural context, a translation and commentary, on which Sauneron had worked since 1950, he was not able to bring to a good end because of his premature death in 1976. However, the results of the work of Sauneron and of those who worked with him, are now presented by Sylvie Cauville in a special publication<sup>2</sup>. This book contains chapters on the architecture of the ptolemaic gate and portico by Françoise Laroche-Traunecker, the hieroglyphic inscriptions drawn from photographs by Laila Menassa and the aforementioned paper of Sau-

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1 S.Sauneron, Les inscription ptolémaïques du temple de Mout à Karnak, BIE 45, 1968, 45-51 (Communication présentée en séance du 13 janvier 1964).

2 S.Sauneron, La porte ptolémaïque de l'enceinte de Mout à Karnak. Dessins de Laila Ménassa Zeyni. Ouvrage publié avec la collaboration de S.Cauville et F.Laroche-Traunecker, MIFAO, t. CVII. Le Caire 1983.

neron in abstract. In this book Sylvie Cauville has given a word-index of the texts that is very useful for everyone who wants to consult these texts, that until 1983 were only partly available in the old and out-dated copy of Bouriant<sup>3</sup>.

Although a complete evaluation, translation and commentary of these texts has not yet been given, it is a very good thing that the work of the former director of the IFAO and the Centre Franco-Egyptien d'Etude des Temples de Karnak has been made available as soon as possible as a basis for further study concentrated on the precinct of the Mut-temple in South-Karnak.

In 1976, the year of the death of the lamented Serge Sauneron, South-Karnak or the precinct of the Mut-temple was still one of the least investigated spots of Karnak. But in that same year 1976 the Brooklyn Museum started an expedition to the Precinct of the Goddess Mut at South-Karnak. This expedition, conducted by Richard Fazzini, the head of the Egyptological and Classical Department of the Brooklyn Museum, has up till now collected precious material and greatly added to our knowledge of South-Karnak and generally of Egyptian art and architecture, history and religion as everybody who has seen the preliminary reports will admit<sup>4</sup>.

For some years now I have been collecting material for a religio-historical monography on the goddess Mut. Of course I could not do such a work without the generous and stimulating help of the Brooklyn Museum Expedition to the Precinct of the Goddess Mut at South-Karnak. Last spring Richard Fazzini suggested to me to make a special study of the texts on the aforementioned ptolemaic gate and portico of the precinct of the Mut-temple, and I am now engaged on translating and commenting on these texts together with Jacobus van Dijk. Eventually this study will appear as one of the occasional papers of the Brooklyn Museum Expedition that are scheduled.

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3 U.Bouriant, RT 13, 1890, 153-179.

4 For brief descriptions of the work of the expedition, see NARCE 101-102, 1977, 12-27; 108, 1979, 19-20; 112, 1980, 39-44; 120, 1982, 37-45; *Orientalia* 46, 1977, 265; 47, 1978, 291-292; 48, 1979, 373-374; 51, 1982, 77-79; JSSEA 11, 1981, 115-126; R. Fazzini, in: *Artibus Aegypti*. Bruxelles, 51-62; R.Fazzini, in: *Mélanges Gamal Mokhtar*. Cairo 1985, I, 293-306; R.Fazzini and W.Peck, *Archaeology*, March/April 1983, 16-23; J.C.Goyon, *JARCE* 20, 1983, 47-64; C.Traunecker, *JARCE* 20, 1983, 65-92.

These inscriptions are incomplete as the gateway and portico themselves are incompletely preserved. The inscriptions have many broken lines and lacunas. Some readings were and still are uncertain. So we still have problems of translation and interpretation.

The cartouches of Ptolemaeus II and Ptolemaeus VI are found on the gate<sup>5</sup>. So one can accept that the texts inscribed on the gate and the portico (or "avant-porte") are to be dated as early ptolemaic. This does not yet mean that the texts are exclusively a reflection of myth and cult of the goddess Mut in ptolemaic times. They may as well be also a summary of religious traditions that reach back to the New Kingdom.

Up to the present no certain evidence has been found that the goddess Mut was venerated in Thebes in the Middle Kingdom as Amun was. Her name was found on blocks of a building of Amenhotep I in Karnak as I have stressed before<sup>6</sup>. I can now add that in Thebes Mut is first mentioned together with Amun and Ptah on a stela of King Antef Nubkheperre of the 17th dynasty, that was found in the Ptah-temple<sup>7</sup>. I do not believe that the relationship of Mut and Amun is fundamental in origin. Outside Thebes Mut is often found without Amun and in Thebes she is also a goddess on her own with her own temple who had relations with other gods. In the texts on the ptolemaic gate her relation to Ptah is still juxtaposed to her relation to Amun<sup>8</sup>.

At this moment we cannot say with certainty just when the construction of a temple for Mut in South-Karnak was started. One of the results of the excavations of the Brooklyn Museum is that archaeological evidence found in recent years shows that there was a temple dedicated to Mut in the time of Hatshepsut and that textual evidence is hereby confirmed<sup>9</sup>.

On a statue of Hapuseneb<sup>10</sup>, vizir of Hatshepsut, highpriest of Amun

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5 Sauneron, La porte ptolémaïque, 2, cf. Inscr. 13,1; 16,1; 20,2-3; 22,1.

6 LÄ IV, 246.

7 PM II (2nd.ed.), 198.

8 Inscr. 14, 18.

9 See int. al. Urk. IV, 409; 521 (Statues of Senmut and Puyemre found in the precinct of Mut).

10 Urk. IV, 478-480.

and chief of the prophets of the gods of Lower and Upper Egypt, that was found by Benson and Gourlay in the precinct of the Mut-temple, Amun and Mut, Mistress of Isheru, Sakhmet and Bastet are invoked. On the back four uraeus goddesses (Neseret, Bastet, Wadjet and Menhet) are addressed in terms derived from the "Hymnen an das Diadem der Kronen"<sup>11</sup>. In the "Hymnen an das Diadem der Kronen" itself, a text dating from the Second Intermediate Period, Mut is mentioned as one of the many uraeus goddesses. The cult of Mut in South-Karnak seems to be connected with the complex uraeus, lion, eye and crowns.

As so many other goddesses Mut is given the epithet Eye of Re since the New Kingdom. Several goddesses were already called Eye of Re before the New Kingdom. (In the Pyramid Texts the Eye of Re is said to be on the horns of Hathor. In the Heliopolitan theology Tefnut was identified with the Eye of Re). As far as I have been able to ascertain Mut is called Eye of Re for the first time in the reign of Ramesses II and not earlier. One can find this epithet of Mut int.al. on the famous bloc statue of Bakenkhonsu, not on the one here in Munich, but on the other parallel statue of Bakenkhonsu that is in the Museum of Cairo<sup>12</sup>.

It is somewhat surprising that Mut was not yet called Eye of Re in the 18th Dynasty, as it seems that she was connected with the complex uraeus, crowns and lion right from the start of her cult in Thebes in the 18th Dynasty or somewhat earlier. The reason of this lacuna in the material preserved might be sought in the incompleteness of our collection of material concerning Mut. But we stumble over the fact that in the 18th Dynasty-texts we often find the usual epithets of Mut such as the Great One (*wrt*), Mistress of Heaven (*nbt pt*), Mistress of Isheru (*nbt išrw*), Mistress of the Two Lands (*nbt tšwy*) and Mistress of all the Gods (*ḥnwt ntrw nbw*), but not yet Eye of Re (*irt-R<sup>c</sup>*). This lacuna can hardly be called accidental. I even have the impression that in the post-ramesside material - the material from the Third Intermediate Period, kushite, saite and ptolemaic times the epithet of Mut, Eye of Re, has more emphasis and is more often found than in the material con-

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11 A.Erman, Hymnen an das Diadem der Kronen, Abh. der Kgl. Preuss. Ak.d.W. Berlin 1911.

12 C.G. 42155. This epithet is attributed to Mut at the same time outside Thebes: E.Naville, Bubastis, pl. XXXVIII.

cerning Mut dating from Ramesside times. It is even so that in the latter Ramesside material the epithet of Mut, Eye of Re, is found more often than in the early Ramesside material. To give just one striking example: The epithet of Mut, Eye of Re, is repeatedly found in the inscriptions of the decorations of the columns of the great hypostyle hall of the Amun-temple in Karnak. But it is not found in those inscriptions of Sethos I, not even in those of Ramses II, but only in the inscriptions on the columns that were decorated by Ramses IV<sup>13</sup>.

I am inclined to seek an explanation in the history of the mythic-cultic background of the epithet Eye of Re. It is well-known from studies by Junker, Sethe, Spiegelberg and scholars of our generation that the myth and cult of the first feminine being, which may be called by different names of goddesses and is indicated in short as the Sun-Eye, which left Egypt in a rage towards the South and then was reconciled and brought back to Egypt in festivity - that this myth and cult of the Eye of Re was a constant element in various temples of ptolemaic and roman times. It is, however, still uncertain or disputed in how far the myth and cult of the Sun-Eye in its elaborated ptolemaic-roman form reaches back to earlier times.

In the ptolemaic texts on the propylon and its portico of the Mut-temple clear indications can be found that the return and the reconciliation of the Sun-Eye was celebrated, as was already indicated by Sauneron. There she is also called Eye of Re and just like Hathor the Golden Lady (*nubt*). But that is not a new ptolemaic development or reformation of the cult of Mut. The myth and cult of the Sun-Eye was celebrated already in Ramesside times in the precinct of Mut. And I suppose that this received its established form in Ramesside times.

In the Ramesside Leiden hymn to Amun (Leiden J 350 ) Thebes is personified as a goddess and called Eye of Re and it is said:

Her Majesty returned as the beneficial Uzat-Eye... She has come to rest and has stopped in Isheru (*ḥtp.ti ḥnwti m 3šrw*) in her form of Sakhmet<sup>14</sup>.

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13 L.A.Christophe, Les divinités des colonnes de la grande salle hypostyle et leurs épithètes. Le Caire 1955, 35, 46, 53.

14 J.Zandee, De Hymnen aan Amon van Papyrus Leiden I 350. Leiden 1948, 25, 27.

This Isheru in Thebes must be the lake that surrounds the Mut-temple on three sides, although the Mut-temple itself is not mentioned. As Sauneron and Yoyotte and now B.Gessler-Löhr have shown<sup>15</sup>, an Isheru is in general a lake in the form of a horseshoe surrounding temples of lion goddesses. The Isheru in Thebes must have been constructed in the time of Amenhotep I or earlier, because since the time of Amenhotep I Mut is called Mistress of Isheru<sup>16</sup> ( *nbt išrw* ). In Pap.Leiden J 350 the technical terms of the myth and cult of the Sun-Eye are used. She has come back ( *iī.ns* ) and she has come to rest and has stopped in Isheru ( *hṯp.ti hṯwti. m ššrw* ). This implies that the goddess, who is called Eye of Re and who came back from the South, stopped her navigation on the Nile in the Isheru-lake in Thebes. Already a text dating from the time of Tuthmosis III, that was found in the precinct of Mut, mentions the festive navigations of these lion goddesses: Wadjet, Bastet and Shesemtet<sup>17</sup>. Later, in Ramesside times, it is always the navigation of Mut ( *p3 hṯw Mut* )<sup>18</sup> that is mentioned, and that seems to have been a very popular feast. The ritual navigation and the epithet Eye of Re are both connected with Mut for the first time in texts dating from the time of Ramses II. As soon as the ritual navigation on the Isheru is connected exclusively with Mut or as it is sometimes said "Mut in all her names" it becomes understandable that Mut in Thebes is given the epithet Eye of Re, because this epithet seems to refer to the navigation or water-festival that was celebrated in her name.

Other lion goddesses are called Eye of Re and have an Isheru before the New Kingdom, but it is extremely uncertain in how far this may be connected with the myth and cult of the Sun-Eye in Ptolemaic and Roman times.

Although Mut is not yet called Eye of Re in the 18th Dynasty material, she is represented lionheaded in those parts of the Luxor-temple that were decorated in the time of Amenhotep III. And in the same time and place she presents, as a lady wearing the double crown, the menat to Amenhotep III<sup>19</sup>. In an inscription in the temple of Ptah dating from

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- 15 S.Sauneron, BIFAO 62, 1964, 50-57; J.Yoyotte, RdE 14, 1962, 101-110; B.Gessler-Löhr, Die heiligen Seen ägyptischer Tempel, HÄB 21. Hildesheim 1983, 401-424.  
 16 Unpublished blocs in Karnak, cf. LÄ IV, 246 n. 5.  
 17 S.Schott, Altägyptische Festdaten, Mainz 1950, 94-95 (nrs.91,94,97).  
 18 H.Altenmüller, in: LÄ II, 177 and n. 103.  
 19 PM II (2nd.ed.), 317(98); 319(109)-(112); 329(161).

the time of Horemheb she is called: Lady of Terror, mistress of attraction in the palace of the lord of the gods. i.e. Amun-Re ( *nbt nrw hmw mrt m qh n nb ntrw* )<sup>20</sup>. Mut is not only a terrible lion goddess, who is to be reconciled, but also the attractive daughter who propitiates the king or a father-god like Amun-Re with her charms by presenting the menat. If the relationship of Amun and Mut has a matrimonial character at all, it is not a marriage based on equality like the divine brother-sister marriage of Osiris and Isis. The relationship between Amun and Mut has the character of a father and daughter relation. Mut is the daughter of Amun and sometimes his mother. She is *mwrt irt s3t* the mother who acts as a daughter as is said in the inscriptions in the portico of the pylon of the Mut-precinct<sup>21</sup>.

This reconciliation whether of the goddess or by the goddess was performed by singing, music-making and dancing at the entrance to the precinct of the Mut-temple. On a relief of the portico the playing on tambourine, harp and sistrum is represented and the texts have many allusions to dancing and singing. Not so many extatic forms of religion are found in Egypt. The cults of the goddesses who represented the raging and reconciled Eye of the Sun may have been an exception to that rule. The singing, music-making and dancing in texts and representations on the pylon and portico of the precinct of the Mut-temple can be traced back to Ramesside times.

In the hymns of the daily temple ritual addressed to Mut (Pap.Berlin 3014 + 3053) several passages can be quoted, in which singing and dancing is alluded to<sup>22</sup>:

"Come and let us perform for her the *ib3*-dance of the ape (*kr*) the ksks-dance of the Nubian king (*kw*) carrying the menat....

Let us take the feathers from the back of the ostrich. Let us perform for her the dance of the Libyans....

Let us dance and jubilate for our Mistress in her form in which she

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20 PM II<sup>2</sup>, 200(18).

21 Inscr. 5, 2, cf. K.Sethe, Amun (Abh. Preuss. Ak.d.W., Jhrg. 1929, nr. 4. Berlin 1929), 30(47). In the index added to the text-publication (p. 33) Sylvie Cauville translates however "l'enfant-oeil".

22 Pap.Berlin 3014 + 3053, XI 5-6; 8-XVII 2; XVII 9-XVIII 1; XVIII 3-4, cf. J.van Dijk, Hymnen uit het dagelijks tempelritueel voor de Egyptische godin Moet, in: Schrijvend Verleden, ed. K.R.Veenhof, Leiden-Zutphen 1983, 233-246.

was, when she was found at the splitting of the *išd*-tree together with Re in Heliopolis.

I have seen you, I have found you when you were sitting at the entrance of Punt; the *htw*-apes dance for you and your Horus sings for you. Buto and Sais dance for you invested with blue linen."

This Berlin-hymn to Mut, Great of magic, Eye of Re, in which the central theme is the return and the reconciliation of the goddess and in which are found so many allusions to singing, music and dancing, was probably sung in the daily temple ritual. But dancing and music itself had no place in the daily temple ritual of the great gods as Henri Wild has remarked. Singers, dancers and sistrumplayers appear at the feasts according to Wild<sup>23</sup>.

However the late François Daumas has called attention to singing, music, dancing and extatic forms of religion, that were performed in "les propylées du temple d'Hathor à Philae". In the propylaea of the Hathor-temple at Philae then real mysteries were enacted according to Daumas<sup>24</sup>.

Whether real mysteries were enacted in the propylon of the Mut-temple I do not know yet. As I said: I am, together with Jacobus van Dijk, engaged in translating and studying the texts on the gate and in the portico (*sbht*). That portico certainly had a liturgical function as Françoise Laroche-Traunecker has already said: "de nombreux rites étaient célébrés à la porte du temple"<sup>25</sup>.

I assume that there were not only celebrations with extatic singing, dancing and music on those festive days when the goddess Mut left or entered the temple in procession, passing through the gateway. It is written on the wall of the portico:

"I am the perfect sistrumplayer for the Golden Lady who pacifies the heart of my mistress every day"<sup>26</sup>:

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23 H.Wild, Les danses sacrées de l'Egypte ancienne, in: Sources Orientales VI, Paris 1963, 42.

24 F.Daumas, ZÄS 95, 1968, 1-17.

25 In: Sauneron, La porte ptolémaïque, 16.

26 Inscr. 4, 1.



There is harp-playing and lute-playing there is dancing and springing  
in the place where She is; there is eating and drinking every day. There  
is not a moment without jubilation<sup>27</sup>."

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27 Inscr. 5, 2.