



The Goddess Tjenenet at Karnak Temples during the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods

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
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INTRODUCTION

The goddess Tjenenet  was a goddess whose first attestations are known from the Middle Kingdom (Mond & Myers, 1940, p.158), precisely during the reign of King Montuhotep III. Her cult centres were found at Tod (Bisson de la Roque 1937, 79–80, fig. 32), Armant and Medamoud. She enjoyed a widespread cult over the 4th Theban Nome, “w3st”. Tjenenet was first regarded as the consort of the god Montu, but from the New Kingdom, she joined the god Sobek as his consort (Legrain, 1912, p. 119). She was often represented in a group composed of Sobek, Iunit, and herself – it is likely that they formed a triad. Moreover, Tjenenet was associated with birth and maternity and was an essential member of the Great Theban Ennead. The Ptolemaic and Roman evidence reflects the maximization of Tjenenet’s theology, contrasting with Wilkinson’s assumption of its decline after the New Kingdom (Wilkinson, 2017, p. 168), as she held new roles in the Egyptian religion. At the time Armant, Tod, and Medamoud were regarded as the main cult centres of Tjenenet (Fareed, 2021, p. 509),

ABSTRACT

The goddess Tjenenet was adopted in the ancient Egyptian religion since the Middle Kingdom. She was regarded as a goddess of maternity and birth and enjoyed a widespread cult over the 4th Theban Nome, “w3st”, from the Middle Kingdom to the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods. This paper aims to trace the depictions of the goddess Tjenenet in the territory of Karnak Temples to shed light on her features and roles during the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods. It is concluded that the Karnak Temples precinct was a secondary cult centre for Tjenenet, where she joined the god Montu and the god Sobek as consort. Tjenenet appeared in three versions: Tjenenet, Tjenenet-Rettawy and Tjenenet-Iunit. At the Karnak Temples, Tjenenet was regarded as a primitive mother goddess, a protective goddess, and a member of the lunar escort in the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods. In the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods, the earliest attestation for Tjenenet came during the time of Ptolemy III, while the latest came during the time of Emperor Tiberius. Therefore, this article highlights Tjenenet’s evolving cultic importance, providing insights into the religious integration of Karnak Temples.

the Karnak Temples' precinct is considered one of the secondary cult centres that witnessed a partial spread of her cult, precisely during the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods. Nevertheless, her cult was already present there in the 18th Dynasty, during the time of Queen Hatshepsut, who included her in her Red Chapel (Lacau & Chevrier, 1977, pp. 226–227). This paper aims to trace the depictions of the goddess Tjenenet in the territory of Karnak Temples to shed light on the mechanisms she played, according to the ancient Egyptian theology in the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods, and answer the following questions: What new features were attributed to the goddess Tjenenet at the Karnak Temples in the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods? How did Tjenenet's roles evolve in the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods? This paper is developed using the descriptive-analytical approach to study her scenes from the varied scientific resources.

TJENENET IN THE PTOLEMAIC PERIOD (CA. 305 BC- 30 BC):

In the Ptolemaic Period, the earliest attestation of the goddess Tjenenet at Karnak temples came during the reign of King Ptolemy III, precisely within the enclosure of the god Montu, on the western jamb of the gate that is nowadays called Bab el-'Abd (Sethe & Firchow, 1957, p. 8; Varille, 1943, p. 2). In this scene (Fig. 1), King Ptolemy III is depicted spearing a turtle before the god Montu and the goddess Tjenenet-Rettawy. The accompanying text explains the slaying of Ra's enemies of Apophis before him and his Ka. The goddess is depicted standing, following the god Montu of Hermonthis. She is raising her left hand with a praising attitude. Furthermore, she is represented with the outward-curved horns of a cow. In-between the sun disc is flanked on her head over a vulture-style headdress composed of a tripartite hair wig. Her neck is adorned with a full collar, and she is clothed in a tight-fitting tunic covering her body, with her breasts exposed. She is holding the "ꜥnh" sign of life in her left hand.

The goddess Tjenenet is addressed with the following:



(¹) *tnnt-Rꜥtt3wy hry.t-ib Iwn-šmꜥw* (²) *mwt ntr msi ntrw pꜥyt wr.t s3.t Itm hry.t tp n Rꜥ-hr-3hty*

(¹) Recitation by Tjenenet-Rettawy the one who resides in Hermonthis, (²) the mother of the god, the one who gives birth to the gods, the great fiery-one, the daughter of the god Atum, and the uraeus of Ra-Horakhty.

She addresses King Ptolemy III who slayed the turtle before Montu and her:

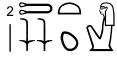


(³) *bs=i m sd.t r sswn wr sbiw=k hftyw=k nn wnn=sn*

(³) I emerge as fire to destroy your hostilities, your foes, they no longer exist.

During the reign of Ptolemy VIII, in the Opet Temple at the Karnak Temples, on the northern wall of the central room (Labrique, 1998, pp. 108–109; Sethe & Firchow, 1957, p. 49; Wit, 1962, pp. 92–93; Zivie-Coche, 2009, pp. 181–184), Tjenenet was depicted within a procession of 14 deities and King Ptolemy VIII and his queen. Separated into two series facing each other, these 16 figures are the lunar escort of the rising moon (Fig. 2). They are lifting their arms in admiration of the crescent moon that represents Osiris-Onophris. This escort is composed of the gods who symbolise the lunar days, when the moon was waxing or waning. King Ptolemy VIII, his wife Cleopatra II, and five deities are standing on the left, worshipping the crescent moon. Meanwhile, to the right, the gods who represent the waning moon days are adoringly lifting their palms towards the crescent moon. The goddess Tjenenet and the goddess

Iunit are depicted at the far end of the right side, standing parallel to each other and following the god Sobek. With her emblem of a cow's uterus, she is primarily standing to the view perspective, where her symbol dominates the foreground. Moreover, she is dressed in a long, tight tunic with a broad decorative collar around her chest. According to the accompanying texts, the goddess Tjenenet represented the 29th diminishing waning day “*ḥꜥ iry*” of the lunar month. The goddess Iunit represented the 30th day of the waning lunar month “*pr.t Mnw*” (Parker, 1950, pp. 11–12).

Above the head of Tjenenet, her name appears  *ḥꜥ nnt*. Before the figures of the goddesses Tjenenet and Iunit, the following is inscribed:

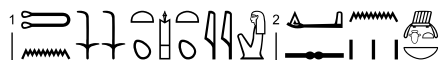
(1) 

pr.t m 3ḥ.t hrw ḥꜥ iry hrw prt Mnw

(1) Coming out of the bright eye, the day *ḥꜥ iry* (i.e., the 29th day), and the day *pr.t Mnw* (i.e., the 30th day).

Another scene for Tjenenet, shown as Tjenenet-Iunit, is found on the eastern wall of the northern chamber of the Opet Temple at the Karnak Temples, dating to Ptolemy VIII (Wit 1962, II:107, pl. 3 (XII)). In this scene (Fig. 3), the goddess Tjenenet-Iunit is represented within the Theban Ennead, which is depicted in two registers with seven deities in each, following King Ptolemy VIII, who is offering the “*mḥ*” headband to the god Osiris. Tjenenet-Iunit is standing at the far left, top of the upper register, following the goddess *Nwt*. Her distinctive insignia of a cow's uterus is shown with exceptionally long stems on her head over a tri-partite hair wig with a headband held by a knot at the back. She is also wearing a wide collar and a long, tight tunic that covers her entire body except for her breasts. She is holding the “*w3d*” sceptre of prosperity in her left hand and the “*ḥꜥ*” symbol of life in her right.

Notably, the texts address Tjenenet-Iunit with the plural pronoun “=*sn*,” despite there being a single portrayal. Over the head of Tjenenet-Iunit, the following inscriptions are written:



(1) *ḥꜥ nnt-Iwn.t* (2) *di=sn 3w.t ib nb(.t)*

(1) Tjenenet-Iunit (2) they may give all the happiness of the heart.

Ptolemy VIII is also depicted on the western wall of the Opet Temple's southern chamber at the Karnak Temples, playing with the “*sššt*” sistrum before a group of four female deities (Wit, 1958, p. 141, pl. 5). He is joined by his Queen Cleopatra to adore Hathor of Dendera, Hathor of Thebes, Tjenenet-Rettawy, and Isis (Fig. 4). According to the accompanying text, he plays the sistrum to the Ka of the divinities and praises them with hymns. Tjenenet-Rettawy is represented sitting on a low back throne, preceded by the goddess Hathor of Thebes and followed by the goddess Isis. A composite emblem of the Hathor crown and the bicornuate uterus is on her head, marked with a long stem. She is also wearing a vulture-style headwear atop a tripartite hair wig. Her neck is adorned with a broad collar, and she is dressed in a long, close-fitting tunic, held in place by two straps, that exposes her breasts and reaches her ankles. In addition, she is carrying a long “*w3d*” sceptre of prosperity in her left hand and the “*ḥꜥ*” symbol of life in her right one.

On top of the goddess Tjenenet and before her, two columns of hieroglyphic address her as follows:

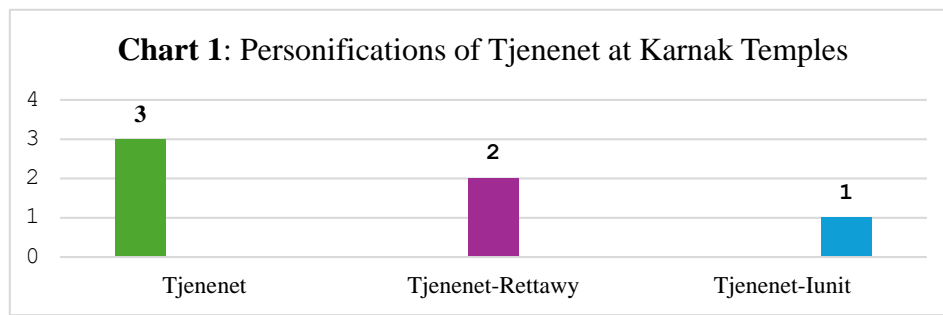


⁽¹⁾ *dd mdw (i)n tnnt hry(.t) ib Twn-šm^cw* ⁽²⁾ *spdt c'bwy nb(.t) nht it=f ir*

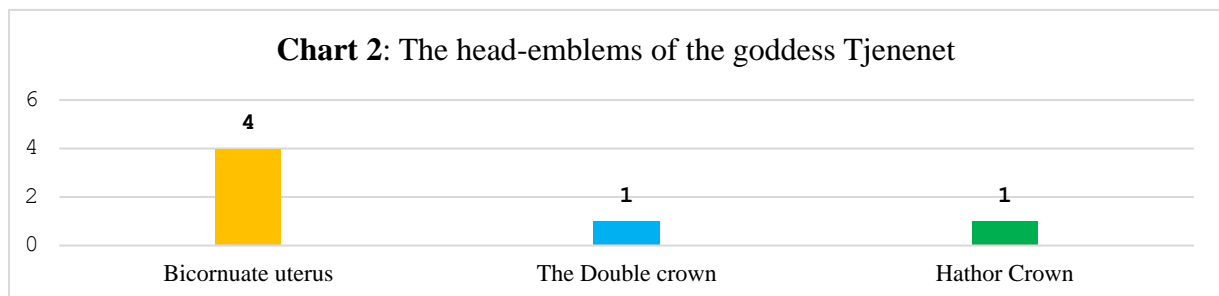
⁽¹⁾ Recitation by Tjenenet, the one who resides at Hermonthis. ⁽²⁾ The one with pointed horns, the mistress of victory that her father does.




RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

Although the goddess Tjenenet appeared in the Karnak Temples precinct during the New Kingdom and the Late Period 12 times (Fareed, Shaikh Al Arab, & Abdelhamid, 2021, p. 399), she functioned in new roles and held new titles during the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods. The researcher could identify six scenes of the goddess Tjenenet with her different forms at the Karnak Temples in the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods.



As illustrated in Chart 1, the goddess Tjenenet was personified in three forms: three times as Tjenenet, twice as Tjenenet-Rettawy, and once as Tjenenet-Iunit in the Karnak Temples area. On the other hand, it is worth mentioning the as-yet earliest time for Tjenenet to be combined with Rettawy, becoming Tjenenet-Rettawy during the time of Hatshepsut at the Karnak Temples in her Red Chapel (Burgos & Larché, 2006, p. 116; Lacau & Chevrier, 1977, pp. 226–227). Meanwhile, the first known attestation of Tjenenet-Iunit is from Armant during the reign of King Ptolemy VI (Farid, 1979; Mond & Myers, 1940, p. 177, pl. XC (1)).



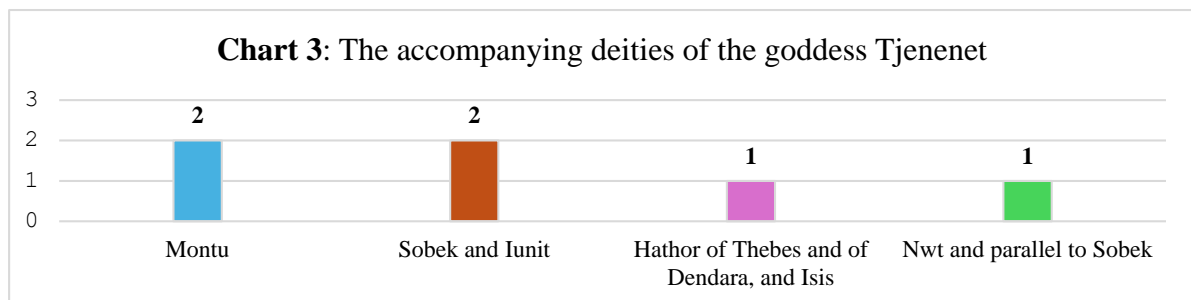
Moreover, as pointed out in Chart 2, she was depicted four times with her distinctive emblem, the bicornuate uterus , one time with Hathor crown , and one time wearing the Double Crown  of Upper and Lower Egypt.

As for the bicornuate uterus emblem, it is the first attributed head emblem, which became the main one, of the goddess Tjenenet in her first apparition at Karnak Temples, during the

time of Queen Hatshepsut (Burgos & Larché, 2006, p. 116), which lasted until the Roman Period (Thiers, 2015, fig. 3). This head emblem echoes the earliest known role of Tjenenet, as a mother goddess of the kings of the Middle Kingdom (Bisson de la Roque, 1937, pp. 79–80, fig. 32; Mond & Myers, 1940, p. 169, pl. XCIX (3)). This idea is also embodied in the epithets that Tjenenet held at Karnak Temples in the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods, being called, among others, “the divine mother” and “she who gives birth to the gods” (Sethe & Firchow, 1957, p. 8; Varille, 1943, p. 2).

In addition, the Hathor crown is a pure manifestation of the solar aspects that Tjenenet enjoyed, whether by her fusion with Rettawy since Queen Hatshepsut’s reign (Burgos & Larché, 2006, p. 116), or with Hathor since the time of Ptolemy IV (Rochemonteix & Chassinat, 1897, p. pl. XXX (B)). Alternatively, Tjenenet was regarded through time, as the uraeus of Ra (Rochemonteix & Chassinat, 1892, p. 100) and Ra-Herakhty (Sethe & Firchow, 1957, p. 8), as the eye of Ra (Farid, 1979, pp. 59–74), and the daughter of Ra (Grenier, 1980, p. 109).

The depiction of Tjenenet with the Double Crown is an indication of a direct connection with the goddess Mut. The relationship between Tjenenet and Mut is a plausible case of the rise of the dynastic god Amun and his wife Mut, who penetrated other cult sites, one of which was Armant. For instance, a memorial stone from Gurna from the end of the New Kingdom clearly attests to this and is regarded as evidence of this possible link, as it calls Mut “mistress of Armant” (Königliche Museen zu Berlin & Roeder, 1913, p. 213). Furthermore, Amun himself could replace Montu, who later was introduced as the head of the Theban Ennead (Thersia, 1979, pp. 9, 57).



As demonstrated in Chart 3, Tjenenet was depicted twice with the god Montu, who was regarded as her husband since the 11th Dynasty (Bisson de la Roque 1937, 79–80, fig. 32). However, starting from the New Kingdom, it seems that Sobek, with whom she is also depicted twice with Iunit, had replaced Montu when he was elevated to become the ruler of the Great Theban Ennead (Nelson 1981, I: pl. 117).



⁽¹⁾ *Mntw ḥry-ib W3st ntr ʕ3 ḥk3 psd.t*

⁽¹⁾ Montu, the one who resides at Thebes, the great god, the ruler of the Ennead.

One time, Tjenenet was depicted with Hathor of Dendera, Hathor of Thebes and Isis, sharing the same attitude of being enthroned upon a shared pedestal. She appeared following the goddess Nwt, parallel to the god Sobek (Wit, 1962, p. pl. 3 (XI)). Apparently, Tjenenet’s role as a key member of the Theban Ennead, which had started in the New Kingdom, at the time of Queen Hatshepsut (Naville, 1901, p. pl. CI), going through the Late Period at Karnak



Temples, during the time of Taharqa (Pillet, 1952, fig. 1). It endured until the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods.




Thanks to the epithets of the goddess Tjenenet, one can understand the different aspects of her character. In the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods, Tjenenet remained in her position as a chief goddess of Hermonthis (Klotz, 2008, p. 308), as she was called



(1) *hry.t-ib Tw̄n-šm̄w* (Leitz, 2002b, p. 414 (b))

(1) She who resides at Hermonthis.

The theology of Tjenenet has been developed through the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods, as she was regarded as a primitive mother goddess:  *mwt ntr* “the divine mother” (Leitz 2002, III:261(a)), and  *msi ntrw* (Leitz, 2002c, p. 417(c)-418(a)) “she who gives birth to the gods.”

In addition, she was seen as a fierce goddess as she was called  *p̄t wr.t* (Leitz, 2002c, p. 30 (a)) “the great fiery-one,”  *hry.t-tp n R̄-hr-3hty* (Leitz, 2002b, p. 452(c)-453(a)) “the uraeus of Ra-Horakhty,” and  *spdt ʿbwy* (Leitz, 2002d, p. 287(c)) “the one with pointy horns.” This aspect of her character is also expressed in addressing the king with



(1) *bs=i m sd̄.t r ssw̄n wr sbiw=k h̄ftyw=k nn wnn=sn*

(1) I emerge as fire to destroy your hostilities, your foes, they no longer exist.

At Karnak Temples, Tjenenet, for the first time, is involved in the lunar escort, during the time of Ptolemy VIII at the Opet Temple. Overall, she was mentioned twice, representing two different days of the lunar month. Once, she represented the 29th diminishing waning day, “*h̄t ʿiry*,” of the lunar month, while at another time, she represented the 14th day, “*si3w*”, of the waxing moon.

Tjenenet was associated with providing the earth’s resources, as she addresses the King Ptolemy VIII



(1) *dd mdw i: di=i n=k bi3t nb.t hry(.t) tp d̄ww ipw*

(1) Recitation: I give you all the precious stones that are in the mountain.

CONCLUSION:

Reflecting on the article’s questions about Tjenenet’s attributes and roles in the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods, it is clear that although the goddess Tjenenet was not accredited with new-found iconographical features at the Karnak Temples in the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods, her iconography communicated her different functions. Her representation with the Double crown reflects her position and significance among the Egyptian goddesses at the Karnak Temples and is parallel to the goddess Mut, who was a dominant goddess in the precinct. Moreover,

Tjenenet functioned in new roles in the Ptolemaic Periods, representing two different days of the waxing and waning moon month. She continued being represented within the Great Theban Ennead, accentuating her significance as an essential member. Seemingly, the development of the theology of Montu, precisely Montu-Ra-Horakhty, whose consort she continued to be, affected her character, as it is seen in texts that she was the fierce uraeus on his forehead. Tjenenet's maternal essence is invoked in a divine form, as she is considered the deities' mother. Plus, her role as a protector was not absent from the texts. In conclusion, the Karnak Temples depictions unveiled crucial aspects of the character of the goddess Tjenenet.

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FIGURES:

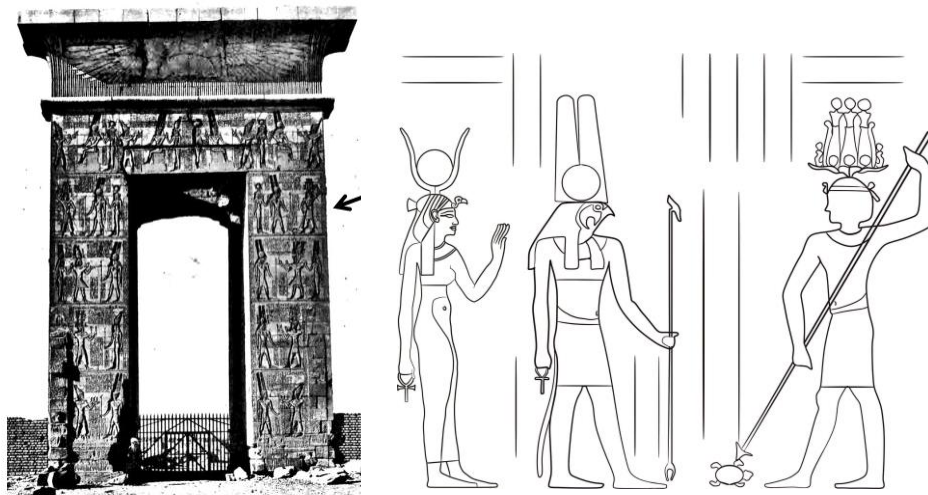


Fig. 1: Ptolemy III spearing a turtle before Montu and Tjenenet-Rettawy.

After: Alexandre Varille, *Karnak*, vol. I, FIFAO 19 (Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1943), pl. V.

Facsimile after: Mina Yacoub

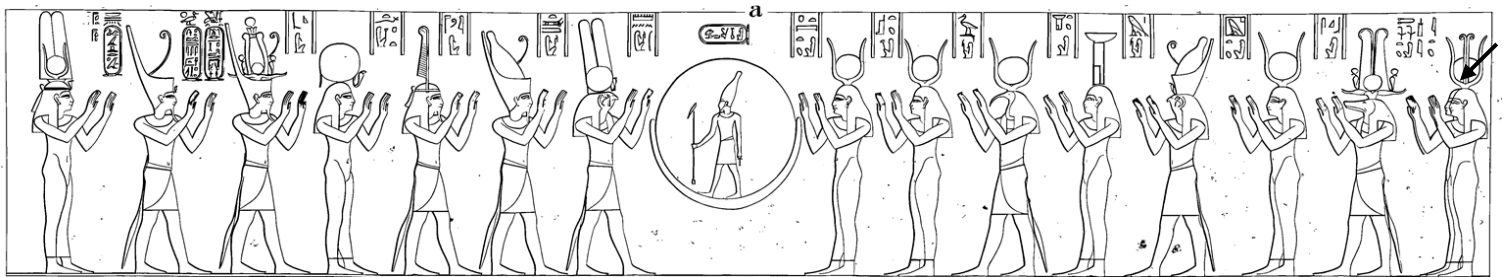


Fig. 2: Tjenenet within the lunar procession of the deities associated with the days of the rising moon.

After: Carl Richard Lepsius, *Denkmaeler aus Aegypten und Aethiopien: Denkmaeler aus Der Zeit der Griechischen und Roemischen Herrschaft, Blatt I-XC*, vol. IX (Berlin: Nicolaische Buchhandlung, 1842), pl. 31a.

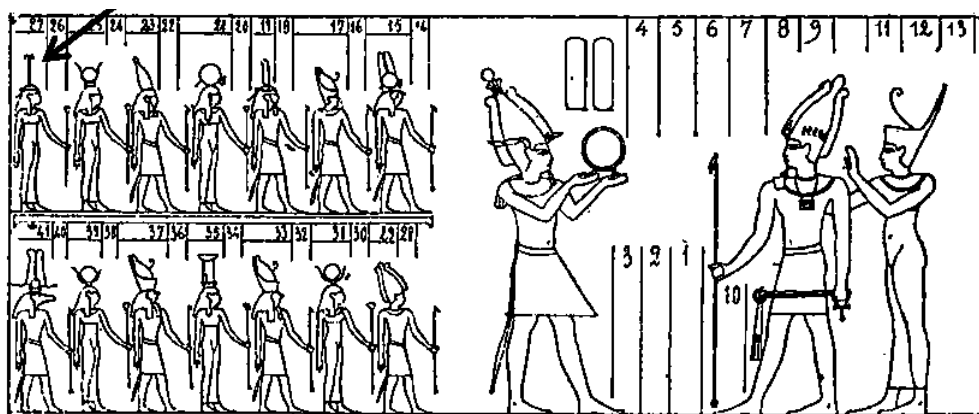


Fig. 3: Ptolemy VIII offering the “mH” headband to Osiris in the presence of Tjenenet-Iunit within the Theban Ennead.

After: Constant de Wit, *Les Inscriptions Du Temple d’Opet à Karnak*, Bibliotheca Aegyptiaca 11 (Bruxelles: Édition de la Fondation égyptologique Reine Élisabeth, 1958), 107, pl. 3.

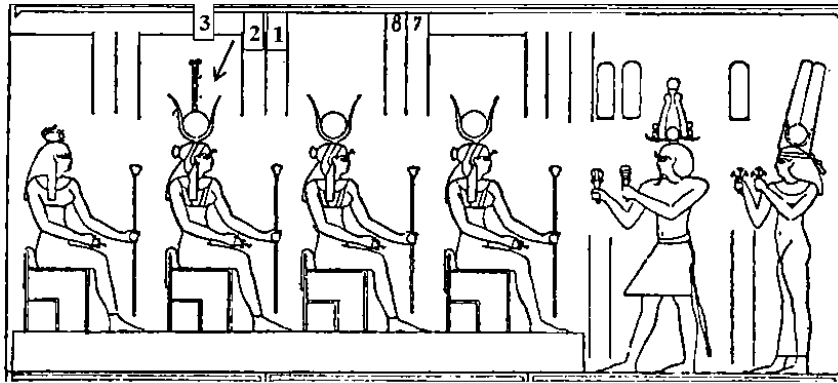


Fig. 4: Ptolemy VIII playing with the “sSt” sistrum before Hathor of Dendera, Hathor of Thebes, Tjenenet-Rettawy, and Isis.

After: Constant de Wit, *Les Inscriptions Du Temple d’Opet à Karnak*, Bibliotheca Aegyptiaca 11 (Bruxelles: Édition de la Fondation égyptologique Reine Élisabeth, 1958), 107, pl. 3.

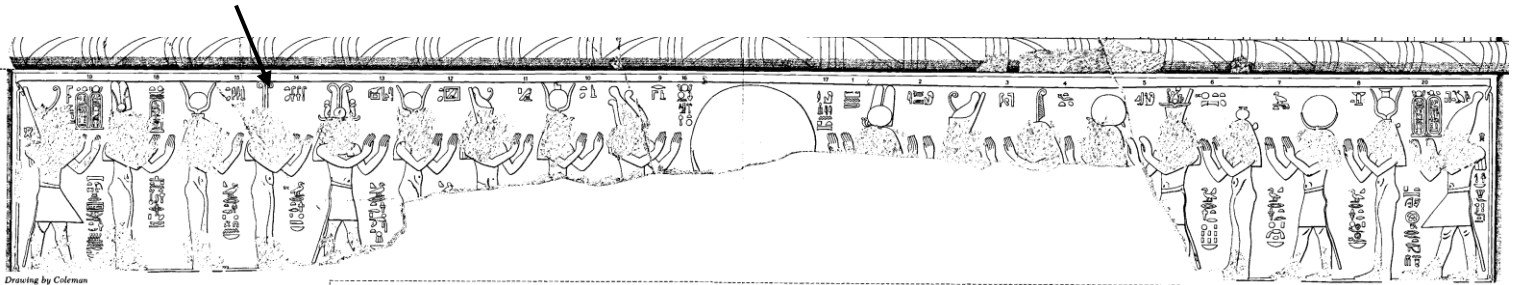


Fig. 5: Tjenenet within the lunar escort worshipping the rising moon disc.

After: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, *The Temple of Khonsu. Volume II: Scenes and Inscriptions in the Court and the First Hypostyle Hall*, Annotated edition, OIP 103 (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1981), 60, pl. 190.

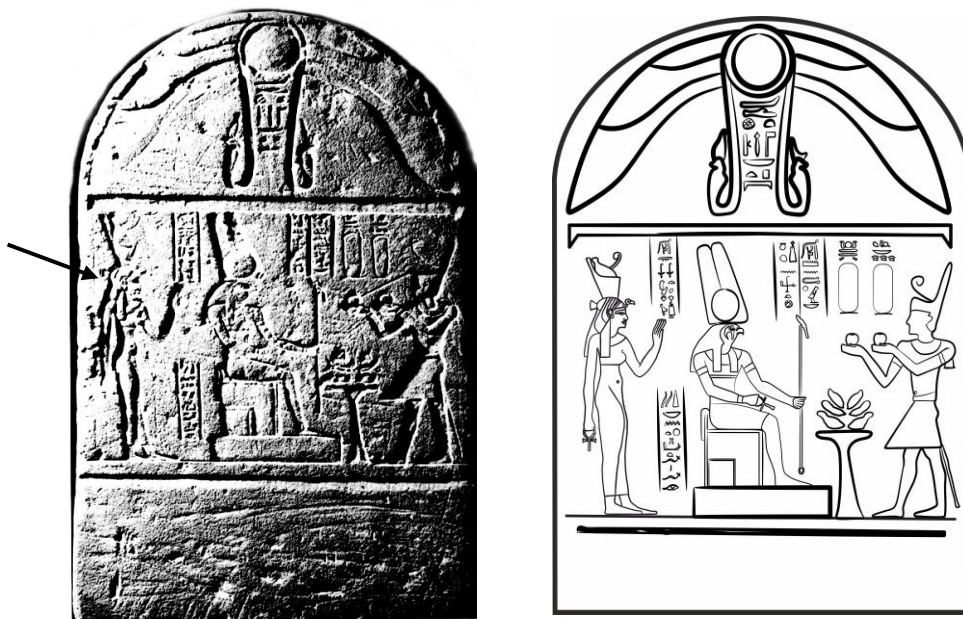


Fig. 6: Emperor Tiberius presenting Nw-jars to Montu-Ra and Tjenenet.

After: Kenneth A. Kitchen and M. C. Beltrao, *Catalogue of the Ancient Egyptian Collection in the National Museum, Rio De Janeiro* (Rio de Janeiro: Aris & Phillips Ltd, 1990), 112, pl. 106.

Facsimile after: Mina Yacoub

الإلهة ثننت في معابد الكرنك خلال العصرين البطلمي والروماني

الملخص

تم اعتماد الإلهة ثننت في الديانة المصرية القديمة منذ الدولة الوسطى. كانت تُعتبر إلهة الأمومة والولادة وقد حظيت بعبادة واسعة الانتشار على نطاق واسع في الإقليم الطيبي الرابع "واست" منذ الدولة الوسطى وحتى العصرين البطلمي والروماني. تهدف هذه الورقة البحثية إلى تتبع تصورات الإلهة ثننت في منطقة معابد الكرنك لإلقاء الضوء على ملامحها وأدوارها خلال العصرين البطلمي والروماني. قد تم استنتاج أن منطقة معابد الكرنك كانت مركز عبادة ثانوي للإلهة ثننت، حيث انضمت إلى الإله مونتو والإله سوبك كرفيقة لهم. ظهرت ثننت في ثلاث هياكل: ثننت وثننت-رعت-تاوي وثننت-إيونيت. في معابد الكرنك، تم اعتبار ثننت في العصرين البطلمي والروماني إلهة أم أزلية وإلهة حامية وعضواً في مجموعة مرافقين القمر. في العصرين البطلمي والروماني، جاء أقدم ظهور لثننت في عهد الملك بطليموس الثالث، بينما جاء الظهور الأخير لها في عهد الإمبراطور تيبيريوس. ولذلك، تسلط هذه الورقة الضوء على الأهمية العبادية المتطورة لثننت، مما توفر نظرة للتكامل الديني لمعابد الكرنك.

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بيانات المقال

تاريخ المقال

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الكلمات الدالة

ثننت- مونتو- سوبك- معابد الكرنك- العصرين البطلمي والروماني.