

## Ptolemy IX (Soter II) at Thebes

Robert K. Ritner, The Oriental Institute

The divided reign of Ptolemy IX, Soter II, from 117 to 107 B.C. and again from 88 to 80 B.C., marked both a tumultuous period in the declining years of the Ptolemaic dynasty and a pivotal era in the history --and ultimate decline-- of the ancient city of Thebes.<sup>1</sup> The present study examines one aspect of that era: the phraseology of the royal Prenomen and its modification for propagandistic reasons. While this is admittedly a highly traditional Egyptological concern for earlier periods, the student of Ptolemaic titularies is poorly served by available studies. Selective examples were collected by Gauthier for his valuable series Le Livre des Rois d'Égypte, and there are studies of the royal epithets in the Demotic, Greek, and, most recently, the hieroglyphic texts.<sup>2</sup> The full phraseology of the hieroglyphic cartouches, in contrast, has received little attention, probably on the assumption that these formal titles in then-arcane script were of little historical importance. When reproduced, the cartouches are only rarely transliterated or translated.<sup>3</sup> Greater interest in the epithets is readily comprehensible, since Demotic and Greek documents use only the epithet,

---

<sup>1</sup> This enumeration of the Ptolemies follows now standard practice, as found in P. W. Pestman, Chronologie égyptienne d'après les textes démotiques (332 av. J.-C. - 453 ap. J.-C.), PLB XV, Leiden: Brill, 1967. Earlier studies numbered Ptolemy Soter II variously as VIII, IX or X. The following article is the result of my comments on the Medinet Habu examples with J. Brett McClain at Chicago House in 2004. I am indebted to Brett for discussion and initial access to Chicago House images and to John Larson for archival photography and collation sheets now housed in Chicago.

<sup>2</sup> For these epithets, see H. Gauthier, Le Livre des Rois d'Égypte, vol. IV, MMIFAO 20, Cairo: IFAO, 1916; Pestman 1967; and Martina Minas, Die hieroglyphischen Ahnenreihen der ptolemäischen Könige, Aegyptiaca Treverensia 9, Mainz: Phillip von Zabern, 2000.

<sup>3</sup> F. Ll. Griffith contributed an Appendix with translations to J. P. Mahaffy, A History of the Egypt under the Ptolemaic Dynasty, London: Methuen & Co., 1899, pp. 255-56. Griffith's Appendix was dropped from the re-edition by Bevan in 1927, and no list of cartouches appears in Günther Hölbl, A History of the Ptolemaic Empire, London and New York: Routledge, 2001. W. Spiegelberg did provide a complete translation of the hieroglyphic titles of Ptolemy V on the Rosetta Stone; see idem, Der demotische Text der Priesterdekrete von Kanopus und Memphis (Rosettana), Heidelberg: self published, 1922, (reprinted Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1990), p. 78. Some attention has been paid to the individuality of special epithets adopted for ritual scenes; see Karin Götte, "Eine Individualcharakteristik ptolemäischer Herrscher anhand der Epitheta-Sequenzen beim Weinopfer," RdÉ 37 (1986): 63-80.

and the Prenomen itself, after Ptolemy III, invariably begins with the declaration that the king is “the heir of” a predecessor’s epithet. In the case of Ptolemy IX, however, published translations of his Prenomen have been inaccurate, and historically-influenced modifications have not been highlighted.

For about a year after the death of his father in September 116 B.C., Ptolemy IX, although king, was in fact the most junior partner of a 3-generation royal triad composed of his grandmother, Cleopatra II, her daughter, former rival and Ptolemy’s mother, Cleopatra III, and least significantly, Ptolemy himself.<sup>4</sup> The pecking order is clear from the Demotic text P. Rylands 20, which preserves the unique record of this odd arrangement by being dated in the reign of “the Queen Cleopatra and the Queen Cleopatra and the King Ptolemy, her son, the mother-loving and the savior” (t3 Pr-‘3.t Glwptr3 ĩrm t3 Pr-‘3.t Glwptr3 ĩrm Pr-‘3 Ptlwmys p3y=s šr p3 mr-mw.t p3 swtr).<sup>5</sup>

Ptolemy, from the beginning of his reign, was designated “the savior” (p3 swtr “the Soter,” nty nħm “who saves,” or nty rk ħb “who removes injury”), while his mother, Cleopatra III, changed her epithet from “the beneficent goddess” (t3 ntr.t mnħ.t), her title with her deceased husband and uncle Ptolemy VIII, to “the goddess who loves her mother and who saves” (t3 ntr.t mr mw.t=s nd.t), and the pair together were “the gods who love their mother(s) and who save.”<sup>6</sup> The origin of these titles came from the elder Cleopatra II, who had used “Thea Philometor Soteira” (“the mother-loving and savior goddess”) during her civil war against Ptolemy VIII and Cleopatra III.<sup>7</sup> The royal epithets were particularly ironic, since neither Cleopatra III nor Ptolemy IX had cause to love their respective, combative mothers, and both brought destruction and instability to Egypt. Although civil war and internal revolt were hardly new to Ptolemaic Egypt,

---

<sup>4</sup> A brief overview of Egyptian reliefs from the coregency is found in W. J. Murnane, *Ancient Egyptian Coregencies*, SAOC 40, Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 1977, pp. 99-101.

<sup>5</sup> Pestman 1967, pp. 64 and 66. There is no need to discount the Demotic evidence as an “inadvertent repetition,” contra Edwyn R. Bevan, *A History of the Egypt under the Ptolemaic Dynasty*, London: Methuen & Co., 1927, p. 325.

<sup>6</sup> See Pestman 1967, pp. 66 and 68, n. f. For the title **nd.t** as an epithet of Isis-Hathor, see Wb. II, 375/7.

<sup>7</sup> Hölbl 2001, pp. 197 and 205.

previously Thebes had escaped serious consequences. The policies of “the saviors” would produce a different result.

Native revolts against Ptolemies IV and V from 206-186 B.C. spawned a rebel dynasty with the support of the Theban clergy.<sup>8</sup> Despite the “ethnic” aspect of the revolt, Horwennefer (205-199 B.C.) is attested in one of the first attempts to render Egyptian into phonetic Greek. A graffito on the left jamb of the Osiris chapel “N” at Abydos records in Greek letters the “fifth year of Pharaoh Horwennefer, beloved of Isis and Osiris, beloved of Amon-Re, king of the gods, the great god.”<sup>9</sup> The prominence of Theban Amon is notable. Under the earlier misreading of his name as “Harmachis,” he served as the prototype for the conflicted native hero of H. Rider Haggard’s 1889 novel *Cleopatra*. Horwennefer was succeeded by Ankhwennefer (199-186), under whom both Abydos and Thebes were occupied by the forces of Ptolemy V in 199. Ankhwennefer regained Thebes by 195 only to lose it again in 187 before being defeated and captured in the Thebaid in 186. Ptolemaic reprisals against Thebes were muted: Ankhwennefer was pardoned, the Theban temples replenished, and a general amnesty declared. Ptolemy V still had Delta rebels to defeat and found it politic to adopt --not suppress-- the valuable pharaonic ideology of Thebes. His dependence upon Egyptian clerical support had been evident from his Memphite coronation; it is the political subtext of the Rosetta Stone.

Revolt flared anew in the generation preceding Ptolemy IX, from 132 to 124 B.C. Cleopatra II fought against her brother and second husband, Ptolemy VIII, who had instigated domestic quarrels by taking Cleopatra’s own daughter, Cleopatra III, as his second (but preferred) wife. As Ptolemaic allegiance splintered, a new native rebellion in Thebes elevated the Egyptian Harsiese as Pharaoh in late 132. “Pharaoh Horus, son of Isis, son of Osiris” is securely attested in only two documents. The Greek papyrus Berlin P. 1389 from November 10, 131, records efforts to correct the (mis)appropriation of funds from the royal bank at Thebes by the

---

<sup>8</sup> Pestman 1967, pp. 41-45; and Hölbl 2001, pp. 154-57. Horwennefer’s formal reign began in 205, the year following the beginning of the revolt; see idem, “Haronnophris and Chaonnophris,” in S. P. Vleeming, ed., *Hundred-Gated Thebes*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995, pp. 101-37. The degree of Theban support is questioned by K. Vandorpe, “City of Many a Gate, Harbour for Many a Rebel,” in *ibid.*, pp. 232-33.

<sup>9</sup> P. W. Pestman, et al., *Receuil de textes démotiques et bilingues*, vol. I, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977, pp. 102-05, no. 11.

“enemy of the gods, Harsiese,” who had just been driven from the city.<sup>10</sup> Like the expelled High Priest Osorkon in Dynasty XXII, Harsiese seems to have fled to the northernmost area of the Thebaid at El Hibeh, where he is attested in his second year in P. Heidelberg Aeg. nos 10-11, a Demotic marriage contract from neighboring Karara.<sup>11</sup> The brief uprising and swift recapture of Thebes by Ptolemaic forces probably spared the city much more than financial consequences. Ptolemy VIII and the two Cleopatras were reconciled in 124 and began, in the apt phrase of Günther Hölbl, a “bizarre triple monarchy.”<sup>12</sup>

With the death of Ptolemy VIII on June 28, 116,<sup>13</sup> the kingdom was willed not to the eldest son of the deceased monarch, but to the formidable Cleopatra III and to “whichever of the two sons she would choose.”<sup>14</sup> Although her preference was for the, presumably more pliant, junior son,<sup>15</sup> opposition from Cleopatra II, the army and the citizenry compelled her to accept the elder son, Ptolemy IX, though she soon forced him to divorce his wife and sister, Cleopatra IV, who would flee with an army to Seleucid Syria to engage her sister in yet another civil war there. Back in Egypt, Cleopatra IV was replaced by a younger sister, Cleopatra V Selene, who was excluded from the standard protocols.<sup>16</sup> Ptolemy’s younger brother was sent to

---

<sup>10</sup> See Ulrich Wilcken, Urkunder der Ptolemäerzeit, Zweiter Band. Papyri aus Oberägypten, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1957, pp. 218-21, no. 199; L. Koenen, “Θεοῖσιν ἐχθρός, ein einheimischer Gegenkönig in Ägypten,” CdE XXXIV, no. 67 (1959): 103-19; Pestman 1967, pp. 59-61; Hölbl 2001, pp. 198-99 (wrongly cited as UPZ I, no. 199).

<sup>11</sup> E. Lüddeckens, Ägyptische Eheverträge, pp. 176-81 and plates VI-VIII (= P. Karara I and II).

<sup>12</sup> Hölbl 2001, p. 201.

<sup>13</sup> As attested by the “Great Building Inscription” of Edfu temple; see De Wit, CdE XXXVI no. 72 (1961), pp. 293-94; and Dieter Kurth, The Temple of Edfu, Cairo: AUC Press, 2004, p. 53.

<sup>14</sup> The evidence is found in Justin, Epitome of the Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus, Book XXXIX.3.1: “... moritur rex Aegypti Ptolemeus, regno Aegypti uxori et alteri ex filiis quem illa legisset relicto.” See also <http://www.the.latinlibrary.com/justin/39.html> and the translation by J. C. Yardley, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994). The term relicto (< relinquo “to leave”) includes the legal nuance “to bequeath.”

<sup>15</sup> Pausanias I. 9. 1; see Pausanias, Description of Greece, vol. I, trans. by W. H. S. Jones, New York: Loeb Library, 1918, pp. 40-43.

<sup>16</sup> For the few exceptions, see Gauthier 1916, pp. 364-65. A rare depiction of her has been suggested for one of two Queen Cleopatras accompanying Ptolemy IX at Philae, but these queens may be instead Cleopatras II and III; see below.

Cyprus as “strategos,” or military governor. Ptolemy IX’s early *Nebty*-name, attested at Edfu and the Theban Khonsu and Deir el-Medina temples, explicitly acknowledges his dependency upon his mother; he is designated as *sh<sup>c</sup>.n sw mw.t=f hr ns.t it=f it iw<sup>c</sup> t3.wy m m3<sup>c</sup>-hrw* “the one whose mother placed him upon the throne of his father, who has seized the inheritance of the Two Lands in justification.”<sup>17</sup>

Like all of his ancestors since Ptolemy V, the new Ptolemy IX displayed public reverence for native religion, and he travelled alone in 115 to officiate at the annual festival of the rising Nile at Elephantine.<sup>18</sup> Perhaps associated with this Upper Egyptian visit is a scene carved at the Khonsu Temple at Karnak. At either end of the lintel of the doorway leading from the north wall of the hypostyle hall into the sanctuary, Ptolemy Soter II follows a series of deities in adoring the central moon disk.<sup>19</sup> In the position

---

<sup>17</sup> The Khonsu temple titulary replaces *sh<sup>c</sup>.n sw mw.t=f* with *sh<sup>c</sup> sw mw.t=f*. See Gauthier 1916, pp. 359-60 (on p. 360, the Deir el-Medina example is miscopied as *sh<sup>c</sup>=f* for *sh<sup>c</sup>.n* and the following *it=f t3.wy* is miscopied for *it iw<sup>c</sup> t3.wy*); and Jürgen von Beckerath, *Handbuch der ägyptischen Königsnamen*, MÄS 20, Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1984, p. 292, N1 (*it=f t3.wy* is miscopied for *it iw<sup>c</sup> t3.wy*). The significance (but not the errors) is noted in Hölbl 2001, p. 219, n. 123. For the Deir el-Medina mammisi and inscriptions, see Pierre du Bourguet, *Le Temple de Deir el-Médîna*, MIFAO 121, Cairo: IFAO, 2002, pp. 167-71 and 357-58 (nos. 181-83).

<sup>18</sup> The visit is known primarily from Greek texts, see Hölbl 2001, pp. 205-06 and 219, nn. 130-32. To these attestations should be added the study by H. De Meulenaere, “Ptolémée IX Soter II à Kalabcha,” *CdÉ* XXXVI no. 71 (1961): 98-105. As suggested by De Meulenaere, an image of the king at Philae followed by two Cleopatras (all termed “the gods who love their mothers”) may be linked to this early visit; see B. Porter and R. L. Moss, *Topographical Bibliography ... VI. Upper Egypt: Chief Temples*, Oxford: Oxford Univeristy Press, 1939, pp. 212 and 219, no. 117 (as Ptolemy X). Gauthier 1916, pp. 357, n. 1 and 364, n. 2, identified the two queens as Cleopatras III and IV (or V), as had R. Lepsius, *Denkmäler aus Ägypten und Äthiopien. Text*, vol. IV, Geneva: Édition de Belles-Lettres, 1972-73 (reprint of Berlin: Nicolaische Buchhandlung, 1849-59), p. 148a. As Cleopatra II probably died in 115, the scene could as easily represent the triple monarchy established after the death of Euergetes II, with Cleopatras II and III beside Ptolemy IX. In any case, Ptolemy’s precedence over his mother is striking; his visit alone in 115 may explain it. De Meulenaere suggested (pp. 104-05) that the visit included Ptolemy’s mother and wife. Murnane 1977, p. 100, considers the scene to depict “a now apparently mature Ptolemy IX.” Murnane argues that the position of Cleopatra III determines whether images from the coregency are from the youth or maturity of Ptolemy IX, but this is unlikely as Cleopatra III remained the dominant partner. The reason for the discrepancies in the representations must lie elsewhere.

<sup>19</sup> B. Porter and R. L. Moss, *Topographical Bibliography ... II. Theban Temples*, second edition, Oxford: Oxford Univeristy Press, 1972, p. 235, no. 36 a-b and plate XX.2.

of lesser importance at the far right of the scene, Ptolemy appears in the Upper Egyptian crown alone behind the deities, perhaps, as just noted, a reflection of the fact of his individual visit to Upper Egypt in 115. However this may be, the dominant, lefthand edge of the scene depicts the more important “underlying reality” of Ptolemy’s role.<sup>20</sup> Here Ptolemy is shown in the Lower Egyptian crown following his mother Cleopatra III, effectively reversing the traditional, iconic positions of king and queen.<sup>21</sup> Cleopatra’s theological precedence clearly reflects her political dominance as senior co-ruler and dynastic “king-maker” (and in the now-dominant north). The visual implication corresponds to the layout of the textual dedication below the lintel on both sides. In each case, the “female Horus, the Lady of the Two Lands, Cleopatra” is invoked prior to “her son, the Horus ... Ptolemy,” and his Nebty-name, as previously noted, stresses her role in his accession.

The scene and texts have been copied by The Epigraphic Survey in The Temple of Khonsu - volume 2 as plates 190-191.<sup>22</sup> Unfortunately, the Survey’s publication contains inaccuracies in its copy, translation and even the designated location of these reliefs. Assuredly by typographical error, the introductory schematic diagram (figure 7) links the position of the gateway to the southern (figure 5), rather than to the northern wall (figure 6).<sup>23</sup> By editorial decision, the lintel itself appears only in an oversized plate (190), without subdivisions for individual sections. While this is understandable for the majority of the brief texts, it is less defensible for Ptolemy’s shrunken cartouches, which are largely illegible. Photographs made prior to the drawings show that chalked divisions were made, but these questionably-placed lines actually bisect the lefthand cartouches and other texts. Surviving collation sheets are equally discouraging, with initial artistic renditions as

---

<sup>20</sup> For the right-facing orientation as dominant in Egyptian art, see the remarks of Gay Robins, Proportion and Style in Ancient Egyptian Art, Austin: University of Texas, 1994, p. 21; and H. G. Fischer, “More Emblematic Uses from Ancient Egypt,” Metropolitan Museum Journal 11 (1976): 127-28.

<sup>21</sup> For the normal position of women in 2 dimensional art, see Robins, ibid., p. 19. The image reversal is noted in Hölbl 2001, p. 219, n. 133.

<sup>22</sup> The Epigraphic Survey, The Temple of Khonsu - Volume 2. Scenes and Inscriptions in the Court and the First Hypostyle Hall with Translations of Texts and Glossary for Volumes 1 and 2, OIP 103, Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 1981, pp. 60-62 and plates 190-191.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., unnumbered sheets, figs. 5-7. See H. Nelson, Key Plans, plate XVII, section M, figure 12, 319 a (for Khonsu II, plate 190) and 319 h (plate 191 West) and 319 b (plate 191 East). Nelson’s section M is now generally cited as “Kh” for “Khonsu temple.”

indistinct lumps later improved by instructions to just copy the tracings. The latter also survive and lack clear internal detail. Certainly the copying goals of the Survey incorporate a tension between the shapes still present and the signs once carved, but it is unlikely that any earlier dynastic cartouches would have been treated so dismissively. Cartouches can show variations, and Egyptologists are usually sensitive to the issue. The overview in plate 190 would have benefited from the inclusion of additional, detailed sections.

The treatment of the lintel cartouches is particularly curious since those in the lower dedication texts of Cleopatra III and Ptolemy IX are rendered more clearly in two examples (by the same artist) on plate 191.<sup>24</sup> Laudably, the accompanying pamphlet does suggest a translation for these examples of the royal titulary (pp. 60-62). It is all the more unfortunate then, that the published translation is wildly inaccurate, with no evident recourse to earlier studies, limited though they may be. In all instances on the wall, Ptolemy's Prenomen should read: **ỉwꜥ (n) nꜥr mnḥ ntr.t mr mw.tꜥs nd.t stp n Pth ỉr mꜥ.t (n) Rꜥ sḥm ꜥnh (n) ỉmn.**<sup>25</sup>

“Heir of the beneficent god and the goddess who loves her mother and who saves, the chosen of Ptah, who performs Maat for Re, the living image of Amon”(see Text Figures 1 and 2).<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> These scenes are included in Minas 2000, pp. 32-33 and plate 21, as Document 59. Minas recognizes the significance of Cleopatra's precedence on the lefthand scene, but suggests (p. 33) that by her absence from the righthand scene “ihre Übermächtigkeit reduziert wird.” I prefer to see the depictions as illustrative of “two truths.” The same pattern is found at Deir el-Medina, see below.

<sup>25</sup> For a selection of his titles, see Gauthier 1916, pp. 346-65; and von Beckerath 1984, pp. 291-292. The Khonsu Prenomen is miscopied in Gauthier, p. 360, XLIX A, with a second **mnḥ**-sign for the “t” of **ntr.t** (Text Figure 2). For the order of the divine roles in the Prenomen, see Gauthier, p. 347. Cf., however, p. 357, XXXVII B, copied with neither **Pth** nor **sḥm ꜥnh**. The questionable cartouche is found in the thickness of the west room in the eastern wing of the first pylon at Philae (unclear Berlin photos 837-38). Does this represent a variant with “chosen of Amon” or just an error of ancient carving or modern copying? As an adjacent cartouche of Ptolemy IX does include the usual reference to “chosen of Ptah” and the “[living] image of Amon,” an error is most likely; see R. Lepsius, *Denkmäler aus Ägypten und Äthiopien. Text*, vol. IV, Geneva: Édition de Belles-Lettres, 1972-73 (reprint of Berlin: Nicolaische Buchhandlung, 1849-59), p. 148a.

<sup>26</sup> One of the few translations of (a variant) of the cartouche was given by F. Ll. Griffith in J. P. Mahaffy 1899, p. 256 (as Ptolemy X).

This the Survey has translated (for the poorly-copied lefthand lintel example) as “Heir of the Gods Euergetai, the Champion of the Goddess Philometor, whom Ptah has chosen, who creates the order of Re, Powerful in the Life of Amon.” The righthand example is rendered simply as “Praenomen.”<sup>27</sup> The translation of the Prenomen in both lower dedication texts repeats that given for the upper left of the lintel with the slight modification that “Powerful (in) the Life of Amon” has parentheses about the word “in.”<sup>28</sup> The translation thus given confuses the singular “god Euergetes” with the plural “Gods Euergetai,” and makes Cleopatra III the object, rather than the subject, of her own epithet, with the well-attested “Philometor Soteira” become a laudatory expression for the disliked son Ptolemy, “the Champion of the Goddess Philometor.” Cleopatra would not have approved. The final phrase is not “Powerful (in) the Life of Amon,” but one of several late variants of the theological name **Tw.t ʿnh ʾImn**, “the living image of Amon,” translated into Greek as εἰκὼν ζωσα τοῦ Διός.<sup>29</sup> For other rulers, the synonyms **snn** and **t̄i.t** are used to express the same imagistic concept.<sup>30</sup>

It is worth noting the relative position of the gods named in the cartouche. From Ptolemy IV onward, the earlier **stp n R** “the chosen of Re” is regularly replaced by **stp n Pth** “the chosen of Ptah,” and Ptah appears first among the triad of gods mentioned, followed by Re and Amon. This order reflects the theological ascendancy of Memphis from post-Saite times, and the dominant positions of the High Priests of Ptah in later Egyptian society (and during the Ptolemaic era in particular). The close bond between the Memphite “papacy” and the Ptolemaic dynasty is underscored even earlier by the regular addition of the phrase **mr̄i Pth** “beloved of Ptah” to almost every Ptolemaic Nomen from Ptolemy III onward.<sup>31</sup> The now secondary position of Re accords with the recently recognized incorporation of ancient Heliopolitan materials into the city of Alexandria, as shown by the underwater excavations by Frank Goddio. The placement of Amon last signals both the continued importance of the god’s

---

<sup>27</sup> Khonsu II, p. 60.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61. The phrase seems to be carved without an “n” in all cases on the wall.

<sup>29</sup> For the common later term **sh̄m** “image,” see *Wb. IV*, pp. 244-45, esp. p. 245/1, where the Ptolemaic title is explicitly noted.

<sup>30</sup> R. K. Ritner, The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice, SAOC 54, Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 1993, p. 248, n. 1140.

<sup>31</sup> The exception is Ptolemy IV, who is “beloved of Isis,” the chief goddess of the state cult in Alexandria. The last few Ptolemies are “beloved of Ptah and Isis.”



cult and the diminution in status of Thebes, first encountered under the Delta-based Ramessides. The relative political isolation of Thebes made it a ready base for revolt, with recent historical and religious ties to Nubia rather than to the North.

The appearance of Cleopatra III and her mention in Ptolemy's Prenomen conclusively link this wall decoration to the earlier reign of Ptolemy IX. The same conclusion can be applied to a relief series on the Theban west bank on the exterior south wall of the temple of Deir el-Medina.<sup>32</sup> As at the Khonsu temple, the dedicatory inscription begins by invoking "Long live the female Horus, the Lady of the Two Lands, Cleopatra, together with her son ... Ptolemy." Below the dedication, in the dominant lefthand scene, Cleopatra III precedes Ptolemy in offering to the Theban triad, while in the righthand scene Ptolemy appears alone offering to Hathor and Maat. In all instances, Ptolemy's Prenomen is identical to the four examples at the Khonsu temple (see Text Figure 3). Aside from minor changes, Ptolemy's Nepty-name (and the rest of his titulary) also duplicates the texts at Khonsu temple.<sup>33</sup> The identity of the texts and the similarity in the spatial hierarchy accorded queen and king suggest that the reliefs on both banks were commissioned at the same time.<sup>34</sup>

Whatever domestic harmony had prevailed at court ended in 107, when Cleopatra III accused her eldest son of attempting to kill her. Ptolemy IX was driven from Egypt to Cyprus, leaving behind his wife and sons.

---

<sup>32</sup> Porter and Moss, II, Theban Temples, second edition, Oxford: 1972, p. 407, no. 34 and plan XL.2 (the interior north wall of the brick mammisi); and Chic. Or. Inst. photos. 8955-56. These scenes are included in Minas 2000, pp. 29-31, as Document 57. Contra Minas, pp. 30-31, the epithet in the ancestor list **t3 ntr.t mr mw.t=f** should designate Cleopatra II, not Cleopatra III who is already noted in the following **ntr.wy mr.wy mw.t**. Cleopatra II is indicated separately from her two husbands and by the very epithet "Philometor" which she had used individually and imposed on her daughter and grandson. The mammisi reliefs and texts are now published in du Bourguet, Le Temple de Deir el-Médina, pp. 167-71 and 357-58, but the published arrangement of the texts inverts the intended status of queen and king, numbering the king and his titles first (no. 183, 2-3), although in fact they follow the queen and her cartouche (no. 183, 6).

<sup>33</sup> Khonsu II, plate 191, copies in the Horus name only **dsr ms.w** instead of the expected **dsr msh<sup>c</sup>.w** found at Deir el-Medina; see similarly Gauthier 1916, p. 360. As noted above, the Nepty-name at the Khonsu temple uses a **sdm=f** rather than a **sdm.n=f** relative (**sh<sup>c</sup> sw mw.t=f** vs. **sh<sup>c</sup>.n sw mw.t=f**).

<sup>34</sup> Both scenes were briefly noted in Murnane 1977, p. 100, with the suggestion that they "probably date to the extreme youth of the king."

Cleopatra's troops forced him from Cyprus to Seleukia in Pereia, where he at last repulsed them. Cleopatra's commander was executed for failing to kill the son "who loved his mother,"<sup>35</sup> and Ptolemy IX returned to Cyprus and ruled the island independently from 106 until 88.<sup>36</sup> The younger Ptolemy X, Alexander I, exchanged positions with his brother and became the new monarch of Egypt: *ḳwꜥ (n) nṯr mnḥ nṯr.t mnḥ.t Rꜥ.t stp n Pṯḥ ḳr mꜥꜥ.t (n) Rꜥ snn ꜥnḥ n ḳmn.*

"Heir of the beneficent god and the beneficent goddess and female Re, the chosen of Ptah, who performs Maat for Re, the living image of Amon."<sup>37</sup>

Like his elder brother, Ptolemy X was designated "the one whose mother placed him upon the throne of his father" (*shꜥ.n sw mw.tꜥf ḥr ns.t ḳtꜥf*), but now this significant epithet was promoted from the Nebty to the Horus name.<sup>38</sup> The triumphal arrival of Ptolemy X was celebrated in the Great Building Inscription of Edfu as a king "who entered Egypt in peace, his soldiers rejoicing, the gods and goddesses as his protection, to whom very numerous Sed-festivals were given by Ptah-Tenen, the father of the gods, to whom kingship was given by Re-Atum, and valor and victory by Amon."<sup>39</sup> The relative positions of Ptah, Re and Amon are again notable. This encomium was considered sufficiently stylish for an invading usurper that it was adapted on the exterior bandeau-texts of the Karnak Opet temple to describe Octavian's later invasion of Egypt.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Justin. XXXIX.4.

<sup>36</sup> Alexander began his regnal years in 114 while in Cyprus, so his 27 years of rule represent only 19 years in Egypt.

<sup>37</sup> See Gauthier 1916, pp. 366-90, especially pp. 386-87; and von Beckerath 1984, pp. 292-93. Gauthier's defective copy from Edfu on p. 390, LXXXVIII, substitutes *ꜥꜥ.t* for *mnḥ.t* and *mrḳ* for *ḳwꜥ*. The former, but not the latter, error is corrected in von Beckerath 1984, p. 292, T2. For the correct form, see De Wit, CdÉ XXXVI no. 72 (1961), p. 294.

<sup>38</sup> See Gauthier 1916, p. 386; von Beckerath 1984, p. 292; De Wit, CdÉ XXXVI no. 72 (1961), p. 277; Kurth 2004, p. 45; and Hölbl 2001, p. 207 at n. 137.

<sup>39</sup> Chassinat, Edfou VII, p. 10; De Wit, CdÉ XXXVI no. 72 (1961), p. 296; and Kurth 2004, p. 54: *ꜥqꜥf Tꜥ-mrḳ m ḥtp mnfy.tꜥf m ḥꜥꜥ nṯr.w nṯr.wt m sꜥwꜥf rdḳ.(w) nꜥf ḥb.w-sd ꜥꜥꜥ.w wr.w ḳn Pṯḥ-Tnn ḳt nṯr.w rdḳ.(w) nꜥf ny.t-sw.t (ḳ)n Rꜥ-ḳtm qn nḥt ḳn ḳmn.*

<sup>40</sup> Constant De Wit, Les Inscriptions du temple d'Opet, à Karnak, vol. I, BAe XI, Brussels: Fondation égyptologique Reine Élisabeth, 1958, pp. 232, l. 2 and 264, l. 2; idem, Les Inscriptions du temple d'Opet, à Karnak, vol. III, BAe XIII, Brussels: Fondation égyptologique Reine Élisabeth, 1968, pp. 109 and 119; and idem, "Une

Soter's attempt to invade Egypt in 103 was repulsed, but the feuding Ptolemies convulsed Seleucid politics from 103 to 101, as evidenced not only by Greek and Latin sources but by a statue erected at Karnak by Padiimhotep, the Egyptian general of Cleopatra III.<sup>41</sup> In 101, the "more pliant" Ptolemy X had Cleopatra III murdered, and he took his brother's daughter, Cleopatra-Bernice III, as queen. A decade later, in 91, Demotic records indicate that much of Upper Egypt was in revolt,<sup>42</sup> and in 89 an Alexandrian revolt expelled Ptolemy X Alexander I and recalled Ptolemy IX Soter II to the throne.<sup>43</sup> Ptolemy X died while attempting to take Cyprus.<sup>44</sup> The reentry of Soter II in 88 entailed active warfare not against a Ptolemaic opponent, but against the continuing native revolts. Witness to the conflict survives in five letters of Platon, epistrategos of the Thebaid, written

---

mention de Rome dans une texte hiéroglyphique du temps d'Auguste," Mélanges Mariette, BdE 32, Cairo: IFAO, 1961, pp. 63-69: **ꜥꜣꜥ Tꜣ-mrꜥ hrꜥ.w mnfy.t m ꜥꜥ ntr.w ntr.wt ꜥꜥ m shmꜥf mꜥ Rꜥ psd m ꜣꜥ.t** "He entered Egypt happily, the soldiers rejoicing, the gods and goddesses seized by his power like (that of) Re shining in the horizon." De Wit's translation differs (*inter alia*) in restoring (**m-sꜣꜥf**) "behind him" after **ntr.w ntr.wt** on the basis of the Edfu text of Ptolemy X, but he does acknowledge that other scholars insisted on a passive (stative) translation for **ꜥꜥ**; see idem 1961, p. 66, nn. e-f; and idem 1968, p. 139, nn. 440-41. The Opet bandeau texts lack **m-sꜣꜥf** in both exemplars. Octavian's suppression of the Memphite "papacy" (probably including the murder of the incumbent High Priest) is indicated by the switch from **stp n Pth** to **stp n Nwn** (transitionally **stp n Pth-Nwn** at Kalabsha), and the encomium is further modified at Kalabsha and Esna; see De Wit 1968, p. 139, n. 439.

<sup>41</sup> Turin 3062 (formerly linked to Tell el-Balamoun and the reign of Ptolemy III or IV) + Karnak Karakol 258; see Jan Quaegebeur, in E. Van 't Dack, et al., The Judean-Syrian-Egyptian War of 103-101 BC, Brussels, 1989, pp. 88-108; B. H. Stricker, "Graeco-egyptische sculptuur," OMRO 40 (1959): p. 14 and plate VII.1; and Hölbl 2001, p. 209.

<sup>42</sup> W. Spiegelberg, "Eine neue Erwähnung eines Aufstandes in Oberägypten in der Ptolemäerzeit," ZÄS 65 (1930): 53-57 (P. dem Berlin 13608 in year 24 = 91 BC.). See also P. Cairo 30963 (92/91 BC).

<sup>43</sup> W. B. Emery, "Preliminary Report on the Excavations at North Saqqara, 1969-70," JEA 57 (1971): 5-6 and plate V/4; properly read in K.-Th. Zauzich, "Enchoria 7 (1977): 193: "regnal year 26 which equals year 29, month 3 of ..., Pharaoh being outside of Egypt." For the expulsion of Ptolemy X and the return of Ptolemy IX, see the overview in Claire Preaux, "Équisse d'une histoire des révolutions égyptiennes sous les Lagides," CdÉ 22 (1936): 547-550; and E. Van 't Dack, et al., The Judean-Syrian-Egyptian War of 103-101 BC, Brussels, 1989, pp. 136-50.

<sup>44</sup> Edfou VII, 1-20; De Wit, CdÉ XXXVI no. 72 (1961), pp. 277-320; and Alan E. Samuel, "Year 27=30 and 88 BC.," CdÉ 40 (1965): 376-400. Ptolemy X reigned only a few days into his 19th (officially the 26th) year. News of the change of kings reached Pathyris between September 6 and October 5; Soter was in Memphis by November 1.

between March and November 88 to the native Egyptian commander Nakhthor and the inhabitants of besieged Pathyris (Gebelein) encouraging them to hold out on behalf of the king (first Alexander then Soter).<sup>45</sup>

**Letter 1 (P. London 465 = SB 6300)**

“Platon to the inhabitants of Pathyris, greeting and good health. Having marched out from Latopolis (Esna) in order to take in hand the situation in accordance with the interests of the state, I have thought it well to inform you and to exhort you to keep up a good courage yourselves, and to rally to Nechthyris who has been given command over you, until I come to your district, with what haste I can. Farewell. Year 26 (of Alexander), Phamenoth 16.” (March 28, 88)

**Letter 2 (P. Bouriant 10 = SB 6643)**

“Platon to Nechthyris, greeting. I have marched out from Latopolis in order to take in hand the situation in accordance with the interests of the state, and I have written to the inhabitants, bidding them to rally to you. You will do well to hold the place and to exercise your command. Those who show a tendency to disobey you [...] until I come to join you, with what haste I can. Farewell. Year 26 (of Alexander), Phamenoth 16.” (March 28, 88)

**Letter 3 (P. Bouriant 11 = SB 6644)**

Though fragmentary, the letter from Platon to Nakhthor (March 30, 88) discusses provisions and may indicate that Platon was preparing for a seige.<sup>46</sup>

**Letter 4 (P. Bad. II 16 = SB 7180)**

---

<sup>45</sup> Ulrich Wilcken, *AFP* 13 (1939): 221-22 (SB 6300, SB 6643, SB 6644, SB 7180 and Chrest. 12). See P. Collart, “La révolte de la Thébaïde en 88 avant J.-C.,” *Receuil d’études égyptologiques dédiées à la mémoire de Jean-François Champollion*, Paris: Honoré Champion, 1922, pp. 273-82; E. Van ‘t Dack, et al., 1989, pp. 146-49; and the bibliography in Preaux 1936, p. 548, n. 4. The following translations are adapted from A. S. Hunt and C. C. Edgar, *Select Papyri II*, Loeb Library, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1934, pp. 568-71; Bevan 1927, pp. 335-36; and Collart, pp. 274-77. For likely Demotic attestations of Nakhthor (P. dem. Heidelberg 746 and 650a = 750a), see W. Spiegelberg, “Papyrus Erbach,” *ZÄS* 42 (1905): 47-50 and 52-53; and E. Van ‘t Dack, et al., 1989, pp. 65-69 and 147-49. On pp. 147 and 149, n. 157, Van ‘t Dack has wrongly cited Pestman, *Chronologie* rather than Pestman, *P. L. Bat. XIV*.

<sup>46</sup> Samuel 1965, p. 383.

“Platon to the priests and the other inhabitants in Pathyris, greeting. You will do well to rally [to Nechthyris] in order that the place may be kept safe for our lord the king. For if you do so, and maintain your loyalty to the realm ... from those above us you will meet with the fitting gratitude ...”

**Letter 5 (P. Bouriant 12 = Wilcken, Chrest. 12)<sup>47</sup>**

“Platon to the priests and the other inhabitants in Pathyris, greeting. Philoxenus my brother has informed me in a letter which Orses has brought me that the Greatest God King Soter has come to Memphis and that Hierax has been appointed to subjugate the Thebaid with very large forces. In order that this news may keep up your courage, I have thought it well to inform you. Farewell. Year 30 (of Soter), Phaophi 19 (= November 1, 88).

The subjugation of the Thebaid required three years, and its impact on Thebes itself was disastrous. On the basis of comments by the Greek author Pausanias, Bevan concluded that the town “remained a mere shadow of its former self, a place of ruins.”<sup>48</sup> In a frequently-cited historical overview, Pausanias writes as follows:

“Alexander fled in fear of the citizens, Ptolemy returned and for the second time assumed control of Egypt. He made war against the Thebans, who had revolted, reduced them three years after the revolt, and treated them so cruelly that they were left not even a memorial of their former prosperity, which had so grown that they surpassed in wealth the richest of the Greeks.”  
**(Pausanias I. 9. 3)<sup>49</sup>**

The destruction of Thebes was a vivid image for Pausanias, and in a later book he again uses the city as emblematic of catastrophic reversal of fortunes. Rarely noted, the second passage is equally striking in describing the new poverty of the city.

---

<sup>47</sup> L. Mitteis and U. Wilcken, *Grundzüge und Chrestomathie der Papyrskunde*, vol. I/2: Chrestomathie, Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1912, p. 22; and cf. vol. I/1: Historischer Teil, p. 22.

<sup>48</sup> Bevan 1927, p. 337.

<sup>49</sup> *Pausanias, Description of Greece*, vol. I, trans. by W. H. S. Jones, New York: Loeb Library, 1918, pp. 42-43. Jones mistranslated 3 years (ἔτει τρίτω) as 2 years.

“Of the opulent places in the ancient world, Egyptian Thebes ... [is] now less prosperous than a private individual of moderate means.”(**Pausanias VIII. 33. 2**)<sup>50</sup>

The three-year campaign noted by Pausanias should probably be dated from the return of Soter II, i.e. from 88 to 85.<sup>51</sup> Corroboration for the campaign and its destructive impact on the Thebaid can be found in the surviving record of papyri and ostraca. While not exhaustive, the selection of Demotic texts in P. W. Pestman’s study of Egyptian chronology reveals a clear pattern.<sup>52</sup> In year 29 (of Soter) = year 26 (of Alexander), corresponding to September 14, 89 to September 13, 88, six documents are noted, of which five derive from the Thebaid with the usual subjects (temple oaths and tax payments) and are dated exclusively to Ptolemy Alexander I. The other document from this year, P. dem. Cairo 30614, derives from farther north, in Tebtunis, and dates by both kings but employs only the epithet appropriate for Soter: “the gods who save.”<sup>53</sup> The following, concluding year of Alexander (30 of Soter = 27 of Alexander, corresponding to September 14, 88 to September 13, 87),<sup>54</sup> is attested by a single document from Pathyris, which now introduces double dates with that of Alexander first (year 27 which amounts to year 30, 21 Thoth = October 4, 88), but the protocol names only Ptolemy, son of Ptolemy, the Soter (**p3 swtr**). On 22 Thoth (October 5, 88), the very day after this last, implied reference to Alexander I, the Pathyrite temple oath P. Strassburg 12 now gives only the regnal year 30 of Soter II. On Phaophi 19 (= November 1, 88), Platon’s fifth letter to Pathyris warns of the impending invasion by Soter’s army. While this series of documentation has often been cited as evidence for both the change of reigns and the transmission of this information to the south, the

---

<sup>50</sup> Pausanias, Description of Greece, vol. IV, trans. by W. H. S. Jones, Cambridge, MA: Loeb Library, 1975, pp. 66-69.

<sup>51</sup> In contrast to most other scholars, Hölbl 2001, p. 211, dates the suppression of the rebellion to about 90-88 BC, but Pausanias’s frame of reference (“after 3 years”) is more likely to be the known return of Soter II and not the actual outbreak of hostilities. The destruction of Thebes is placed in 88 BC by Wilcken 1912, vol. I/1, p. 22, but in 85 BC by Paul Barguet, Le Temple d’Amon-Rê à Karnak, Cairo: IFAO, 1962, p. 23.

<sup>52</sup> P. W. Pestman, Chronologie égyptienne d’après les textes démotiques (332 av. J.-C. - 453 ap. J.-C.), PLB XV, Leiden: Brill, 1967, pp. 74-77. See also Samuel 1965, pp. 381-82.

<sup>53</sup> Contrast P. Dem. Cairo 30615 of yr. 17 of Ptol. X Alexander, without double dates, created for the same parties (Pestman 1967, p. 73).

<sup>54</sup> In reality, Alexander’s final year 27 lasted no more than a few days; see Samuel 1965, p. 382.

series also marks another, more ominous development. In Thebes, a land measurement ( $r r h = w r$ ) document is attested from year 30, Mesore 2 (11 August 87) of Ptolemy Soter II,<sup>55</sup> and then no further Theban documents are dated to his reign. As Clarysse has noted, after 88 B.C., “Theban papyri become very scarce indeed and our information on the town stems mainly from a continuing stream of ostraca, most of them tax receipts. No doubt this situation partly reflects the decline of the town, by Strabo’s time reduced to a cluster of villages on both sides of the Nile.”<sup>56</sup> A similar situation prevails at nearby Pathyris. As succinctly stated by Katelijn Vandorpe, “Documentation, so abundant from c. 186 B.C. onwards, ended abruptly: no Pathyris papyri or ostraca are found after 88 B.C.”<sup>57</sup> Actually, one last document does survive from Pathyris, dated to 80 B.C. just after the death of Soter II.<sup>58</sup> The termination of Greek and Egyptian business records suggests more than the removal of a local garrison (as suggested by Pestman);<sup>59</sup> the economic life of the Thebaid was imperiled.

Though diminished, Thebes certainly was not totally destroyed. A bilingual priestly decree from Karnak under Cleopatra VII (issued March 18, 39) celebrates the local strategos Kallimachos as “savior of the city” during a recent period of famine, when he “took religious care of all that appertained to the worship of the gods, as his grandfather had done.”<sup>60</sup> This reference to an earlier protection was linked by Mahaffy to the invasion of

---

<sup>55</sup> H. Thompson, *Theban Ostraca*, London: Oxford University Press, 1913, pp. 44-45 (D 23). For the correct dating, see Pestman 1967, p. 76. The impact of Soter II’s invasion on the Theban choachyte documentation is noted in A. Bataille, *Les Memnonia*, Cairo: IFAO, 1952, p. 263.

<sup>56</sup> W. Clarysse, “Theban Personal Names and the Cult of Buchis,” in H.-J. Thissen and K.-Th. Zauzich, eds., *Grammata Demotika*, Würzburg: Gisela Zauzich Verlag, 1984, p. 25.

<sup>57</sup> Katelijn Vandorpe, *The Bilingual Family Archive of Dryton, His Wife Apollonia and Their Daughter Senmouthis*, *Collectanea Hellenistica IV*, Brussels: Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie van België, 2002, p. 9.

<sup>58</sup> See Pestman 1965, p. 51 and n. 28: “Contre 300 documents environ datant des 60 années précédant l’an 88 av. J.-C., nous en connaissons un seul de la période de 60 ans suivant cette date: P. dém. Cairo 30752 (80 av. J.-C.)” This Cairo papyrus (from Gebelein/Pathyris) is dated to the first year of Cleopatra-Bernice III and Ptolemy XI Alexander II.

<sup>59</sup> So *ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>60</sup> *OGIS* 194; André Bernand, *La prose dur pierre dans l’Égypte hellénistique et romaine*, vol. I, Paris: CNRS, 1992, pp. 106-09, esp. 108-09, ll. 23-26; and Mahaffy 1899, pp. 244-46 (quote on p. 245).

Soter II forty years before. For Mahaffy, the text “seems to imply that by the interference of this grandfather the privileges of the city had been spared more than our other sources admit.”<sup>61</sup> Bevan found this argument unconvincing as he knew of no benefactions by Ptolemy IX after his return:

“The traces which Soter has left of himself in Egyptian buildings seem to belong to his earlier reign (116-107).”<sup>62</sup>

The same opinion had been given earlier by Gauthier in his Livre des Rois: “Il est probable que presque tous, sinon absolument tous les travaux de Ptolémée ... en Haute Égypte datent de son premier règne ..., car la plus grande partie de son second règne ... a été consacrée à la répression de la révolte de la Thébaïde et ne devait pas lui laisser le loisir de songer à des constructions ou restaurations de monuments.”<sup>63</sup>

Examination of Soter’s cartouches in Thebes, however, show these conclusions to be wrong. Paralleling his earlier Theban attestations, Soter is again represented at one site on each bank of the river, but now at central Karnak and on the first and second pylons at the small temple of Medinet Habu. The issue is particularly significant for the disputed construction history of the little temple of Medinet Habu, which includes cartouches of both Ptolemy Alexander I and Soter II. In 1939, Hölscher noted the work of both rulers at the site and assigned the heightening of the gateway of the second (Ethiopian) pylon to Alexander I. The flanking renewal texts of Soter II are mentioned, but Hölscher lists both periods of the king’s rule without preference.<sup>64</sup> Regarding Soter’s more extensive attestation on the western, or first, pylon, however, he concluded that this king’s work dated to his second reign. His decision was based simply upon the proximity, not the content, of cartouches:

---

<sup>61</sup> Mahaffy 1899, p. 46; and Bevan 1927, p. 337 (who doubts Mahaffy’s interpretation). The Kallimachos stela is noted by Hölbl 2001, pp. 239-40, but he makes no mention of the grandfather’s benefactions.

<sup>62</sup> Bevan 1927, p. 337. The stela is cited in K. Vandorpe 1995, p. 235, as evidence of Pausanias’ exaggeration, but she notes only the subsequent construction under Ptolemy Auletes, not Soter II (ibid., n. 241).

<sup>63</sup> Gauthier 1916, p. 362. Eliminated from the quotation are Gauthier’s numbering of Soter II as Ptolemy X and his incorrect dates for the two periods of rule.

<sup>64</sup> Uvo Hölscher, The Temples of the Eighteenth Dynasty, The Excavations of Medinet Habu - volume II, OIP 41, Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1939, pp. 27 and 30.



“Cartouches found on the east side and interior of the gateway mention Ptolemy ... Soter II, the older brother of Ptolemy ... Alexander I, who reigned before and after the latter ... On the rear of the gate appear only empty cartouches at the top, as the sculptor was probably ignorant as to who would next come to the throne. Below, however, the name of Ptolemy ... Neos Dionysus, called Auletes (80-51 B.C.), who succeeded Soter II, appears in the cartouches. It is thus probable that Soter II, in the second period of his reign, was the actual builder and that Auletes only added nonessential details to the decoration.”<sup>65</sup>

Hölscher’s assessment differs from that of Somers Clarke, who in 1899 had insisted that Soter’s cartouches were themselves mere additions to the uncompleted work of his father: “Until refuted by better and more direct evidence, I shall consider the unfinished west pylon to be the work of Ptolemy [Euergetes II], arrested in the days of Ptolemy [Soter].”<sup>66</sup> By implication, it was the eviction of Soter in 107 that prompted the curtailment of the project.

The “better and more direct evidence” demanded by Somers Clarke has been “hiding in plain sight” in the unexamined Prenomen of Soter II. Although Murnane once sought to distinguish youthful from mature depictions of Ptolemy IX Soter II on the basis of the relative position of Cleopatra III in joint scenes, the true distinguishing feature of Soter’s mature reign is rather the absence of his mother.<sup>67</sup> On his return, Cleopatra was deceased and her image irrelevant. Officially, Soter II “no longer loved his mother,” and he eliminated the epithet “Philometor” from his titulary while retaining the epithet “Soter.”<sup>68</sup> All of the Medinet Habu inscriptions conform to this later style, which is distinguished not only by the removal of an offensive element, but by a politically significant, though completely overlooked, addition.

---

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., pp. 57 and 59 (quote on p. 59). Hölscher identifies Ptolemy Soter II as Ptolemy VIII, Ptolemy Alexander I as Ptolemy IX and Ptolemy Auletes as Ptolemy XI.

<sup>66</sup> Mahaffy 1899, pp. 209-11, quote on p. 211. Mahaffy and Somers Clarke use Ptolemy IX. for Euergetes II and X. for Soter II. In contrast to Mahaffy, Bevan 1927, p. 339, also attributes the construction of the western pylon to Soter II, but before his expulsion.

<sup>67</sup> Murnane 1977, p. 100. Cleopatra III never ceded her primary position in the joint titulary, and the eleven-year coregency would hardly allow a change from “extreme youth” to “maturity.”

<sup>68</sup> Pestman 1967, pp. 75-76. The quotation is adapted from *ibid.*, p. 76.

While a single instance at the Memphite Serapeum describes the reinstated Soter as “the youth who was again king”(pꜣ ḥwn ἰ-ἰr wḥm (n) ny-sw.t),<sup>69</sup> the new Theban Prenomen for Ptolemy Soter II adopts a consistent pattern. Ptolemy IX is now ἰwꜥ ʿꜣ n ntr.w mnḥ.w stp n Pth ἰr mꜣꜥ.t (n) Rꜥ sḥm ʿnh (n) ḥmn

“Elder heir of the beneficent gods, the chosen of Ptah, who performs Maat for Re, the living image of Amon.”<sup>70</sup>

Gone are the special epithets of Cleopatra III, whose role is now subsumed within the epithet of her husband, Euergetes II, as merely one of the pair of “beneficent gods.” More importantly, Soter’s new Prenomen deviates from standard Ptolemaic practice by designating the king not simply as “heir” of his deified parents, but as the “elder heir” (ἰwꜥ ʿꜣ). All published copies of Soter’s cartouches from the little temple of Medinet Habu have obscured this reading by conflating elements of the older and younger Prenomen (see Text Figure 4). In place of the new ʿꜣ, published versions miscopy the older termination “t” and egg from the now-eliminated epithet of Cleopatra III, nd.t (“the female savior”).<sup>71</sup> The result is unintelligible, and the fact that it has not been questioned is further sad testament to the general disinterest in Ptolemaic titularies. At Medinet Habu, the later Prenomen appears twice (in flanking renewal inscriptions) on the little temple’s second pylon and more than 16 times on the eastern face and interior of the first pylon.<sup>72</sup> Although the vertical carving of ʿꜣ at Medinet Habu bears a resemblance to the adjacent sign mnḥ, the proper reading is certain and substantiated by examples across the river at Karnak.

<sup>69</sup> Thesaurus 986, no. 50b; see Pestman 1967, p. 77.

<sup>70</sup> Although Griffith (Mahaffy 1898, p. 256) and von Beckerath (1984, p. 120) employ the dual to represent the divine parents, that form was defunct and the hieroglyphic (and Demotic) texts employ plural strokes (ntr.w mnḥ.w not ntr.wy mnḥ.wy). In the renewal texts on the second pylon at Medinet Habu and at Karnak, the genitive “n” before Amon is written; otherwise the texts vary only in spatial arrangement.

<sup>71</sup> The Prenomen was miscopied by R. Lepsius, Denkmäler aus Ägypten und Äthiopien. Abteilung IV, Berlin: Nicolaische Buchhandlung, 1849-59, p. 40 a (= Text III, pp. 151-52); and the error was repeated in Gauthier 1916, p. 360, no. XLVII, and in Mahaffy 1899, p. 206. The later Prenomen is missing from von Beckerath 1984, pp. 291-92.

<sup>72</sup> Nelson Key plans locations MH B 240, and 301-306. The eastern face of the first pylon contains a damaged, 17th example that retains the relevant traces. An 18th example below the roof preserves only the final signs of the Prenomen. The Epigraphic Survey has now recorded ink traces of the earlier cartouche of Ptolemy IX on the red granite Ptolemaic naos in the sanctuary of this small Amon temple.

In room XVa at Karnak, part of a suite of Eighteenth dynasty rooms north of the granite sanctuary, Ptolemy Soter II appears three times offering to Amon, to the Theban triad, and to Ptah, Imhotep and Amenhotep son of Hapu.<sup>73</sup> Although the full scene remains unpublished, one portion of it was reproduced by Wildung in photograph and line drawing in his study of the deified Imhotep and Amenhotep.<sup>74</sup> My own photographs of the wall (Plates I-IV) accompany this study and prove the consistency of the orthography of the Prenomen. Aside from the damaged example in the offering scene before Amon, Ptolemy's Prenomen clearly contains the initial element ꜥwꜥ ꜥꜣ n ntr.w mnḥ.w "Elder heir of the beneficent gods," with the ꜥꜣ-pillar elongated and rotated horizontally. Wildung's copy is the only accurately published facsimile of Soter's later Prenomen (see Text Figure 5), but while he identified the king correctly he did not comment on the text of the cartouche or on its significance for the dating of the relief.

The title "eldest heir" was not chosen capriciously for the hieroglyphic titulary; it is meaningful precisely because it creates a deliberate contrast to the prior "interloper" and junior heir Ptolemy Alexander I. Moreover, the terminology is far more than a simple statement of biological fact or a translation of the Greek *πρεσβύτερος*.<sup>75</sup> It is a conscious selection based on longstanding Egyptian concepts. Parallel usages appear in the "Great Building Inscription" of Edfu temple in propagandistic passages describing both the accession of Ptolemy Soter and his return after the flight of Ptolemy Alexander I:

**wꜥ bꜣk dnḥ.wꜥf r p.t sꜣꜥf wr dꜣꜥf s(w) ḥr ns.tꜥf**

"The falcon (Euergetes II) opened his wings toward heaven (i.e., died). As for his eldest son, he placed himself upon his throne."<sup>76</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Porter and Moss II/2, 1972, p. 104 §312 = Chic. Orinst. photos 6185-87 and 8502 and plate XI. Porter and Moss designate Ptolemy Soter II as Ptolemy X.

<sup>74</sup> Dietrich Wildung, Imhotep und Amenhotep, MÄS 36, Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1977, pp. 211-14 and plates LIV-LV.

<sup>75</sup> For a use of "elder brother" (ὁ *πρεσβύτερος*) questionably linked to Ptolemy IX Soter II in Diodorus, see Diodorus of Sicily, vol. XII, trans. by Francis R. Walton, Loeb Library, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967, pp. 108-09.

<sup>76</sup> E. Chassinat, Le Temple d'Edfou, vol. VII, Cairo: IFAO, 1932, p. 9; De Wit, CdÉ XXXVI no. 72 (1961), pp. 293-94; Dieter Kurth, The Temple of Edfu, Cairo: American University in Cairo, 2004, p. 53; and Gauthier 1916, pp. 346-47, n. 4.

wꜣrꜣf r Pwn.t snꜣf wr šspꜣf Bꜣk.t wḥm.nꜣf ḥꜣ m ny-sw.t

“He (Alexander) fled to Punt. As for his elder brother, he took possession of Egypt. He again appeared as king.”<sup>77</sup>

By anticipatory emphasis, the text stresses Soter’s legitimacy first as “eldest son” and then as “older brother.” Although the Edfu inscription retains the older Prenomen of Soter II with its titles of Cleopatra III, the text notes that Soter “placed himself upon his throne” and concludes its praise of the restored king by noting that it was Horus who “established him on his throne forever.”<sup>78</sup> While such remarks may seem mere platitudes, they do effectively refute Soter’s early Nebty-name “the one whose mother placed him upon the throne of his father.” The title “eldest son” is a technical term in Egyptian legal texts, signifying the proper legal heir and trustee. The designation occurs throughout the Hermopolis Legal Code, cols. VIII/30-X/17, copied during the Ptolemaic era: “If a man dies ... without having deeded shares to his children while alive, it is his eldest son who takes possession of his property.”<sup>79</sup> “No man can say, ‘The property is mine, it is my father’s’, except the eldest son. He is entitled to say, ‘The property is mine, it belongs to my father.’”<sup>80</sup> The same code contrasts the legal authority of the “older” vs. any “younger” brother: “If the younger brothers bring action against their elder brother ... he (the elder brother) is given the share he prefers.”<sup>81</sup>

---

<sup>77</sup> Chassinat 1932, p. 9; and De Wit, CdÉ XXXVI no. 72 (1961), p. 294, l. 8. Punt is here substituted for Cyprus. On pp. 294-95, De Wit has misidentified the earlier Prenomen of Ptolemy Soter II as that of Ptolemy VIII, Euergetes II. See the correct identification in Kurth 2004, pp. 53-54.

<sup>78</sup> De Wit, CdÉ XXXVI no. 72 (1961), p. 295; and Kurth 2004, p. 54.

<sup>79</sup> Col. VIII/30-31; in Girgis Mattha and George R. Hughes, The Demotic Legal Code of Hermopolis West, BdÉ 45, Cairo: IFAO, 1975, pp. 39-43 (quote adapted from p. 39). The title is not merely a reflection of chronological birth, but of legal designation; see *ibid.*, p. 123, n. to ll. 30 and 32.

<sup>80</sup> Col. IX/32-33, in *ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>81</sup> Col. VIII/31-33 in *ibid.*, p. 39. Cf. also the statement in ‘Onchsheshonqy, col. 10/14-15: “Would that it were the ‘elder brother’ of the town who was assigned to it! Would that it were the charitable brother of the family who acted as ‘elder brother’ for it!”; in W. K. Simpson, ed., The Literature of Ancient Egypt, 3rd edition, New Haven: Yale: 2003, p. 509 and n. 22.





Plate II. Ptolemy IX at Karnak (Room XVa) - Offering to Ptah, Imhotep and Amenhotep son of Hapu  
(photo by the author)



Plate III. Ptolemy IX at Karnak (Room XVa) - Offering Maat to the Theban Triad  
(photo by the author)





Plate IV. Ptolemy IX at Karnak (Room XVa) - Detail with Cartouche  
(photo by the author)



## Postscript

Since this original lecture in 2006 and its online publication in 2007, the Theban attestations of Ptolemy Soter II have now been gathered in Jochen Hallof, *Schreibungen der Pharaonennamen in den Ritualszenen der Tempel der griechisch-römischen Zeit Ägyptens, Teil 1: Die griechischen Könige*, Studien zu den Ritualszenen altägyptischer Tempel 4.1, Dettelbach: J. H. Röhl, 2010, pp. 170-71 (Medinet Habu, T.1-15),<sup>85</sup> 183 (Karnak, T. 124),<sup>86</sup> and 185 (Deir el-Medina, T.143-44).<sup>87</sup> In every case, however, Hallof has miscopied Ptolemy's critical, later epithet  $\text{ḥw}^c \text{ ʿ3}$  as  $\text{ḥw}^c \text{ mnḥ}$ , thus perpetuating the early errors discussed above. Hallof does cite available Chic. Or. Inst. photo numbers where relevant and the published copy by Wildung (1977, p. 212) for Karnak, but without benefit to his transcriptions.

---

<sup>85</sup> See also pp. 190-91 (E.5), 195-96 (E.18-19), 197 (E.33 and 41).

<sup>86</sup> See also p. 191 (E.9) and 197-98 (E.42); and 201 (B.15-16).

<sup>87</sup> See also p. 188 (E.1); and 201 (B.18-19).

