SOME THOUGHTS ON RELIGIOUS CHANGE AT DEIR EL-MEDINA

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It gives me very great pleasure to contribute to a volume in honor of Richard Fazzini, a fellow Egyptomania enthusiast and aficionado of ancient Thebes. I feel reasonably certain that the characters mentioned in this paper, though residents of the Western Side, were as familiar as the characters mentioned in this paper, though ancient Thebes. I feel reasonably certain that fellow Egyptomania enthusiast and aficionado of the Temples of Mut at Karnak and he with the Temple of Mut at Karnak.

The title of Keith Hopkins’s recent work on the religions of the Hellenistic Mediterranean, A World Full of Gods, aptly describes the religious life of the workmen of Deir el-Medina as well. From the inception of the study of this organization, the votive monuments of the sdm.w-Mu-F’t-M3 have attracted the attention of scholars. The sheer quantity of the monuments, as well as the variety of the deities depicted (a list that includes divinities of both indigenous and foreign origin), has led to their being used to illustrate general compendia on Egyptian religion. Indeed, it is difficult to know what we would do without them.

Attempts to link these (all too) portable monuments to individual cult places at Deir el-Medina proper, and to the North Chapel area in particular, have met with some success: Baraize’s excavations in the Ptolemaic temple area; the clearance of the “oratorio” sacred to Ptah and Meretseger; Davies’ investigation of the “high place,” situated above the path between Deir el-Medina and the Valley of the Kings; and the Italian, German and French excavations of the village itself, have yielded up some in situ material. In addition to general surveys of religious cult and practice at Deir el-Medina, religious studies of the Deir el-Medina “pantheon” have frequently focused on individual deities, notably the deified Amenhotep I and Ahmose-Nefertari and Meretseger. Others, however, remain understudied, including Hator, the dedicatee of Deir el-Medina’s major sanctuary, and her interaction with her local sister-divinities, such as Meretseger and Henutimentet. These three deserve reexamination as well, building upon the pioneering work of Bruyère.

For example, since at least Dynasty 11, Hator appears to provide local access to the west (at, for example, Deir el-Bahri) in her aspect of

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6 Bernard Bruyère, Mort Seger à Deir el-Médineh, MIFAO 58 (Cairo: IFAO, 1939), 5ff.
12 Bruyère, Mort Seger à Deir el-Médineh.
13 According to the stela of Wahankh Intef II (MMA 13.82.3) and depictions in the temple of Nebhepetre
“mistress of the Red Mountain,” whereas Meretseger was associated with the further western peaks. Meretseger’s increasing importance in the 20th Dynasty royal necropoleis, already noted by Bruyère, was subsequently confirmed by Erik Hornung in his publication of the tomb of Hor-emheb, where he documented the prominence of Hathor in the 18th Dynasty royal tombs, and her systematic replacement, initially by Henutet-Amun; Hathor reasserts her importance as the patroness of votives dedicated to Meretseger declines, and Hathor reasserts her importance as the patroness of the Theban West Bank.

A second focus of research on religious life at Deir el-Medina is that of the religious personnel attached to the local shrines. Beyond the title of sgm-ỉ, religious offices current at Deir el-Medina include several groups of titles that appear to be associated with specific divinities, such as: w'b, bk, hm-ntr, hm-ntr ìpt, il-ntr, and hši (associated with Amun); w'b and hši (associated with Ptah); il-ntr n Pth-Skr (of Ptah-Sokar); a w'b ksšt n Dhweti (in the cult of Thoth) and the bsk n Mrtsg (associated with Meretseger).

Associated with Amenhotep I: w'b, bsk, šmsw, ś-s-n-, hšt h-sbt, šmsw h-sbt, il-ntr, hm-ntr, and hm-ntr ìpt. Already in 1927, Černý identified a barque-related “set” of servitors through the examination of such documents as a column base in Cairo, which lists: a bsk n Ḫsšt, a hšt h-sbt n ’Imnḥtp, an ‘3-n-’, six w'b priests, and one hsš-b-hšt, each with assigned positions around the barque of the god. He identified the wʾbw as both carrying out the cult of Amenhotep I in general, and as the actual bearers of barques (of other divinities as well) that made oracular decisions, and noted that the title was limited largely to specific families.

A third approach to studying the religious life of the Deir el-Medina workmen has been reconstructing the beliefs and practices of individual members of the Crew. Naturally, this can be undertaken only for well-attested workmen, and here the scribe of the tomb Ramose has taken pride of place. Often described as the richest...