



## THE *B3W* OF TAWERET: VINDICTIVENESS (AND FORGIVENESS) OF THE HIPPOPOTAMUS GODDESS

Sabrina Ceruti

Civic Archaeological Museum, Milan

### ABSTRACT

In Egyptological scholarship, the so-called hippopotamus goddess is traditionally depicted as a completely benevolent being that is the effective apotropaic protectress of women and children. Even though this picture appears quite consistent with most of the documentation, nevertheless in a few textual instances the goddess, more or less explicitly, exhibits a menacing attitude towards the people she is usually thought to protect, even threatening the same children she ought strongly to defend. In the present paper, evidence of this malevolent facet of the goddess is gathered, arguing her more complex nature and role, and a more stratified worship than is commonly claimed. Even in the light of the goddess' long-lasting fortune, such an ambiguous facet of hers makes her perhaps one of the better cases to bring to inquiry into the ancient Egyptians' approach to the transcendental world, their deeply devotional attitude, and even their *timor*, towards it.

### INTRODUCTION

Although not to be numbered among its major deities, the so-called hippopotamus goddess is nonetheless one of the most long-lived and successful beings of the Egyptian pantheon, her career spanning from the late Old Kingdom, if not earlier, well into the Ptolemaic and Roman periods.<sup>1</sup> In Egyptological scholarship, she is traditionally portrayed as a completely benevolent entity. Almost invariably associated with Bes, she is included among the most popular Egyptian deities, and specifically acknowledged as one of the most favoured household and domestic<sup>2</sup> apotropaic being relating to pregnancy and fertility, thus the patroness of childbirth and childhood.<sup>3</sup>

In view of the overall paucity, and also vagueness, of relevant textual references involving a theological discourse concerning the goddess, the positing of such a role is chiefly based on her iconography and

the typology of the items on which her image most frequently recurs, above all starting from the Middle Kingdom onwards. These are mainly amulets and statuettes, scarabs, the Middle Kingdom magical wands and rods, jewellery, and other implements recognized as being primarily connected with protective or healing rituals and practices referring to women—above all of pregnant women, women in labour and puerperae—their newborn babies, and children.<sup>4</sup>

In her more distinctive and recurring frightful image—seemingly hippopotamic but actually hybrid, blending both human and animal components—she could actually embody a very effective apotropaic force. With the rounded belly of a pregnant woman and the heavy breasts of a nursing mother, threateningly standing erect on her lions' paws, holding the *s3*-sign/amulet symbol of protection and/or one or more knives, and, last but not least, exhibiting a

fearsome hippopotamus' snarling muzzle and a crocodile's skin on the back, she must have been wielded to ward off whatever potential evil force that could menace mainly pregnancy and childbirth, as well as that might prevent the healing of newborns and infants, and indeed, any vulnerable individual.

However, although such a portrait may be accurate, in light of the most comprehensive evidence related to the deity and also in view of the often scanty reliability—and in many cases the complete lack—of archaeological data (even more so when referring to early excavations),<sup>5</sup> the goddess' status as a household/domestic deity should not be over-emphasized,<sup>6</sup> nor should perhaps her role be restricted to the positive and benevolent one sketched above.

Of the already mentioned meagre textual evidence that contributes to defining her nature, there are in fact a few instances in which, more or less explicitly, a very dreadful attitude is attributed to the hippopotamus goddess, this time directed towards the vulnerable individuals whom she ought protect and not towards the hostile powers that might menace them. The evidence of this harmful facet of the goddess has remained largely unnoticed, and even underestimated, in Egyptological scholarship,<sup>7</sup> but it turns out to be indeed prominent for establishing the nature of the goddess, allowing us to construe a more complex character and a more stratified worship and cult of her than the ones commonly stated. These occurrences appear in, and are mainly restricted to, the Ramesside New Kingdom, therefore primarily concerning her name of Taweret,<sup>8</sup> and stem particularly from the Theban milieu, where her worship and cult were seemingly more rooted than elsewhere at that time.

#### THE *Bꜣw* OF TAWERET, OR THE REVENGE OF THE GODDESS

A small group of documents from the settlement of Deir el-Medina refers to a *bꜣw* (*n*) *Tꜣ-wr.t*, i.e., a *bꜣw*-manifestation of the goddess. Notwithstanding some minor interpretative nuances and, as a consequence, divergent translations into various modern languages, there is so far general agreement relating to the concept of a divine *bꜣw*. On the most general level, it neutrally designates the capacity of a transcendental being to manifest in the human sphere, that is, the perceptible materialization of its power experienceable as an episode in whatever context and by whatever means. More specifically, it signifies a deity's injurious

intervention in a person's life in response to an offence he/she has received: therefore, accordingly, a manifestation of an avenging wrath directed towards the offender, implicitly demanding a show of remorse from him/herself.<sup>9</sup> False oaths seem to be the grounds for this divine anger in some cases, but mostly the motive—evidently a human *hybris*—is left unsaid, nor is it specified what trouble the manifestation has caused, although in some cases it must have been a health issue, such a temporary blindness.<sup>10</sup> The texts implying such a dreadful divine intervention are mostly strictly associated with the sphere of the so-called "personal piety"<sup>11</sup> and refer to it concisely as both *bꜣw* (*ntr*) *hprw*, "a (divine) manifestation come about" (without naming the deity actually concerned), and *bꜣw* (*n*) *D(ivine) N(ame)*, respectively, or in more elaborate inscriptions in which the author proclaims—and warns against—the wrath of such and such a deity as it has been experienced by him/herself. Each of these forms occurs in the instances relating to Taweret herewith concerned, all from the Nineteenth–Twentieth Dynasties.<sup>12</sup>

#### 1: OSTRACON ASHMOLEAN MUSEUM 166

The first one is O. Ashmolean Museum 166 (ro. 1–3),<sup>13</sup> a statement before the local law-court in which a certain Nakhtmin<sup>14</sup> reports a theft he suffered by a certain lady Tanehesy<sup>15</sup>. He tells how, while he was sitting in his private chapel on the occasion of a festival of Taweret (named the "Birth of Taweret"),<sup>16</sup> the said lady stole from him one of his *sꜣ*-cakes—clearly an offering to the goddess on her feast day—and how *hr ir sꜣ 10 n hrw iw=sꜣ ii r qd n=i bꜣw hprw*, "but ten days later she (i.e., Tanehesy) came saying to me: 'a divine manifestation has come about!'" (ro. 2–3).<sup>17</sup>

Although, as a rule, there is no mention of how the manifestation occurred,<sup>18</sup> nor is it explicitly stated that it was indeed her *bꜣw*, it was evidently the evil manifestation of the goddess herself that Tanehesy experienced in the ten days that elapsed between her theft and her confession (perhaps a significant timing, if the date of the feast were known).<sup>19</sup> And it may have been perhaps the fear of experiencing, in his turn, the same goddess' wrath—for having failed to accomplished his due rituals towards her—that led to Nakhtmin making a public statement, thus exonerating himself before the deity.<sup>20</sup>

Instead of being deduced from events, in the next two instances a *bꜣw* is openly attributed to Taweret, although, unlike in the previous instance, here the

actual context is much less clear. Both are related to a consultation of the so-called wise woman (*t<sup>3</sup> r<sup>h</sup>.t*). She was a sort of diviner and/or healer, perhaps as well a sort of magical practitioner, whose in-depth knowledge (*r<sup>h</sup>*) of both human and transcendental matters and the intrinsic link between the two meant one could ask for advice and an explanation of otherwise inexplicable events, in order to find a solution.<sup>21</sup>

### 2: OSTRACON DEM 1690

In the fragmentary letter of O. DeM 1690,<sup>22</sup> an unnamed man is requested to turn to the wise woman to ask her about an anonymous woman's ocular disease, which someone else (a man?) seems to have already linked to the *b<sup>3</sup>w n T<sup>3</sup>-wr.t nb.t-p.t* [*iw=f hr*]<sup>23</sup> *ir.t r=s hr hr=f*: "a manifestation of Taweret, lady of the sky, [and it (the *b<sup>3</sup>w*)] acted against her because of him" (ro. 3–5). Due to the numerous lacunae, other particulars are difficult to grasp. We do not know the reply of the wise woman, whether or not she may have confirmed the suspected *b<sup>3</sup>w n T<sup>3</sup>-wr.t* to be the cause of the trouble; however, the fact remains that Taweret is here explicitly considered to be the one who is probably responsible for the affection of the eyes (temporary blindness?) of the woman in question, and that such a punishment has fallen on the poor woman for the misbehaviour (a false oath?) of someone else, a male person (*hr hr=f*), somehow linked to her.

### 3: OSTRACON CAIRO CG 25674

The likewise fragmentary letter of O. Cairo CG 25674<sup>24</sup> parallels the previous one. The *b<sup>3</sup>w T<sup>3</sup>-wr.t* [*nb.t-p.t*],<sup>25</sup> "a manifestation of Taweret [lady of the sky]," is here instead mentioned as being the precise reply of the wise woman consulted (ro. 4), here too, by an unnamed male person on the advice of another else, who had previously been told by a woman (wise? the same wise woman?) about the *b<sup>3</sup>w n Nmty*, "a manifestation of Nemty." The context of the letter is unfortunately far from clear and does not allow a firm interpretation of the circumstances<sup>26</sup> or of the connection—not attested elsewhere, to my knowledge—of the two diverse deities mentioned, if indeed there is any. Nemty is a falcon god who acts primarily as a ferryman to whom is attached a bad reputation: at least by the Late Period sources, he is charged with the mythical episode of beheading of the cow goddess.<sup>27</sup>

### 4: OSTRACON OIM 16974 VO.

Another possible instance of an evil manifestation of Taweret is to be recognised in the letter of O. OIM 16974 v<sup>o</sup>, but the text is too poorly preserved to allow a continuous translation.<sup>28</sup> The *n<sup>h</sup>t* of Taweret (instead of her *b<sup>3</sup>w*) is mentioned there (vo. 2) within a context of apparent suffering on the part of the addressee (vo. 4: *m ir šn.t h<sup>3</sup>ty=t m d[hr(.t)?]*, "don't question heart with [bitterness(?)]"<sup>29</sup>). Moreover, it is far from clear if this passage—introduced by *ky dd* (vo. 1)—could be connected with the letter on the *recto* of the ostrakon, which records another consultation of the wise woman, this time regarding two children.<sup>30</sup>

### 5: OSTRACON DEM 251

A link between (the *b<sup>3</sup>w* of) Taweret and another deity's *b<sup>3</sup>w*, only inferable in the above presented O. Cairo CG 25674, is perhaps actually involved in the brief message of O. DeM 251 (ro. 1–4).<sup>31</sup> In this case, an unnamed man commissions to his addressee the making of *w<sup>c</sup> n <T<sup>3</sup>?-> wr.t* "a(nother) (statue(ette)/amulet of Ta?)weret" (ro. 1),<sup>32</sup> because the one of the latter made for him before had been stolen *hr iry=s b<sup>3</sup>w Sth ir=i*, "so it (image)/she (deity) may work a manifestation of Seth against me." Therefore, it was feared the stolen item could impel the evil manifestation of Seth against its previous, and righteous, owner: either by being suitably (i.e., magically) manipulated by a third party, the thief, against its former owner, or simply because this latter could have been considered, somehow, negligent in the care of his holy item and therefore with the pious ties to the being represented by the item.<sup>33</sup> Certainly without his sacred item he could not fulfil the ritual duties attached to it and thus receive protection by means of it. It remains to be seen exactly what kind of item it was and from where it had been stolen. Borghouts, both with philological and contextual arguments, convincingly argued that the term *wr.t/(T<sup>3</sup>)-wr.t* identifies metonymically a statue(ette) (or amulet?) of the goddess Taweret:<sup>34</sup> might it be a cultic or votive statue(ette) stolen from the owner's house, that is, from his private altar? Or, rather, from a community chapel?<sup>35</sup> The question is of no minor importance, but it seems destined to remain unanswered. What is noteworthy is that the sacred item, metonymically the goddess, was thought to have power over another deity—namely Seth—as a sort of "master of demons." And indeed, the hippopota-

mus goddess appears endowed with such power in a few slightly later texts, which leads us away from the Deir el-Medina settlement, although we remain in the Theban milieu.

Among the category of dangerous demons listed in the so-called Oracular Amuletic Decrees of the Twenty-first Dynasty,<sup>36</sup> and from which one must be kept safe, are *wrt*-demons. Both female and male, these beings can reveal themselves in various environments, but neither a peculiar iconography nor behaviour is assigned to them.<sup>37</sup> These *wrt*-demons have been cited by some commentators with regard to the *wr.t* of O. DeM 251, and also Borghouts commented on the possible link with the two. Next I would like to underline a particular passage from one such decree that seems to me to be relevant and which strengthens Borghouts' interpretation of the ostrakon, here accepted and shared.

#### 6: PAPYRUS BRITISH MUSEUM EA 10251

In the decree for Taahuty of Papyrus British Museum EA 10251, one such female-*wrt* is exceptionally qualified by the definite article and is explicitly named as the foremost of the same category of beings, which, moreover, is here specifically ascribed to the astral milieu. The following is proclaimed: *iw=i <r> šd=s m-dr.t t3 wr.t t3 p.t t3 h3.ty n3 wr(.w)t*, "I (the god Khonsu, who emitted the decree) will keep her safe from the hand of the demoness (Ta-weret) of the sky, the foremost of the *wrt*-demons" (ro. 32–33).<sup>38</sup> It is noteworthy that here the spelling of the compound *t3-wr.t*, with the egg and cobra classifiers, parallels the name of our hippopotamus goddess: this latter generally displays few graphic variations, and is preferably written without classifier(s) at all, but where present, they are the cobra alone or the cobra and the egg.<sup>39</sup> With the last fullest spelling, the goddess' name appears in the brief label of her image on the Deir el-Medina stele CGT 50062, describing her as *T3-wr.t t3 p.t*, "Taweret of the sky."<sup>40</sup> As isolated as it is, this label could make the connection between the "chief of the *wrt*-demons" of papyrus British Museum EA 10251 and the hippopotamus goddess Taweret be much more than a surmise.<sup>41</sup>

The grounds for such a connection might have been her astral role, i.e., the catasterism of the goddess—well established in the New Kingdom—rather than her commonest epithet *nb.t p.t*, indeed one of the most common epithets for goddesses, which extolls their (great) godhead above all. On the so-called astronomical ceilings of the Theban royal

tombs, the image of the hippopotamus goddess stands out among the imperishable stars of the northern sky, embodying the foremost of the circumpolar constellations with the task of firmly holding in its due place the Meskhetiu-Seth constellation (i.e., the Big Dipper/*Ursa Major*), thus preventing him from wandering in the sky and the perversion of the cosmic cycle this would have caused (as related texts tell us).<sup>42</sup> Such an astral image must have been very familiar to the Deir el-Medina workmen in charge of the decoration of the royal tombs, and one might wonder if her astral role could be the grounds of the unusual Taweret's epithet on the stele CGT 50062—later mirrored in the papyrus BM EA 10251—and of the hold she, or rather, her *b3w*, was thought to have over Seth in O. DeM 251. Although in the New Kingdom Seth had not yet undergone his quasi-complete demonization into the ultimate evil god he would be from the Third Intermediate Period onward, his role as the possible agent of all kinds of diseases, and even death, was renowned:<sup>43</sup> among others, he was considered the agent of infertility (as an emasculated god), miscarriage, and even forcible rape.<sup>44</sup> The latter are possibly further grounds for his connection with Taweret, otherwise very scanty and ambiguously documented in the Egyptian sources<sup>45</sup> prior to Plutarch's statement about her having been Seth (-Typhon)'s unfaithful concubine.<sup>46</sup> Could Seth be chosen by Taweret as the due agent of her own revenge? The argument risks appearing circular, based on the presumption that the punishment of the deity could be enacted appropriately in the sphere commonly attributed to her exclusive concern, i.e., pregnancy, birthing, and its related phases. But the instances collected here do not appear so confidently related to such circumstances, with the exception of possibly O. OIM 16974 (above, no. 4).<sup>47</sup>

However, other categories of demons can be under the command of the hippopotamus goddess.

#### 7: LOUVRE E 25479

The three columned text of the back pillar of the votive statuette Louvre E 25479 is one of the most meaningful concerning the goddess (FIG. 1a–b).<sup>48</sup> The statuette was dedicated by two Theban high priests of Amun, probably cousins, in the early Twenty-second Dynasty, and the inscription concerns a goddess' self presentation. At the beginning, in a statement that translates literally her monstrous aggressiveness she says: *ink Rr.t hd m hrw=s wnm m*





FIGURE 1: Statuette Louvre E 25479. © Musée du Louvre, dist. RMN—Grand Palais/Christian Décamps.

*ḥs=s qꜣi ḥrw khb dni.wt*, “I am Reret, who attacks with her voice, who devours who presses her, in a loud voice, uttering roars” (col.1).<sup>49</sup> Later on, she specifically qualifies herself as (cols. 2–3):

*<Tꜣ>-wr.t m šhm=s ḥꜣ.t ḥr jht=s dr ꜥwꜣwy (...)  
 ïnk 1pt ḥry-ib ꜣḥ.t mk ds<=s> nb-(r)-ḏr nb(.t) nrw  
 ꜥpr <m> ḥprw dndn sbiꜣw ḥr=f ḥsb inw nt ḥtmyw  
 šmꜣyw ḥr ḏbꜥ=i qḏftyw ḥr <ḏḏ> m pw rf ir=n  
 wḏ.n=i mwt r ꜥnh,*

I am (Ta)weret in her might, who fights for her ownership, who repels the demons of prey. I am Ipet on the horizon, whose knife protects the Universal God,<sup>50</sup> the Lady of the fear, of perfect manifestation (*ḥprw*), who beheads his (the Universal God’s) rebel-demons. (I) count the duties of the Sealer-demons, the Wanderer-demons are under my control, the demons of

death say ‘what is it that we should do?’ when I have sent death instead of life.

The votive context makes these statements a very epitome of the goddess’ apotropaic nature and the means by which she materializes it, but it remains outstanding that she proclaims herself an agent of death instead of life<sup>51</sup>, controlling, in her turn, demons of destruction and death, which, if angered —and her *bꜣw*-manifestation testifies she might! — she could unleash not for protection but for vengeance.

#### 8: GRAFFITO DEIR EL-BAHRI 50

Turning back to Ramesside times, we are again faced with the evil nature of Taweret in the Graffito Deir el-Bahri 50, a threat-formula left by a doorkeeper of the temple of Maat in Thebes, named Penpamer, on one of the columns of the Thutmoside temple:<sup>52</sup> (2)

*ir p³ nty iw=f (3) ftt rn<=i>r rdi.t rn=f ir n=f (4) Pth m iry n ʿh³ (5) iw Shm.t m-s³ hmw=f iw T³-wr.t (6) <m->s³ hrdw=f*, “as for the one who shall erase <my> name in order to place his name, Ptah shall/may be an opponent to him, (while) Sakhmet shall/may be after his wives, (and) Taweret after his offspring” (ll. 2–6).<sup>53</sup> Taweret is here invoked—even if not named, in a sense, as a *b³w*—as an agent of punishment, and her victims are specifically children. Yet, in another, coeval graffito of Deir el-Bahri we find exactly the same sequence of threats, but there the agents are Osiris,<sup>54</sup> Hathor, and Meretseger, the latter two engaged with wives and children, respectively. It is noteworthy that the authors of this curse are two members of the Deir el-Medina village where the two goddesses were prominent.<sup>55</sup> In another threat we again find Sakhmet as the potential persecutor of wives, but Nefertem—Sakhmet’s child—as the persecutor of children.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, on graffito Deir el-Bahri 50, Taweret appears in an unusual triad; but, facing the examples just quoted as well as other Ramesside/ Theban threat-formulae, this one may reflect instead a personal divine constellation of the author of the curse—perhaps local and/or based on an association with work duties—rather than a “specialization” of roles of the god/goddesses invoked to protect his pious signature in the temple.<sup>57</sup> Ptah and the lioness goddess Sakhmet are both Memphite gods and, with Nefertem, they fulfil the role of the local triad, but both are present in the Theban area, as well as the hippopotamus goddess. Ptah, frequently bears the epithet “Lord of Maat”—could this be a connection with the author’s office in the Maat temple?<sup>58</sup>—and his *b³w*-manifestation (after false oaths) is well documented.<sup>59</sup> On the other hand, his consort Sakh-met is the dangerous female deity par excellence in the Egyptian pantheon.<sup>60</sup>

#### 9: HARRIS MAGICAL PAPYRUS

Just after Sakhmet, however, Taweret is included in a brief list of dangerous beasts and goddesses to be warded off in a spell for the protection of the herd in the late Ramesside Harris Magical Papyrus. The litany recites: *stb<.tw> r³ <n> T³-wr(.t) ʿnh(.t)*, “May be sealed the mouth of Taweret, the living one.” The formula employed is the same for all the members on the list, and is, therefore, not significant for Taweret, being merely a conjuration to render the conjured beings/deities harmless. In the spell we found an obvious allusion to her possible destructive

and harmful behaviour towards the living ones— injuries to the herd would imply trouble for them—likely more specifically to her being a devourer (as in her own words on the Louvre statuette, no. 7), even though an explanation for her inclusion in such a context, as well as for her unusual epithet (a *hapax*, to my knowledge), still seems far from clear to me and deserves further investigation.<sup>61</sup>

#### 10: STELE GLASGOW EGNN. 683

The *b³w* of Taweret is definitely proclaimed in its effectiveness on the Stele Glasgow EGNN. 683 dedicated to the goddess by the guardian Penbuy, who lived at Deir el-Medina in the Nineteenth Dynasty.<sup>62</sup> The text of the stele belongs to the so-called *Bekennntnisbiographien*, in which the author/devotee acknowledges his/her own misbehaviour and the justness of the punishment consequently doled out by the offended deity, and then proclaims the greatness of the divine clemency finally received.<sup>63</sup> Penbuy does not admit his crime, nor what type of punishment he received from Taweret, but sincerely promises: *iw=i r hn t³ ph.ti <=t> ʿt n hm tw n rh tw iw=i r dd n d³m.w n d³m.w s³w=tn r=s iri*: “I will let <your> great power be known to those who do not (still) know it and to those who know it. I will tell generation after generation: ‘Beware of her!’” (cols. 5–6). And goes on to say: *hrw htp<im=f> T³-wrt t³i ib=i rš.w(.t)*, “The day Taweret is pleased, my heart swells with joy” (col. 6); and finally he proclaims: *nw rmt nb ntj ʿnh sndw n T³-wr.t p³-wn dns b³w=s r dw n bj³ hr p³ ʿnh p³y=s htp*, “Beware, O living men, fear Taweret, for her *b³w* (wrath) is heavier than a mountain of metal, but the life is (depend on) her clemency” (cols. 9–10). The goddess is to Penbuy’s eyes *t³ ʿn.t htp.ti* “the wonderful, when (you are) in a merciful mood”<sup>64</sup> (col. 2), a statement that is also visually translated into the image of the goddess pictured on the stele: that of a beautiful and slender seated woman—*Ti.ti-nfr.ti* she is addressed at the beginning of the hymn (col. 1)—which is one of the rare instances known of a wholly anthropomorphic image of Taweret.<sup>65</sup>

#### CONCLUSIONS

The above collected evidences clearly show that the hippopotamus goddess does not always embody a secure and benevolent protectress of the living. Quite the contrary, in such texts she exhibits a capricious and irascible nature directed towards the

very ones she should protect (nos. 1–5; 8) and reveals all the means she can draw on in order to manifest her unfriendly aspect: not only does she wield her own brutish power and weapons (knives), but she could even summon up other gods, namely Seth (no. 5) and bands of demons (no. 7).

This negative character helps to draw a better picture of the goddess in the light of the overall documentation related to her. Certainly, it seems to be the sum of her definite primary, and indeed fundamental, apotropaic nature—she is aggressive in order to protect!—and possibly stems from her being originally a liminal entity, as her very hybrid iconography, which is to be held as the original (being the earliest documented) and likewise bound to be the most long-lived, also seems to attest. The adjective *wr.t*, “great,” incorporated into her own name, Taweret, is, maybe, itself liminal, a cross between a common divine epithet (as it is) and a demonic one, at least according to one of the Oracular Amuletic Decrees (no. 6). Through the paper I have constantly referred to her as a goddess, and this is highly consistent for the period concerned in the texts discussed. Such texts reflect Ramesside “personal piety” of the Theban milieu, where she also had a her own cult and appears beside some of the major deities:<sup>66</sup> her inclusion in such “personal” expressions, which reflect the intimate pious spirit and the *timor dei* of the devotees towards their chosen deities,<sup>67</sup> is therefore to be viewed in my opinion as the better reflection of her “career,” in a sense, of her “promotion”—of which the Ramesside period seems also the acme—from perhaps more “demonic” origins. Furthermore, as an important corollary—to be further dealt with elsewhere—reflect a complex and wide spectrum of her sway, e.g., her worship being also, and importantly, a male concern [1–2(?), 5, 7–9].<sup>68</sup> Finally, the ambiguous nature of the hippopotamus goddess, in light of her long-lasting fortune, can add some clues to the debate on the definition of demon versus god/godhead in Egyptian religious thought, and left consciously in the background of this paper.<sup>69</sup> Cases of demons who attain a cult, are converted into personal protectors, and thus gain complete godhead are recognizable as mainly Late Period phenomena:<sup>70</sup> in this respect, the case of the hippopotamus goddess appears to be of the utmost interest, because it might be one of the first well documented of this type, her “promotion,” in this sense, dating to the Ramesside period (if not even earlier), within the exploit of the “personal

piety” phenomenon. On the other hand, even major gods and goddesses have their dual personality: Sakhmet and Seth being prototypical examples, but every god and goddess could be angry and display a demonic—namely, harmful—character.<sup>71</sup> Indeed, dualistic—or rather flexible—as is the Egyptian religious and mythical way of thinking and of viewing the world,<sup>72</sup> it might be ultimately be safer not to seek a definite separation between “demonic” and “godhead,” i.e., greater and lesser deities, but instead to think that we are merely faced with the dual/flexible expression of the divine inhabiting the world,<sup>73</sup> more or less great may the deity in concern be.<sup>74</sup>

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I should like to acknowledge here my gratitude to Kasia Szpakowska (Swansea) for inviting me to contribute to the present volume of proceedings, even though I did not actually participate to the conference from which it arises, and thus affording me the opportunity to develop the topic set forth here. Thanks to Judith for correcting and improving my English and the anonymous reviewer for comments and suggestions. Any errors that may remain are, of course, my own.

#### REFERENCES

- Assmann, Jan. 1994. “Oracular Desire in a Time of Darkness: Urban Festivals and Divine Visibility in Ancient Egypt.” In Ahron R. E. Agus and Jan Assmann (eds.), *Oracular Desire*, 13–29. Yearbook for Religious Anthropology. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag.
- Baines, John. 2000. “Egyptian Deities in Context: Multiplicity, Unity, and the Problem of Change” In Barbara Nevling Porter (ed.), *One God or Many? Concepts of Divinity in the Ancient World*, 9–78. Transaction of the Casco Bay Assyriological Institute 1. Casco Bay, ME: Assyriological Institute.
- Baines, John and Elisabeth Froid. 2011. “Piety, Change and Display in the New Kingdom.” In Mark Collier and Steven Snape (eds.), *Ramesside Studies in Honour of Ken A. Kitchen*, 1–17. Bolton: Rutherford Press.
- Barbotin, Christopher. 2007. *Les statues égyptiennes du Nouvel Empire. Statues royales et divines*, vols. 1–2. Paris: Musée du Louvre, Khéops.
- Baum, Natalie. 2008. “Les *baou* et leur action sur terre.” In Christine Gallois, Pierre Grandet, and Laura Pantalacci (eds.), *Mélanges offert à François*



- Neveu par ses amis, élèves et collègues à l'occasion de son soixante-quatrième anniversaire*, 9–31. Bibliothèque d'étude 145. Le Caire: Institut français d'archéologie orientale.
- Bierbrier, Morris and Hermann De Meulenaere. 1984. "Hymne à Taouêret sur une stèle de Deir el Médineh." In Rostislav Holthoer and Tullia Linders (eds.), *Sundries in Honour of Torgny Säv-Söderbergh*, 23–32. Acta Universitatis Upsalien-sis Boreas 13. Uppsala-Stockholm: Universitet; Almqvist & Wicksell.
- Blumenthal, Elke. 2011. "Das Schwangere Nilpferd und andere Nothelfergottheiten—Polytheistische Frömmigkeit im Ägyptische Neuen Reich." *THOTs* 6: 9–15.
- Bomann, Ann H. 1991. *The Private Chapel in Ancient Egypt*. London—New York: Kegan Paul.
- Bommas, Martin. 1998. *Die Heidelberger Fragmente des magischen Papyrus Harris*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter.
- Borghouts, Joris F. 1971. *The Magical Text of Papyrus Leiden I 348*. Oudheidkundige mededelingen uit het Rijksmuseum van Oudheden 51. Leiden: Brill.
- . 1982. "Divine Intervention in Ancient Egypt and Its Manifestation (B<sup>3</sup>w)." In Robert J. Demarée and Jac. J. Janssen (eds.), *Gleanings from Deir el-Medina*, 1–70. Egyptologischen Uitgaven 1. Leiden: The Netherlands Institute for the Near East.
- Brunton, Guy. 1948. *Matmar: British Museum Expedition to Middle Egypt, 1929–1931*. London: B. Quaritch.
- Černý, Jaroslav. 1935. *Catalogue général des antiquités du Musée du Caire Nos. 25501–25832. Ostraca hiératiques*, I–II. Le Caire: Institut français d'archéologie orientale.
- . 1939. *Catalogue des Ostraca Hiératiques non littéraires de Deir el Médineh*, IV. Le Caire: Institut français d'archéologie orientale.
- Ceruti, Sabrina. 2013. "La percezione del mostruoso nell'antico Egitto: il caso della dea-ippopotamo." In Igor Baglioni (a cura di), *Monstra. Costruzione e percezione delle entità ibride e mostruose nel Mediterraneo Antico*, vol. I, 17–28. Religio 1. Roma: Edizioni Qasar.
- . 2017. "The Hippopotamus Goddess Carrying a Crocodile on Her Back: An Iconographical Motif Distinctive of the Late Middle Kingdom." In Gianluca Miniaci, Marilina Betrò, and Stephen Quirke (eds.), *Modelling the Imaginary World of Middle Kingdom Egypt (2000–1500 BC)*, 93–123. Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 262. Leuven—Paris—Bristol CT: Peeters.
- Cox, Michael J. 2013. *Ba'al and Seth: An Investigation into the Relationship of two Gods with References to their Iconography* (c. 1500–1000 BC). PhD dissertation, Stellenbosch University.
- Davies, Benedict G. 1999. *Who's Who at Deir el-Medina: A Prosopographic Study of the Royal Workmen's Community*. Egyptologischen Uitgaven 13. Leiden: Institute of Ancient Near East.
- . 2013. *Ramesside Inscriptions Translated and Annotated: Notes and Comments III: Ramesses II, His Contemporaries*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Donker van Heel, Koenraad. 2016. *Mrs. Naunakhte and Family: The Women of Ramesside Deir el-Medina*. Cairo—New York: American University Press.
- , Robert J. Demarée, Ben Haring and Jana Toivari-Viitala (eds.). *The Deir el-Medina Database*. Leiden. < <http://dmd.wepwa.wet.nl/> >.
- Edwards, Iorwerth E.S. 1960. *Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum, Fourth Series: Oracular Amuletic Decrees of the Late New Kingdom*. London: Trustees of the British Museum.
- Fischer-Elfert, Hans W. 1993. Review: Gasse, Annie. 1990. *Catalogue des ostraca hiératiques littéraires de Deir el-Medina*, Nos. 1676–1774, Le Caire: Institut français d'archéologie Orientale. *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 50: 125–130.
- Frandsen, Peter J. 2011. "Faeces of the Creator or the Temptation of the Dead." In Peter Kousoulis (ed.), *Ancient Egyptian Demonology: Studies on the Boundaries between the Demonic and the Divine in Egyptian Magic*, 25–62. Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 175. Leuven—Paris—Walpole, MA: Peeters.
- Gabler, Kathrin. 2017. "Stele Turin CGT 50057 (= Cat. 1514) im ikonographischen und prosopografischen Kontext Deir el-Medines: *nb.t pr Mw.t(-m-wj<sup>3</sup>)* (vi) im Spannungsfeld der Mächte der Taweret und des Seth?" *Rivista del Museo Egizio* 1: 1–34.
- Galán, José M. 1999. "Seeing Darkness." *Chronique d'Égypte* 74: 18–30.
- Germond, Philipp. 1981. *Sakhmet et la protection du monde*. Aegyptiaca Helvetica 9. Genève: Les Belle-Lettres.
- Goebs, Katia. 2002. "A Functional Approach to the Egyptian Myth and Mythemes." *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religion* 2: 27–59.



- Goecke-Bauer, Maren. 2003. "Untersuchungen zu den 'Torwächtern' von Deir el-Medine." In Jac. J. Janssen, Elisabeth Froom, and Maren Goecke-Bauer, *Wordcutters, Potters and Doorkeepers. Service Personnel of Deir el-Medina Workmen*, 63–153. Egyptologische Uitgaven 17. Leiden: The Netherlands Institute for the Near East.
- Goyon, Jean-Claude. 2011. *Le Rituel du s̥tp šmt au changement de cycle annuel*. Bibliothèque d'étude 141. Le Caire: Institut français d'archéologie orientale.
- Graves-Brown, Carolyn. 2007. "Flint and the Northern Sky." In Thomas Schneider and Kasia Szpakowska (eds.), *Egyptian Stories: A British Egyptological Tribute to Alan B. Lloyd on the Occasion of His Retirement*, 111–135. Munster: Ugarit Verlag.
- . 2018. *Daemons and Spirits in Ancient Egypt*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press.
- Griffith, John Gwyn. 1960. *The Conflict of Horus and Seth: A Study in Ancient Mythology from Egyptian and Classical Sources*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.
- Guermeur, Ivan. 2015a. "Du dualism et l'ambivalence séthienne dans la pensée religieuse de l'Égypte ancienne." In Fabienne Jourdan and Anca Vasiliu (eds.), *Dualismes. Doctrine religieuses et traditions philosophiques*, 63–88. Cluj-Paris: Poliron-Chôra.
- . 2015b. "Un faucon et une chatte dans une recette iatromagique du papyrus de Brooklyn 6-218.2 (col. X + IV, 2–7)." In Magali Massiera, Bernand Mathieu, and Frédéric Rouflet, *Apprivoiser le sauvage—Taming the Wild*, 165–181. Égypte Nilotique et Méditerranéenne 11. Montpellier: Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3.
- . 2016. "Encore une histoire du sorcière (š-<sup>c</sup>-l-<sup>f</sup>)? Une formule de protection de la chambre du mammisi (pBrooklyn 47.218.2, x+v<sup>2-6</sup>)." In Sandra L. Lippert, Maren Schentuleit and Martin A. Stadler (eds.), *Sapientia Felicitas. Festschrift für Günter Wittman zum 29. Februar 2016*, 171–189. Montpellier: Équipe "Égypte Nilotique et Méditerranéenne."
- Hauser-Wegner, Jennifer. 2001. "Taweret." In Donald B Redford. (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, vol. 3, 350–351. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hoffman, Friedhelm and Joachim Quack. 2007. *Anthologie der demotischen Literatur*. Berlin: LIT Verlag.
- Israelit Groll, Sarah. 1992. "A Model of Divine Anger." In Jurgen Osing and E. Koldin Nielsen (eds.), *The Heritage of Ancient Egypt: Studies in Honour of Erik Iversen*, 63–72. CNI Publications 13. Copenhagen: The Carsten Niebuhr Institute Publications.
- Iversen, Erik. 1941. *Two Inscriptions Concerning Private Donations to Temples*. Historisk-filologiske meddelelser 27/5. Copenhagen: Munksgaard.
- Janssen-Winkeln, Karl. 2005. "Vier Denkmäler einer thebanischen Offiziersfamilie der 22. Dynastie." *Studien zur Ägyptischen Kultur* 33: 125–146.
- Jauhainen, Heidi. 2009. "Do not celebrate your feast without your neighbours." *A Study of References to Feasts and Festivals in Non-Literary Documents from Ramesside Period Deir el-Medina*. Publications of the Institute for Asian and African Studies 10. Helsinki: Helsinki University Print.
- Kákósy, László. 1982. "Decans in Late-Egyptian Religion." *Oikumene* 3: 163–191.
- Kaper, Olaf. 2003. *The Egyptian God Tutu: A study of the Sphinx-God and Master of Demons with Corpus of Monuments*. Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 119. Leuven-Paris-Dudley: Peeters.
- Karl, Doris. 2000. "Funktion und Bedeutung einer weisen Frau im alten Ägypten." *Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur* 28:131–160.
- Klotz, David. 2013. "A Theban Devotee of Seth in the Late Period." *Studien zur Altägyptische Kultur* 42: 155–180.
- Kousoulis, Peter (ed.). 2011. *Ancient Egyptian Demonology: Studies on the Boundaries between the Demonic and the Divine in Egyptian Magic*. Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 175. Leuven: Peeters.
- Leitz, Christian. 2001. *Magical and Medical Papyri of the New Kingdom: Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum VII*. London: British Museum Press.
- (ed.). 2002. *Lexikon der ägyptischen Götter und Götterbezeichnungen*, vol. 4. Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 113. Leuven: Peeters.
- Lesko, Barbara S. 1999. *The Great Goddess of Egypt*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- . 2008. "Household and Domestic Religion in Ancient Egypt." In John Bodel and Saul M. Olyan (eds.), *Household and Family Religion in Antiquity*, 197–209. Malden—Oxford—Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Lucarelli, Rita. 2009. "Popular Beliefs in Demons in the Lybian Period." In Gerard P. F Broekman, Robert J. Demarée, and Olaf E. Kaper (eds.), *The*

- Lybian Period in Egypt: Historical and Cultural Studies into the 21st-24th Dynasties*, 231–239. Egyptologische Uitgaven 23. Leiden: The Netherlands Institute of the Near East.
- Luiselli, Maria Michela. 2011. *Die Suche nach Gottesnähe. Untersuchungen zur Persönlichen Frömmigkeit in Ägypten von der Ersten Zwischenzeit bis zum Ende des Neues Reiches. Ägypten und Altes Testament* 73. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- . 2013. “Images of Personal Religion: An Outline.” In Maria Michela Luiselli, Jürgen Mohn, and Stéphane Grippentrog (eds.), *Kult und Bild. Die bildliche Dimension der Kulte in Alten Orient, in der Antike und in der Neuzeit*, 13–40. Würzburg: Ergon Verlag.
- Mahmoud, Adel. 1999. “Ii-neferti, a Poor Woman.” *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologische, Institute Abteilung Kairo* 55: 315–323.
- Manassa, Coleen. 2013. “Divine Taxonomy in the Underworld Books.” *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 14: 47–68.
- Marciniak, Marek L. 1974. *Deir el Bahari I. Les Inscriptions hiératiques du temple de Thoutmosis III*. Warsaw: PWN—Éditions scientifiques en Pologne.
- Mathieu, Bernard. 1993. “Sur quelques ostraca hiératiques littéraires récemment publiés.” *Bulletin de l’Institut français d’archéologie orientale* 93: 335–347.
- McDowell, Angela G. 1999. *Village Life in Ancient Egypt: Laundry Lists and Love Songs*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Mendel, Daniela. 2005. *Die Monatsgöttingen in Tempeln und im Privaten Kult*. Rites Égyptiens 11. Bruxelles: Brepols.
- Meurer, Georg. 2015. *Penbui—Wächter an der Stätte der Wahrheit. Eine prosopographische Untersuchung zu Deir el-Medine in der 19. Dynastie*. Egyptology 24. London: Golden House Publications.
- Merschauer, Scott. 1991. *Threat-Formulae in Ancient Egypt: A Study of the History, Structure and Use of Threats and Curses in Ancient Egypt*. Baltimore: Halgo.
- Nagy, István. 1992. “La statue de Thoutéris au Caire (CG 39194), et la légende de la déesse lointaine.” In Ulrich Luft (ed.), *The Intellectual Heritage of Egypt: Studies Presented to L. Kákosy by Friends and Colleagues on the Occasion of His 60th Birthday*, 449–456. *Studia Aegyptiaca* 14. Budapest: Chaire d’égyptologie.
- Nassar, Mohamed A. 2019. “The Wise Woman and the Healing Practice (O.OIM 16974).” *Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections* 24: 41–48.
- O’Rourke, Paul. 2015. *A Royal Book of Protection of the Saite Period: pBrooklyn 47-218.49*. Yale Egyptological Studies 9. New Haven: Yale Egyptological Institute.
- Porter, Bertha and Rosalind Moss. 1972. *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs, and Paintings, Vol. II: Theban Temples*. 2nd edition. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Quack, Joachim. 1999. “Balsamierung und Totengericht im Papyrus Insiger.” *Enchoria* 25: 27–38.
- Ritner, Robert K. 2008. “Household Religion in Ancient Egypt.” In John Bodel and Saul M. Olyan (eds.), *Household and Family Religion in Antiquity*, 171–196. Malden—Oxford—Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.
- . 2011. “An Eternal Curse upon the Reader of These Lines (with Apologies to M. Puig).” In Peter Kousoulis (ed.), *Ancient Egyptian Demonology: Studies on the Boundaries between the Demonic and the Divine in Egyptian Magic*, 3–24. *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 175. Leuven—Paris—Walpole, MA: Peeters.
- Sabek, Yasser. 2016. *Die Hieratischen Besucher-Graffiti dsr-ḥ.t in Deir el-Bahari*. Internet-Beiträge zur Ägyptologie und Sudanarchäologie 18. London: Golden House Publications.
- Sadek, Ashraf J. 1984a. “An Attempt to Translate the Corpus of the Deir el-Bahri Hieratic Inscriptions.” *Göttinger Miszellen* 71: 67–91.
- . 1984b. “An Attempt to Translate the Corpus of the Deir el-Bahri Hieratic Inscriptions (Part Two).” *Göttinger Miszellen* 72: 65–86.
- . 1987. *Popular Religion in Egypt during the New Kingdom*. Hildesheimer Ägyptologische Beiträge 27. Hildesheim: Gerstenberg.
- Stevens, Anna. 2009. “Domestic Religious Practices.” In Willeke Wendrich and Jacco Dieleman (eds.), *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology*. Los Angeles: eScholarship. <<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7s07628w>>.
- Sweeney, Deborah. 2015. “Masculinity, Femininity and the Spirituality of Work at Deir el-Medīna.” In Peter Kousoulis and Nicolas Lazaridis (eds.), *Proceedings of the Tenth International Congress of Egyptology, University of Aegean, Rhodes, 22–29 May 2008*, 873–884. *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 241. Leuven—Paris—Bristol, CT: Peeters.
- Szpakowska, Kasia. 2008. *Daily Life in Ancient Egypt*.

- Malden—Oxford: Blackwell.
- Te Velde, Herman. 1967. *Seth, God of Confusion: A Study of His Role in Egyptian Mythology and Religion*. Probleme der Ägyptologie 6. Leiden: Brill.
- Thiers, Christopher. 2013. “La Chapelle d’Ipet la Grande/Epoeris sur le parvis du temple de Louqsor. Relecture d’une stèle kouchite.” In Christopher Thiers (ed.), *Documents de théologies thébaines tardives* 2, 149–173. Cahiers Égypte nilotique et Méditerranéenne 8. Montpellier: Université Paul Valéry.
- Toivari-Viitala, Jaana. 2001. *Women at Deir el-Medina: A Study of the Status and Roles of the Female Inhabitants in the Workmen’s Community during the Ramesside Period*. Egyptologische Uitgaven 15. Leiden: The Netherlands Institute for the Near East.
- Tosi, Mario and Alessandro Roccati. 1972. *Stele e altre epigrafi di Deir el Medina n. 50001–n. 50262*. Catalogo del Museo Egizio, Serie II, vol. I. Torino: Edizioni d’Arte Fratelli Pozzo.
- Valbelle, Dominique and Emmanuel Laroze. 2010. “Un sanctuaire de Thoutmosis III à la déesse Ipy-Ouret édifié à Karnak par le première prophète d’Amon Menkhéperréseneb.” *Cahiers de Karnak* 13 : 401–428.
- van Dijk, Jacobus. 2001. “Ptah.” In Donald B. Redford (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, vol. 3, 74–76. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Verner, Miroslav. 1969. “Statue of Taweret (Cairo Museum no. 39145) Dedicated by Pabesi and Several Remarks on the Role of the Hippopotamus Goddess.” *Zeitschrift zur Ägyptischen Sprache und Altertumskunde* 96: 52–63.
- Vernus, Pascal. 2003. “La piété personnelle à Deir el-Médineh. La construction de l’idée de pardon.” In Guillemette Andreu (ed.), *Deir el-Médineh et la Vallée de Rois. La vie en Égypte au temps des pharaons du Nouvel Empire*, 309–347. Paris: Khéops, Musée du Louvre.
- Volokhine, Youri. 2014. *Le porc en Égypte ancienne*. Liège: Presses Universitaires.
- . 2016. “La décapitation de la déesse vache.” *Égypte, Afrique et Orient* 83: 7–18.
- Weiss, Lara. 2015. *Religious Practices at Deir el-Medina*. Egyptologische Uitgaven 29. Leuven—Leiden: Peeters-Netherlands Institute of Ancient Near East.
- Wente, Edward. 1990. *Letters of Ancient Egypt*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature.
- Wilfong, Terry G. 2013. “The Oracular Amuletic Decrees: A Question of Length.” *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 99: 295–300.
- Winand, Jean, and Stéphanie Gohy. 2011. “La grammaire du Papyrus Magique Harris.” *Lingua Aegyptia* 19: 175–245.
- Yoyotte, Jean. 2005. “Thouéris.” In Pascal Vernus and Jean Yoyotte (eds.), *Bestiaire des pharaons*, 686–697. Paris: Agnès Viénot-Perrin.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> For the deity’s iconography and career, see an outline in Ceruti 2013 and 2017, 93–97.
- <sup>2</sup> See the methodological inquiries for such definitions in Ritner 2008, 171–74, 186; Lesko 2008; Stevens 2009; Weiss 2015, 1–26.
- <sup>3</sup> See, e.g., Sadek 1987, 125–127; Lesko 1999, 275; Wilkinson 2003, 183–186; Szpakowska 2008, 125–126. For some exceptions, see below, n. 7.
- <sup>4</sup> For the Middle Kingdom types of evidence, see Ceruti 2017, 95–98. To the statues/statuettes there listed (part. 97 fn. 19), is to be added the limestone statue Manchester EGY 270a-b (h. ca. 31 cm).
- <sup>5</sup> Such a corpus of evidence has been gathered in my unpublished doctoral research mainly focused on the pharaonic period (see Ceruti 2017, 94 fn. 3, to which paper I refer for a discussion in particular on the reliability of the Middle Kingdom documents).
- <sup>6</sup> See Weiss 2015, 23–27, 107, for the case of Deir el-Medina, certainly pivotal for the deity’s worship in the New Kingdom, as most of the evidence related to it comes from there (see also below, n. 62).
- <sup>7</sup> Exceptions are: Borghouts 1982, 18–19, probably the first to highlight the goddess’ “ambiguous role”; Hauser-Wegner 2001, 351: “Taweret could have had a *demonic* [namely, harmful] *aspect*” (brackets and italics added); Yoyotte 2005, 692: “on peut *entravoir* que la Grande pouvait à l’occasion nuire aux humains” (italics added).
- <sup>8</sup> For the entangled question of the deity’s name(s)/identity(ies) as Ipy/Ipet-Reret-Taweret, see an outline with some remarks in Ceruti 2017, 94 fn. 3 (with references).
- <sup>9</sup> The seminal discussion, with references, is Borghouts (1982), who regards the term as a col-



- lective/abstract noun/notion, meaning the “ba-hood” of a transcendental being (by nature: a god, a dead person; or by role: the king), with distinctive negative connotations, distinguishable, and therefore nearly independent (although stemming from the same root), from the singular  $b^3$  and the plural  $b^3.w$  (i.e., “bas”), and thus proposing for it the differentiated (albeit somehow, artificial) transliteration  $b^3w$ . See also Vernus 2003, 317–318; Baum 2008, 22–23 for some remarks to Borghouts’ transliteration and concept of the term, which she interprets rather at a psycho/theological level as a “revelation.” For the purposes of the present paper, not focussed on the philological/semantic investigation of the concept itself, I still retain Borghouts’ transliteration, which, however, fits with the texts here in concern. The expression will survive in the Demotic  $b(^c)y.t/bw(^3)$ , except for one case, only with such a negative sense: see Ritner 2011, 15 (with references).
- 10 (Temporary) blindness being the punishment for false oath and connected with a deity’s  $b^3w$ , e.g., on stele BM EA 589 (Neferabu;  $b^3w Pth$ ): Borghouts 1982, 7; recent translation in Luiselli 2011, 361–363 [G.19.6]. For blindness, real and/or metaphorical: Assmann 1994; Galán 1999; Luiselli 2011, 162–168 (with list of documents); see also Israelit Groll 1992; Mahmoud 1999.
  - 11 The notion is not, however, confined to the “personal piety” sources, but appears also both in magic texts and literary genres (as the *Königsnovelle*). For the “personal piety”—an ever-functioning definition, the topic of which is however still highly debated, and now rather generally approached with expressions such as “practical/personal religion”—see the latest discussions in Baines and Frood 2011; Luiselli 2011 and 2013, 13–40.
  - 12 Some new material has appeared since the study of Borghouts 1982, where first has been collected the core of this small Deir el-Medina dossier about Taweret’s  $b^3w$ .
  - 13 No date preserved, but ascribed by most to the Nineteenth Dynasty (Ramesses II): lastly in Davies 2013, 401–402 [A.59: as O. Gardiner 166 (older nr.)] with references, to which must be added McDowell 1999, 102 [74.B] and Donker van Heel 2016, 50–51.
  - 14 His identification among the villagers is impossible, as the name is common at Deir el-Medina: Davies 1999, sub index.
  - 15 At least three women with this name are recorded at Deir el-Medina (Davies 1999, index). Donker van Heel 2016, 25, 51, assumes that this might be a further one, identifiable as the first wife of the scribe Qenhikhopshef (i)—the couple would have been childless—who later married the famous Naunakhte (i) (brackets after names, according to Davies 1999).
  - 16 Interpretation first argued by Borghouts (1982, 4, and n. 13), accepted by Davies (2013, 401), and relied upon by Jauhiainen (2009, 154), who interprets this feast day of Taweret—for which the ostrakon is presently the sole attestation—as a personal feast.
  - 17 A similar case of theft brought before the local court is referred to in BM EA 65930 (= O. Nash. 1): here a woman who witnessed to a theft, only after experiencing a  $b^3w ntrw hprw$  decides to testify to the court that she had seen the crime committed: Borghouts 1982, 4 (nr.1); extensive references in Donker van Heel et al., *The Deir el-Medina Database*.
  - 18 The  $b^3w$ -manifestation being an epiphany *per se*, it might be considered a premonitory dream (Davies 2013, 400; Donker van Heel 2016, 50), or perhaps an illness, physical distress (blindness?), or any misfortune she, or someone in her family, could have suffered in those ten days, to which it was believed the confession could put a stop.
  - 19 Borghouts 1982, 5.
  - 20 Borghouts 1982, 5; Davies 2013, 400. Donker van Heel 2016, 51, wonders if, “after all,” Nakthmin’s charges were instead addressed to the goddess herself.
  - 21 This figure is referred to only in a few ostraca, all from Deir el-Medina: Karl 2000; Toivari-Viitala 2001, 228–231; cf. also Nasser 2019.
  - 22 Fragmentary, written on both sides (ro. 1–7; vo. 1–5), no date preserved, but ascribed to the Nineteenth–Twentieth Dynasties: Mathieu 1993, 335–336; Fischer-Elfert 1993, 126; Karl 2000, 134–135; Toivari-Viitala 2001, 229.
  - 23 Integration of Karl 2000, 134, fn. 26.
  - 24 No date preserved, but ascribed to the Nine-



- teenth–Twentieth Dynasties. Text in Černý 1935, 56, 76\*, pl. 73; proposed translations: Borghouts 1982, 24; Karl 2000, 137 (the latter reproduced in Toivari-Viitala 2001, 230).
- <sup>25</sup> Integration of Mathieu 1993, 336 n. 4; cf. Karl 2000, 137.
- <sup>26</sup> The grounds for the consultation may have been the life/(false) oath of a father/a certain *P3-it* (ro. 3). It is likely inferred that both the deities are being pinpointed as an explanation of the man’s trouble (with Borghouts 1982, 24), but one should also wonder if the text describes two diverse situations, involving two different male persons (the adviser—referring to his own earlier experience—and the advised) and two distinct divine manifestations, with neither linked to the other.
- <sup>27</sup> Reconstruction of the mythical episode in Volokhine 2016, 10–11. Nemty (previously read Anty) is the ferryman, e.g., in *The Contendings of Horus and Seth* (P. Chester Beatty I, Ramesside). The god is sometimes assimilated to Horus and, in a case, also to Seth (Te Velde 1967, 113–114); proceeding on the assumption of an actual Taweret and Nemty link, in the light of O. DeM 251 (here, no. 5), one could wonder if the assimilation with Seth is in stake here. Complete references for Nemty in Leitz 2002, 242–244.
- <sup>28</sup> Unpublished. Transcription: Notebook Černý Mss. 17.107.30. My thanks are due to the Griffith Institute staff (University of Oxford) for providing me with the scan of Černý’s transcription on which my translation is based. Its publication (Nasser 2019) issued when the present paper had already been submitted for publication.
- <sup>29</sup> Černý’s conjectural reading (not mentioned in Nasser 2019). For the term *dhṛ(.t)* and its generally negative connotation, see O’Rourke 2015, 60 (O).
- <sup>30</sup> It has been suggested that the ostrakon would have been the reply to O. Letellier, concerning a consultation of the wise woman about the death of two children. See Toivari-Viitala 2001, 229; Karl 2000, 134; Nasser 2019; complete references in Donker van Heel et al., *The Deir el-Medina Database*.
- <sup>31</sup> No date preserved, but ascribed to the Nineteenth–Twentieth Dynasties. Text in Černý 1939, 3, pl. 3. Translations and comments in Borghouts 1982, 15–19; Wente 1990, 141 [n. 182]; McDowell 1999, 102 [n. 74]. Cf. Donker van Heel et al., *The Deir el-Medina Database*.
- <sup>32</sup> Borghouts 1982, 16–17.
- <sup>33</sup> Borghouts 1982, 18; McDowell 1999, 102; Baum 2008, 19.
- <sup>34</sup> Borghouts 1982, 15–19, to whom I refer for thorough discussion. By others the item is considered as an amulet of whatever protecting entity: Edwards 1960, xxii; Baum 2008, 19; Lucarelli 2009, 234.
- <sup>35</sup> A few statues have been excavated by Bruyère in the settlement (or are ascribed to it by prosopographic data), and they range from few centimetres to the 39.5 cm tall of statue Turin C 526. However, with few exceptions (Louvre E 14377bis, from a tomb: Barbotin 2007, I–II, 178–79, cat. 115), the exact original context is hardly ascertainable. Moreover, the archaeological records seem support the conclusion that in the settlement Taweret was worshipped preferably in votive chapels (Weiss 2015, 106 and fn. 803), as the so-called *Chapelle du Djebel* (Bomann 1991, 42, 69).
- <sup>36</sup> Mostly of Theban origin, they consist of divine oracle deliberations written on narrow strips of papyrus to be worn as phylacteries by their owners—generally young males and females—for protection: Edwards 1960; Lucarelli 2009, 231–239; Wilfong 2013 (the last two with updated list of documents and bibliography).
- <sup>37</sup> Edwards 1960, xxii; Lucarelli 2009, 234–235. These demons/demonesses are rarely found outside the Oracle Amuletic Decrees, and the term will survive only with negative meaning in Demotic sources: references in Guernier 2016, 181. See also below, n. 42. For an apotropaic/positive function attached to an *wṛ.t* being/goddess, see O’Rourke (2015, 199–200), who also connects her to the various manifestations of the Eye of Re.
- <sup>38</sup> Edwards 1960, 15.
- <sup>39</sup> As has been emerged from the collected corpus of evidences relating to the deity, the most relevant variant in its spelling is indeed the presence or absence of the suffix *.t* and its graphic posi-

tion. It is also worth noting that the name *T<sup>3</sup>-wry.t* will disappear from the hieroglyphic and hieratic sources by the end of the Third Intermediate Period–early Late Period. See the references above, n. 5 and 8.

<sup>40</sup> Tosi and Roccati 1972, 100.

<sup>41</sup> Already seen in Kákosy 1982, 185; Tosi and Roccati 1972, 100, however, reconnect the label to the commonest of Taweret’s epithets, *nb.t p.t*.

<sup>42</sup> For an alternative interpretation, stressing the watery essence of the northern sky and its link with the Inundation, see Graves-Brown 2007, 114ff. The constellation actually has various names probably based on diverse mythological traditions (for an overview: Ceruti 2017, 108–112, with references), but for the Deir el-Medina workmen it remains, first and foremost, the image of the goddess known only as Taweret in their performing “personal piety.” In the late Ptolemaic Papyrus Insinger, *t<sup>3</sup>-wry(.t)* is the demoness of the bad influences, the female astrological personification of bad destiny, by whom “one is carried away” and “who causes the end” (P. Insinger, 17,8, 18,7–8; cf. also 18,18, 19,2: see Quack 1999, 28; Hoffman and Quack 2007, 258–259). I wonder if this demoness does not conceal the hippopotamus goddess, still documented in Ptolemaic-Roman times, especially in her astral conception (cf. Ceruti 2017, 94, 108–110). This topic needs further study and is, however, far beyond the limit of the present paper.

<sup>43</sup> Mostly documented in medico-magical and funerary texts. For Seth: Te Velde 1967; recently Cox 2013, 31–53 (with bibliography); Guermeur 2015a, 76–83. Anyway, the theory of the complete Late Period demonization and proscription of Seth based on the seminal work of Te Velde (1967) has been recently questioned: see lastly Klotz 2013 (with further references).

<sup>44</sup> Te Velde 1967, 28–29, 53–59; Guermeur 2015b, 176.

<sup>45</sup> Besides the ostracon O. DeM 251 and the above-mentioned astronomical myth, to my knowledge these are: Stele Turin CGT 50057, Ramesside, from Deir el-Medina (lastly: Gabler 2017); Stele Cairo JE 55887, Ramesside, from Matmar (Brunton 1948, 61 n. xi, pl. 50), but without any inscriptions. The hippopotamus god-

dess rarely appears in medico-magical spells, and never, to my knowledge, in clear connection with Seth.

<sup>46</sup> Griffith 1960, 105, reads (with others) Plutarch’s statement as the aetiological myth reflecting the negative aspect of the male hippo, incarnation of Seth, versus the positive one of the female hippo, i.e., of Taweret-like images (passing over the fundamental hybridism of the hippopotamus goddess). It is worth noting that Plutarch’s text comes much later than the Egyptian quasi-complete demonization of Seth. Cf. also Borghouts 1982, 18–19; Gabler 2017, 7 (although I do not agree with some of the interpretations there expressed, nor with the identification of an early hippopotamus goddess Ipet diverse from the later Taweret [for this topic see above, n. 8]).

<sup>47</sup> Regarding O. Ashm. 166 (here, text no. 1), cf. Donker van Heel (2016, 51), who on the basis of his uncertain identification of Tanehesy as a childless woman (see above, n. 15), wonders if the theft were not the woman’s attempt to gain closeness with Taweret. However, the author’s arguments do not seem convincing.

<sup>48</sup> The inscription also pinpoints the three fundamental names attributed to the goddess (see above, n. 8). Last translation: Janssen-Winkel 2005, 140–146, Taf. 9–11. Here I quote only the passages of the text most relevant for the present topic.

<sup>49</sup> In her name of Reret (Sow/Nourisher), here it could also be echoed the occasional identification of the hippopotamus goddess with the sky goddess Nut, in one aetiological and astral myth this latter being described as a sow (*rr.t*) swallowing her piglets, i.e., the decanal stars (*rrw*), in order to give birth to them again. It is worth noting that the “piggishness” of the hippopotamus goddess—and generally of goddesses—is both far from being represented in images and clear: cf. Ceruti 2017, 111–112; Volokhine 2014, 148–153, 154–158. Cf. also Guermeur 2016, 179–181.

<sup>50</sup> *mk.(t) nb=s* “who protects her Lord;” she is similarly labelled on the statue Cairo CG 39145. See Verner 1969, 58, but with another reading of the passage, accepted by Nagy (1992, 455) and lastly by Mendel (2005, 35).

- <sup>51</sup> On the statuette Aberdeen Anthropological Museum 1422 (probably Saite), we find the parallel statement *‘nh mwt m hf’=t* “life and death are in your grasp” (lastly Mendel 2005, 32–33, with previous references). However, the statuette does not properly portray the hippopotamus goddess here concerned, but rather one of the twelve month-goddesses (namely *Imy.t-p.t-Sšm.t-ntrw*), which are attested by the Late Period onwards. They mostly share with/derive from the hippopotamus goddess their iconography, but not their names, and seem to specify her function on a timing base (Mendel 2005; some notes in Ceruti 2017, 94 fn. 3). In view of the history of the deity that I draw from the collected corpus of documents (see references above, n. 1), I surmise that most of the numerous hippopotamus goddess’ amulets datable to the Late and Ptolemaic Period might be related more to this cohort of goddesses (and also to the similar one, of the goddesses of the thirty-six decans) than to the hippopotamus goddess Ipy/Ipet-Reret-Taweret per se.
- <sup>52</sup> Text in Marciniak 1974, 104 (no. 50): line nr. after him. Translation and transcriptions: Sadek 1984b, 69; Sabek 2016, Graffito 6.
- <sup>53</sup> I follow Sadek’s reading (Sadek 1984b, 69) omitting from the threat-formula proper the last line 7 of the graffito—which implies the name and title *whm Jmn-nht*—as seemingly inconstant with the curse. Otherwise Sabek (2016, 147) integrates the line into the formula as its line 6, reading “[u]nd Taweret (6) (möge den) *whm*-Priester *Jmn-nht* (7) und seine Kinder verfolgen”: that would mean a curse *ad personam*, highly exceptional for such type of formulae (see Morschauser 1991, *passim*).
- <sup>54</sup> As the “Lord of the Eternity,” in fact he can unleash the Hereafter’s demons: see, e.g., Ritner 2011 (mostly for late and Demotic samples).
- <sup>55</sup> Marciniak 1974, 60 (no. 3); Sadek 1984a, 75–76; Sabek 2016, 270 (Graffito 68).
- <sup>56</sup> Stele Cairo JE 45327: Iversen 1941, 5–6; for the dreadful character of Nefertem, see Borghouts 1971, 66, n. 94.
- <sup>57</sup> Morschauser 1991, 138–139.
- <sup>58</sup> A Penpamer (i) (or Penpai/Penpaesh) is known at Deir el-Medina holding the position of door-keeper (sc. “of the Tomb”), with a career spanning from (at least) the year 24 of Ramesses III to the year 4 of Ramesses V, and Sabek (2016, 147) tentatively identifies him with the author of the graffito. Indeed, a few Deir el-Bahri graffiti may be ascribed to members of the village (Sabek 2016, 104), yet in any case doorkeepers were not effectively member of the crew, but rather support staff from outside the village: see Goecke-Bauer 2003, 63–153 (with also Penpamer (i) dossier). The temple of Maat lies in the precinct of Montu, at Karnak-Nord (Porter and Moss 1972, 11–13).
- <sup>59</sup> O. Ashmolean Museum 149 (Karl 2000, 136; Toivari-Viitala 2001, 230); Stele British Museum EA 589 (see above, n. 10). In the Theban area, besides Karnak, where he had his own temple, Ptah was also worshipped (with Meretseger), in a rock-shrine between Deir el-Medina and the Valley of the Queens. For an introduction to the god see van Dijk 2001.
- <sup>60</sup> Sakhmet is therefore frequently invoked in threats (Morschauser 1991, 140). On the goddess and the requirement of her pacification see Germond 1981; Goyon 2011.
- <sup>61</sup> Papyrus BM EA 10042 vo., II, 6 = fr. Heidelberg vo., col. II.6. Lastly: Bommas 1998, 44 (with some criticisms of previous interpretations, but without his own proposal); Leitz 2001, 49. For the text date to the late Twentieth Dynasty, see Winand and Gohy 2011, 243, where are underlined both lexical and grammatical singularities, due to the composite nature of the text, which, e.g., presents many lexical *hapax* (Winand and Gohy 2011, 186, 240–243).
- <sup>62</sup> Bierbrier and De Meulenaere 1984, 23–32; lastly in Meurer 2015, 55–57, Taf. 52 (with complete bibliography): cols. nr. after him. The hymn of the stele and Penbuy’s particular devotion to Taweret—to whom he dedicated another stele (Louvre E 16374) and a libation basin (CGT 22031)—would deserve more comments than those allowed by the limits of this paper, and it should also be viewed in the wider context of the goddess’ cult at Deir el-Medina, which, in its turn deserves a reappraisal. Here are cited the passages of the hymn most relevant to the present topic.
- <sup>63</sup> Cf. also Meurer 2015, 6 (with references), and

- Blumenthal 2011, 13. Luiselli (2011, 373) assumes the text is rather a prayer to the deity for having children; that is debatable, in my view, according to both the content of the hymn as a whole, and that two son of his seven children (four male and three female) are depicted on the lower register of the stele. On this type of texts and the notion of forgiveness, see Vernus 2003 (cf. also above, n. 10).
- <sup>64</sup> For this expression see Vernus 2003, 330–332.
- <sup>65</sup> See above, note 2, especially Ceruti 2013, 22.
- <sup>66</sup> Above all at Deir el-Medina (see above, notes 6 and 62), but also at Thebes/Karnak (Opet Temple), where her cult was established already in the Eighteenth Dynasty (Valbelle and Laroze 2010), even if it is much more documented for the Late and Ptolemaic periods, both at Karnak, and Luxor (Thiers, 161–163).
- <sup>67</sup> Even when reflected in an elaborate, literary phraseology: Vernus 2003, 338–340.
- <sup>68</sup> As the Deir el-Medina documents as a whole attest (above, n. 6 and 62), but also elsewhere. Cf. Sweeney 2015, 884.
- <sup>69</sup> For the issue see the various approaches lastly in Kousoulis 2011, with further references; cf. Graves-Brown 2018.
- <sup>70</sup> Ritner 2011, 4, 14; Kaper 2003.
- <sup>71</sup> Frandsen 2011, 60–61.
- <sup>72</sup> E.g., Goebis 2002, 27–59; Guermeur 2015a.
- <sup>73</sup> Cf. Frandsen 2011, 61–62.
- <sup>74</sup> For a divine taxonomy, see, e.g., Baines 2000, 35–39 (with further references); Manassa 2013.