Article

The Egyptian Temple as a Place to House Collections (from the Old Kingdom to the Late Period)

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Abstract

As did Greek and Roman temples, Egyptian temples preserved collections of valuable objects or *nouophores*, i.e. 'bearers of meaning' (I). Two main types of *nouophores* can be distinguished in Egyptian temples (II): statues displayed in the temple (III), and ritual objects of costly materials stored in special chambers (IV). An examination of these collections suggests that the Egyptian temple functioned as an institution to collect and preserve the cultural heritage of ancient Egypt (V).

Keywords

Collections, cultural heritage, *nouophores*, ritual objects, statues, temples

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كما هو الحال بالنسبة للمعابد اليونانية والرومانية، كانت المعابد المصرية القديمة تتضمن مجموعات لمقتنيات ذات قيمة ومعنى، مما يعني أن تلك المجموعات كانت: (أ) ذات مغزى، (ب) أمكن تحديد نوعان لتلك المجموعات، (ج) النوع الأول هو التماثيل التي كان يتم عرضها في المعابد، (د) النوع الثاني هو المواد الثمينة المستخدمة في الطقوس والتي كان يتم تخزينها في حجرات خاصة. (هـ) خلُصت دراسة تلك المجموعات إلى أن المعابد المصرية القديمة كانت تلعب دوراً كمؤسسة تُعنى بالجمع والمحافظة على التراث في مصر القديمة.

And if anything beautiful or great or that also has something distinctive about it has come to pass somewhere, either near you or here or even in another region that we know by hearsay – all such things have been written down from olden times and preserved here in our temples.[1]

I

'Collecting', in the basic sense of gathering valuable objects,[2] belongs to the basic intellectual or emotional activities of human beings; it contributes to acquiring knowledge on the items collected and to understanding their environment. The range of collectible items is wide indeed – from edible products, such as wine, to invisible essences, such as perfumes or incenses; from common-use objects, such as cups or jars, to decorative items, such as jewels; and from artefacts with an historical or a cultural value, such as museum exhibits, to items with certain artistic features, such as postcards. Because every culture is conditioned by its environment, collected items and the

places for their preservation have varied in the course of history.

In the Ancient World, the gathering of artefacts took place mainly in the sacred domain. The best sources for the study of such collections are the temple inventories and the inscriptions of offering donations. In the temple inventories from ancient Greece, collected items are classified by type, material and location in the temple.[3] According to these texts, Greek temples housed numerous cult statues, ritual equipment and treasures dedicated to the gods. Thus, the inventory of Athena's sanctuary at Lindos lists the collection of items preserved in it. Its treasure included valuable items offered by kings from exotic lands, such as Lycian shields,

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[3] J. Shaya, 'Greek Temple Treasures and the Invention of Collecting', in M. Wellington Gahtan and D. Pegazzano (eds), *Museum Archetypes and Collecting in the Ancient World* (Leiden, 2015), 25.

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[1] Answer of an Egyptian priest to Solon, quoted by Plato in *Timaeus* (ed. P. Kalkavage; Indianapolis, 2001), 53 (§ 23 A).
[2] M. Raffler, *Museum. Spiegel der Nation?* (Wien, 2007), 84.

Phoenician inscriptions and a Persian sword.[4] It is remarkable that the famous linen corselet of the Egyptian king Amasis (570–526 BC), mentioned by many ancient authors such as Herodotus, also belonged to Athena's Lindos treasure, together with a collection of 10 Egyptian libation vases and some statues with hieroglyphic inscriptions.[5] The items collected in temples of the Ancient World, like those stored in the Lindos treasury, have been called *semiophores*,[6] or more exactly, *nouophores*,[7] that is, 'bearers of meaning'.

In ancient Rome, too, temples served as sites for the preservation of valuable objects. However, in contrast to Greek temples, many of the objects were not private or royal donations, but rather military offerings owing to Rome's expansionist politics. They were trophies of war offered to the deity of a given temple as thanksgiving for assistance in military victories.[8] Thus, the furniture of Roman temples included not only collections of cult statues and ritual items, but also collections of objects such as thrones and sceptres that had an historical meaning because they had been taken from defeated enemies.[9] Conservation of this kind of objects meant that Roman temples functioned as memorials in which Roman history was celebrated.[10]

II

As Greek authors attest, Egyptian temples were places where collections of valuable objects were housed. For example, Herodotus tells us that a sacred wooden cow, containing the remains of Menkaure's daughter, and a set of ancient statues representing his concubines were preserved in a sanctuary of Sais.[11] Regardless of whether those statues belong in fact to the times of Menkaure or not, Herodotus' story shows the intention and will of Egyptian priests to preserve the history of the country in the country's temples through the collection of statues. However, little attention has hitherto been paid to this important cultural function of Egyptian temples,[12] as can be gathered from current studies, which usually deal with

temples under the scope of religion, architecture, economy and administration.[13] The role of Egyptian temples as cultural institutions in which Egyptian history and social values were treasured has been widely disregarded. Egyptian priests were not mere monks occupied in carrying out ritual tasks, but genuine intellectuals[14] in charge of preserving the identity and heritage of their culture. To this end, three kinds of objects were chiefly collected in Egyptian temples:

(a) Statues of deities, kings and private persons preserved and displayed in the temple.
(b) Ritual items of precious materials and valuable objects from war booties kept in treasury chambers. Unlike statues, costly objects in treasure chambers were not displayed and these should therefore be called more exactly 'treasuries'.
(c) Scrolls of papyri preserved in temple archives.

The aim of this article is to offer a brief overview of the extant textual and archaeological sources on the role of the Egyptian temple as a place for the preservation of the cultural heritage of ancient Egypt. Further research will go into a more detailed and substantial study of the objects preserved in the Egyptian temples. Here, temple collections of statues (III) and temple treasuries (IV) will be examined. Papyri scrolls, which maintain, in written form, the wisdom of ancient Egypt, should rather be the subject of studies on bibliographical collections.[15]

III

Collections of statues in Egyptian Temples are attested since the Old Kingdom in (1) papyri, (2) temple reliefs or stelae, and (3) archaeological sites.

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[4]Shaya, in Wellington Gahtan and Pegazzano (eds), *Museum Archetypes*, 24; see also H. Aigner, 'Museale Vorläufer vom Alten Orient bis in die griechisch-römische Welt', *Curiositas. Zeitschrift für Museologie und museale Quellenkunde* 1 (2001), 84.

[5]C. Higbie, *The Lindian Chronicle and the Greek Creation of their Past* (Oxford, 2003), 35, 113–14.

[6]K. Pomian, *Der Ursprung des Museums* (4th rev. edn; Berlin, 2013), 54.

[7]F. Waidacher, 'Grundgedanken zu einer museologieorientierten Praxis', *Museologie Online* 3 (2001), 91.

[8]A. Stähli, 'Sammlungen ohne Sammler: Sammlungen als Archive des kulturellen Gedächtnisses im antiken Rom', in A. Assmann, M. Gomille and G. Rippl (eds), *Sammler – Bibliophile – Exzentriker* (Tübingen, 1998), 59–62.

[9]Stähli, in Assmann, Gomille and Rippl (eds), *Sammler*, 64.

[10]Stähli, in Assmann, Gomille and Rippl (eds), *Sammler*, 81.

[11]Herodotus (ed. R. Waterfield), *The Histories*, (Oxford, 1998), Book II §§ 129–33, 146–8.

[12]In fact, only the following works on the Egyptian concept of collecting have been published: J. Assmann, 'Sammlerin Isis: Einbalsamieren, Beleben, Erinnern', in Assmann, Gomille, and Rippl (eds), *Sammler*, 21–36; L. D. Morenz, 'Frühe Spuren vom Sammeln: Museal inszenierte Vergangenheiten im ägyptischen Neuen Reich', *Imago Aegypti* 3 (2011), 82–90; W. Wendrich, 'Antiquarianism in Egypt: The Importance of *Re*', in A. Schnapp

(ed.), *World Antiquarianism: Comparative Perspectives* (Los Angeles, 2013), 140–58; M. Franci, 'Towards the Museum: Perceiving the Art of "Others" in the Ancient Near East', in Wellington Gahtan and Pegazzano (eds), *Museum Archetypes*, 19–23. Assmann examines the mythological role of Isis collecting the limbs of Osiris after his dismembering by Seth; Morenz proves the existence of precious objects collected in Egyptian temples, such as exotic minerals, though this would not mean that Egyptian temples were forerunners of modern museums; Wendrich explains the Egyptian concept of collecting through the preservation of knowledge in temple archives, and Franci argues that Egyptian collections in temples and palaces were considered symbols of prestige that served to preserve the identity of Egyptian culture.

[13]See for example: D. Arnold, *Die Tempel Ägyptens: Götterwohnungen, Baudenkmäler, Kultstätten* (Augsburg, 1996); B. J. J. Haring, *Divine Households* (Leiden, 1997); B. E. Schafer (ed.), *Temples of Ancient Egypt* (Ithaca, 1997); E. Teeter, *Religion and Ritual in Ancient Egypt* (Chicago, 2011).

[14]Franci, in Wellington Gahtan and Pegazzano (eds), *Museum Archetypes*, 20; S. Deicher, 'Einführung', in S. Deicher and E. Maroko (eds), *Die Liste: Ordnungen von Dingen und Menschen in Ägypten* (Berlin, 2015), 15, with reference to Ch. Leitz.

[15]See for example K. Zinn, 'Tempelbibliotheken im Alten Ägypten', in H. Froschauer and C. Eva Römer (eds), *Spätantike Bibliotheken: Leben und Lesen in den frühen Klöstern Ägyptens* (Vienna, 2008), esp. 81–3.

(1) Papyri

One of the earliest lists of statues is preserved in some papyrus fragments found in the pyramid temple of the Fifth-Dynasty queen Khentkaus II in Abusir. These fragments were published by Paule Posener-Kriéger, who interpreted them as parts of an inventory of statues.[16] However, Hana Vymazalová and Filip Coppens have recently argued that the fragments could have been part of a papyrus on a clothing ritual performed on the statues of queen Khentkaus II in her temple.[17] In any case, these papyrus fragments clearly show a group of at least 16 standing statues with parts made of valuable materials, e.g. the eyes were of semiprecious stones and *w3ś*-sceptres of electrum.[18] It can therefore be concluded that these images were a collection of costly statues having some function in the rituals of the pyramid temple of Khentkaus II.

In a similar way, a collection of statues of kings, members of the royal family and private persons is attested in the temple inventories of Lahun from the Twelfth Dynasty.[19] As can be seen in the published fragments, the naming of the statues is followed by indications of the materials they are made of, e.g. ebony, ivory or granite. These were expensive materials, for they were transported from stone quarries such as Hammamat[20] or exotic lands such as Punt.[21] It is also remarkable that the papyri mention pieces of clothing for statues, for this proves that those statues were displayed with ornaments. The purpose of such inventories was to keep a record of the statues to ensure they were not removed when the phyles of priests rotated in the temple. Therefore, this kind of inventory is called *paradosis*, i.e. 'handing over'.[22]

(2) Temple reliefs or stelae

Collections of divine and royal statues are represented in temple reliefs, for instance the so-called royal list of Karnak in the 'Chambre des Ancêtres' of the Festival Hall (*Akhmenu*) in Karnak's Amun temple, removed to the Musée du Louvre in 1843. In this relief, Thutmose III is represented making an offering to 61 statues of his royal ancestors from the Third to the Seventeenth Dynasty. Of these statues, 17 are indeed attested in the temple; most of them were set up in the Middle Kingdom sanctuary.[23] As can be read in the dedicatory inscription in the southern chamber of the Festival Hall, the collection of statues represented in the 'Chambre des Ancêtres' was endowed by Thutmose III to commemorate his predecessors with offerings in order to present himself as successor of the sovereigns from the Old Kingdom:[24]

(a)
(b)
(c)
(d)
(e)

(a) *wč ḥm=f śmn.t rn(.w) n.(ỉ)w ỉt(.w)*

(b) *ś:rwč p3.(w)t=śn*

(c) *mś.t ᶜḥm(.w)=śn m č.(w)t=śn nb*

(d) *w3ḥ n=śn ḥtp(.w) nčr ᶜ3(.w) m m3.wt*

(e) *m ḥ3.w wn.t m-b3ḥ*

(a) His Majesty ordered to perpetuate the names of his fathers,

(b) to provide them with offering loaves,

(c) to fashion divine images of them in each of their forms,

(d-e) and to offer them anew great divine boons more than what existed before.[25]

In addition to the royal list of Karnak, there exists the so-called 'Inventory Stela' found by Mariette in the temple of Isis in Giza in 1858. Though at the beginning of this stela one reads that Cheops was the author of the inventory, it was recorded most probably between the Twenty-first and Twenty-sixth Dynasty, when the temple of Isis flourished[26] (and it therefore still falls within the time span of our research). The Inventory Stela is divided into four registers showing 22 images of gods, several valuables such as crowns and one cult boat. As do the temple inventories from Lahun, the Inventory Stela includes details on material and size, which prove that the images of deities were real statues preserved in the temple of Isis.[27] However, it is noticeable that the statues in the Inventory Stela are described in more detail than the Lahun statues. Not only does the Inventory Stela record the material of the statues, but also their size and colour (e.g. black copper or golden wood). It seems therefore that the temple inventories from Lahun and the Inventory

[16]M. Verner, P. Posener-Kriéger and P. Janosi (eds), *The Pyramid Complex of Khentkaus* (Abusir 3; Prague, 1995), 133–4.

[17]H. Vymazalová and F. Coppens, 'Statues and Rituals for Khentkaus II: A Reconsideration of Some Papyrus Fragments from the Queen's Funerary Complex', in M. Bárta and F. Coppens (eds), *Abusir und Saqqara in the Year 2010*, II (Prague, 2011), 798.

[18]Verner, Posener-Kriéger, and Janosi (eds), *The Pyramid Complex of Khentkaus*, 134–42.

[19]L. Borchardt, 'Der zweite Papyrusfund von Kahun und die zeitliche Festlegung des Mittleren Reiches der ägyptischen Geschichte', *ZÄS* 37 (1899), 89–103. A complete edition of the temple archive of Lahun is being prepared by Jürgen Osing, see J. Osing, 'Die Tempeltagebücher von Illahun: Ein Vorbericht'; in V. Lepper (ed.) *Forschung in der Papyrussammlung* (Berlin, 2012), 161–4.

[20]Hammamat 114, 15. Inscription (published by J. Couyat, P. Montet, *Les inscriptions hiéroglyphiques et hiératiques du Ouâdi Hammâmât*, Cairo, 1912).

[21]*Urk.* IV, 328.17–330.6.

[22]Shaya, in Wellington Gahtan and Pegazzano (eds), *Museum Archetypes*, 25.

[23]D. Wildung, 'Aufbau und Zweckbestimmung der Königsliste von Karnak', *GM* 9 (1974), 42–7. According to Grimal, the order of the kings on the Karnak list corresponds to the location of their statues in the temple; see N. Grimal, 'Les ancêtres de Karnak', *CRAIBL* 154 (2010), 357–63.

[24]Grimal, *CRAIBL* 154, 369.

[25]*Urk.* IV, 607. 8–12.

[26]Chr. M. Zivie-Coche, *Giza au premier millénaire: Autour du temple d'Isis, dame des pyramides* (Boston, 1991), 220.

[27]Zivie-Coche, *Giza*, 233.

Stela had a different function: whereas the Lahun inventories were *paradosis*, i.e. records of the statues for when the phyles changed in the temples, the Inventory Stela is an *exetasmos*, or 'special inventory',[28] made by priests for a special occasion,[29] namely the renovation or reconstruction of the temple of Isis, as stated in the first lines of the stela. For this occasion, the most valuable objects of the temple were registered and described in order to preserve them for the future, which explains why such a durable material as calcite was used as a support for the inventory.

Collections of royal statues are represented not only in temple reliefs, but also on the walls of private tombs. Thus, a scene from the Theban tomb of Khabekhnet (TT 2) shows a man offering before a long row of statues of kings, queens and princes.[30] Such scenes suggest that the Egyptian elite was aware of the importance of keeping the memory of historical figures alive through the collection of statues, which were usually preserved in temples.[31]

(3) Archaeological sites

The collections of statues mentioned in temple inventories and shown in temple reliefs are also attested in the archaeological material. During his excavation campaigns between 1858 and 1874, Auguste Mariette observed that at least 572 black granite statues of the goddess Sekhmet were set along the walls of the temple of Mut (Fig. 1).[32] This collection of statues, disseminated today in museums throughout the world (Fig. 2), was granted by Amenophis III to the temple of Mut. Another relevant group of more than 100 statues of Sekhmet belonging to Amenophis III has recently (between 2000 and 2010) been found in his funerary temple

Fig. 1. Row of Sekhmet statues in the western corridor of the Temple of Mut (from A. Lythgoe, Statues of the Goddess Sekhmet, BMMA 14; 1919, fig. 6).

Fig. 2 Sekhmet statues exhibited in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (from A. Lythgoe, Statues of the Goddess Sekhmet, BMMA 14; 1919, fig. 21).

at Kôm el-Hettan in Thebes, Luxor West Bank.[33] All these statues played an undeniable role in religious rituals, but a great number of them and particularly their systematic display in temples show that they were considered 'collections' in a way similar to what we see in today's museums.

Donations of divine statues to temples were indeed a common practice of kings to gain divine favour, as Thutmose I says in his Abydos stela:

(a)

(b)

(c)

(...)

(d)

(e)

(f)

(g)

(h)

(i)

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[28]Shaya, in Wellington Gahtan and Pegazzano (eds), *Museum Archetypes*, 25.

[29]A. von Lieven, 'Darstellungen von Götterstatuen als Dekor in Krypten und Sanktuaren in Götterstatuen', in H. Beinlich (ed.), *9. Ägyptologische Tempeltagung: Kultabbildung und Kultrealität* (KSG 3, 4; Wiesbaden, 2013), 219.

[30]R. Lepsius, *Denkmaeler aus Aegypten und Aethiopien* (Berlin, 1849–1859), Abtheilung III 2 (a); PM, 7 (10); G. Roeder (ed.), *Ägyptische Inschriften aus den Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin: Vol. 2* (Leipzig, 1924), 190–1.

[31]It has also been suggested that objects stored in private tombs should be taken as 'collections' (see Pomian, *Der Ursprung des Museums*, 20–2; cf. Aigner, *Curiositas* 1, 82. It is true that among private grave goods one finds collections of objects such as papyrus libraries that preserve cultural tradition—see A. Amenta, 'The Egyptian Tomb as a House of Life for the Afterlife', in R. Pirelli (ed.), *Egyptological Essays on State and Society* (Napoli, 2002), 26—but the origin and the *raison d'être* of these collections are different from the objects and treasures collected in the temples. Whereas the items stored in tombs belonged to the tomb's occupant, statues and treasures kept in temples came mostly from donations by kings and individuals. One may say that Egyptian temples functioned as 'public' institutions for the preservation of the history of Egyptian culture.

[32]A. Mariette-Bey, *Karnak: Étude topographique et archéologique* (Leipzig, 1875), 7, 15.

[33]H. Sourouzian et al., 'Fifth Report on Excavation and Conservation Work at Kom el-Hettan from 9th to 12th Seasons (2007–10) by the Colossi of Memnon and Amenhotep III Temple Conservation Project', *ASAE* 85 (2011), esp. 413–28.

(a)   *ìw grt [w]č̣.n ḥm=ì*

(b)   *mś.t pśč̣.t ᶜꜣ.t ìm.(ì)t ꜣbč̣w*

(c)   *č̣t wᶜ ìm m rn=f*

     (· · ·)

(d)   *ìr.n ḥm=ì nn n ìt=ì Wśìr*

(e)   *n-ᶜꜣ.t-n mrr=ì św r nč̣r(.w) nb.w*

(f)   *n-mr.wt mn rn=ì*

(g)   *r(w)č̣ mnw m pr ìt=ì*

(h)   *Wśìr H̱nt.ìw-ìmn.tìw nb ꜣbč̣w*

(i)   *n nḥḥ ḥnᶜ č̣.t*

(a)   My Majesty ordered as well

(b)   to create (statues of) the great Ennead of gods, which is in Abydos,

(c)   after having given (lit. said) its name to each of them:

     (…)

(i)   It is forever and ever,[34]

(d)   that my Majesty made this for my father Osiris,

(e)   inasmuch as I love him more than any god,

(f)   in order that my name preserves

(g)   and my monuments endure in the house of my father

(h)   Osiris, Foremost of the Westerners, Lord of Abydos.[35]

Another collection of statues was found between 1903 and 1905 by George Legrain near the 7th pylon in Karnak. The collection included 457 statues of deities, kings and private persons, 8000 bronze statuettes and several ritual objects such as vases and altars.[36] Some of these statues were dedicated by kings to their predecessors, among them a granite statue made by Senusret in honour to Sahure. This fact points to the use of statues of the kings in the royal cult as attested too in the Karnak royal list – see line (b) of the Abydos stela just transcribed. Also in the temple of Karnak there was found a collection of 10 statues of Mentuhotep, vizier and architect of Senusret. These statues, which were probably displayed in the Middle Kingdom sanctuary, were restored in later times by priests of the Karnak temple, which shows the interest of Egyptian priests in preserving historical artefacts.[37] A similar case concerns the seven statues of Amenhotep, Son of Hapu, which were displayed publicly in several sanctuaries of Karnak, as one must infer from the 'Appeal to the living' inscribed on one of those statues (Cairo 583 and 835). Yet another statue representing Amenhotep, Son of Hapu (Cairo 42127) shows traces of restoration in ancient times.[38]

IV

Apart from collecting statues, Egyptian priests *treasured* precious stones, military triumphs from the campaigns of the king in foreign countries,[39] ritual objects and votive offerings in special rooms such as the clothing room (*pr-mnḫ.t*) and the treasure chamber (*pr-ḥč̣ / r-ḥč̣*). For this reason, these special rooms have been compared to the sacristies of medieval churches.[40] Because of the high value of such objects, access to them was restricted. Only the high priest of a temple, the *sem*-priest, the god's father (*ìt-nč̣r*), and the scribe of the treasury had close contact with temple treasures. The god's father was especially concerned with the keeping of cult objects.[41]

As happens with statue collections, precious objects kept in temples are attested since the Old Kingdom in (1) papyri, (2) temple reliefs or stelae and (3) archaeological sites.

(1) Papyri

Ritual objects of valuable materials are registered in the Old Kingdom temple inventories of Neferirkare and Raneferef, as well as in the Middle Kingdom temple inventories of Lahun.[42] As some temple reliefs show (see point (ii) next), such objects were stored in particular temple rooms. Indeed, a fragment of the temple inventory of Raneferef records the objects in the temple's clothing room.[43] The inventory list mentions several wood statues, two cult barques (*wìꜣ*), six precious stones (*ᶜꜣ.t*), 100 sealed chests (*ḫtm.t*), 42 chests (*ḥn*), clothes (*ḥbś.w*) and some ritual objects such as six libation jars (*śnb.t*), nine litters (*wč̣ś*) and 13 portable offering tables (*śč̣ꜣ.t*).[44] It can be inferred from this list that clothing rooms served to house not only the clothes to dress the statues,[45] but also other valuable objects used in temple rituals.

[34]This line (i) is the stressed part of the sentence, which appears in the Egyptian at the end of the sentence. Thus the (i) line is placed here to correspond to the English translation.

[35]*Urk.* IV, 99.3–4; 100.2–7.

[36]G. Legrain, 'Renseignements sur les dernières découvertes faites à Karnak', *RecTrav* 27 (1905), 67.

[37]D. Wildung, 'Mentuhotep: Hofbaumeister und Weiser', in V. M. Lepper (ed.), *Persönlichkeiten aus dem Alten Ägypten im Neuen Museum* (Petersberg, 2014), 91–2.

[38]A. Varille, *Inscriptions concernant l'architecte Amenhotep fils de Hapou* (Cairo, 1968).

[39]R. Müller-Wollermann, 'Die ökonomische Bedeutung von Templschatzhäusern', in M. Fitzenreiter (ed.), *Das Heilige und die Ware: Zum Spannungsfeld von Religion und Ökonomie* (IBAES VII; London, 2007), 171-8.

[40]Haring, *Divine Households*, 128; D. Arnold, *Wandrelief und Raumfunktion in ägyptischen Tempeln des Neuen Reichs* (MÄS 2; München, 1962), 83.

[41]Haring, *Divine Households*, 217, 222.

[42]P. Posener-Kriéger, *Les archives du temple funéraire de Néferirkarê-Kakaï* (BdÉ 65; Cairo, 1976), 134–208 and figs 20–5, 26 A–D, 27 A–S, 28, 29 A–C, 58 D, 71 A, 75 J, 89 A, 90 A–E, 91 A; P. Posener-Kriéger, M. Verner and H. Vymazalová (eds), *The Pyramid Complex of Raneferef: The Papyrus Archiv* (Abusir X; Prague, 2006), 242–59 and pls 27–38; Borchardt, *ZÄS* 37, 89–103.

[43]Posener-Kriéger, Verner and Vymazalová (eds), *Raneferef: Papyrus*, 246–7 and pl. 31.

[44]For the use of these objects see P. Posener-Kriéger, 'Quelques pièces du matériel cultuel du temple funéraire de Rêneferef', *MDAIK* 47 (1991), 295–301; R. A. Díaz Hernández, 'Zum altägyptischen Konzept des "Sammelns" anhand der Tempelinventare des Alten Reichs', *Curiositas. Zeitschrift für Museologie und museale Quellenkunde*, 14/15 (2016), 27–58.

[45]Arnold, *Wandrelief*, 78–9.

These temple inventories were established for keeping track of valuable ritual objects when the rotation of phyles took place, they are therefore *paradosis*. It is worth noting that the objects are normally recorded from right to left according to their ritual use and from top to bottom according to their material, e.g.:[46]

(a)

(b)

(c)

(d)

(a) *bì3 śb3 2*

(b) *k(3)f pśš 1*

(c) *mnw h3čś ḥč 1 km [1]*

(d) *ḥnw.t ḥč [· · ·] km [· · ·]*

(a) ore: ritual blades, 2.

(b) obsidian (or flint): ritual knife, 1.

(c) granite (or quartz): ritual vase, white 1, black, 1;

(d) drinking bowl, white […], black […].[47]

(The two ritual blades, the ritual knife of obsidian – or flint, the ritual vases and the drinking bowls are all objects used in the Opening of the Mouth ritual.)

This type of classification[48] shows that Egyptian priests not only had a deep knowledge of ritual objects, but also that they treasured them because of the expensive material from which they were made. It is remarkable that those objects, especially the vases, were made of stone, not clay, such as those usually found in private tombs. Stone objects were more expensive than earthenware as they had to be carefully sculpted and thus involved a lengthier and more laborious production process than did ceramics.

(2) Temple reliefs or stelae

Most of the valuable objects registered in temple inventories were given by the Egyptian kings. These gifts were symbols of royal wealth and prestige:[49] the bigger the number of objects and the higher the value of their materials, the higher the reputation of the king. For instance, the annal inscription of Amenemhat II in the temple of Ptah in Memphis mentions royal gifts to several Egyptian temples of objects seized by him during his military campaigns in foreign countries.[50] Among these objects one finds libation vases (*ḥs.t* and *nmś.t*), libation sets (*ḥsmn.y*), offering stands (*gn*), chests

(*hn*) and ornamental collars (*wśḫ*) of all sorts of valuable materials (gold, silver, copper, precious stones, etc.).

In this regard, the reliefs on the walls surrounding the bark sanctuary in the temple of Karnak show a more detailed list of royal gifts.[51] In these reliefs, Thutmose III is represented offering a great number of costly artefacts to the god Amun after his victories over the Asiatic countries. However, some gifts of Thutmose III did not come from his war booties, but were rather commissioned by the king himself, as the double inscription on a series of vases (from nos 139 to 144 and from 151 to 156) attests:

ᶜ3.(w)t ìr.n ḥm=f m k3.t ìb=f čś=f

Stone vessels which his Majesty made by the device of his own heart.[52]

According to this inscription, the vases in question were considered not only ritual objects, but also genuine and costly artworks given by the Egyptian kings to the temples for their preservation.

Similar objects can also be found in the reliefs of the treasure chamber from the funerary temple of Ramesses III in Medinet Habu, where he is shown offering precious objects from his war plunder to several deities.[53] The temple donation by Ramesses III consisted mainly of collars, ritual vases, chests, altars and offering tables[54] treasured in the *pr-ḥč* of the temple:

(a)

(b)

(a) *ḳṭ.n<=ì> n=k pr-ḥč špś m ḥw.t=ì n ìm(.ì) W3ś.t*

(b) *mḫ=ì n=k ś(ì) m ᶜ3.t nb m3ᶜ.t*

(a) It is in my house in Thebes where I have built for you a splendid treasure chamber.

(b) It is with every authentic precious stone that I fill it for you.[55]

On this inscription, two *hn*-chests of gold and white gold are represented containing precious stones, which Ramesses III gifted to his temple, probably from war booty (Fig. 3):

(a)

(b)

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[46]Díaz Hernández, *Curiositas* 14/15, 46–48.

[47]J.-L. Cenival and P. Posener-Kriéger, *The Abu Sir Papyri* (Hieratic papyri in the British Museum 5; London, 1968), pl. XX.

[48]Oddly enough, a similar classification by purpose can be found in the medieval inventories of royal collections, see K. Minges, *Das Sammlungswesen der frühen Neuzeit* (Münster, 1998), 17–19.

[49]Franci, in Wellington Gahtan and Pegazzano (eds), *Museum Archetypes*, 21

[50]H. Altenmüller and A. M. Moussa, 'Die Inschrift Amenemhets II. aus dem Ptah-Tempel von Memphis: Ein Vorbericht', *SAK* 18 (1991), 37.

[51]E. Blyth, *Karnak: Evolution of a Temple* (London, 2006), 83.

[52]W. Wreszinski, *Atlas zur altägyptischen Kulturgeschichte*, II (Leipzig, 1925), pl. 33b.

[53]University of Chicago Oriental Institute Publications, *Medinet Habu: Volume V*. pls 250–362. *The Temple Proper*, I (OIP 83; Chicago, 1957), pls 317–33.

[54]University of Chicago Oriental Institute Publications, *Medinet Habu V*, II, pls 317, 327, 331, 333.

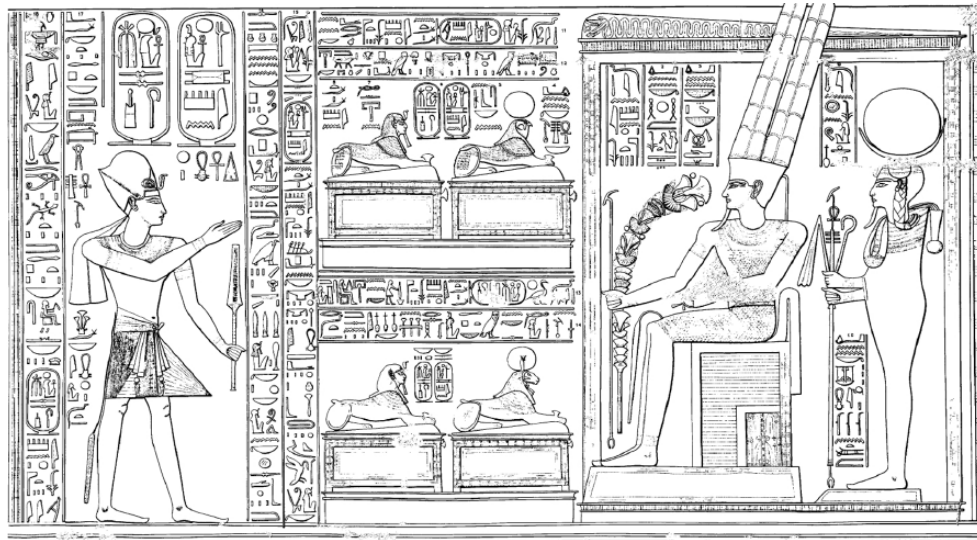[55]University of Chicago Oriental Institute Publications, *Medinet Habu V*, II, pl. 325.

Fig. 3. Treasury of Medinet Habu, south-east room, north wall (from *Medinet Habu*, V, II, pl. 325).

(a)   *ᶜrf.n<=i> n=k ḥn.w m nbw nbw ḥč biꜣ*

(b)   *m pnᶜ ḥr tꜣ m-ẖnw pr-ḥč=k*

(a–b) It is as (a symbol of) 'prostration' of the country in the interior of your treasure chamber that I *gathered* for you chests of gold, white gold and copper.[56]

(3) Archaeological sites

The *nouophores* recorded in temple inventories and represented in temple reliefs are also attested from archaeological sites. It has already been mentioned that Legrain found some precious vases and altars (in addition to 457 statues) in the cache of Karnak between 1903 and 1905. Another deposit of *nouophores* was found in the funerary temple of Raneferef in the last decades of the twentieth century. The deposit contained fragments of papyri and ritual objects of expensive materials, such as a ritual knife of black schist (*pśš*), a censer in the shape of a hand, flint blades and several quartz and basalt bowls (*ḥn.wt*) used in the Opening of the Mouth ritual (Fig. 4).[57] Particularly important is the 'Main Deposit' found by J. E. Quibell and F. W. Green in the temple of Horus in Hierakonpolis between 1897 and 1900, as it contained objects similar to those entered in the temple inventories – mainly cult-items, but also stone vases, military offerings such as maces, amulets and, obviously, statues.[58]

V

This research shows that Egyptian temples served as places for collecting *nouophores*, in the same way Greek and Roman temples did and European churches in the Middle
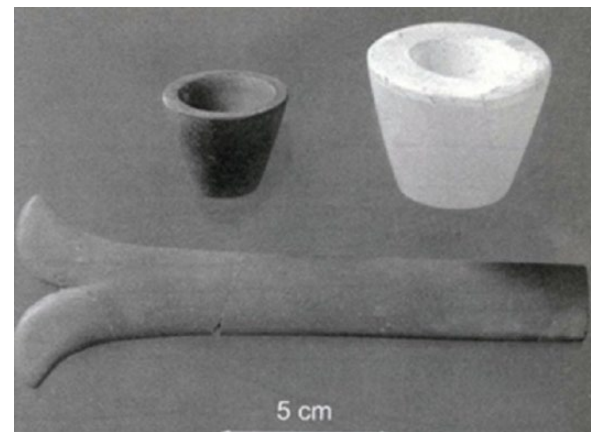

Fig. 4. A ritual knife (*pśš*) with two bowls (*ḥn.wt*) (from M. Verner [ed.], *The Pyramid Complex of Raneferef: The Archaeology* [Abusir IX; Prague, 2006], 61.).

Ages.[59] Two types of collections of *nouophores* can be distinguished in Egyptian temples: the statues of deities, kings and private persons preserved and displayed throughout the temple, and valuable objects mostly used in ritual ceremonies and kept in special chambers such as the clothing room (*pr-mnḫ.t*) and the treasury (*pr-ḥč / r-ḥč*).

Statue collections chiefly had historical and religious purposes: they served as contacts to the divine realm, in the case of the statues of deities, and to preserve the memory of ancestors in the case of the statues of kings and private individuals. Whereas collections of statues of deities arose out of pure religious reasons, collections of statues of kings and private persons originated from the Egyptian notions of *piety* and *renown*.[60] The donation of statues underpinned, on the one hand, a hope to be honoured with offerings after death

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[56]University of Chicago Oriental Institute Publications, *Medinet Habu V*, II, pl. 325.

[57]M. Verner (ed.), *The Pyramid Complex of Raneferef: The Archaeology* (Abusir IX; Prague, 2006), 61.

[58]G. Dreyer, *Der Tempel der Satet: Die Funde der Frühzeit und des alten Reiches* (AV 39; Mainz, 1986), 38–46, 59–61.

[59]See also Von Lieven, in Beinlich (ed.), *9. Ägyptologische Tempeltagung*, 226.

[60]For these terms see A. Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume: Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses* (3rd rev. edn; München, 2006), 33–8.

and, on the other, the wish that one's good deeds in life be remembered by posterity. This double function of statues in temples is made explicit in the Abydos stela of Thutmose I (lines a to j are an appeal by the king to the priests' piety, and lines k to r express his wish for eternal renown):

(a)

(b)

(c)

(d)

(e)

(f)

(g)

(h)

(i)

(j)

(k)

(l)

(m)

(n)

(o)

(p)

(q)

(r)
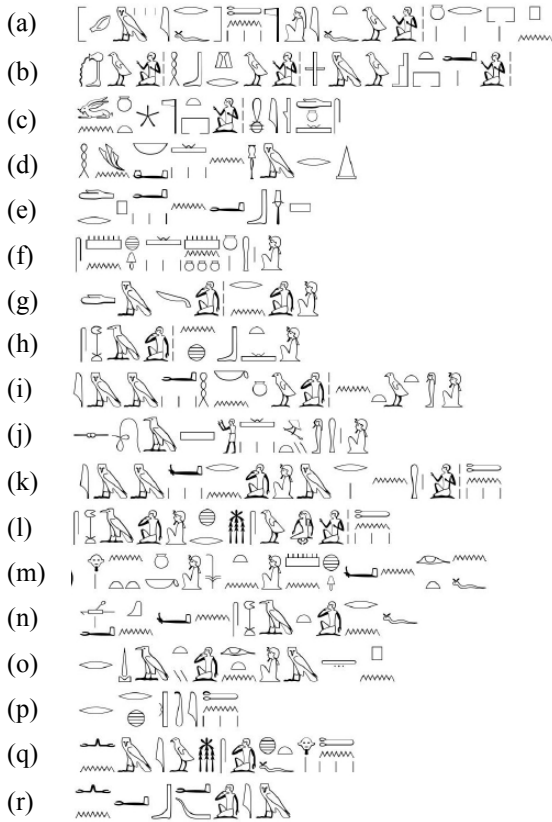
(a) *[śčm(.w) ìr=f] čn ìt.w nčr n.(ì)w r'-pr pn*

(b) *wᶜb.w ḫr.(ì)w-ḥ(ȝ)b<.t> ìmì.w ś.t-ᶜ(.w)*

(c) *wnw.t ḥw.t nčr mì ḳ̱ṯ=ś*

(d) *ḥnk(.w) n mr<=ì>*

(e) *ṯrp(.w) n ᶜb<ì>*

(f) *ś:mnḫ(.w) mnw n.(ì)w ḥm=ì*

(g) *ṯm(.w) rn=ì*

(h) *śḫȝ(.w) nḥb.t=ì*

(i) *ìmm ḥkn.w n twt=ì*

(j) *św̓ȝš(.w) ḫn.tì ḥm=ì*

(k) *ìmm(.w) rn=ì m rȝ n(.ì) ḥm(.w)=čn*

(l) *śḫȝ=ì ḥr mśw(.w)=čn*

(m) *ḥr-ntt ìnk nsw mnḫ n ìr.t n=f*

(n) *wᶜ ḳn n śḫȝ.t rn=f*

(o) *r čȝ.t ìr.tn m tȝ pn*

(p) *r rḫ.t=čn*

(q) *nn m ìwmś ḫft ḥr=čn*

(r) *nn ᶜbᶜ ìm*

(a) [Listen to me], fathers of the god of this chapel,

(b) *wᶜb*-priests, lector priests, *ìmì.w ś.t-ᶜ.w*,

(c) and priesthood of the whole temple:

(d) make offerings to my pyramid,

(e) offer to my offering-stone.

(f) preserve the monuments of my Majesty,

(g) proclaim my name,

(h) commemorate my titularity,

(i) give praises to my statue,

(j) pay honour to the image of my Majesty,

(k) put (lit. give) my name in the mouth of your servants,

(l) and my memory should be among your children.

(m) For I am a powerful king due to what was done for him,

(n) the only powerful one due to the commemoration of his name,

(o) conforming to this that I did in this country,

(p) before you heard (lit. knew) it.

(q) There is neither misstatement before you

(r) nor any boast.[61] (Abydos stela of Thutmose I)

The treasuries of the temples derive from royal and private donations. The valuable objects given by the kings and registered in temple inventories originated from the spoils of war and expeditions, as was the case in ancient Rome. Donations included not only objects for temple rituals, but also exotic objects and precious stones and metals. These valuable objects were preserved in *immobile memory spaces* such as treasure chambers or in *mobile memory spaces* such as *hn*-chests.[62] Treasure chambers were usually decorated with royal or private gifts offered to temple divinities. Valuable ritual items, important scrolls and precious stones and metals were kept safe in chests. The materials of the chests varied depending on the value of the objects kept inside – the more sacred and valuable the contents, the more expensive the chest material. Temple donations bestowed prestige on the donor because it was evidence of his power. Thus, kings proudly tell of their donations to temples, such as Ramesses II:

(a)

(b)

(c)

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[61] *Urk.* IV, 100.10–101.13.

[62] For the terms *immobile memory space* and *mobile memory space* (in German 'immobiler Gedächtnisraum' and 'mobiler Gedächtnisraum') see Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume* (3rd rev. edn), 114–21.

(b) *špśś.n=ỉ pr-ḥč=k*

(c) *mḥ(.w) m (ỉ)ḫ.(w)t m ḫr.t ỉb*

(a) *rč.y=ỉ n=k ḥnᶜ ḥtr.w=k*

(b) It was filling with desirable goods,

(c) which I gave to you together with your revenues,

(a) how I enriched your treasure chamber![63]

As a conclusion, it can be said that Egyptian temples were undoubtedly *memory places*, in which the *cultural memory* of Egyptian society was kept in order to preserve its consciousness of unity and distinctiveness.[64] For this purpose, Egyptian temples were endowed with a magical aura prompted by their collections and treasures, which afforded contact not only with the divine realm, but also with the past. Hence, Egyptian temples were spaces to safeguard and preserve the cultural heritage of ancient Egypt.

Author biography

Roberto A. Díaz Hernández studied History at Salamanca University and Egyptology and Arabic Philology at Leipzig University. He did his PhD thesis on the language of the historical-biographical and literary texts of the Middle Kingdom under the supervision of Wolfgang Schenkel at Tübingen University (2009-2013). He was scientific assistant at Jever's Castle Museum and scientific trainee at the State Museum of Egyptian Art in Munich. Since April 2017 he is working at the Egyptology Institute of the Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich on his postdoctoral thesis on the objects in Egyptian temple inventories and donation inscriptions. He is also a scientific assistant in the Volkswagen project 'Hermopolis Magna's Cosmogony' at the same institution. Díaz Hernández's main research interests are Egyptian Grammar, the history of Egyptian collections in Europe and the objects preserved in Egyptian temples.

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[63]K*RI* II, 332.12–13. The line order of the transliteration and translation is in accordance with English phrasing.

[64]M. Bommas (ed.), *Cultural Memory and Identity in Ancient Societies* (London, 2011), 3, see also in the same volume M. Bommas, 'Pausanias' Egypt', 93–5.