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Property and the God's Wives of Amun

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This brief study will concentrate on two well known texts concerning the priestesses called “god’s wife of Amun”: the so-called “Donation Stela” dating to the reign of King Ahmose, founder of the New Kingdom, ca. 1550-1525 B.C.; and the “Adoption Stela of Nitocris”, dated in year 9 of King Psamtik I, (ca. 664-610 B.C.). Both of these inscriptions were monumentalized on stelae that were erected in the great temple of Karnak, the seat of the worship of Amun in Egypt.

The Donation Stela emerged from the reused material within the Third Pylon in three successive fragments over more than twenty years.¹ The Nitocris Stela has preserved a lengthy yet incomplete inscription, and it lacks the upper lunette in which a visual representation would have been placed. It was found in 1897 by Georges Legrain who cleared the front first court of the Karnak temple.²

Both inscriptions included a formal date which indicated an official record was being reported. It should be noted, however, that the bureaucratic mind set of ancient Egypt was so pervasive that it is unclear whether all dates on stelae referred to actual events or actions or whether some were given to underscore that an official record was to be understood. Both concern royal women who held the god’s wife position, Ahmose-Nofretari, a king’s daughter, king’s sister, and king’s wife, and Nitocris, a king’s daughter. To begin, a description of the office of god’s wife, later often called god’s adoratrice as well as god’s hand, is in order.

The position of the god’s wife of Amun cannot be attested earlier than the beginning of the 18th Dynasty. The first officeholder was either Ahmose-Nofretari or her mother or step-mother, Ahhotep, mother of King Ahmose.³ (It should be underlined that from the late 17th Dynasty through the reign of Tutankhamun it was the standard practice of the ruling dynasty for the king to marry a half-sister so that it was normal for king and queen to share a father but not a mother.⁴ In the case of Ahmose and Ahmose-Nofretari, however, there may have been full brother-sister marriage. We are not absolutely certain that Ahhotep gave birth to both king and queen, but it seems likely. If Ahhotep was god’s wife, she would have held the position into the reign of Ahmose, ceding it to Ahmose-Nofretari at an unspecified time – indeed this is one of the cruxes of the Donation Stela text – whether it records her installation or another event.⁵

¹ The inscription was published with each fragment find, and only with the entirety is a reasonable interpretation possible: Kees 1948: 107-20; Sander-Hansen 1948; Drioton 1953; Harari 1959: 139-201.

² Legrain 1897: 12-19; Caminos 1964: 71-102.

³ Eaton-Krauss 1990: 195-205; Eaton-Krauss 2003: 75-89.

⁴ Bryan, 2000: 226-30.

⁵ A number of interpretations of the details of the Donation Stela exist. Three of the most important include Graefe 1981: 101-4; Gitton 1976: 65-89; Menu 1971: 155-63.

The god's wife played important cultic roles which are illustrated on the Karnak quartzite Red Chapel of queen Hatshepsut, ca. 1479-1459 B.C.⁶ Limestone blocks from the reign of Amenhotep I also show the god's wife – which would have been Ahmose-Nofretari – participating in the cult liturgies and being purified in the sacred lake of Karnak. Among the duties we can identify for the god's wife are the following:⁷

1. Participation in the procession of priests for the daily liturgies of Amun. She was shown accompanying the priests called “god's fathers”, a general designation that could include the top four priests of the temple, known by numbered position, i.e., “first priest”, etc.
2. Bathing in the sacred lake with the pure priests before carrying out rituals.
3. Entering the most exclusive parts of the temple together with the high priest. This included the holy of holies.
4. With the high priest, “calling the god to his meal”, reciting a menu of food offering being presented to Amun.
5. With the high priest, burning wax effigies of the enemies of the god to maintain the divine order.
6. Shaking the sistrum before the god to propitiate him.
7. Theoretically, as the “god's hand”, assisting the deity in his self-creative masturbation. In this way and in her sistrum activity (a sexual allusion) she performed as the god's wife.

From at least the tenure of Ahmose-Nofretari onward there existed an economic entity associated with the office of god's wife, and this was the *pr hmt n tr* (“*per hemet-netjer*”), literally “the house/estate of the god's wife”, referred to in account documents, even in the 18th Dynasty, as *pr dw3t* (“*per duat*”), “the house of the adoratrice”.⁸ The estate (*pr dw3t*) and the office holders (*h mt n tr/dw3t n tr*) were not identical, and they could hold property separately. For example, a jar seal of the New Kingdom found in the workmen's village of Deir el Medina was labeled: “[product name missing] of the god's wife of the house of the adoratrice.”⁹ This prepares us for the fact that god's wives held their own estates supported by their personal property and also planned for future funerary cults out of these independent holdings. However, the large administration associated with the god's wife, was, in the 18th Dynasty, headed by the “steward of the god's wife”, and this continued to be the case later, although the office was then more commonly referred to as that of the “divine adoratrice”. Other important officials included the “scribe of counting grain for the god's wife”, and “overseer of cattle for the god's wife”. The institution of the *pr dw3t*, “house of the adoratrice”, attested by a papyrus of the early reign of Amenhotep II, had land holdings, as well as a palace, in various parts of the country, including Middle Egypt.¹⁰ What is not understood and brings us to the Donation Stela itself is when the property belonging to the institution of the god's wife/adoratrice was endowed, by whom, and in what amount. This will be one point of attention in the text, but perhaps equally of interest is the role of the god's wife herself versus that of her husband/brother Ahmose.

⁶ Lacau and Chevrier 1977.

⁷ Gitton 1975: 80. Like the king, the god's wife may have been represented in actual daily liturgies by a substitute, although this would in no way negate the connection of the duties to the office.

⁸ Graefe 1981: 96.

⁹ *Ibid.*, and note 79, citing the Deir el Medina jar sealing originally published by Bruyère.

¹⁰ Golénischeff 1913.

The stela¹¹ shows, on the left, Ahmose and Ahmose-Nofertari, with the “eldest king’s son” Ahmose-ankh between them. They face the god Amun-Re, lord of the thrones of the two lands, lord of the sky. The text above Ahmose-Nofretari reads as follows: “king’s daughter, king’s sister, god’s wife, great royal wife, one for whom everything which she says is done for her, the chieftaness of Upper and Lower Egypt, Ahmose-Nofretari, may she live!”

[Year x] month three of Inundation, day 7 under the majesty of the king and upper lower Egypt Nebpehtyre, the son of Re Ahmose, living forever and ever. Done in the presence of [the council?] of the lands of the city [Thebes] and the servants of the temple of Amun. What was said in the majesty of the palace, (life!, prosperity!, health!), in... [saying]: ...[I have given]¹² the office of the second priest of Amun to the god’s wife, great royal wife, she united to the beauty of the white crown, Ahmose-Nofretari, may she live! [It] was done for her in an *imyt-per*, from son to son, heir to heir [without allowing a challenge] against it by anyone forever and ever, because the office....¹³ [3/4 line missing] I have seen... [2/3 line missing] before me. The list thereof:

gold: 160 pieces (*shenau*, possibly a writing of *seniu*)¹⁴

silver: 250

copper: 67 of an object made of copper,¹⁵ each one of 6 *shenau*. I have given it to her for 4 (pieces), totaling 200.

Clothing (*d3iw*), 200 with the value of 400 *shenau*. I have given them for 200.

Wigs, 80, with the value of 210 *shenau*, reckoning of it as 150.

Ointment, 13 pots for 78; reckoning of it as 50.

Grand total in *shenau*: 1,010.

I have given to her male and female servants, and four hundred *oipe* of barley [equal to 100 sacks “*khar*”] and six arouras of inundated land as an excess over the 1010 *shenau*. Her office will be at the value of 600 *shenau*. The office is completed for her, it being endowed.

She said: ‘Indeed I am satisfied with the price. Let it be done according to it, without allowing that it be challenged by anyone forever and ever.’ She gave an oath concerning it: ‘as my lord lives for me’.¹⁶

She came at the front of the council of the city [of Thebes] together with the servants of the temple of Amun in order to record in writing the office which was placed under the control of the god’s wife, great royal wife Ahmose-Nofretari, may she live!, clothed in a shawl (*d3iw*) deriving from the exchange price, consisting of one of the 200 shawls which my majesty gave. For she is a *nemhet*,¹⁷ without anything.

Indeed my majesty has caused that one build a house for her separate from any petition which she

¹¹ Drawing from Gitton 1976, with text copy. Publications listed in Porter and Moss 1972: 73. In addition to those cited above, Harari 1959: 139-201.

¹² An important gap to fill, and by this reconstruction, the position taken in the paper below is clear. Gitton 1976: 71 translates, citing the Juridical Stela’s stipulations, “[Appartenait] la fonction de deuxième Prophète d’Amon à l’Epoque du Dieu et grande Epouse du Roi,...”. Harari 1959: 141 reads “Que soit constituée la fonction de deuxième prophète d’Amon à l’epouse du dieu, la grande épouse royale...”.

¹³ This is a standard phrase set into the property transfers to eliminate challenges from family members or others. See Gitton 1976: 73, note (g); also see the testament of the royal barber Si-Bastet, from the reign of Thutmose III: de Linage 1939: 217-34, pls. XXIV-XXV.

¹⁴ Gitton 1976: 74, note (j). Compare Janssen 1975: 102-4.

¹⁵ Gitton 1975, note (k) restores as “diadems” (*mhw*); Graefe follows Helck here in reading “ax” (*3qhw*), a more common word using copper as its principal material. However, neither can be supported with any certainty.

¹⁶ A standard oath formula uses the conditional statement, “as xxx deity lives for me, I will do....”. The oath is here simply referred to by this protasis: Wilson 1948: 129-56.

¹⁷ The various meanings of *nmH* include “orphan”, “free person”, and “poor person”. Gitton argued for a meaning of “poor”: 1976, 78 n. (ah). Harari 1959: 147 translates it as “orphan” with no further discussion. An explanation of the meaning “free person” is contained in Eyre 1987: 209. For the view taken here, see the discussion below.

says, consisting of what a brother gives to her in order to make revenue for her, it being removed from challenge.

Then she praised god on behalf of his majesty in the presence of the courtiers, saying: ‘he clothes me, while I have nothing; he causes that I am rich, while I am orphaned (*nmH.kwj*). Sealed in the presence of the king himself. [One gave] the *imyt per* in the presence of the portable bark of Amun at his festival of Choiak [in the] southern festival hall in the presence of the king himself, in the presence of the god’s wife and great royal wife Ahmose Nofretari, may she live!, in front of [two words missing] all together, and the courtiers who are in the following of his majesty [remainder of column empty; continues horizontally below], and the entire council of magistrates (*djadjat*). Then the majesty of this god said: [this appears to be an oracle coming from the portable bark of Amun] ‘I am her protector. A challenge to her shall not occur forever by any king who shall arise in the following of future generations. But only the god’s wife Nefertary. It belongs to her from son to son forever and ever in accordance with her office of god’s wife. There is not one who shall say, ‘except for me’. There is not another who can speak.’

The setting of the text is in the palace of Ahmose in Luxor (probably within the precinct of Karnak) where a group of landed courtiers and priests are in attendance. Before this group the king announced that he was [giving] the office of the second priesthood of Amun to the god’s wife, great royal wife, one who unites the beauty of the white crown, Ahmose-Nofretari. This section refers to an audience held, most probably on the date given at the beginning of the stela, in the month of Choiak, the festival of which is referred to in the inscription. Audiences of the king frequently announce official acts, as here, and the presence of the court provides witness for the decree. Following the announcement of the gift to the god’s wife, it is stated that the transfer of this office was made through an *imyt per*. This legal instrument, literally meaning, “that which is in the house” is known as early as the Third Dynasty.¹⁸ It was the standard means of transferring property outside normal lines of inheritance. It was not, strictly speaking a will, since it could be used to confer title during the lifetime of the donor, but it could also be set up to activate upon the death of the testator. In the case of the Donation Stela, the *imyt per* was a necessity, because the office of second priest of Amun would have gone to the son of the last officeholder without this written, sealed, and recorded transfer document.¹⁹ The *imyt per* property transfer was said to provide the office to the god’s wife’s heirs in perpetuity, with complete freedom from legal contests by anyone whatsoever.

Following a break that totals more than one and a half columns, the king provides a list of materials that he has given with his valuation of them for the purpose of this transaction. This consists of gold, silver, copper objects, clothing, wigs, and ointment, and he adjusts the value downward so that he is claiming to have provided 1010 *shenau* for the office, some 8,410 *deben* of copper. This downward adjustment of the value of the materials he lists is meant to support the fiction that Ahmose-Nofretari is paying for the office, although, as Menu has shown, the king actually both purchases and disposes of the priesthood.²⁰ He also gave male and female servants, as well as grain and fields to support them, as an additional amount over the price he set. Ahmose then stated that the office itself had the value of 600 *shenau*, perhaps meaning that this was the revenue the god’s wife would receive from the position, the office having been endowed for her.

At this point Ahmose Nofretari announced her satisfaction with the transaction and made an oath in favor of it, after which she entered before the king, leading the courtiers and priests of Amun

¹⁸ Johnson 1996: 175-186, especially 177-78.

¹⁹ Gitton 1976: 86 and n. 1 mentions an Ahmose known from a funerary cone who may have held the second priesthood up to this time. Garis Davies 1957: cone no. 300.

²⁰ Menu 1971: 155-63.

in order to record in writing the office which was placed under the control of the god's wife, great royal wife Ahmose-Nofretari, may she live." Here is a puzzling addition in the text: she appears clothed in one of the 200 shawls given to fund the office of second priest by the ruler, and the text states that this is because she is impoverished, having nothing. Indeed the word used in the inscription, *nmHt*, also means "orphan", and we may need to consider that the role of god's wife of Amun was indeed one that was without funding until this time. The king's text continues: "I indeed caused that an estate was built for her, ... in order to create revenue for her." The queen reiterated before the court that Ahmose had clothed her and made her rich, while she was poor and orphaned. Here perhaps is the insistence that the offices of second priest and, indeed, god's wife, had no value until this gift of the second priesthood of Amun and its funding. The insistence on Ahmose Nofretari's sole ability to transfer the rights of these offices would also suggest that only within the context of this *imyt per* has the god's wife position become one of substance.

To underline the seriousness of this transfer, the *imyt per* was sealed before the king and it was placed or recorded in the presence of the portable bark of Amun, the visible image of the god which moved in procession through the temples of Karnak. It was the source of oracles, which it appears to provide here as a final guarantee from Amun himself that no one could contest this contract. The intentional binding of the second priesthood to Ahmose-Nofretari's god's wife role is clearly stated by Amun: "Only Nofretari – it belongs to her from son to son forever and ever, in accordance with her office of god's wife." That the second priesthood remained in the god's wife possession is probable,²¹ since there is no known officeholder until after the death of Ahmose-Nofretari in the reign of Thutmose I. At that point Hatshepsut became god's wife, and may have improved the circumstances of one Puyemre, granting him the second priesthood. Not coincidentally, Puyemre was married to the daughter of the high priest of Amun Hapuseneb, Seniseneb, who was the Divine Adoratrice at the time – i.e., the substitute for the god's wife in the Karnak rituals.²² Thus the likelihood is that the Donation Stela was not entirely ignored, and certainly not contested, by Hatshepsut, but rather that she awarded the office and its benefits within her own circle.

The ultimate aim of this text is the funding and endowment of the office of god's wife of Amun, rather than, as Menu and Graefe argue, the transfer of the office of second priesthood of Amun. In this conclusion I agree generally with Gitton. The king was able to purchase the second most important priesthood and further endow its title holder in concert with the position of god's wife. This not only assured the god's wife direct involvement in the Amun priesthood, but it also guaranteed a similar connection for the king who sponsored the god's wife. Since Ahmose-Nofretari was herself a princess and queen, she was heir with her husband to her father Seqenenre's holdings and she held marital property jointly with Ahmose – along with whatever dowry, if any, had been designated for her to bring into the union.²³ She was hardly "impoverished", and indeed her private funerary foundation was substantial and necessitated the employ of a wide group of officials, including priests (at least three ranks known), stewards, overseers of her granary, overseer of cattle, scribe of counting cattle, etc.²⁴ So the impoverishment only regards Ahmose-Nofretari's role as

²¹ Despite the view of Gitton 1976: 85-86.

²² Seniseneb's canopic jars are in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. She also appears in the Gebel el Silsila cenotaph of her father Hapuseneb where she bears, as on the false door from Puyemre's tomb in Thebes, the title "divine adoratrice." See Berman 2002: Catalogue nr. 55.

²³ Pestman 1961: 87-114; Johnson 1996.

²⁴ Graefe 1981: 97-99.

god's wife. The fiction of poverty provides strong motive for Ahmose to endow the priestly office he bought for the god's wife, and the use of the *imyt-per* property transfer gives legal force to Ahmose-Nofretari's control of the office and its wealth. The construction of a "*per*", or estate for the god's wife can only be understood as the founding of the *pr dw3t* described above, since clearly the queen had no personal need of an estate "to create revenue for her" as the text states.

Finally we must consider the possibility that the god's wife Ahmose-Nofretari was indeed "an orphan" as title holder (after the death of Ahhotep, if she held the title earlier). Despite the various settings in which *nmH* could mean "free person", in the Donation Stela it is the poverty of Ahmose-Nofretari that is linked to the state of being a *nmH*. This would better suit a meaning for this last word in its association with orphans. Technically Ahmose-Nofretari had some claim to that designation, since her father Seqenenre was indeed deceased, and the absence of or abandonment by the male parent could constitute orphanhood. However, the queen was an adult and as much an heir of Ahhotep and Seqenenre as was her husband Ahmose. As such she would not have in any sense been an orphan. In the New Kingdom, the childless might adopt an orphan who could provide for his or her adoptive parents in their old age and after death,²⁵ and it is certain that in later times the adoption mechanism was the means of transferring the office of god's wife. What may be contained within the Donation Stela, at the (probable) creation of the office, is its non-hereditary succession, in contrast to other priestly offices. The status of Ahmose-Nofretari as a *nemhet* was thus connected to her office of god's wife of Amun. As god's wife she had been given to Amun for service and was thus orphaned with regard to her family. In her state as a *nemhet*, Ahmose-Nofretari was entirely dependent on the king for any and all sustenance.²⁶

In the Third Intermediate Period, at least by the Twenty-third dynasty, god's wives were forced to adopt the daughter or sister of the ruling king and make them their heir in the office (we will speak to this particular feature of the office below). If the oracle of Amun at the end of the Donation Stela text was meant to guarantee both the second priesthood of Amun and the god's wife office, as it would appear from the addition of the phrase, "in accordance with her office of god's wife", then Ahmose-Nofretari was able to appoint her successor and cede the holdings of the office. The wealth of the *pr dw3t/ pr hmt ntr* was great already in the mid-18th Dynasty, and it is thus likely that the creation of such an estate was intentional in the Donation Stela. The office moved from a princess (and queen) to a princess (and queen), Hatshepsut, and from there to another princess, Nefrure, Hatshepsut's daughter. Most probably, in response to Hatshepsut's usurpation of the kingship – probably accomplished, in part, by her power as god's wife – kings, beginning with Thutmose III interfered with the descent of the office after Nefrure. Thutmose III's last wife, Merit-Re, mother of Amenhotep II, received the title and held office through the reign of her son. She was the offspring of a woman named Huy, who herself became a divine adoratrice (of Re), though perhaps only after the marriage of her daughter to the king. Tiaa, mother of Thutmose IV, received the position upon the death of Merit-Re,²⁷ and technically this could be seen as moving the office to a daughter (the wife of the queen and god's wife's son). Nonetheless, the likelihood that the stipulations of the Donation Stela were transgressed by Thutmose III after the demise of Hatshepsut, is high, since Nefrure was almost certainly not involved in choosing her successor. It may not be coincidental that in the reign of Amenhotep III (ca. 1390-1352 B.C.), the son of Thutmose IV, the

²⁵ Feucht: 1142-43. See particularly literature cited in nn. 10, 18-23. Eyre 1992: 215, and n. 49.

²⁶ Eyre 1987: 209.

²⁷ BM 1280 of Huy. See Graefe 1981: 103; Robins 1993: 149-56, for an overview of the god's wives.

Third Pylon was built and the Donation Stela was placed as fill within it – broken in three sections. The perpetual right of the god’s wives, independent “of any kings who should arise in future generations” to control the wealth of the second priesthood and the god’s wife office was apparently no longer upheld officially. The possibility exists, however, that the adoption method of passing the office, clearly at work in the Third Intermediate Period, may have been in operation in the 18th Dynasty as well. Behind the transfer of the status, both by the royal females independently and by the intervention of kings, may very well have been the declaration of the novitiate as an orphan and a consequent adoption.

The god’s wives of Amun had less visibility through the remainder of the New Kingdom, being in fact unidentified between the reigns of Thutmose IV and Ramesses II. Towards the end of the Twentieth Dynasty, however, a princess Isis, daughter of Ramesses VI, left monuments suggesting a return of the office to king’s daughters. In the Twenty-first and Twenty-second Dynasties, the High priests of Amun effectively ruled Thebes as a theocratic state, and not surprisingly, their daughters are found as god’s wives.²⁸ But with the end of the Twenty-third Dynasty a new and clearly defined pattern for the succession of the office is in evidence. Beginning with the Kushite (Nubian) conquest of Egypt by Kashta, daughters of the Kushite kings were installed in Thebes as god’s wives of Amun, and they were adopted by the incumbent priestess, becoming full heir to the personal wealth, as well as the office, of the last. The first instance of this occurred with the adoption by Shepenwepet I, daughter of the Libyan king Osorkon III, of Amenirdis I, daughter of Kashta. Exactly when this took place is uncertain, since Shepenwepet I may have held office during a lengthy period (her father’s reign was completed by ca. 750 B.C.). Amenirdis I can only certainly be identified as god’s wife from her own monuments in the reign of her brother Shabaka, first ruler of the 25th, or Kushite, Dynasty, ca. 716-701 B.C., and she was still in office in the following reign of Shabataka, ca. 701-689. However, the Nitocris Stela notes that she was present at the installation of Shepenwepet I during the reign of her elder brother Piankhy/Piye. The small temple of Osiris Hekadjet in the northeast corner of the Karnak precinct was built in the Twenty-third Dynasty and then expanded in the Twenty-fifth. In the front court both Shepenwepet I and Amenirdis I appear as god’s wives, with Amenirdis the more active and indeed the only real dedicant for the building.²⁹ Amenirdis I’s successor was Shepenwepet II, daughter of Piankhy/Piye, and it is to this adopted daughter that Amenirdis I owed most of her monumental representations. Included as the god’s wife “true of voice”, indicating most likely decease, Amenirdis was shown in several small chapels built by Shepenwepet II, as well as in the funerary chapels built for the two god’s wives in the precinct of Medinet Habu.³⁰ Leclant has pointed out that, although Amenirdis I appeared as major dedicant together with Shabaka and Shabataka in two chapels, Shepenwepet II appeared without any ruler in two of her constructions. After the reign of Taharqa, (689-663) the Twenty-fifth Dynasty kingship was drastically weakened, and Tanuatamun (663-656) left only one edifice in the Karnak area – and that one in a somewhat unimportant part of the precincts. Shepenwepet II did not appear at all in this edifice, but was rather building her own monuments. The god’s wife would have been the most powerful and visible Kushite presence in Thebes during the

²⁸ Saphinaz-Amal Naguib 1990: 86-93. For example, Karomama most probably was a daughter of the High priest of Amon Sheshonk and sister of Harsiese I, High priest of Amon and King.

²⁹ For the temple of Osiris Hekadjet, in process of publication, see at present Leclant: 1965: 47-54, 357-58.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 358-61. The chapel of Osiris Wennefer in the midst of the Persea tree and the chapel of the Divine Adoratrices at North Karnak. Shepenwepet’s provision of the funerary chapel for Amenirdis I and for herself, *ibid.*, 361. Shepenwepet II also built the chapels of Osiris Nebankh (with Taharqa); Osiris Padedankh also with Taharqa.

struggle for control from the end of Taharqa's reign until year 9 of Psamtik I (ca 655 B.C.). With the final demise of Tanuatamun, Psamtik was able to claim Thebes as his own in 656, and in the ensuing months he sent his daughter Nitocris to the southern city (from Sais, perhaps, his residence city) to be adopted by Shepenwepet II. The text of the stela commemorating this as follows:³¹

[beginning lost but the bulk is preserved]... in order to shake the sistrum [before] him in [Karnak?] [1/3 line missing]... who [se]es his beauty, he [kn]ows him as one weighty of reputation. I acted for him according to what is done for a father. For I am his eldest son, the successful one of the father of the gods, who performs the cult acts of the gods. He made him (i.e., me) for himself in order to pacify his heart. I have given to him my daughter to be god's wife, I having endowed (*sxwd*) her more than those who were before her. Surely he will be pleased with her worship, and he will protect the land because of the gift of her to him.

Now indeed I heard that a king's daughter is there, the Horus high of crowns, the good god [Taharqa] (cartouche erased), true of voice, whom he gave to his sister to be her eldest daughter and who is there as Divine Adoratrice (*dw3t-n tr*). I will not do, namely, what is not to be done, removing an heir from his throne, since I am a king who loves just order (*maat*). My sacred abomination is mendacity; a son, the protector of his father, who has taken possession of the inheritance of Geb, having united the two shares (i.e., Upper and Lower Egypt) as a youth. Now then I will give her to her as an eldest daughter like she was made for the sister of her father (can be understood as 'she is born to' [i.e., Taharqa's daughter Amenirdis became Shepenwepet II's daughter]).

Then they [the courtiers of the king] bowed to the ground and thanked god for the king of upper and lower Egypt Wahibre, living forever. They said: Firmly and enduringly to the ends of eternity, May your every command be firm and enduring. How beautiful is this which god has done for you! How effective is what your father has done for you. He placed it in the heart of one whom he loved, that he might cause to endure the one who engendered him on earth, since he desires that your Ka is remembered and he rejoices because your name is pronounced: Great of heart, the king of upper and lower Egypt Psamtik, living forever. He made as his monument for his father Amun, lord of the sky, ruler of the ennead, giving to him his eldest daughter, his beloved, Nitocris, whose nickname is Shepenwepet, to be god's wife, to shake the sistrum before his beautiful face.

Year 9, month one of Inundation, day twenty-eight: going forth from the royal apartments by his eldest daughter clothed in fine linen and ornamented with new turquoise. Her retinue was with her, great in number, while police cleared her paths. Taking the beautiful path to the quay in order to head southwards to Thebes. Ships were with her in great numbers, the crews being of mighty troops, being loaded end to end with utensils (reading *x`w*) with every good thing of the royal house. The commander thereof was the sole companion and mayor of Nar-khent [the XXth nome of Upper Egypt, near modern Beni Suef], great general, great one of the harbor, Sematawytefnakht, messengers having gone south to Upper Egypt complete provisions before her. The sail of the mast was lifted, pricking against his nostrils as the wind rose.³² Her supplies were obtained from each nomarch who was in charge of his offerings and was furnished with every good thing, namely bread, beer, oxen, fowl, vegetables, dates, herbs, and every good thing. Indeed, it was one who gave over to his colleague until she arrived at Thebes.

Year 9, month two of Inundation, day 14. Putting to land at the quay of the city of the gods, Thebes. Her prow rope was taken, she finding Thebes with young troops of men and crowds of women, standing and jubilating at meeting her, surrounded by oxen, fowl, and abundant provisions, numerous in number. They they said: "May the royal daughter Nitocris [not in cartouche] come to the temple of Amun, that he might accept

³¹ Caminos 1964: 71-101; Der Manuelian 1994: 297-321.

³² Caminos 1964: 82-83 comments: "The present passage would seem to suggest that as the fleet gathered way the rising wind let itself be felt on the expedition leader's face or, literally, 'at his nostrils'". Der Manuelian 1994: 300, 317 n.44, translates, after Goedicke, "The sail of the mast was raised, being crossed at its nostrils when the wind arose". He argues that the description is a metaphorical one referring to a part of the ship. The meaning remains uncertain.

her and be satisfied with her. The king's daughter Shepenwepet shall come to Karnak, that the gods who are in it might favor her. All the monuments of the king of upper and lower Egypt Psamtik, living forever and ever are firm and enduring.

Amun, lord of the sky, king of the gods, accepted what his son, Horus, great of will, living forever and ever did for him. Amun ruler of the ennead praised what his son, the favorite of the Two ladies, possessor of the region [or power], living forever, did for him; Amun, the great one of the gods, loved what his son, the Horus of gold, the valiant one, living forever and ever did for him. In exchange for this from Amun, the bull of his two heavens and from Montu, lord of the thrones of the two lands, are millions of years of life, stability, health, and all joy from them to their beloved son the king of upper and lower Egypt, lord of the two lands Wahibre, the son of Re Psamtik, living forever and ever, and giving to him together with his Ka. Horus gave to him his throne, and Geb gave to him his inheritance that he might be foremost of all the Kas of the living. Then he was the king of upper and lower Egypt upon the throne of Horus, there being no equal of a ka for him.

Now afterwards she approached the god's wife Shepenwepet [in cartouche]. When she [Shepenwepet] saw her, she was satisfied with her [Nitocris], and she [Shepenwepet] loved her more than any thing. She made for her the *imyt per* property transfer which her father and her mother made for her, together with her eldest daughter Amenirdis [not in cartouche], the royal daughter of [Taharqa erased], true of voice. It was executed for them in writing, saying: "We have given to you all our property in the country and the city. You will be established upon our throne firm and enduring until the ends of eternity. The witnesses for them were all the priests, the pure priests, and the courtiers of the temple.

List of all the property which was given to him as gifts from the cities and nomes of upper and lower Egypt.

What his majesty has given to her in seven nomes of Upper Egypt:

In the district of Ninsu, an estate called Iuna which is in its territory, 300 arouras of field.

In the district of Pi-medje, the place of Putawy which is in its territory, 300 arouras of field.

In the district of Dewenanwy, the place of Kuku which is in its territory, 200 arouras of field.

In the district of Wenu, the places of Nesmin which are in its territory, 500 arouras.

In the district of Aphroditopolis (Xth nome Upper Egypt), Qay which is in its territory, 300 arouras.

In the district of Hut-sekhem, the place of Harsiese which is in its territory, 200 arouras.

All this totaling 1800 arouras of field together with all the property (usufruct) which comes forth therefrom in country and in town, together with their dry lands and their canals.

Bread and beer that one should give to her for the temple of Amun.

What the fourth priest of Amun, the mayor of Thebes, overseer of the entire south Montuemhat, may he be healthy!, should give to her: 200 deben of bread, 5 hin of milk, 1 shat cake, and 1 bundle of herbs daily; monthly due: 30 oxen and 5 geese.

What his eldest son, the instructor of priests in Thebes, Nesptah should give to her: 100 deben of bread, 2 hin of milk, and 1 bundle of herbs daily; monthly due: 15 shat cakes, 10 heben of beer, and the usufruct of a 100-aroura field belonging to the nome of Tjebu.

What the wife of the fourth priest of Amun Montuemhat, Wadjarenes, true of voice [deceased?] should give to her: 100 deben of bread daily [this may be from her funerary endowment].

What the first priest of Amun Horakhbit should give to her: daily, 100 deben of bread and 2 hin of milk; month due: 10 shat cakes, 5 heben of beer and 10 bundles of herbs.

What the third prophet of Amun Padiamunnebesettawy should give to her: daily due: 100 deben of bread and 2 hin of milk; monthly due: 5 heben of beer and 10 shat cakes and 10 bundles of herbs.

Grand total: Daily due: 600 deben of bread, 11 hin of milk, 2 1/6 shat cakes, and 2 2/3 bundles of herbs; monthly due: 3 oxen, 5 geese, 20 heben of beer, and the usufruct of 100 arouras of field.

What his majesty gives to her from the temple of Re-Atum in the Hekaadj nome in the form of divine offerings instituted by his majesty: 3 khar sacks of first class emmer wheat after it has been offered in the [god's] presence, daily, and the god has been satisfied therewith.

What should be given to her from the temples of:

Sais: 200 deben of bread
Pi-Wadjet 200 deben of bread
Pi-Hathor mefket, 100 deben of bread
Pi-inbwy, 50 deben of bread
Pi-nebimu, 50 deben of bread
Pi-manu, 50 deben of bread
Taaten tjar, 50 deben of bread
Tanis, 100 deben of bread
Pi-Hathor, 100 deben of bread
Pi-Bast, nebet Bast, 100 deben of bread
Hut heyib, 200 deben of bread
Mest, 50 deben of bread
Baset, 50 deben of bread
Pi-HershefnbNinsu, 100 deben of bread
Pi-Soped, 100 deben of bread

Grand total: 1500 deben of bread

What has been given to her in four nomes of Lower Egypt:

In the district of Sais, the estates of the southern bedouin which are in its territory, 360 arouras of field

In the district of Baset, TaaenNofrehor, which is in its territory, 500 arouras of field.

In the district of Geb, Tent-tawatnehet, which is in its territory, 240 arouras

In the middle district of Unu (heliopolis), the wall of Hori, son of Djedty, called “The wall of Psherienmut born of Meretwebkhet”, which is in its territory, 300 arouras

Total: 1400 arouras of field in four nomes together with everything that comes forth hence in country and in town, together with their dry lands and their canals [i.e., the usufruct].

Grand total: 2100 deben of bread and 3,300 arouras of field (in) eleven nomes.

Enduring and flourishing! Without perishing or decline forever and ever.

[addendum in small hieroglyphs]: In the district of Tawer (Abydos): Inup together with all its people, all its fields, and all its property in country and in town.

The inscription is written in the voice of Psamtik I, a point important to make and one which immediately places it in parallelism to the Donation Stela. We learn that the king “has given” his daughter to the god Amun to be god’s wife. He also notes that he has “endowed” her. *Sekhued* (*sxwd*) literally means “to make wealthy” and is a causative form of the more commonly attested *xwd*, a word found in both autobiographical and literary texts, which would be closely equivalent to this inscription in type.³³ Further, Psamtik states that he knows that a royal daughter is already installed, a daughter of Taharqa (whose name is erased from the inscription), “whom he gave to his sister to be her eldest daughter and who is there as Divine Adoratrice”. This refers to Amenirdis II, who was to inherit the god’s wife position from Shepenwepet. Now Psamtik here declares that he will not “remove an heir from his seat”, and then says: “Now then I will give her to her as an eldest daughter just as she was made (*ir.t.s*) for the sister of her father. [i.e., Taharqa’s daughter Amenirdis became Shepenwepet II’s daughter.]” The words used are those used in Egyptian filiation, and this is likely not coincidental. The verb “*iri*”, meaning “to make, create, or do” also refers to the male siring of offspring, while the verb “*msi*”, to bear refers to bearing children by women. Thus Nitocris may

³³ See, e.g., *Wb* IV, 239. *Urk.* IV, 60,15; Faulkner 1962: 186-87. Schenkel 1984: 211-12 cites Hatnub autobiographical texts, temple royal inscriptions, and the literary text “Eloquent Peasant”.

be understood to be now claiming a male-type filiation from Amenirdis II, who likewise claims it from Shepenwepet II.

In the following section we have a description of Nitocris' departure from the royal residence (at Sais?) and journey to Thebes to be accepted by Shepenwepet II and Amenirdis. It should be pointed out that, despite the fact that Amenirdis would be the adoptive mother, it is Shepenwepet II who, as the installed god's wife, greets and receives Nitocris. The journey to Thebes was extravagantly described in order to note that all the nomarchs along the Nile valley provisioned the retinue of numerous ships as they traveled south. This point was meant to underscore Psamtik's complete control of Upper Egypt, a recent accomplishment.

In Thebes Nitocris approached the god's wife Shepenwepet II in the temple of Karnak, and here the god's wife suddenly "loved her more than anything." "She made for her the *imyt per* property transfer which her father and her mother made for her, together with her eldest daughter Amenirdis [not in cartouche], the royal daughter of [Taharqa erased], true of voice. It was done for them in writing, saying: 'We have given to you all our property in the country and the city. You will be established upon our throne firm and enduring until the ends of eternity.' The witnesses for them were all the priests, the pure priests, and the courtiers of the temple."

It is perhaps worthy of note that Amenirdis II appears never to have been installed as god's wife. She was known to have been Divine Adoratrice, a position she could have held already as a child, but no document identifies her with certainty as the god's wife and god's hand. Indeed, one statue that may belong to her identifies a husband for Amenirdis, perhaps suggesting she did not remain with Shepenwepet II and Nitocris. The pious representation by Psamtik that he would never expel an heir from his seat may be at least questioned, it would appear, since Shepenwepet II remained as god's wife until an unknown date in Psamtik I's reign (probably no later than year 22) and then handed over to Nitocris directly, if the documentation can be believed. Nitocris honors primarily Shepenwepet II in her monuments and appears with Psamtik I as well. At Medinet Habu, where the god's wives built funerary chapels, just as Shepenwepet II built for Amenirdis I, Nitocris remodeled Shepenwepet's chapel and attached it to her own and one she built for her birth mother Mehitemweskheth.³⁴

With respect to the legal action done for Nitocris by the god's wife Shepenwepet II and her adopted daughter Amenirdis, the text states that "she made over to her the *imyt per* which her father and her mother made for her. This is a standard description of designating the heir in a life time property transfer. This is a requirement when the intended heir is not a natural child or sibling (the norm for testamentary inheritance). In cases where a husband wishes his wife to be his primary heir – a case out of the norm – an *imyt per* was necessary, and there are well known cases of this.³⁵ The situation here would be of the same type and does not, as Caminos believed, indicate that Nitocris became immediate owner of Shepenwepet and Amenirdis' property.³⁶ Excellent examples from the reign of Thutmose III in the 18th dynasty, of the royal barber Si-Bastet (see above), the royal nurse Senimose, and the royal butler Neferperet. All "proclaimed" the contents of their *imyt per* transfers in monumental forms – statues and stelae. The important point for Egyptian law was to establish heredity rights, and this was done by the creation of the property transfer document, its sealed registration with the vizier's office, and by public proclamation of it – just as was the case in the

³⁴ Porter and Moss 1972: 478-80. Leclant 1965: 158-59.

³⁵ Pestman 1961; Johnson 1996: 184 with citations.

³⁶ Caminos 1964: 99.

Donation Stela.³⁷ Upon the death of Shepenwepet II, the property described in the *imyt per* – not identified by listing – should have devolved upon Amenirdis II, but nothing suggests that it did. It is possible that she died before her adopted mother or, as hinted above, left the temple altogether.

As to the contents of the *imyt per* we are specifically ignorant, but we may surmise that its contents would have combined this testament with the list of gifts provided by the king for Nitocris. When the text notes that Shepenwepet II will give the *imyt per* that her father and her mother made for her, she means her father Piankhy's gift when she was brought to Thebes and her adopted mother Amenirdis I's holdings as god's wife. Otherwise, as has been pointed out already several times, a transfer document would not have been necessitated. This testament, like the one being made for Nitocris, contained property that would not ordinarily have come to Shepenwepet II.

Why, then, is the list of gifts provided for Nitocris by her father (primarily), an extensive list of lands in Upper and Lower Egypt, that includes both towns and country fields, not included in a separate *imyt per*? The likelihood is that this property was in fact to be in the control of Shepenwepet II until her death and would have only been the direct wealth of Nitocris at that time. There are few models we can use to see how endowments were structured in Egypt, and those of marriage and adoption both appear to be of use here. The normal scenario for adoption during life of an heir suggested that a poor person could be taken by a childless one with resources in order that there be an heir for the future who could perform the funerary rites and ensure immortality for the deceased.³⁸ The adoptee was not expected to bring wealth into the household. The adoption model thus accounts for at least half of the situation seen with the god's wives, and explains the intense concentration in the monuments of these women on veneration of their adoptive mothers. This was the means of demonstrating publicly their right to inherit and to boast of their having done what an heir should: i.e., perform and even fund the funerary foundations. Shepenwepet II did so for Amenirdis I, and Nitocris enlarged the chapel of Shepenwepet II and made one for herself.

For an understanding of the wealth brought by Nitocris when she came to Thebes, we must look at marital law. Nitocris provided what would be the equivalent of a dowry when she was presented to Shepenwepet II. This was perhaps, in cynical terms, a bribe from Psamtik to assure a smooth transition from the Kushite dynasty of god's wives to the Saite one. Nonetheless it is very much a listing of what marriage contracts call a *s`nꜣ*, “that which makes to live”. *nkwt n s-Hmt*, the property of the woman, are normally portable items in the marriage contracts preserved, but the funds are the property of the wife and the value of them is guaranteed back to her in the case of divorce. However, any monies brought into the marriage by the wife may be manipulated during the life of the couple by the husband as he sees fit – only save he must produce the wife's contribution if they part.³⁹ It is highly likely that Nitocris' “gift” from her father Psamtik I was treated like such a wife's contribution and that it was in fact Shepenwepet II (and her many administrators) who managed the holdings until Nitocris' installation, as much as fifteen years after her arrival in Thebes. The *imyt per* made to Nitocris by Shepenwepet is a pledge against the dissolution of Nitocris' future inheritance.

One final point that is not directly addressed in these two texts but which is always in the

³⁷ Spalinger 1984: 631-65. All cited.

³⁸ Wente 1990: 149 cites Deir el Medina ostrakon O. Berlin 10627 that refers to this practice. “As for him who has no children, he adopts an orphan instead [to] bring him up. It is his responsibility to pour water onto your hands as one's own eldest son”. Likewise, Johnson 1996; Jasnow 2003. See also the Adoption Papyrus and particularly Eyre 1992: 207-21.

³⁹ Pestman 1961: 106-8.

background of any discussion of god's wives is the question of their celibacy. It has been assumed for fifty years now that once these women arrived in Thebes they joined "a college of virgins". Since the cultural notion of "virginity" cannot really be identified in Egypt, this is probably not the correct term to use.⁴⁰ However, the question of celibacy may be debated, but it has never been positively proved by the citation of any text. In recent years work on women in Egypt has demonstrated that women's monuments routinely excluded representations and references to their male family members, particularly their husbands. This phenomenon goes back to the Old Kingdom when women built a large number of tombs for themselves and did not picture their husbands at all. Even within a joint tomb, a false door monument for a woman would not mention the man.⁴¹ Although it is an argument from silence, it is conceivable that the god's wives had husbands that do not appear in the documentation. We simply do not know at present. However, one aspect of the office of god's wife should be considered in this regard. As we learn from the Donation Stela, the god's wife was considered to be other than a female priest coming from the royal house to perform rituals. The office itself was so separate that as god's wife Ahmose Nofretari was "an orphan who had nothing". Only one other clear case exists of an office being treated in this fashion in Egypt – the kingship – to which the god's wife office has often been compared. Shepenwepet II and particularly Nitocris emulated kings in their cult activity, even celebrating the supreme royal festival – the *heb sed*, the renewal of kingship itself. The literary text "An Instruction for King Merikare" refers to the kingship in this way: "A goodly office is kingship, it has no son, no brother to maintain its memorial, but one man provides for the other. A man acts for him who was before him, so that what he has done is preserved by his successor."⁴² Once endowed, by Ahmose at the beginning of the 18th Dynasty, the god's wife was no longer impoverished, but perhaps the office remained one of "orphans" who must adopt and be adopted and must particularly 'act for her who was before her'. The issue of celibacy in this context – i.e., of the office separate from the office holders, as we saw with Ahmose Nofretari already – may become moot.

⁴⁰ Discussion of the text: Westcar Papyrus, where women "as yet unopened" has been translated as "virgin" by J. Johnson, public lecture, Johns Hopkins University, 1999, concluding that, at most, it means not yet having given birth. See also Teeter 1999: 405-14, arguing the affirmative with respect to marriage for these priestesses.

⁴¹ Roth 1999: 37-54.

⁴² Lichtheim 1976: 105.

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