

Review of Filip Coppens' dissertation:**„The Complex of Wabet and Court in Temples of the Thirtieth Dynasty and the Ptolemaic and Roman Period”**

The Graeco-Roman temples are among the most known and best preserved monuments in Egypt, their scholarly research has, however, started to become widespread only during the last decades. Not without reason. They were often thought to be late copies of pharaonic temples with degenerated inscriptions and decorations of local interest. The situation has changed dramatically by the end of the 20th century, as several works have been published investigating the role of temples in political, economic or social history of Egypt, and the so called „grammar of the temples” became a focal point for the understanding of the religious system of a particular temple. Another research field focused on the analysis of a chosen rite, god or concept within these periods. The book of Filip Coppens, who has long been concerned with the study of Graeco-Roman temples, combines both latter tendencies. It is divided in 6 main chapters.

In his introduction he describes the typical layout of Ptolemaic and Roman temples after a short general overview of them, and summons up the most important facts in the research history concerning the complex of *wabet* and court, the theme of his book. He also formulates his aim by providing an in-depth study of its outlook, function and development on the bases of all available textual and decorative material.

Chapter 1 gives an overview of 13 temples owning this complex. First the temple sites are presented, then the location, orientation and layout of the complex of *wabet* and court. Usually a short history of research of the given complex closes the units. The list contains 9 temples where the complex is ascertained: Dendera, Edfu and Philae are well preserved and full decorated, depicting the rituals in detail. Others, as el-Qala'a and Shanhur, are preserved only partly, but remained in a state which still yields fairly much information on the complex, while the rest, as Deir Shalwit, Kom Ombo, the Hnum temple of Elephantine and Kalabsha were undecorated or are practically preserved so. All stand on Upper Egyptian soil, just as three of the temples with the possibility of having this complex: Athribis, Komir and the Satet temple in Elephantine. The only temple with the presumed presence of the complex of *wabet* and court in Lower Egypt is Behbet el-Hagar. Here the suggestion is based on similarities in the layout with Edfu and Dendera, a possible hint at *wabet* in an inscription and sunken reliefs found at the supposed area of the court.

Chapter 2 deals with the time limit and location of this architectural component. The results are illustrated by tables. Thus the complex appeared first during the 30th Dynasty, was popular in Ptolemaic time and still built in the 1st c. AD. The complex is shown to be built to the left or right side of the sanctuary depending on which bank / island of the Nile the temple was situated; it followed usually the orientation of the whole temple, and it moved over time from the vicinity of the hypostyle hall toward the sanctuary.

Chapter 3 provides the various ancient Egyptian names for the complex, starting with *wabet* known from Edfu and Dendera and designating this complex all along the book. In a subchapter the original meanings of the expression as „*pure place*”, „*mortuary workshop*”, „*place of embalming*” or „*tomb*”, are explained with the development of the word into the Late Egyptian language. The most popular ancient Egyptian name for the elevated chapel seems to be the *s.t hb tpy* and it points at an eminent period of the activities performed in it, that is the transitional period of the year which was thought to be instable and life threatening, needing the most protection possible. The large variety of other names as *'b3 df3w* or food

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altar, *w3dy.t* or columned hall, *sbh.t* or screen-walled portico, *3h.t* or horizon, *bw rnp* or place of rejuvenation, *h3y.t* or (dark internal) chamber (for the god), *hw.t* or (protective) chapel, describe again activities or rites performed in it, or the nature of them, the period of the performance or its architectural appearance.

Chapter 4 is a lengthy section covering the individual, decorated *wabet* and open court complexes. It gives a detailed description and analyses of both scenes and inscriptions in their actual arrangement, searching for the origins and the development of the program with an exemplary accuracy.

The first complex to study is Philae, the *wabet* and court of which has never been analysed before although it is the oldest preserved example. The first obstacle of its study is the inadequate and inaccurate publication of the ensemble. Thus – beside the various published and unpublished documentation – Filip Coppens needed to study the decoration several times at the spot which is a difficult task especially in case of the inscriptions situated in the top registers. The fruit of his work is the excellent re-publication of the texts with the numerous emendations and additions, followed by a transcription and a translation which completed the general description of the scenes. Each relief unit, called for sake of convenience document, is closed by a first analyses of the new edition. Several interesting details are discussed, and the ceremony performed in both open court, called here *wsh.t s.t hb tpy*, and elevated chapel named *hw.t mnh.t* in this complex. The survey cleared that the complex was the place of the ceremony of *hnm itn* when the god, manifested in his statue, got unified with his *ba*. Technically said, the purified, protected and revitalised cult statue stood probably on a sort of platform in front of the west wall of the court, when the sun rose, facing the great offering scene of libation and censuring. The main elements of the probable ceremonies could also be reconstructed, as well as its purpose being legitimation, rejuvenation and protection. One of the most interesting results is the demonstration how innovatively the Daily Temple Ritual, the Book of the Dead, the Opening of the Mouth rites and other old sacred texts were merged into the newly developed rites. The scenes revealed that the 'rightful-heir-of-the-thron' aspect of Ptoleamios II identified with the young Horus was stressed. It is also worth to mention the observation that some details in the illustration of the texts are unique in their word-to-word way of representation. Another important observation is that the crypt holding the „dead“ statues in most part of the year, is also an essential part of the complex.

The complex of Edfu is described less accurately as it is well published in other books. At this place, Filip Coppens stresses the crucial stage of the complex during the procession of the New Year, the time of the inundation revitalising the land of the Nile, thus the most ideal moment of the regeneration both of the dominium of the pharao and the land of Egypt. As the final destination of the procession was the kiosk on the roof of the temple, the rites performed in the complex could only be preparatory stages. The ceremonies focused here to the toilet of the gods' statues as purification, clothing with linen and anointment – essential elements of funeral rites. Based on these activities Filip Coppens raise a possible inspiration of the denomination of the elevated and closed chapel as *wabet* indeed in a mortuary character.

The Dendara complex provides the only example of a completely preserved decorative program of the whole complex. It is extensively studied by various scholars which made again a new edition superfluous. Even so a thoroughful study of the complex is given in the book concluding that the main ritual activities in it dated to the period surrounding the arrival of the New Year. Scenes in the court included great many offerings, different solar scenes and the appeasement of Sekhmet and Hathor in their raging aspect, while the *wabet* focused on the preparation of the statues of the gods for the New Year's rituals, on the roof with the *hnm itn* ritual as a climax. Besides, further „union with the sun disc“ rituals might occur on other

occasions, eventually performed in the court of the complex itself. As a local speciality, also festivities surrounding the investiture of Hathor and Isis played a role here.

In Shanhur only the covered chamber received a decoration program where even the ceiling was covered by an astronomical relief. The limited number of scenes on walls and the inscriptions, including two hymns, must have been considered to be the very essence of the ceremonies related to this complex. Thus the rejuvenation of the statues of the gods, the various offerings starting with the *ʒb.t ʒ.t* and the *hnm itn* ritual must have played the central role in the complex. The name *ʒh.t* or horizon also stresses its being a place of transition.

The el-Qala'a complex was also a destination of processions throughout the year but again concentrated around the New Year's celebrations. The selection of scenes in both court and *wabet* is the same as found in the other complexes, but strongly inspired by the local theology. It manifests not only by the choice of the gods represented but also by emphasising the myth of the distant goddess and her appeasement or the offering for the four ka's or some objects offert. For the full interpretation the still unpublished decoration of the crypt is yet missing.

In Chapter 5 the ten hieroglyphic texts describing the activities in the complex in Edfu, Dendara and el-Qala'a ranging from Ptolemaios IV to Claudius, is analysed. Compared to and completed with the scenes Filip Coppens reconstructs the primary events performed in the open court as the great offering of provision, the daily rejuvenation of the sun through his journey in the bark and by the destruction of his enemies, and the appeasement of the distant goddess, while in the *wabet* as the entrance of the procession, opening the shrines, revealing the face of the god, purification rites and clothing rituals for the statues of the gods. The exact sequence of them was undoubtedly different in each particular site, and can be reconstructed only in a hypothetical manner. The author also established an extensive knowledge of many older ritual practices in the temples which were formed by the editor priests into a thoroughly reasoned program represented on the walls of the complex with a well-known visual language. His study also displayed very clear the great degree of merging the temple, funeral and royal rituals for expressing the essence on a new way, that is the new life born out of death. He also deduced that the new temple terminus technicus *wabet* incorporates all aspects of the older designation of this word as it was the place where the lifeless statue of the gods past from death to a new life.

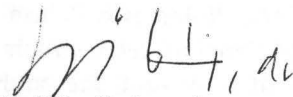
Chapter 6 concerned with the probable architectural precursors of the complex. First the oldest and most likely one, the sun-shade is described and studied with the conclusion that it has not only architectural similarities but also its aim resembles, being renewal, or a passage from death-like state to new life and the confirmation of kingship that is associated with a successful renewal. A later step may be identified in the Taharqa building of the Karnak temple of Amun, the association of which, however, is based almost solely on the reliefs from the subterranean rooms which show a strong syncretisation of solar and osirian elements. Associated by the architectural structure but lack of most of the decoration are chapels in Nubian temples, probably consecrated to Ra-Harachte. Here a strict adherence to an East-West orientation finds its counterpart in the earliest *wabet* and court complex in the temple of Philae. The last on the list of the possible architectural precursors is the whole E complex on the roof of the Hibis temple – instead of only the unit E1 - based on the analysis of the relief decoration which aimed in its entirety the reanimation of the statues of the deities. The conclusion is thus, that – although it is not possible to determine an exact origin and way of development for the idea and realisation of the complex during the Third Intermediate and Late Period – several basic elements can be found.

At the end Filip Coppens reaches the conclusion that the complex is not only an architectural unit but also a significant inner cult center mainly for New Year's rituals, and is

an essential component of late Egyptian temples. It has important common features but is different at each site being varied by numerous intrusions of local theology.

Through the book many additional knowledge has been gained concerning a so far mostly disregarded complex. The study contains many lucid observations, and elaborate commentary on the texts and representations, and is a most useful work of reference with full bibliography for each complex. It is a great advantage that all the related known material are grouped together and discussed carefully and thoroughly, considered in all relevant aspects thus enabling the student to get well established comparisons and a better understanding as a result. The study is instructive not only from religious but also from philological or iconographical points of views and is characterized by the accuracy and meticulous attention to details. The figures illustrating the volume are on a small scale but they are intended for reference or reminder. The synthesis will hopefully stimulate further researches in the development of Greco-Roman temples in Egypt.

All in all I am convinced that the dissertation of Filip Coppens fully deserves to be accepted as a well done PhD dissertation.



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