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Dream Interpretation in the Ramesside Age

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It is a great honour to be able to play a part in this tribute to Kenneth Kitchen, an Egyptologist whose work has always had such an impact on me. The *KRI* has constantly been kept close at hand, as have so many of his books and articles on the Ramesside Age, but I have also been inspired by his commentaries on subjects outside the realm of historical studies. In particular, his article 'The Curse of Publication and the Blight of Novelty'¹ has encouraged me try to keep my own work more reader-friendly, and to focus on maintaining quality over quantity. It is with a great debt of gratitude, therefore, that I offer this paper on one small aspect of life in Ramesside Egypt.

A discussion of dream interpretation befits this volume that focusses on the Ramesside Age, for it is precisely during this time that the use of dreams as a form of divination is firmly attested.² Prior to this time, dreams appear only in other contexts. The earliest currently known references to dreams are found in letters to the dead dating from the Old Kingdom to First Intermediate Period, which were left in or near the tomb of the addressee. In one of these, P. Nag ed-Deir 3737, the writer complains of being watched by the dead in a nightmare,³ while in the other a husband hopes to see his deceased wife acting on his behalf in a dream.⁴ From the Middle Kingdom onwards, rather than being presented as desirable visions, dreams appeared as malignant forces to be repulsed and avoided. This is attested in execration texts, medical spells, and prescriptions to be used alongside artefacts such as headrests, that would offer the vulnerable sleeper a modicum of protection.⁵ Literary texts such as the *Tale of Sinuhe* and the *Teachings of Ptahhotep* employed the metaphor of dreams to emphasise that which was ephemeral, untrustworthy, and potentially dangerous. The dream was perceived as a sort of liminal space whose boundaries lay somewhere between the world of the living and the world beyond that allowed contact between the dreamer and those who inhabited the afterlife: the gods, the dead, and the damned.

From the time of the New Kingdom, gods began to appear in the recorded dreams of pharaohs such as Amenhotep II⁶ and Merneptah,⁷ whose divine visions occurred during respites in military campaigns.

¹ In C. J. Eyre (ed.), *Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Egyptologists, Cambridge, 3–9 September 1995* (OLA 82; Leuven, 1998), 625–30.

² For dreams in general, and this argument specifically, see K. Szpakowska, *Behind Closed Eyes: Dreams and Nightmares in Ancient Egypt* (Swansea, 2003).

³ W. K. Simpson, 'The Letter to the Dead from the Tomb of Meru (N 3737) at Nag' ed-Deir', *JEA* 52 (1966), 39–50.

⁴ Letter on a stela published by E. F. Wente, 'A Misplaced Letter to the Dead', *OLP* 6/7 (1975/1976), 595–600.

⁵ Szpakowska, *Behind Closed Eyes*, 159–60.

⁶ Memphis Stela 20–2; *Urk.* IV, 1306.11–1307.2.

⁷ *KRI* IV, 5, 10–15.

The best known of the royal dreams is that of Tuthmosis IV,⁸ who recorded his dream on a stela at the foot of the sphinx. None of these dreams, however, was symbolic, nor did they require a specialist to interpret them; it is clearly stated within the texts that the dreams were instantly understood by the dreamers.

The Ramesside Period, however, ushered in numerous changes in decorum and sanctioned expressions of piety. Divine dreams were no longer a royal prerogative, as demonstrated by two individuals who publicly recorded that they had direct communication with the goddess Hathor in their dreams.⁹ The practice of divination became more common, and more diversified in method. The techniques that are attested now include at the least hemerology (the use of calendars or almanacs listing auspicious and inauspicious days),¹⁰ oracles (which were also known in the pre-Amarna period), lecanomancy (divining by interpreting patterns of oil on water),¹¹ and oneiromancy (divination through dreams).¹² The evidence for oneiromancy that has both survived and been published remains sparse, and any reconstruction of this practice must be considered preliminary. Nevertheless, the practice is attested to in dramatic fashion by the survival of a Dream Manual on P. Chester Beatty III.¹³

The beginning and the end of this Dream Manual are missing, but enough remains to indicate that this was not a small composition. The surviving portion of the manuscript is organised into three sections. The first consists of lists of dreams and their interpretations – 139 dreams that are interpreted as good omens are listed first, followed by 83 negative omens. This is followed immediately by the second section which contains a protective spell to ward off the effects of a nightmare. The third section provides a description of a type of man called a ‘Follower of Seth’ along with a listing of the good dreams that this individual could see.¹⁴ The ‘Follower of Seth’ is described as being a hot-tempered, violent, debauched, red-haired man whose sexual prowess was enjoyable to women. His proclivities towards excess included that of drink, and the text informs us that ‘he drinks beer in order to incite confusion and uproar’. This hot Sethian character can be contrasted with that of the ideal Ramesside man: one who was silent, humble, modest and pious.¹⁵ It is possible that the first portion that has survived would have been titled ‘The Dreams of a Follower of Horus’ to emphasise this polarity.¹⁶ These two deities often visually express the notion of opposition, and appear within the spell to keep away nightmares that forms part of the manuscript.¹⁷ The division of a Dream Manual into separate categories of dreams is also attested in the

⁸ Sphinx Stela (8–13); *Urk.* IV, 1539–44.

⁹ Stela of Ipuw (Stele Wien 8390, 1–19) published by H. Satzinger, ‘Zwei Wiener Objekte mit bemerkenswerten Inschriften’, in P. Posener-Krieger (ed.), *Mélanges Gamal Eddin Mokhtar* (BdE 97; Cairo, 1985), II, 249–54; Biography of Djehutiemhab (TT194), *KRI* VII, 153. See also K. Szpakowska, ‘The Open Portal: Dreams and Divine Power in Pharaonic Egypt’, in S. B. Noegel, J. Walker, and B. Wheeler (eds), *Prayer, Magic, and the Stars in the Ancient and Late Antique World* (Pennsylvania, 2003), III–24.

¹⁰ This is attested at least from the Middle Kingdom in the form of an unfinished papyrus from Kahun (UC 32192) in M. Collier and S. Quirke, *The UCL Kahun Papyri: Religious, Literary, Legal, Mathematical and Medical*, (BAR IS 1209; Oxford, 2004), 26–7. For a recent publication of a New Kingdom text, see C. Leitz, *Tagewählerei: Das Buch ḥꜣt nḥḥ ph.wy dt und verwandte Texte* (ÄA 55; Wiesbaden, 1994).

¹¹ S. Demichelis, ‘La Divination par l’huile à l’époque Ramesside’, in Y. Koenig (ed.), *La magie en Égypte: À la recherche d’une définition. Actes du colloque organisé par le Musée du Louvre, les 29 et 30 septembre 2000* (Paris, 2003), 149–65.

¹² For an overview of divination see A. von Lieven, ‘Divination in Ägypten’, *AoF* 26 (1999), 77–126.

¹³ P. Chester Beatty III, rt. 1–11; A. H. Gardiner, *Chester Beatty Gift* (HPBM 3; London, 1935).

¹⁴ Only four of these remain before the text breaks again.

¹⁵ This binary opposition of temperaments is common in contemporary texts, one example being the *Instructions of Amenemope*. See also J. F. Borghouts, ‘Magical Practices among the Villagers’, in L. H. Lesko (ed.), *Pharaoh’s Workers: The Villagers of Deir el-Medina* (Ithaca, 1994), 127–8 n. 41.

¹⁶ This was first proposed by Gardiner, *Chester Beatty Gift*, 9.

¹⁷ This spell, like most Ancient Egyptian magico-medical texts, is embedded within a mythological context with the healer playing the role of Isis, the patient is referred to as Horus, and the source of the bad dream is blamed on the bad things (*dwꜣt*) that were created by Seth.

Demotic Dream Manual (P. Carlsberg XIII–XIV).¹⁸ In this Roman Period composition, the dreams are not evaluated as good or bad, and instead are divided into various groups, each with their own heading. These include dreams of numbers, games, drinking (beer), snakes, speaking out, animal excrement and flesh, swimming with other people, accepting wreaths and other plants, and crocodiles. In addition, there are categories of dreams that the authors conceived a woman might dream of including sexual dreams, giving birth to animals, and suckling animals. If the Ramesside Dream Manual ever included more than the two extant divisions, such as a section enumerating the dreams that could be seen by a woman, or some other category of person, they are now lost.

The lists in the Ramesside text are arranged in neatly lined horizontal rows, each column preceded by the vertical heading: *ir m33 sw s m rsw.t* ‘If a man sees himself in a dream’, which is to be read before each individual row. These serve to organize the composition in an orderly fashion. The careful physical organisation and tabulation reflects a need for order and categorisation that can be readily found in other Egyptian documents such as offering lists, administrative texts, even hymns, as well as other types of omen texts, including the onomastica, already known in the Middle Kingdom.¹⁹

The columns are formed by the clear separation of the three elements that make up each horizontal line. Each sentence is composed of the image seen in the dream (protasis), followed by an evaluation of the dream as ‘good’ *nfr* or ‘bad’ *dw* (the negative word is always rubricised), and concluded by the consequence (apodosis). This is a format (though the use of evaluations of ‘good’ or ‘bad’ is inconsistent) that is used in other contemporary interpretive texts such as medical texts, calendars of days,²⁰ and the lecanomantic text.

A few examples will suffice to give an idea of the form.

rt. 6.25

ir m33 sw s m rzw.t hr wnm jwf n msh nfr wnm h.t sr pw

If a man sees himself in a dream consuming the flesh of a crocodile;
good, it means consuming the possessions of an official.

rt. 9.10

ir m33 sw s m rsw.t hr kf3 ph.wy=fy ds=f dw jw=f r nmh hr ph.wy

If a man sees himself in a dream baring his own rear-end;
bad, it means that in the end he is going to be poor.

In the first example, there is an obvious link between the image seen by the dreamer and the interpretation by means of repetition of the word *wnm* ‘consuming’. But there is also a translexical pun (where the lexical association of one word is evoked by another), for in Egyptian literature the character of officials was often associated with the rapacious nature of the crocodile. In the second example, the protasis is linked to the apodosis by antanacsis (the identical words are used in the text with different meanings), with the lexeme *ph.wy* meaning ‘rear-end’ and ‘end.’²¹ I have emphasised the use of puns here because while punning was common in Egyptian religious texts (and indeed numerous literary works from the

¹⁸ A. Volten, *Demotische Traumdeutung (Pap. Carlsberg XIII and XIV Verso)* (AnAe 3; (Copenhagen, 1942).

¹⁹ A. H. Gardiner, *Ancient Egyptian Onomastica* (London, 1947).

²⁰ An unfinished calendar of days from the Middle Kingdom town of Kahun (see UC 32192 in Collier and Quirke, *The UCL Labun Papyri*, 27) uses the term *dw* for ‘bad’ while others from the New Kingdom use ‘*h*’ or ‘*bin*’ (L. Troy, ‘Have a Nice Day! Some Reflections on the Calendars of Good and Bad Days’, in G. Englund, (ed.), *The Religion of the Ancient Egyptians: Cognitive Structures and Popular Expressions. Proceedings of Symposia in Uppsala and Bergen, 1987 and 1988* (Boreas 20; Uppsala, 1989), 127–47.) The argument that the *dw* necessitates a Middle Kingdom origin is weakened by the fact that the Ramesside lecanomantic manual, for which there is no earlier antecedent, uses *dw* as well (Demichelis, in Koenig (ed.), *La magie en Égypte*).

²¹ S. B. Noegel and K. Szpakowska, ‘Word Play in the Ramesside Dream Book’, *SAK* 35 (2006), 193–212.

Old Kingdom on), it has been shown that this use of puns to create a causal link between the sign and the interpretation does not feature in other Ancient Egyptian divinatory texts but is restricted to the dream manuals.²² Neither the hemerological texts nor the lecanomantic manual seem to employ this device. This situation can be contrasted with that of the Mesopotamian tradition, where the punning hermeneutic featured in a variety of divinatory contexts, from much earlier on.²³ One familiar example is the dreams of Gilgamesh, interpreted by this mother via a series of puns in the Old Babylonian version of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*.²⁴ In many ways the Ramesside Age was a time of cultural exchange between Egypt and her neighbours to the East, and the transfer of the punning device from the sphere of religious and literary texts, to that of divination could be an indication of this contact.²⁵

In contrast with this possible influence of cultural exchange, other aspects of the Dream Manual seem to reflect the internal culture of the Ramesside Age. Paleographically it is typical of the early Nineteenth Dynasty. Grammatically, it is much more difficult to determine. In the past, it has been assumed that it is a New Kingdom copy of an originally Middle Kingdom text, as was suggested by its first publisher Gardiner,²⁶ but this has been challenged recently by scholars who suggest a New Kingdom origin.²⁷

These disagreements stem in part from the fact that most of the text, with the exception of the spell and the lacuna-ridden description, is not narrative, but composed of short formulas. This is a typical feature of Egyptian scientific and technical manuals (the medical texts are perhaps the best-known examples) that were meant to be usable through the ages. While many grammatical markers are prevalent in narrative texts, they are often invisible in formulas. The fact that the use of certain classical Middle Egyptian forms was a common device to lend authenticity to technical manuals and to elevate their status throughout the ages is a further hindrance to dating the manual.²⁸

The lexicography suggests at the least serious redaction in the Ramesside Period. At least ten words such as *wrry.t* 'chariot',²⁹ *gsgs* 'measuring cup',³⁰ and *dnw* 'threshing floor'³¹ appear whose usage is only attested from the New Kingdom on while some determinatives that are associated only with the post-Amarna period.³² Another idiosyncrasy is that lexemes related to the sun, such as *šw* or *wbn*, consistently

²² S. B. Noegel, 'On Puns and Divination: Egyptian Dream Exegesis from a Comparative Perspective', in K. Szpakowska (ed.), *Through a Glass Darkly: Magic, Dreams and Prophecy in Ancient Egypt* (Swansea, 2006), 95–119.

²³ For an overview of puns in the Ancient Near East see S. B. Noegel, *Puns and Pundits: Word Play in the Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near Eastern Literature* (Bethesda, 2000).

²⁴ Noegel, in Szpakowska (ed.), *Through a Glass Darkly*, 99.

²⁵ Noegel, in Szpakowska (ed.), *Through a Glass Darkly*, 102–5. See also N. H. Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel and its Near Eastern Environment: A Socio-Historical Investigation* (JSOT Supp 142; Sheffield 1994) for divinatory links with Mesopotamia.

²⁶ Gardiner, *Chester Beatty Gift*.

²⁷ The text has been analysed as using literary Late Egyptian in S. Israelit-Groll, 'A Ramesside Dream Book of a Technical Language of Dream Interpretation', in S. Israelit-Groll (ed.), *Pharaonic Egypt: The Bible and Christianity* (Jerusalem, 1985), 71–118. In other ways, the text is grammatically not quite what one might expect from a divinatory manual. For example, the *r*+infinitive form of the future is common in predictions and in omen texts (Demichelis, in Koenig (ed.) *La magie en Égypte*, 162 n. 68. citing P. Vernus, *Future at Issue: Tense, Mood, and Aspect in Middle Egyptian: Studies in Syntax and Semantics* (YES 4; New Haven, 1990), 9) but this construction only appears three times in the Ramesside Dream Manual (rt. 2.18; rt. 4.3; rt. 9.10). In the first two cases it appears in the phrase *r hpr n=f*.

²⁸ T. A. Bács, 'Two Calendars of Lucky and Unlucky Days', *SAK* 17 (1990), 41–64, esp. 61; Szpakowska, *Behind Closed Eyes*, 15–33.

²⁹ rt. 9.7; *Wb* I, 334.1–3; *DZA* 22.535.470; see also J. Zeidler, 'Zur Etymologie von *wrry.t* "Wagen": Mit einigen Bemerkungen zur "syllabischen" Schreibung', *GM* 178 (2000), 97–111.

³⁰ rt. 10.5; *Wb*. V 207; *DZA* 30.713.720.

³¹ rt. 6.7; *Wb*. V 575.6; *DZA* 31.632.140.

³² The word for female divinity, *ntr.t-hm.t*, is written with the word for female explicitly written out and is determined by a cobra. The classifier of the cobra combined with the explicit writing of *hm.t* after *ntr.t*, $\overline{\text{𓏏}} \overline{\text{𓏏}} \overline{\text{𓏏}} \overline{\text{𓏏}}$ (*Wb*. 362.14) is featured from the New Kingdom on. It usually appears in phrases where the female divinities are in direct contrast with specifically male ones,

appear with the determinative of the falcon on a standard . These are  (5.13, 9.22) and  (5.22). Examples of the sitting god divine determinative following these words are common in the New Kingdom, but the use of the divine falcon classifier here seems to be unique to this text – perhaps reflecting the increasing stress on the divine nature of the sun occurring in the Ramesside Age.³³

As an example of intertextuality, certain puns and metaphors used in the manual are remarkably similar to those found in other Ramesside literary texts, such as the Instruction of Amenemope.³⁴ Perhaps not coincidentally, this latter text also emphasises the contrast between the hot-blooded loud chaotic man and the silent humble man. This does not imply that the authors of these works necessarily were aware of each other's writings, but that those particular semantic frames of reference and cultural norms were prevalent in the Ramesside Period.

In contrast to so much of our textual evidence from Ancient Egypt, the findspot and owner of this Dream Manual are known. The papyrus was originally part of the archive of the well-known Ramesside scribe from Deir el-Medina, Qenherkhopshef. His collection included a diverse assortment of letters, memoranda, documents related to family and domestic affairs, exercises, belles-lettres, medical prescriptions, spells and hymns, as well as this Dream Manual. Some were written by Qenherkhopshef, but it is clear that he did not write this particular text, as the back of the papyrus, as well as little leftover nooks and crannies, were filled in with other texts written in his own distinctive handwriting. Specifically, two copies of the Battle of Kadesh Poem as well as a copy of a letter to the vizier can be found on the back. After Qenherkhopshef died childless, his wife, Naunakht remarried and the library, including this manual of dreams, was passed down to her son Amunnakht, son of Khaemnun, who added his own colophon to the papyrus stating that he copied or owned it.

An obvious assumption might be that Qenherkhopshef, or another family member, used the Dream Manual to interpret the dreams of others, perhaps his neighbours, the villagers of Deir el-Medina. While we know that the villagers often acted as their own priests and presumably physicians, there are no indications that Qenherkhopshef was ever consulted on any matter. The fact that he chose this papyrus as the medium on which to record the copies of poems and his letters might indicate that the papyrus already had a certain prestige, and emphasised Qenherkhopshef's access to restricted materials. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine Qenherkhopshef unrolling this papyrus over and over again in order to look up interpretations for petitioners who had come to him for consultation. This would entail him either laying out the papyrus with his own writings rubbing against the surface of the floor, mat, or table, or else holding it up, with his own texts visible on the outside. Perhaps then it was memorised and kept as an aide mémoire.

If Qenherkhopshef was not an interpreter, there are a number of categories of priests who might have included divination of dreams as part of their repertoire. One possible candidate in Ramesside Egypt is the *rh-bt*, 'knower of (ritual) things'. This individual is attested as early as the Old Kingdom, in reference to herding spells among other magical rituals.³⁵ Ritner suggests that these 'knowers of things' were trained magic users who would have learnt their skills under the auspices of other priests and had access to the

often determined with . Examples can be found in Ramesside contexts such as the Theban tomb of Paser (DZA 25592370), the Ramesses II's Chamber of Mut in Luxor (DZA 25592900), Medinet Habu (DZA 25592910), P. Leiden 343 RSI, 1–3 (DZA 25592920), as well as in the temples of Edfu, Philae, and Dendera. This writing also appears on a New Kingdom 'Calendar of Days' (Cairo Calendar B vs. XII–XIII; Troy, in Englund (ed.), *The Religion of the Ancient Egyptians*, 127–47, esp. 141.) where the text reads: 'Last Day Favourable. You should not offer to male gods. You should not offer to female goddesses on this day' (Bács, SAK 17) with *hm.t* explicitly written, and *ntr* above it as a correction for the scribe who had mistakenly forgotten it. Israelit-Groll (in Israelit-Groll (ed.), *Pharaonic Egypt: The Bible and Christianity*, 71–118, esp. 106.), interprets the use of *hm.t* in the Ramesside Dream Manual as indicative of literary Late Egyptian.

³³ O. Goldwasser, *Prophets, Lovers and Giraffes: Wor(l)d Classification in Ancient Egypt*, (GOF IV/38; Wiesbaden, 2002), 14.

³⁴ See for example the connection between the ferryman and disputes (Dream Manual rt. 4.6 and Amenemope 12, 9–10).

³⁵ R. Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice* (SAOC 54; Chicago, 1993), 207, 229–33.

knowledge stored in the House of Life. This is verified by other texts where individuals who are *rh-h* are listed with priestly titles as well.³⁶ Intriguingly, the Ramesside Turin Papyrus CGT 54065, which on page 8 provides instructions on lecanomancy, also mentions the *rh-h* earlier on page 3. Therefore, the publisher of the text suggests that perhaps this form of divination was performed by a *rh-h*.³⁷ Unfortunately, there are no direct links between the ‘knower of things’ and dream divination.³⁸

Setting aside the identity of who performed the interpretations for the moment, the question of the intended audience of the text needs to be addressed. Was it the craftsmen and villagers of Ramesside Deir el-Medina or was it rather the courtly elite or literati, or were all members of society able to have their dreams interpreted if they desired?

The content of the Dream Manual may provide clues. Most of the dreams refer to nourishment or wealth – concerns applicable for all members of society. References to townsfolk and to being appointed as an official might initially point to villagers, but they appear in literary texts of the elite as well. Tasks such as casting copper, building a house, looting a temple, weaving thread, brewing beer, and pounding grain, would have been known to the elite as well as the upwardly mobile, as would the theme of writing itself. Making fun of officials – a theme that appears in at least three instances where officials are both verbally and visually, in hieratic, compared to greedy crocodiles³⁹ – is surprisingly popular in courtly literature as well. The activities themselves are more reflective of rural life in ancient Egypt, and it therefore could be reasonably suggested that the intended audience of this Dream Manual was the villagers rather than the elite.⁴⁰ However, as we are all aware, dreams do not reflect reality – the visions seen are limited only by the imagination and therefore do not necessarily reflect the actual status, occupation or lifestyle of the dreamer.

Another possible clue can be found in the description of the ‘Follower of Seth.’ He is described as a red-headed, hot-tempered, loud, drinker, who enjoys brawling and womanizing, but the papyrus also informs us that ‘even if he is a real Royal Friend, he is (still) one who enjoys the food of a man of the populace’. This reference to a ‘Royal Friend’ indicates at least that the dreamer could be a man of the courtly classes. Whether this description represents a particular type of man, or a side that potentially can be seen in any man, is again not certain, but due to the prevalent dichotomy in Ramesside Egypt with the chaotic ‘hot’ man versus the ideal silent and modest man it is more likely the former.

Otherwise, the Ramesside Dream Manual is thoroughly lacking in specific temporal, geographical, or social references. The generic word *dmi.t* is used for ‘town’; the animals are common ones, and even the gods are not individually named, but instead the universal term ‘god’ *ntr* or the personal god ‘his god’ *ntr=f* are used. Nor can the text be situated firmly in Upper or Lower Egypt. It has been described as a

³⁶ For examples see Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, 230.

³⁷ Demichelis, in Koenig (ed.) *La magie en Égypte*.

³⁸ Another possible (though unlikely) candidate is the *t3-rh.t*, the ‘woman who knows’, who is attested in a number of documents from Deir el-Medina, see J. Toivari-Viitala, *Women at Deir El-Medina: A Study of the Status and Roles of the Female Inhabitants in the Workmen’s Community During the Ramesside Period* (EU 15; Leiden, 2001), 228–31. These texts testify that she could be consulted if one was under the influence of a *bau*, the manifestation of the power of a god, particularly the gods Ptah or Taweret, or for an explanation for the death of a member of the community, or for divination. Both men and women availed themselves of her services, and one individual could consult her on behalf of another. Very little is known about her identity, as she was only ever referred to as *t3 rh.t*, no personal names nor titles are ever used. Nor is there any evidence as to whether or not she was literate, although both Ritner and Borghouts suggest that she acquired her wisdom through insight and practical experience rather than any formal training; J. F. Borghouts, in Lesko (ed.), *Pharaoh’s Workers*, 119–30; Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, 230. There is, however, no discernible link between her and dreams.

³⁹ See above and rt. 2.22; 5.11; 5.17.

⁴⁰ C. Leitz, ‘Altägyptische Traumdeutung nach einem Papyrus des Neuen Reiches’, in A. Karenberg and C. Leitz, (eds) *Heli-kunde und Hochkultur, I: Geburt, Seuche und Traumdeutung in den antiken Zivilisationen des Mittelmeerraumes*, (Münster, 2000), 221–46.

Deir el-Medina text, but its content leave no clues as to its origin – it could have come from anywhere, and it reflects any Egyptian's concerns. Chances are that this lack of specificity was not accidental, but rather indicates that the composition was designed to be deliberately ambiguous, and therefore universally applicable.

What is not in any doubt is the gender of the dreamer in the extant portion of the Dream Manual. Whereas the lecanomantic manual, for example, expected the observer to be either a 'man' *s*, or a 'woman' *hm.t*, or a generic (but masculine) 'you' *k*, and the *Demotic Dream Manual*, dated to the first or second century AD was divided into different sections for dreams of women as well as men,⁴¹ this one was clearly written for men. As suggested above, there may have been other sections that are now lost, describing dreams of women, but the surviving portion uses only masculine suffix-pronouns, and is geared for male lifestyles. Women appear only as wives or as objects of sexual attention (even when those women are mothers and sisters).⁴² This again fits in well with the text having been written by a courtly or priestly author, who would have been male, usually writing for men.

The possibility should also be considered that it might not have been created for the use of others at all, but perhaps as a record for one man to consult. Perhaps, rather than using it for others, Qenherkhopshef used it for himself. He seemed to be perfectly willing to self-medicate and to treat himself, as is attested by the prescriptions and spells (for demon and stomach problems in particular) that he owned.⁴³ One of these at least was in his own handwriting, indicating that he himself copied it from an original or had the prescription dictated to him. Documents from Deir el-Medina, including one from this same Chester Beatty collection, also attest to the possibility of acquiring texts from the scriptorium or House of Life.⁴⁴ As a parallel, the Egyptian hemerological texts (Calendars of Days) come from temple contexts, suggesting their use was not at a plebeian level.⁴⁵ Indeed, it is highly probable that the House of Life was the origin of Qenherkhopshef's text as well. The hieratic handwriting is clear while the skilled use of wordplay, analogy, and metaphor attest to the sophistication of the author. The physical tabular format as well as the 'if ... then' structure are featured in other technical texts (such as the Edwin Smith Surgical Papyrus and other medical papyri) that are believed to have been part of the holdings of the House of Life. The authors of these texts would have been priests, members of the male elite literati of Ancient Egypt who were well versed in a range of literary and religious texts. Like the medical texts, the Dream Manual was in all likelihood not only composed but also used by priests who also acted in the capacity of physicians and diviners.

If compositions such as the Ramesside Dream Manual were necessary for the successful interpretation of dreams, and they were stored in the House of Life, then certainly the *hry-hb.t*, the lector priest, would be the most likely class of priest to have included dream interpretation as part of their duties. These priests were specialists in ritual and by the Late Period they were renowned throughout the Ancient Near East. Chief lector priests, *hry-tp hry-hb.t*, called *Hartibi* in Akkadian, were included in a list of prisoners and craftsmen brought back to Mesopotamia by Ashurbanipal.⁴⁶ The Akkadian term has been linked to the Hebrew *Hartummim* who failed to successfully interpret the dreams of Pharaoh in the famous Bibli-

⁴¹ A. Volten, *Demotische Traumdeutung*.

⁴² K. Szpakowska, 'Flesh for Fantasy: Reflections of Women in Two Ancient Egyptian Dream Books', in T. Schneider and K. Szpakowska, (eds), *Egyptian Stories: A British Egyptological Tribute to Alan B. Lloyd* (AOAT 347; Münster 2007), 393–404.

⁴³ Y. Koenig, 'Les effrois de Keniherkhpeshef (Papyrus Deir El-Médineh 40)', *RdE* 33 (1981), 29–37; I. E. S. Edwards, 'Kenihkopshef's Prophylactic Charm', *JEA* 54 (1968), 155–60.

⁴⁴ Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, 206–7.

⁴⁵ Troy, in Englund (ed.), *The Religion of the Ancient Egyptians*.

⁴⁶ See *CAD* 6, 116.

cal tale of Joseph.⁴⁷ Divination in general, and oneiromancy in particular, could conceivably have been part of the repertoire of the lector priests in Ramesside Egypt. And because the Ancient Egyptian priests worked in shifts in temples, they could have not only interpreted the dreams of the elite, but also those of their fellow members of the community.

The only currently known report of a Ramesside Egyptian individual consulting any sort of technician, professional or otherwise, for help concerning a dream is found in a letter from Deir el-Medina.⁴⁸ In this letter, an anonymous scribe writes a letter to an addressee concerning the latter's female friend who has come to visit, telling him that he is sending this message in secret (vs. 1–3):⁴⁹

The woman X has run away to the village. Now look, I have taken charge of her. I didn't let her see that I had written to you saying 'She's here'. Actually, it is because of a dream that she has come in order to stand in the presence of Nefertari. Look after her and don't do what you have usually done.

The writer of the letter emphasizes that he did not want the woman to know that he was revealing her presence in the village to his correspondent. Our lack of context and other substantiating evidence, however, leaves us unable to ascertain whether it was simply the presence of the woman in the village that was to be kept secret, or her visit to a shrine or statue of the divinised Ahmose Nefertari. The phrase 'to stand in the presence of' (*m-b3h*) is often used to indicate an oracular consultation.⁵⁰ The woman in the letter might have been inspired by a dream to go to the oracle, or her goal may have been to ask the goddess whether her dream was a positive or a negative omen. At least one other example of an oracular consultation concerning a dream is attested by a small ostrakon from Ramesside Deir el-Medina inscribed with the question: 'As for the dreams which one will see, will they be good ones?'⁵¹ As these were presented to an oracle, it is conceivable that this type of question was asked by the dreamer in the above letter during her visit to the oracle of Ahmose-Nefertari. There is no firm evidence whether this dreamer might then also have obtained a fuller interpretation, or whether a simple 'yes' or 'no' response sufficed. In any case, if the woman in the letter was indeed in search of guidance regarding a dream, it is clear that she did not take her troubles to a professional dream interpreter, but rather to a goddess. This letter, along with the oracular ostrakon, suggests that in the Ramesside Period questions regarding dreams could be brought to the presence of a divine oracle, rather than a professional interpreter.

Another practice related to oneiromancy is the practice of incubation, which can be defined as the practice of going to a temple or other sacred space for the express purpose of receiving a dream and/or healing with or without interpretation. But the evidence for this practice in Egypt so far seems to date from no earlier than the Ptolemaic Period.⁵² As the only evidence of early dream incubation, a Ramesside stela written by the son of Naunakht, the wife of Qenherkhopshef (the owner of the Dream Manual), whose name was also Qenherkhopshef, has been claimed as a description of the practice.⁵³ As part of a

⁴⁷ For an overview of the topic and bibliography see Szpakowska, *Behind Closed Eyes*, 63–5.

⁴⁸ P. Deir el-Medina VI published by J. Černý, *Papyrus hiératiques de Deir el-Médineh*, I: [Nos I–XVII], completed and edited by G. Posener (DFIFAO 8; Paris, 1978), 19, pls. 22–22a. The dating for the letter is based on Kitchen (KRI VI, 266.)

⁴⁹ This translation follows D. Sweeney, *Correspondence and Dialogue: Pragmatic Factors in Late Ramesside Letter Writing* (ÄAT 49; Wiesbaden, 2001), 181.

⁵⁰ A. M. Blackman, 'Oracles in Ancient Egypt', *JEA* 11 (1925), 249–55; A. M. Blackman, 'Oracles in Ancient Egypt', *JEA* 12 (1926), 176–85.

⁵¹ O. Gardiner (no number) in J. Černý, 'Troisième série de questions adressées aux oracles', *BIFAO* 72, (1972), 51, pl. xv (no. 40) = O. Ashmolean Museum 1010, see Deir el-Medina Database <<http://www.leidenuniv.nl/nino/dmd/dmd.html>>.

⁵² For textual references, see the stela of Somtutefnakht, stela of Taimhotep, the Bentresh stela, and Setne II. For possible physical venues, see F. Daumas, 'Le Sanitorium de Dendara', *BIFAO* (1957), 50–7.

⁵³ British Museum stela no. 278; B. Bruyère, *Mert Seger à Deir El Médineh* (MIFAO 58; Cairo, 1930), 23–32. A healing-incubation cult has been proposed in the area of Deir el-Bahri by M. Marciniak, 'Un text inédit de Deir el-Bahari', *BIFAO* 81 (1981), 283–91, but refuted by A. K. Philips, 'Observation on the Alleged New Kingdom Sanitorium at Deir el-Bahari', *GM* 89 (1986), 77–83.

hymn to Hathor, the younger Qenherkhopshef describes a pious ritual performed for the goddess at a natural grotto which became a pool when it flooded with rain.⁵⁴ But although he spent the night at the sacred sanctuary as part of the ritual, he does not in fact relate any visions seen, nor does he mention dreams at all.

Although the much referenced Tale II of the Setne Cycle clearly does describe cases of dream incubation,⁵⁵ this demotic composition is Roman (written on a Greek administrative text dated to Emperor Claudius, year 7 (AD 46–7)).⁵⁶ Indeed, already in 1959 Sauneron noted the late introduction of incubation into Egypt, and theorized that the main goal of the individuals who go to these sanatoriums was for the purpose of receiving divine healing.⁵⁷ Interpretors are usually not mentioned, although a small stela in the Serapeum in Memphis proudly announced that the ‘dream interpreter here is a Cretan’.⁵⁸ Perhaps this is an indication that during the Graeco-Roman Period dream specialists of various countries could come to the temples of Egypt and ply their trade.

Regardless of whether incubation was practised at the time, it is clear that in the Ramesside Age dreams began to play an increasingly prominent role in the lives of the Egyptians. Oneiromancy is well-attested in the Late Period,⁵⁹ and the existence of the Dream Manual of P. Chester Beatty III reveals the complex ponderings that the priests had on dreams. Whether or not Qenherkhopshef himself or Amun-nakht or any other members of that family actually used this particular papyrus to interpret the dreams of others, or whether it was treasured as a rare acquisition from the House of Life, dream interpretation was well-established as a divinatory technique in Ramesside Egypt.

⁵⁴ P. Vernus, ‘La grotte de la Vallée des Reines dans la piété personnelle des ouvriers de la Tombe (BM 278)’, in R. J. Demarée and A. Egberts, (eds), *Deir El-Medina in the Third Millennium AD: A Tribute to Jac. J. Janssen* (EU 14; Leiden, 2000), 331–6; Ch. LeBlanc, *Ta Set Neferou: Une nécropole de Thèbes-Ouest et son histoire* (Cairo, 1989).

⁵⁵ See A. B. Lloyd, ‘Heka, Dreams, and Prophecy in Ancient Egyptian Stories’, in Szpakowska, (ed.), *Through a Glass Darkly*, 71–94, esp. 85.

⁵⁶ W. K. Simpson (ed.), *The Literature of Ancient Egypt: An Anthology of Stories, Instructions, Stelae, Autobiographies, and Poetry* (3rd rev. edn; New Haven, 2003), 401.

⁵⁷ S. Sauneron, ‘Les songes et leur interprétation dans L’Égypte ancienne’, in S. Sauneron and A. Caquot, (eds), *Les Songes et Leur Interprétation* (Sources Orientales 2; Paris, 1959), II, 18–61.

⁵⁸ von Lieven, *AoF* 26, 113; G. Roeder, *Kulte Orakel und Naturverehrung im alten Ägypten* (Die ägyptische Religion in Texten und Bildern 3; Zurich, 1960), pl. 14.

⁵⁹ J. Quack, ‘A Black Cat from the Right, and a Scarab on Your Head: New Sources for Ancient Egyptian Divination’, in Szpakowska (ed.), *Through a Glass Darkly*, 175–87; J. D. Ray, *The Archive of Hôr* (EES TEM 2; London, 1976), 130–6.

