

Thoth as Textual Critic

The Interrupting Baboons at Esna Temple

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ἔστι συγγένεια κυνοκεφάλων Αἰγύπτια
ἐπισταμένων γράμματα

There is a type of baboon that understands
Egyptian writing.

Horapollo, *Hieroglyphica*, I.14

HIEROGLYPHS DEPICTING the baboon and the ibis, the two most common avatars of Thoth, could write many phonetic and ideographic values associated with the god. Herman De Meulenaere discussed many of the options in a classic study,¹ and additional values can be found in more recent sign-lists.²

My ongoing study of the writing system and vocabulary of Esna temple has revealed a previously unrecognized logographic use for the simple baboon () , apparently limited to this temple. At Esna, this sign most commonly writes *dd*, *nfr*, *in*, and *i* (the latter usually in the name *'Itm*), but it also represents the copula pronoun *pw* in over twenty examples. Several of the relevant passages have been translated previously, but since scholars were unaware of this potential ideographic value, they typically transcribed the sign as *nfr* or ignored it altogether, sometimes resulting in unconvincing translations.

The first two attestations have direct parallels that spell out the copula pronoun phonetically, establishing the equivalence proposed here. In the other examples, however, this particular reading must be deduced from context. Most often, the pronoun *pw* is the only possible interpretation. Other passages afford multiple possibilities, but even then *pw* is usually the most sensible option, since no compelling reasons (i.e. direct parallels, set phrases) demand alternate readings. Some of the relevant texts present significant challenges and merit further discussion and comparison with helpful parallels (particularly text **24**), so they will be translated with detailed commentary below.

¹ H. DE MEULENAERE, “Les valeurs du signe  à la Basse Époque,” *BIFAO* 54, 1954, p. 73-82.

² D. KURTH, *Einführung ins Ptolemäische*, 2008-2009, (hereafter: D. KURTH, *EP*) I, p. 204-205; II, p. 1125; for additional logographic values for the baboon not registered there, see *infra* “Appendix.”

Examples

1. *Esna* IV, 421, 4 and *Esna* III, 331, 10:³

421, 4:







331, 10:



Nw.t pw nt ȝhty (a) wbnꜣf (b) ḥtpꜣf im=s

Because she is Nut of the Horizon god (Akhty), in whom he rises and sets.

(a) Both versions employ the simplified writing of *ȝhty*, regularly found in the divine name Horakhty (e.g. ) as found in other texts from this temple:  (*Esna* III, 272, 5) and  (*ibid*, 275, 9). Accordingly, one should correct A.W. Blackman's peculiar suggestion to read an identically written god at Edfu as **Tty*, "Table-god,"⁴ especially since a similar group () clearly writes *ȝhty* elsewhere at Edfu.⁵

(b) This sportive, partially acrophonic spelling of *wbn* (*w* < *wꜣd.t*, *b* < *bꜣ*, *n* < *Nw.t*), was noted already by Sauneron for a single hymn (*Esna* III, 331).⁶ In addition to his examples, many orthographies of this verb employ the *bꜣ*-ram:



Esna IV, 421, 3



Esna II, 60, 4



Esna II, 164, A



Esna II, 169, 5



Esna II, 118, 11



Esna III, 272, 4

In the latter two examples, the divine barks write *w* < *wꜣ*,⁷ as they do frequently elsewhere in *Esna*.⁸

As with similar spellings of the verb *psd*, "to shine,"⁹ or the hymn composed entirely with rams (*Esna* II, 126), these orthographies reflect a thoroughly criocentric worldview, in

³ The parallel was translated by S. SAUNERON, *Les fêtes religieuses d'Esna*, *Esna* V, 1962, p. 151.

⁴ A.M. BLACKMAN, "The King of Egypt's Grace Before Meat," *JEA* 31, 1945, p. 63-64, n. 28; followed by P. WILSON, *A Ptolemaic Lexikon*, p. 1178-1179, and *LGG* VII, 447.

⁵ *Edfou* IV, 83, 14; discussed by M.-L. RYHINER, "A propos des trigrammes panthéistes", *RdE* 29, 1977, p. 132, with n. 38.

⁶ S. SAUNERON, *Les fêtes religieuses d'Esna*, p. 155, n. h.

⁷ In Demotic, this term had similarly reduced to a monosyllabic word *w*: Fr. HOFFMANN, "Die Lesung des demotischen Wortes für „Götterbarke“", *Enchoria* 23, 1996, p. 39-51.

⁸ S. SAUNERON, *L'écriture figurative dans les textes d'Esna*, *Esna* VIII, 1982, p. 168-169; D. KURTH, *EP* I, p. 356-357. Specific examples outside of the litanies include: *Esna* II, 96, 2 and 156, 25 (both in *šw*, "Shu"); *Esna* III, 378, 17 and 21 (both in *tꜣw*, "air").

⁹ M.-Th. DERCHAIN-URTEL, *Epigraphische Untersuchungen zur griechisch-römischen Zeit in Ägypten*, *ÄAT* 43, 1999, p. 196-197, and add *Esna* II, 150, 1.

2. *Esna* II, 97, 3; 47, A and B (extended imperial titulary):

Figure 1 displays two sets of hieroglyphic signs. The left set, labeled 'to be', includes a sign of a person standing with a staff, a sign of a person sitting, and a sign of a person standing with a staff. The right set, labeled 'to be not', includes a sign of a person sitting, a sign of a person standing with a staff, and a sign of a person standing with a staff.

Sovereign, [ruler], son of the ruler, it is your decree that approaches up to heaven.

3. *Esna* II, 3, A (Dedication text):

[illegible]

(she is also called Nebtu).

¹³ J.-Cl. GRENIER, *RdE* 38, 1987, 96, n. g. “S’il faut sans doute comprendre *pw* après *wđw/f.l.k* des versions 2 et 4, que faire du babouin assis de la leçon d’Esna?”

Philippe Derchain and Daniel von Recklinghausen skipped over the baboon sign in their translation,¹⁴ perhaps regarding it as a unique determinative for “Shu.” Nonetheless, similar explanatory glosses explicitly identify Khnum Lord of the Field with Shu.¹⁵

Esna III, 232, 12-13 (135-136):



Hnmw Mnhy.t m T3-Sn.t

Khnum and Menhit in Esna:

T3-Tnn pw hn' N.t

that means Tatenen together with Neith.

Hnmw Nb.t-ww m Pr-ntr

Khnum and Nebtu in Pi-Netjer:

Šw pw hn' Tfn.t

that means Shu together with Tefnut.

Esna IV, 424, 1 (epithets of Khnum-Shu):



Hnmw-R' nb-sh.t Šw pw

Khnum-Re Lord of the Field, *that means Shu* (...)

sn.t=f m nb(.t)-3h.t r-gs=f

his sister is as the Lady of the Field beside him,

m m=s n Mnhy.t

in her name of Menhit,

Nb.t-ww hr.tw r=s

(she is also called Nebtu).¹⁶

Esna VI, 507:



ntr w' hp(r) m ntr snw

The sole god who transformed into two,

Hnmw Mnhy.t

(namely) Khnum and Menhit,

Nb.t-ww hr.tw r=s

(she is also called Nebtu).

¹⁴ Ph. DERCHAIN, D. VON RECKLINGHAUSEN, *La création – Die Schöpfung. La façade ptolémaïque du temple d'Esna. Pour une poésie ptolémaïque*, *RitEg* 10, 2004, p. 103: “Schu – Tefnut ist bei ihm als Menhit (Šw Tfntr-hn' =fn Mnhyt).”

¹⁵ Cf. also *Esna III*, 348, 26, describing a festival procession for Khnum Lord of the Field: “the august god (...) *that means Shu*, son of Re (Šw pw z3 R').”

¹⁶ Here and in the following example, the apparent bees are actually unusual forms of the grasshopper, obtaining the normal cryptographic value *r*; cf. D. MEEKS, *Les architraves du temple d'Esna: Paléographie*, *PalHier* 1, 2004, p. 108, §289, 293; for another seemingly apian depiction of a grasshopper or locust, see *id.*, “De quelques ‘insectes’ égyptiens. Entre lexique et paléographie,” in Z. Hawass, P. Der Manuelian, R.B. Hussein (eds), *Perspectives on Ancient Egypt: Studies in Honor of Edward Brovarski*, *CASAE* 40, 2010, p. 291, fig. 9d.

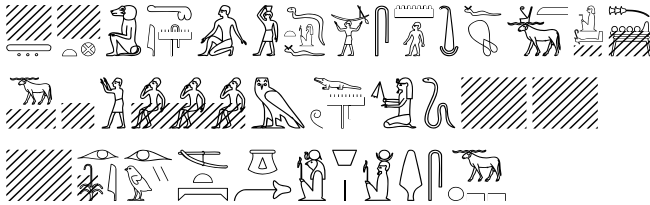
(she is also called Nebtu by name).

(she is also called Nebtu).

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(b) This peculiar epithet designates Thoth specifically at North Esna.²¹ Here “the triad” clearly designates Shu, Tefnut, and Thoth, but elsewhere the other two divinities are Horus and Seth (cf. *LGG* II, 285).

5. *Esna* II, 53:



[...] *T3-[Sn].t pw tīs=f d.t=f (a) im=f*

smn=f snṯ nb m ỉry-wdḥw (b)

[...] it is E[sn]a, in which he reposes his body,

and sets up every foundation as Chief of the Altar.

s[.t nt nhī] ms.w m-ḥnt=s (c)

ṯnī šzy [ḥr mshn.t...] (d)

[...*twṯ*] (e) *m33 sw r (di)-mr.t (f) ḥr-R'*

(i) (h) (g) *im=s (ḥr) shḏ (h) t3.wy*

The pla[ce of beseech]ing children is within it,

and distinguishing fate [upon the birthbrick]

[...] it is more perfect to see than the sky bearing Re,

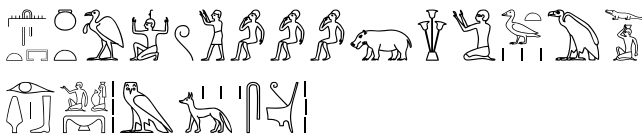
the moon within lighting up the two lands.

(a) This transitive use of *tīs*, “to sit; repose” (not registered in *Wb.* V, 242, 12-18), is also used in *Esna* III, 212, B: *tīs=f d.t=f m šdī.w*, “he reposes his body in the fields.”

(b) The last, damaged group is uncertain, but a similar title is attested in the Middle Kingdom.²² This particular spelling of *nb* (*n + b3*) is quite common at Esna.²³

(c) This passage can be restored thanks to multiple parallels:

Esna II, 16, 1:



s.t nt nhī ms.w

dbḥ 33.wt m-ḥnt=f

ir(.t) im3 bw-nb m ms.w3sn

The place of requesting children,

and of entreating daughters within it:

of making everybody happy with their progeny.

²¹ *Esna* II, 81, 4 (context damaged); *Esna* III, 309, 27; *Esna* VI, 493, 9; in all of these examples, the numeral “three” is written with three *Ba*-birds.

²² H.G. FISCHER, *Egyptian Titles of the Middle Kingdom. A Supplement to Wm. Ward's INDEX*, 1985, p. 40, 57 (No. 519); cf. also the divine epithet *ỉry-wdḥw n R'* (*LGG* I, 406), carried by various “dieux maîtres d'autel.”

²³ Chr. LEITZ, *SAK* 29, 2001, p. 254-255, with n. 20; D. KURTH, *EP* I, p. 210, n. 106; to which one can add several examples, e.g. *Esna* II, 171, B; *Esna* III, 328, A; 393, 23; *Esna* VI, 541, A; *Esna* VII, 549.

[illegible][illegible]

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7. *Esna* II, 75:

hw.t-N.t pw sndm=s im

It is the Temple of Neith, in (which) she dwells.

8. *Esna* II, 80, 7 (epithets of Khnum):



T3-Tnn pw ir nn r-3w

He is Tatenen, who created everything entirely.

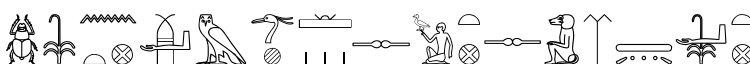
9. *Esna* II, 125, 1:

iwnn (a) pw n N.t nb(.t) k3pw(?) (b) hnw.t Pwn.t

It is the residence of Neith, Lady of kyphi(?), Mistress of Punt.

(a) As frequently at Esna, one must emend the determinative from  to .

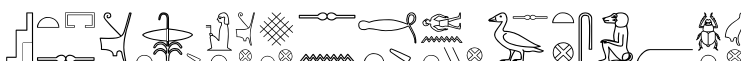
(b) The spelling of this word is problematic, and possibly influenced by the similar toponym *Kpn*, “Byblos.” Either term would be appropriate for the present text, a description of the temple “laboratory” that held incense, oils, and other *materia sacra*.³⁶

10. *Esna* II, 163, 19 (hymn to Neith):

T3-Sn.t pr(.w) m 3h.w=s Z3w=s pw m t3-sm

Esna is equipped with her excellent things, for it is her Sais in Upper Egypt.

Sauneron translated this passage correctly (“car c’est sa ville de Saïs dans le pays du Sud!”), but did not comment on the baboon’s function.³⁷

11. *Esna* IV, 424, 3:

s.t=s n rs3.t (T3)-Sn.t (a)

Her southern seat is Esna,

³⁶ Cf. S. SAUNERON, *Esna* II, p. 225.

³⁷ S. SAUNERON, *Les fêtes religieuses d’Esna*, p. 289.

$sp\mathfrak{z}.t\mathfrak{z}s\ n\ m\mathfrak{h}.t\ M\mathfrak{h}-N.t$ (her northern district being $M\mathfrak{h}-N.t$),
 $Z\mathfrak{z}w\mathfrak{z}s\ pw\ m\ t\mathfrak{z}-\mathfrak{s}m'$ it (Esna) is her Sais in Upper Egypt.

(a) Although the toponym “Esna” is consistently written $T\mathfrak{z}-Sn.t$ throughout the temple, a few examples omit the initial element,³⁸ and this abbreviated form is standard in Demotic papyri.³⁹

Without mentioning the parallelism with the preceding example (10), Alexandra von Lieven translated this passage slightly differently: “das $M\mathfrak{h}-N.t$ -Heiligtum ist ihr schönes Sais in Oberägypten ($S\mathfrak{z}w.t\mathfrak{z}s\ n\mathfrak{f}r\ m\ t\mathfrak{z}\ \mathfrak{s}m'$).”⁴⁰ Yet in the parallel, Esna itself, not the $M\mathfrak{h}-N.t$, is called “Sais of Upper Egypt.” Indeed the present text distinguishes between Neith’s two residences, the twin Sais of Upper and Lower Egypt:⁴¹ the original city in the Delta (here parenthetically called $M\mathfrak{h}-N.t$, emphasizing its northern location), and the secondary, southern residence (Esna).

Elsewhere, only one inscription directly identifies Esna with the $M\mathfrak{h}-N.t$ (*Esna* II, 16, 2).⁴² However this is a cult-topographical monography listing alliterative pairings between the temple and its chief divinities; thus Esna is called, *inter alia*, “the $M\mathfrak{h}-N.t$ of Methyer ($M\mathfrak{h}-N.t\ n\ M\mathfrak{h}.t-wr.t$).” In similar texts, these correspondences can often be quite forced, and thus there is little reason to assume the $M\mathfrak{h}-N.t$ was a standard designation for Esna.

12. *Esna* II, 190, 1 (describing the colonnade hall using various idyllic metaphors):



$twf\ pw\ swtwt\mathfrak{z}k\ r\ m\mathfrak{z}\mathfrak{z}\mathfrak{z}f$

It is a reed-marsh which you travel to behold.⁴³

³⁸ E.g. *Esna* II, 60, 2; 63, 1; *Esna* III, 206, 2

³⁹ Ph. COLLOMBERT, “À propos des toponymes de la stèle Bucheum n° 9,” in A. Gasse, Fr. Servajean, Chr. Thiers (eds), *Et in Aegypto et ad Aegyptum. Recueil d'études dédiées à Jean-Claude Grenier II*, CENiM 5, 2012, p. 203-206.

⁴⁰ A. VON LIEVEN, *Der Himmel über Esna: eine Fallstudie zur religiösen Astronomie in Ägypten am Beispiel der kosmologischen Decken- und Architravinschriften im Tempel von Esna*, ÄgAbh 64, 2000, p. 98-99.

⁴¹ Esna if frequently identified as Sais in Upper Egypt: e.g. *Esna* II, 83, 1; 163, 25; *Esna* IV, 424, 3; *Esna* VII, 598.

⁴² Another inscription states that the small “laboratory” at Esna (cf. supra, n. 31) was also called “ $M\mathfrak{h}-N.t$ ”; but the same text continues by noting this was true everywhere in Egypt (*Esna* II, 85, 2: $hpr\ M\mathfrak{h}-N.t\ m\ rn\mathfrak{z}s\ hr\ i\mathfrak{z}b.t\ n\ r-pr\ nb\ r-mn\ hrw\ pn$, “Its name has come to be $M\mathfrak{h}-N.t$ on the left-side of all temples, up until today.”); cf. also *Esna* II, 163, 19.

⁴³ Note the more extensive parallel in *Esna* II, 156, 21: “(May you find the very great hypostyle hall filled with columns rising up to meet your Majesty), just like a reed-marsh which you would travel to behold ($mi\ twf\ swtwt\mathfrak{z}k\ r\ m\mathfrak{z}\mathfrak{z}\mathfrak{z}f$).”

13. *Esna* III, 224, 1:

dr nty hb Pth pw hꜥf p.t m hrw pn

For it is the festival of Ptah, he lifts up the sky on this day.

Sauneron translated: “car c’est la fête de Ptah-au-beau-visage qui a soulevé le ciel en ce jour,” restoring a face (*hr*) on the knee of the baboon (*nfr*), thus writing Ptah’s typical epithet *nfr-hr*.⁴⁴ However, he did not explain which word in the passage corresponds to “c’est”, nor did he justify rendering the subsequent *sꜣdmꜥf* as an active participle.

14. *Esna* III, 260, 9 (Invocation hymn to Khnum-Shu):

ntk pw pr(.w) m swḥ

For it is you who manifests as the air,

mḥy.t ḥnm n fndꜥk

the north-wind being the breath of your nose,

r sꜥnh ḥr-nb

in order to enliven everybody.

Sauneron translated this passage as follows: “C’est encore toi qui sors sous forme de vent.”⁴⁵ Although he did not comment on the baboon’s grammatical function, his interpretation suggests the enclitic particle *is*, “moreover; meanwhile.”

15. *Esna* III, 267, 9 (epithets of Khnum-Shu):

[...] *rwꜥ ibꜥf r sꜥnh Rꜥ pw ḥry-nꜥr.w*

[...] his heart is firm in order to support life, for he is Re, Chief of the Gods.

16. *Esna* IV, 422:

iwꜥk ḥꜥ.ti m p.t mḥi.t it-it.w pw n nꜥr.w Ḥnmw-Rꜥ


You appear in the southern sky, that is: father of fathers of the gods, Khnum-Re.

Alexandra von Lieven tentatively read the baboon as *nsw*, “king,” a valid transcription of the baboon, and supposed the goddess Neith might be a determinative.⁴⁶ Since the red crown

⁴⁴ S. SAUNERON, *Les fêtes religieuses d’Esna*, p. 74, with n. 2.

⁴⁵ S. SAUNERON, *Les fêtes religieuses d’Esna*, p. 360.

⁴⁶ A. VON LIEVEN, *Der Himmel über Esna*, p. 90, n. a, who noted the alternative solution *nꜥr-nꜥr.w*, “god of gods.”

would be inappropriate for the word *nsw*, however, one might alternatively emend the second sign (e.g. ) and thereby translate *nsw-bity ntr.w*, “Dual King of the Gods.” Nevertheless, the latter epithet is not otherwise attested at Esna (*LGG* IV, 326), whereas “father of fathers of the gods” is quite common (*LGG* I, 576-577), so the baboon most likely writes *pw* here as well.

17. Esna III, 377, 8:



pr-hyn (a) *pw n wtḫ-ntr.w* It is the *pr-hyn* of He who Beget the Gods,
m mḫf n Ḥnmw (b)-*Pth* in his name of Khnum-Ptah,
qmḏ swḫ.t who created the egg,
pr m [Nwn] (c) and who emerged from [Nun].

(a) The *pr-hyn* was originally a sanctuary of Amun between Karnak and the Mut Temple precinct, associated with Min-Kamutef and processions to Luxor temple.⁴⁷ A recently uncovered relief from Luxor depicts Ramesses II offering bread to a god who wears a beard and double plumes, bearing the garbled label:⁴⁸



Mansour Boraik tentatively read: “Amun-Ra who resides in Ihyny(?)”⁴⁹ but one might propose emending the text as follows, further confirming the link to Luxor temple:



“Amun-Re within the *pr-ihyn*.”

As a shrine for Amun-Kamutef, the *pr-hyn* was connected to the ithyphallic demiurge Amenope, who fashioned the Ogdoad and other gods within Luxor Temple.⁵⁰ By extension, the *pr-hyn* was also an appropriate residence for Khnum or Khnum-Ptah at Esna, specifically where he might “beget the gods” (17) and “create what exists” (18). The


⁴⁷ J. OSING, *Hieratische Papyri aus Tebtunis I, The Carlsberg Papyri 2, CNIP 17*, 1998, p. 162, n. a; D. KLOTZ, “The Theban Cult of Chonsu the Child in the Ptolemaic Period”, in Chr. Thiers (ed.), *Documents de Théologies Thébaines Tardives (D3T 1)*, *CENiM 3*, 2009, p. 110, n. f; *id.*, *Caesar in the City of Amun*, p. 143.

⁴⁸ M. BORAİK, “Inside the Mosque of Abu El-Haggag: rediscovering long lost parts of Luxor Temple. A preliminary report,” *Memnonia 19*, 2008, p. 144-145 (scene d).

⁴⁹ M. BORAİK, *Memnonia 19*, 2008, p. 144, with n. 20.

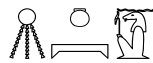
⁵⁰ D. KLOTZ, *Caesar in the City of Amun*, p. 54-55, 175-176.

generative function of this edifice might explain the unusual spitting-mouth determinative in example **18**.⁵¹

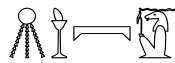
(b) The present spelling ()⁵² remarkably lacks the usual determinative of a seated Khnum, and in isolation this writing is difficult to reconcile with the local god. Nonetheless, similar celestial spellings for Khnum – featuring the radiant sun and sky signs – abound at Esna, preparing readers to recognize this potentially obscure divine name:⁵³



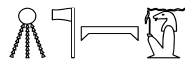
Esna III, 225, 18 (50); 232, 12 (135); 394, 23



Esna III, 225, 16 (45)



Esna III, 378, 22 (*n* < *nḥp*)



Esna III, 377, 2 (*n* < *nṯr*)



Esna III, 379, 24; VI, 587, 23 (*n* < *nṯr*)



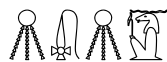
Esna III, 224, 2; 225, 17 (48), 20 (57) (*n* < *nṯr*)



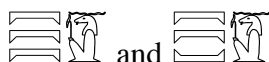
Esna III, 393, 21 (*n* < *Nwn*)




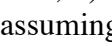
Esna III, 272, 4 (*n* < *Nw.t*, “Nut”)



Esna III, 377, 5 (*n* < *nb̄.t*, “flame”)



Esna III, 355, 7 (34, 35)

The first two signs are thus closely associated with the name Khnum. The final hieroglyph likely derives its phonetic value *m* < *m̄wy*, “radiance.” Surprisingly, among all the divine names at Esna, this value is only attested one other time, earlier in the same inscription (*Esna* III, 377, 5).⁵⁴ It might also represent the final *m* in Late Period trigrams for Atum ()⁵⁵, assuming that group should be read in retrograde (*).


⁵¹ Note that the related term *hyn*, “border,” can also appear with a range of determinatives: A. EGBERTS, *In Quest of Meaning: A Study of the Ancient Egyptian Rites of Consecrating the Meret-Chests and Driving the Calves I*, *EgUitg* 8, 1995, p. 135-136, n. 3.

⁵² S. Sauneron also translated this divine name as “Khnum-Ptah” (*Les fêtes religieuses d’Esna*, “Additions et corrections,” p. C, note to p. 210); followed by *LGG* VI, p. 29.

⁵³ In most of the examples that follow, the final consonant is *p* (< *p.t*), reflecting the pronunciation *Chnoubis*; cf. S. SAUNERON, *L’écriture figurative*, p. 83.

⁵⁴ D. KURTH, *EP* I, p. 319, 328, n. 71, registered this phonetic value, citing only S. SAUNERON, *L’écriture figurative*, p. 193; however, the latter page does not contain textual references, and most likely intended the present attestation.

⁵⁵ D. KLOTZ, “Two Curious Orthographies for Khepri,” *ENiM* 3, 2010, p. 72-73.

(c) Similar spellings of Nun, determined with crocodiles instead of water signs, are popular at both Kom Ombo and Esna.⁵⁶ In an earlier spelling of this word from Karnak (*Urk.* VIII, 132k), a single crocodile substitutes for the expected water determinatives: . This example suggests that the crocodiles in all spellings represent, *pars pro toto*, the waters they inhabit; or perhaps the reptile alone writes *mw* < *imy.w-mw*, “water dwellers,” a common term for crocodiles.⁵⁷ The statement regarding the cosmic egg is also popular at Esna and elsewhere, and usually refers to Ptah or Chonsu.⁵⁸

18. Esna IV, 431, 3:

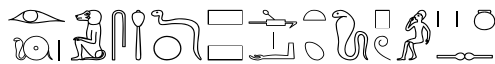


pr-hyn pw n qm3-wnn.t

It is the *pr-hyn* of He-who-Created-what-Exists.

Both examples (17-18) begin the same way. For the first text, Sauneron translated “le beau lieu de résidence”; in the second, Von Lieven similarly understood “die schöne Wohnung.”⁵⁹ However, there are no other examples where the *pr-hyn* is described as “good (*nfr*),” and thus the reading *pw* is preferable in these instances as well.

19. Esna IV, 423 (epithets of Nebtu):



ir.t-R' pw shd t3.wy w'.t pw nn snwz.s

She is the Eye of Re, who brightens the two lands,

she is the unique-serpent, without her double.

For this example, *parallelismus membrorum* suggests the baboon also writes *pw*.

20. Esna VI, 538:



⁵⁶ D. KLOTZ, *Adoration of the Ram*, p. 163, n. B; D. KURTH, *EP I*, p. 280, n. 66; Chr. LEITZ, “Der Lobpreis des Krokodils: Drei Sobekhymnen aus Kom Ombo,” in H. Knuf, Chr. Leitz, D. von Recklinghausen (eds), *Honi soit qui mal y pense. Studien zum pharaonischen, griechisch-römischen und spätantiken Ägypten zu Ehren von Heinz-Josef Thissen*, OLA 194, 2010, p. 313, n. 55. Examples include: *Esna II*, 76, 9, 11; 96, 1; 117; 180, A; 187, A; *Esna III*, 335, 1; 367, 24; *Esna VII*, 552, 1; 587, 40.

⁵⁷ D. KLOTZ, *Adoration of the Ram*, p. 46, n. B.

⁵⁸ For this epithet, see primarily D. MENDEL, *Die kosmogonischen Inschriften in der Barkenkapelle des Chonstempls von Karnak*, MRE 9, 2003, p. 44-51, 181-189 (to her examples add *Esna VII*, 633); Ptah-Hephaistos also opens up (*pth*) the primeval egg in a cosmogony reported by Damascius: M.L. WEST, “Ab ovo: Orpheus, Sanchuniathon, and the Origins of the Ionian World Model,” *ClassQuart* 44, 1994, p. 291-293; D. KLOTZ, *Caesar in the City of Amun*, p. 107, n. 526.

⁵⁹ S. SAUNERON, *Les fêtes religieuses d'Esna*, p. 210; A. VON LIEVEN, *Der Himmel über Esna*, p. 114-115.



hw.t-Hnmw pw

It is the Khnum Temple

n it-z3.w-n=sn

for the Father of the Guardian Deities,

hw.t-nbi

the Temple of the Fashioner,

n ir Hnm.w 7 (a)

for He who made the Seven Khnums,

m-tp(?) (b) D3ls.w 7 wr.w (c) [...]

at the head of(?) the Seven Great Djaisu [of Methyer...].

(a) Matthias Rochholz identified this first group as “die 7 Kinder (*hrd.w* or *ms.w*),” assuming that the next group of gods were Khnums;⁶⁰ however, this group of “seven children” is not otherwise attested. Khnum is most often hailed for making the other seven Khnums,⁶¹ and he is specifically called a “fashioner (*nbi*)” in this sense elsewhere:⁶²



nbi im=k(?) Hnmw ir Hnmw 7

You(?)⁶³ are the Fashioner, Khnum who made the Seven Khnums.

In the present text, this group of gods can be identified simply from the context. Nonetheless, the term may also be read phonetically. The first four children serve as unilaterals (*h*, *n*, *m*, *w*), while the last three mark the plural; collectively, the seven hieroglyphs represent the cardinal number. Similar spellings of Khnum (in the singular) occur throughout the temple, enabling readers to recognize this group:



Esna III, 225, 11 (25); 275, 9



Esna III, 355, 3 (29) (m < m3'.t)



Esna III, 277, 24 (9) (h < h < hrp)

More often, the child hieroglyph only writes one of the first two consonants, either *h* (< *hy*, “child”), or *n* (< *nww*, “child”).⁶⁴

⁶⁰ M. ROCHHOLZ, *Schöpfung, Feindvernichtung, Regeneration: Untersuchung zum Symbolgehalt der machtgeladenen Zahl 7 im alten Ägypten*, ÄAT 56, 2002, p. 56.

⁶¹ LGG VI, p. 28; D. KLOTZ, *Adoration of the Ram*, p. 141-143, with n. B.

⁶² *Esna III*, 232, 6 (107); compare similar references to Esna as “the place of fashioning (*s.t-nbi*)” the creator gods: *Esna II*, 63, 3; 80, 7.

⁶³ Emending the *t* to the similarly-shaped wig (S 56); S. Sauneron tentatively translated this passage: “le modeleur-d’argile (?), qui fit les Sept Khnoum” (*L’écriture figurative*, p. 22).

⁶⁴ S. SAUNERON, *L’écriture figurative*, p. 115. For additional examples of *h*, add also *Esna III*, 277, 20 (2); 318, 11; 377, 4; *Esna VII*, 587, 27; for examples of *n*, add *Esna III*, 224, 1; 264, 25; 366, 2 (16); 393, 21.

(b) As written, the compound preposition is problematic,⁶⁵ since one might expect the phrase *m-‘b*, “together with.”⁶⁶ Although not registered elsewhere with this value, the head could theoretically write ‘*b* < *‘*p*, “head” (cf. Demotic: ‘*p(e).t*, Coptic: *ⲁⲡⲉ*).⁶⁷ Alternatively, the horn that usually occurs in this word may have been re-interpreted here as *db* (Coptic: *ⲧⲁⲡ*) instead of ‘*b*,⁶⁸ and subsequently rendered with the homophonous head sign. Finally, the head alone could also write the numeral “seven,” modifying the Djaisu. However, when the head is followed by a single stroke, as it is here, it properly writes the number “eight” (i.e. seven plus one).⁶⁹

In any event, Khnum is not usually credited with fashioning the Djaisu, since that task is performed by Neith-Methyer. Consequently, this group might be the compound preposition *m-tp*, “at the head of; in charge of” (*Wb.* V, 271, 10), implying that Khnum’s builders presided over Neith’s Djaisu at Esna.

(c) Since all the heads are damaged, the identity of this group can only be inferred from the context.⁷⁰ Beside the seven Khnums, the seven Djaisu of Methyer were the other great primeval deities at Esna. Although Neith created all thirty builder gods,⁷¹ local tradition downplayed the significance of the Shebtu and Ogdoad who were so important at Edfu and elsewhere. Remarkably, the Latopolite cosmogony even mocks the ignorance of the Ogdoad, in contrast to the Djaisu.⁷²

‘*h‘.n* *ḏd.in nṯr.w ipw*

Then these gods said (to Neith):

hm≠n m nn ṣḏm≠n

We knew nothing (*hm≠n*) about this which we have just heard!”

hpr Ḥmni.w m rn n nn nṯr.w

Thus “Ogdoad (*Ḥmni.w*)” became the name of these gods.

In short, the Djaisu are the most likely group of seven in the present text, especially since they are often qualified as “great (*wr*),”⁷³ unlike the seven Khnums.

⁶⁵ M. Rochholz understood this passage quite oddly: “das Haus-des-Schöpfers für den, der die 7 Kinder schuf, die gemacht wurden mit dem Kopf von 7 erwachsenen Chnumen” (*Schöpfung, Feindvernichtung, Regeneration*, p. 56 [italics mine]).

⁶⁶ Cf. *Esna* III, 345, 14: *m-‘b ḏis.w nw Mḥ.t-wr.t*, “together with the Djaisu of Methyer,” where the compound preposition is spelled non-etymologically as: *m-‘b*.

⁶⁷ *CDD* ‘ (03.1), p. 54-55; W. CRUM, *CD*, p. 13.

⁶⁸ For the possible etymological relationship between ‘*b* and *db* (both “horn”), see H. SATZINGER, “Egyptian ‘*ayin* in Variation with *d*,” *LingAeg* 6, 1999, p. 145.

⁶⁹ D. KURTH, *EP* II, p. 688.

⁷⁰ In two earlier copies of the text, H. Brugsch recorded ram heads for these gods (*Thesaurus*, p. 1370m, 1373v), leading M. Rochholz to identify this group as the seven Khnums (*Schöpfung, Feindvernichtung, Regeneration*, p. 56). However, Brugsch reproduced the heads differently on each page, putting the accuracy of his copies into doubt.

⁷¹ *Esna* III, 206, 3 §7. For the thirty primeval builder gods in general, see D. BUDDE, “Dreißig Götter der Genese des Tempels,” in W. Waitkus (ed.), *Diener des Horus. Festschrift für Dieter Kurth zum 65. Geburtstag*, *AegHamb* 1, 2008, p. 17-40.

⁷² *Esna* III, 206, 7 §11; S. SAUNERON, *Les fêtes religieuses d’Esna*, p. 262.

⁷³ *Esna* II, 58, 2; 81, 3; 107, 2; *Esna* VI, 474; 481, 11-12.

For this example, Rochholz also read the baboon as *nfr*, here functioning as a stative: “„Das-Haus-des-Vaters“ ist vollkommen (*nfr*) für den Vater der Schutzgötter.”⁷⁴ However, such a statement would be without parallel for a temple monography.

21. Esna III, 262, 22 (16):



R' nb R'.w nb-dr pw it-ntr.w

Re, lord of Res, that means: the All-Lord, father of the gods.

This example is somewhat uncertain, since the baboon could alternatively stand for the initial *i* in *it*, “father” (i.e. for), as it does earlier in the same hymn to write “Atum” (; 262, 20 [6]). However, the conventional spelling for “father” () is rarely encountered at Esna,⁷⁵ the most frequent orthographies being and . In his translation of this hymn, Sauneron did not comment on the baboon, and rendered the passage as follows: “soleil seigneur des soleils, le seigneur universel.”⁷⁶

22. Esna II, 106, 3:



ʒh.t=sn m-hnw 'Iwny.t 'Iwn pw(?) m=f

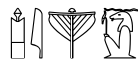
Their *Akhet* is within Esna (*'Iwny.t*), that is why his (Khnum's) name is “Pillar of Wind” (*'Iwn*).

Throughout Esna, Khnum Lord of the Field, identified with Shu, is often called “Great Pillar of Wind (*'Iwn-wr*)” (*LGG* I, 185), and thus one might propose reading the baboon here as *wr*, “great.” Although not registered elsewhere, this value would derive from a common epithet of Thoth,⁷⁷ similar to the word ʕ (cf. *infra*, *Appendix*, no. 3).

The same word *iwn* often appears with a final *yod*:



Esna III, 367, 17



Esna IV, 433, 3



Esna II, 162, 5; IV, 432, 11



Esna IV, 415

⁷⁴ M. ROCHHOLZ, *Schöpfung, Feindvernichtung, Regeneration*, p. 56

⁷⁵ The few exceptions include *Esna* II, 107, 1; *Esna* III, 260, 8 (3).

⁷⁶ S. SAUNERON, *Les fêtes religieuses d'Esna*, p. 369.

⁷⁷ D. KURTH, *EP* I, p. 143 (human with ibis head).

These examples raise the possibility that the baboon might write *yod* in this example. Nonetheless, this solution is less likely since the sign occurs after the determinative.

While the epithet *'Iwn-wr* may be more common, there are several examples where Khnum is simply called *'Iwn* without a modifier.⁷⁸ Notably, this abbreviated form occurs in a text distinctly similar to the passage in question (*Esna* II, 80, 2):




dd.tw 'Iwn m rn n Šw

One says “Pillar” (*'Iwn*) as the name of Shu,

'Iwny.t m rn n spꜣ[.t] tn

and Esna (*'Iwny.t*) as the name of this nome.

Both texts explain the traditional name of Esna, relating it to an epithet of Khnum-Shu (cf. sportive writings of the toponym *'Iwny.t* such as: ).⁷⁹ The adjective *wr* would needlessly complicate this neat etiology (*'Iwny.t* < *'Iwn*), and thus the baboon could easily represent the copula *pw* in the present example as well.

23. *Esna* VII, 549 (protocol of the Emperor Titus):





[...] *mꜣi-nḥt pr-ꜥ pw* (a) [...] a mighty lion, that means a champion,


nsw-nsw.w

King of Kings,

nsw-bity nb-tꜣ.wy (b)

King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Lord of the Two Lands.

(a) This example is not entirely certain. Although one could interpret  as a full spelling of *nsw* (*in* [= baboon] + *sw* + determinative), the following plural form is written without the baboon: .

(b) Geb, identifiable by his typical crown, here writes *tꜣ*, “earth,” via the principle of direct representation. This value is quite common elsewhere for the toponym *Tꜣ-Sn.t*, “Esna.”⁸⁰ In one of the famous cryptographic hymns (*Esna* II, 103), the ram writes this word specifically while wearing Geb’s crown (≈ ).⁸¹ Perhaps derived from the latter value, even a bare-headed ram could represent *tꜣ* or *tꜣ*.⁸²

⁷⁸ *LGG* I, 185, lists many examples where Khnum is simply associated with “the wind (*iwn*)”; in the following examples, *'Iwn* is treated as a special epithet or name, followed by a divine determinative: *Esna* II, 30, 1; 31, 6; *Esna* III, 239, A; 373, D.

⁷⁹ D. KURTH, *EP* I, p. 360, n. 59.

⁸⁰ D. KURTH, “Die Lautwerte der Hieroglyphen in den Tempelinschriften der griechisch-römischen Zeit – zur Systematik ihrer Herleitungsprinzipien,” *ASAE* 69, 1983, p. 296, n. 2; add also *Esna* II, 164, A; *Esna* III, 318, 11; 378, 23.

⁸¹ Chr. LEITZ, “Die beiden kryptographischen Inschriften aus Esna mit den Widdern und Krokodilen,” *SAK* 29, 2001, p. 255 (5), 258-259 (16), 260 (21), 261: “Herkunft: unbekannt.”

⁸² D. KURTH, *EP* I, p. 209, n. 97 (only noting the first example).

Tj-Sn.t, “Esna”

Esna II, 76, 15


Esna III, 389, 13
tjw, “wind; air”⁸³

Esna III, 378, 17


Esna III, 378, 15, 21



Esna III, 378, 13

This specific crown is associated with Geb already in the New Kingdom,⁸⁴ and the same sportive value occurs in the titulary of Sety I at Abydos.⁸⁵



wsr [pd.wt] m tj.w nb.w

Mighty of [bows] in all lands.

In the latter text, the plural *tj.w* is not spelled phonetically, as Drioton and Roberson assumed.⁸⁶ Rather, as Étienne-Fart already recognized, the text employs three unique logograms for *tj*: .

24. *Esna* VI, 503, 1-3.

In this scene, the Emperor Decius presents the potter's wheel to Khnum-Re Lord of Esna and to the sacred ram of Esna; the latter stands upon a pedestal and carries a simple uraeus on his head. While the following caption is quite difficult, it helps to remember that this sacred ram was considered the composite of the Bas of Re, Shu, Geb and Osiris, just as at Mendes.⁸⁸



⁸³ For the boat writing *w*, cf. *supra*, n. 7.




⁸⁴ J. YOYOTTE, “Les stèles de Ramsès II à Tanis (deuxième partie)”, *Kêmi* 11, 1950, p. 59-61, Pl. VII.


⁸⁵ É. DRIOTON, “Les protocoles ornementaux d’Abydos,” *RdE* 2, 1936, p. 12, Fig. 6, 15, n. k (assumed this figure was Osiris, and tentatively suggested reading *m* < *Mryty*); M. ÉTIENNE-FART, “« *De rebus quae gerentur...* » dans deux inscriptions ramessides,” *BIFAO* 94, 1994, p. 137-138 (also assumed the figure was Osiris, but derived *t(j)* < *ity*, “the sovereign”); J.A. ROBERSON, *The Awakening of Osiris and the Transit of the Solar Barques. Royal Apotheosis in a Most Concise Book of the Underworld and Sky*, *OBO* 262, 2013, p. 112-117, with n. k (refrained from translating this sign, since “no plausible alternatives can be offered”).

⁸⁶ For the heron, Drioton assigned the acrophonic value *w* < *wdj* (*RdE* 2, 1936, p. 15, n. k), while Roberson proposed the uniliteral *j* through avian substitution (*The Awakening of Osiris*, p. 116, n. k). Yet this sign writes the word *tj* already in other texts of the New Kingdom: J.C. DARNELL, *The Enigmatic Netherworld Books of the Solar-Osirian Unity: Cryptographic Compositions in the Tombs of Tutankhamun, Ramesses VI and Ramesses IX*, *OBO* 198, 2004, p. 26, n. d; D. KLOTZ, “Once Again, Min: Acrophony or Phonetic Change?”, *GM* 233, 2012, p. 25, n. H)

⁸⁷ M. ÉTIENNE-FART, *BIFAO* 94, 1994, p. 138.







⁸⁸ A. EGBERTS, *In Quest of Meaning* I, p. 163-165, n. 8-9 (with references).

(e) Because of parallelism, both words ( and ) must write *bʒ*, “ram,” written as if the word were pronounced *fʒ*.⁹⁶ Only rarely attested in Demotic,⁹⁷ the labial shift *b > f* is exceptional for a hieroglyphic text,⁹⁸ and these spellings reflect the inscription’s very late date (reign of Decius, c. 249-251 CE). The only other certain example of such change occurs in a nearby scene from Esna, where one finds *šfy.t*, “prestige,” spelled: .

Out of context, such unconventional spellings would be nearly impossible to identify. Accordingly, the ancient scribe sandwiched these variants between two standard writings of the word () , subtly guiding readers toward the correct solution.

(f) This peculiar spelling of Shu occurs frequently at Kom Ombo and Esna, most likely derived from a similarly shaped Demotic ligature for the biliteral *šw*.¹⁰⁰

(g) The five-pointed star writes the number five, and by extension, the fifth god of the Ennead, Geb.¹⁰¹

(h) From the context, the god in question must be Osiris, and a similar spelling of his name occurs in a cryptographic litany:  .¹⁰² The first two signs occur in the present example, but here the expected final *r*-is missing. Instead, one should read the present example as *w* () + *sr* () = *Ws(i)r*.¹⁰³ The ram stands for this biliteral value in comparable spellings of Osiris, such as  (*w(ʒ) + sr*)¹⁰⁴ and possibly  (*w(p) + sr*).¹⁰⁵

⁹⁶ D. KURTH, *EP* I, p. 222, 231, n. 26, registered two examples of the converse phenomenon, where the ram head might write *fʒ* (< *bʒ*), but admitted they are both uncertain.

⁹⁷ D. KURTH, *EP* I, p. 511, n. 4 (but cf. J.Fr. QUACK, *WdO* 39/1, 2009, p. 137); R. JASNOW, K.-Th. ZAUZICH, *The Ancient Egyptian Book of Thoth*, 2005, I, p. 89; D. KLOTZ, *Caesar in the City of Amun*, p. 254, n. 225.

⁹⁸ For interchange between Egyptian labials in general, see generally D. KURTH, *EP* I, p. 495-496, 505-511; D. KLOTZ, “On the Origin of the 3rd Masc.Sing. Suffix Pronoun (*ʒf*). A Comparative Approach,” *LingAeg* 19, 2011, p. 248; cf. also O.E. KAPER, “Galba’s Cartouches at Ain Birbiyeh,” in K. Lembke, M. Minas-Nerpel, St. Pfeiffer (eds), *Tradition and transformation: Egypt under Roman Rule*, *CHANE* 41, 2010, p. 189 (Latin “v” rendered with Egyptian *b*).

⁹⁹ *Esna* VI, 480, 19 (reign of Caracalla, c. 211-217 CE); discussed by D. KURTH, *EP* I, p. 507, who already noted comparable derivatives in Coptic (Ⲡⲃⲉ / Ⲡⲃⲏ); compare also the Egyptian Arabic honorific: *shubbēk*, “your Excellency” (A.A. YOUSSEF, *From Pharaoh’s Lips: ancient Egyptian language in the Arabic of today*, 2003, p. 93).

¹⁰⁰ A. GUTBUB, *Textes fondamentaux de la théologie de Kom Ombo*, *BdE* 47, 1973, I, p. 341-342, n. r; D. KLOTZ, “Remarks on Ptolemaic Epigraphy and Lexicography. §3 – Two Unusual Writings of Shu,” *RdE* 64, 2013, p. 30-33.

¹⁰¹ See recently Sh. BEDIER, “Die Schreibung des Namens des Erdgottes Geb mit dem Sternzeichen und mit der Zahl 5,” in W. Waitkus (ed.), *Diener des Horus. Festschrift für Dieter Kurth zum 65. Geburtstag*, *AegHamb* 1, 2008, p. 1-6.

¹⁰² *Esna* III, 217, 20 (O 6); cf. Chr. LEITZ, “Les trente premiers versets de la litanie d’Osiris à Esna (*Esna* 217),” *RdE* 59, 2008, p. 238-239.

¹⁰³ Multiliteral signs do occur in the primarily alphabetic litanies from Esna (S. SAUNERON, *L’écriture figurative*, p. 92); while those divine names are usually written as trigrams, certain examples use only two signs (*ibid.*, p. 93).

¹⁰⁴ Fr.-R. HERBIN, “Une nouvelle page du Livre des Respirations,” *BIFAO* 84, 1984, p. 255, n. 7, Pl. LV (Ms Golenischeff 517, col. 2).

¹⁰⁵ *Esna* II, 58, 5; for the horns writing *w*, see S. SAUNERON, *L’écriture figurative*, p. 137, 192. H. Sternberg transcribed this name literally as *bʒ-dmḏ*, “the united Ba (Re-Osiris)” (*Mythische Motive und Mythenbildung*, p. 60, 66, n. aa), but the sportive orthography permits both readings.

Subsequently, the preceeding sign (𓂏) should write the indirect genitive *nti* < *ntr*.¹⁰⁶ The following word (𓂏𓂏𓂏), meanwhile, would be *swḥ*, “breath.”¹⁰⁷ If Sauneron’s copy is correct,¹⁰⁸ this reading would derive from the following elements:

𓂏 = *s* (< *s.t*), 𓂏 = *w* (< *wḥ*, with phonetic complement),¹⁰⁹ 𓂏 = *h*.

Elsewhere, Khnum-Shu of Pi-netjer manifests as the breath of life specifically in the form of a “great august ram (*sr* ʿ *šps*)” (*Esna* III, 267, 8 and 268, B).

25. *Esna* VI, 525, 2-3 (offering the royal inheritance):



ns.t=k pw (r) r3-ʿ nhḥ

This is your throne for all time;

iml.t-pr=k pw mn.tw š3-ḏ.t

this is your inheritance, enduring until eternity.

This example is not entirely certain, since it relies on a minor emendation (*nb* for *k*), perfectly reasonable for a text from the reign of Commodus. Moreover, the baboon is open to multiple interpretations. In his study of similar scenes, Jacques Kinnaer translated this text as follows: “c’est ton trône jusqu’à l’éternité et chaque Imit-per établi (*smn.tw*) jusqu’à l’éternité.”¹¹⁰ Although he did not comment on the baboon hieroglyph, it could alternatively write the uniliteral *s* in *smn*, “to establish.” Nonetheless, the parallel structure favors reading *pw* in both phrases.

Conclusion

As mentioned in the introduction, previous translators had either ignored the baboon in their editions (3, 10, 14, 21), or transcribed it as *nfr* (11, 13, 17-18, 20). The latter option might be envisaged for some texts, but it is grammatically impossible for others (e.g. 3, 4, 6, 14-16, 19). The value *pw* is confirmed from two direct parallels (1-2) and similar syntax (19, 25), and it explains the other twenty-one examples quite well.

This new ideographic value occurs in all areas of the temple (facade, columns, architraves, exterior), from the reign of Ptolemy VI (3-4) until the mid third-century CE (24). In most examples discussed above, the baboon occurs precisely where one would expect the copula pronoun *pw*. Frequently, it introduces a figurative designation of Esna (1, 5, 7, 9-12, 17-18, 20). The baboon also modifies divine names (3, 6, 8), thereby establishing syncretistic relationships (e.g. Khnum = Shu; Heka = Geb), it explains a certain festival (13: *ḥb Pth pw*),

¹⁰⁶ S. SAUNERON, *L’écriture figurative*, p. 171, 193. For the specific use of this genitive marker, distinct from the masculine indirect genitive *n*, cf. D. KURTH, *EP* II, p. 801-805, §164


¹⁰⁷ Noted already by D. KURTH, *EP* I, p. 359, n. 19.





¹⁰⁸ For the first group, S. Sauneron noted: “Signe mal compris, déformation, peut-être, de 𓂏 ?” (*Esna* VI, p. 86, n. a).

¹⁰⁹ D. KURTH, *EP* I, p. 356, No. 6.

¹¹⁰ J. KINNAER, “Le Mekes et l’Imit-per dans les scènes des temples ptolémaïques et romains,” *OLP* 22, 1991, p. 86.

appears in a traditional gloss formula introduced with *ir*, “as for” (24; cf. *Wb.* I, 103, 2), and follows after independent pronouns for in a classic nominal pattern (4, 14).¹¹¹

In some other, more ambiguous passages, the baboon coordinates related epithets (15-16, 19, 21-23). In these examples, the copula pronoun is technically unnecessary, and would have been added only for emphasis. In those examples, one might propose reading the baboon as the enclitic particle *is*, “moreover; furthermore,” either derived from *ns* < *in-sw* (as in the personal name:  = *Ns-Mnw*, Esminis),¹¹² or from the common uniliteral value *s*. However, unlike with the copula *pw*, this ideographic value is not confirmed by any direct parallels.

One could envisage multiple derivations for this logographic value. Phonetically, the baboon can write both *wp* and *ip* (both epithets of Thoth),¹¹³ and either value could reduce to *p(w)* via the Consonantal Principle. Historically, the copula pronoun was abbreviated to *p* (, , or )¹¹⁴ or *pi* (; cf. Coptic: ΠΕ),¹¹⁵ and the baboon may have represented the uniliteral *p* at least once, in *Esna* II, 81, 5-6:




[...] *m ihy m hb pn nfr*

n 4-nw n 3h.t

r 30 n hb k3-hr-k3

wpy-3 hr.tw [r-f]

[...are] in jubilation on this ()¹¹⁶ good festival,

of the fourth month of Akhet,

until the 30th of Khoiak,¹¹⁷

which is called the “Major Celebration.”¹¹⁸

However, in archaizing liturgical and magical texts of the Graeco-Roman period, the copula can also be spelled phonetically as *ip(w)* (Demotic: *ip*, Old Coptic: ΕΠ).¹¹⁹ Since the baboon normally represents *ip*, “to reckon” (epithet of Thoth), this simple derivation presents the

¹¹¹ M. GILULA, “An Unusual Nominal Pattern in Middle Egyptian,” *JEA* 62, 1976, p. 162.

¹¹² H. DE MEULENAERE, *BIFAO* 54, 1954, 76-82; in Demotic the onomastic element *ns* (“he/she belongs to”) can be phonetically represented as is: *CDD N* (04:1), p. 119-120.

¹¹³ D. KURTH, *EP* I, p. 204.

¹¹⁴ *Wb.* I, 490, 5-7; A. VON LIEVEN, *Grundriß des Laufes der Sterne*, p. 31.

¹¹⁵ *Wb.* I, 502, 1; E. EDEL, *Altägyptische Grammatik*, §§182, 193; R. VAN DER MOLEN, *A Hieroglyphic Dictionary of Egyptian Coffin Texts*, *ProblÄg* 15, 2000, p. 129.

¹¹⁶ The phrase *hb pn nfr* is common, whence the present translation. Nevertheless, one could just as easily ascribe the normal uniliteral value *s* to the baboon, thus obtaining: *m hb-sn nfr*, “in their (sc. Khnum-Shu and Nebtu-Tefnut) good festival.”

¹¹⁷ Each ram-headed standard (*mdw*) represents the numeral ten (*mdw*), as it does in *Esna* III, 339, 1; cf. S. SAUNERON, *Les fêtes religieuses*, p. 29; it might also occur in *Esna* VII, 586, referring to the Thirty creator gods.

¹¹⁸ For similar references to the “major celebration (*wpy-3*)” of Khoiak, when divinities from the region came to visit Esna, Khnum of the Field united with Nebtu, and was vindicated in his trial (*wp.t*) over the enemies of Re; cf. *Esna* II, 55, 6 (Khoiak 6); 127, 8 (*[w]py-3 hr.tw r-f*); *Esna* III, 194, B; 337, B; 346, 24; 347, 25 (*3bd-4 3h.t hb k3-hr-k3, wpy-3 hr(w) r-f*); 349, 1 (*3bd 4 3h.t hrw 10, wpy-3 hr(w) (r-f)*); 349, 13; 350, 10; 351, B; S. SAUNERON, *Les fêtes religieuses*, p. 15-17, 47-67.

¹¹⁹ *Wb.* I, 502, 1; D. KURTH, *EP* II, p. 623; J.Fr. QUACK, *WdO* 39/2, 2009, p. 275 (with references to Demotic and Old Coptic examples).

most elegant solution. In short, the baboon writes *ip* (standard value), which happens to be the contemporaneous pronunciation of the copula pronoun (originally spelled *pw*).

At the same time, this sign aptly represents the grammatical function of *pw*, since the baboon was a manifestation of Thoth, not only the god of writing and eloquent speaking,¹²⁰ but also the chief interpreter of obscure textual passages and mythological tales, as so vividly recorded in the “Book of Thoth.”¹²¹ According to various Egyptian traditions, baboons were naturally gifted with a sacred language.¹²² Moreover, certain oracular apes uttered the decisions of Thoth at Tuna el-Gebel,¹²³ while a pair of divine simians, Chonsu-*p3-ir-shr.w* and Chonsu-*wn-nhn*, served as mediums for Chonsu-Neferhotep in Thebes.¹²⁴ In the Demotic “Mythus,” the particularly loquacious monkey, an avatar of Thoth, hardly stops talking.

Meanwhile, the verb *dd*, “to say,” is also written with the baboon. At Esna, this spelling may occur more frequently than traditional phonetic writings. Etiological derivations of toponyms or divine names are often introduced by the phrase *dd.tw*, “one says...” (𐩣𐩢), and many of the hymns begin with *dd-mdw*, “words spoken” (e.g. 𐩣𐩢). As with the copula pronoun, this value may originally have had a phonetic origin,¹²⁵ but it still alludes to the baboon’s propensity for dialog and could thus function as an ideogram, essentially a direct representation of “the talker.” As De Meulenaere noted years ago, examples of the baboon for *dd* are commonplace, but the ibis, a creature not typically known for its loquacity, writes the same word extremely rarely.¹²⁶

In the texts from Esna translated above, explanatory glosses, signaled by the speaking baboon, interrupt the main text to introduce background knowledge, alternate mythological traditions, and even deeper levels of interpretation. It is almost as if Thoth himself had been sitting beside the Latopolite scribes in the form of a baboon (recalling the beloved genre of New Kingdom private statues),¹²⁷ speaking up periodically to contribute his own exegesis. How often modern readers of the Esna texts might wish for such divine assistance!

¹²⁰ Cf. Y. VOLOKHINE, “Le dieu Thot au Qasr el-Agoûz. *Dd-hr-p3-hb*, *Dhwtj-stm*,” *BIFAO* 102, 2002, p. 414: “Que Thot soit écrivain est une chose avérée; or, il est également connu comme un dieu parlant.”

¹²¹ See recently R. JASNOW, ““Caught in the Web of Words”–Remarks on the Imagery of Writing and Hieroglyphs in the Book of Thoth,” *JARCE* 47, 2011, p. 297-317.

¹²² H. TE VELDE, “Some Remarks on the Mysterious Language of the Baboons,” in J.K. Kamstra, H. Milde, K. Wagtendonk (eds), *Funerary Symbols and Religion (Fs. Heerma van Voss)*, 1988, p. 129-137.

¹²³ Y. VOLOKHINE, *BIFAO* 102, 2002, p. 415-416.

¹²⁴ D. KLOTZ, *Caesar in the City of Amun*, p. 95-96.

¹²⁵ The origin of this common value for the baboon sign was a lively subject of debate between H.W. Fairman and É. Drioton, the latter defended by very prominent scholars. Yet while the baboon certainly derives this value from the name Thoth (cf. S. SAUNERON, J. YOYOTTE, “Le cynocéphale 𐩣𐩢 comme graphie du nom de Thot,” *RdE* 7, 1950, p. 9-13), this process did not involve acrophony (i.e. *d(d) < Dhwtj*). Rather, this convention ultimately relies on older abbreviations of Thoth in which his name appears to be simply *t*, “bread” (*Wb.* V, 211, 3; D. KURTH, *EP* I, p. 219, n. 340; J. PARLEBAS, “Sur l’origine de la valeur *Dhwtj* de 𐩣𐩢 et le groupe 𐩣𐩢𐩣𐩢 dans les noms de personnes,” *GM* 15, 1975, p. 39-43), and thus *d(d) < t* or *dī*.

¹²⁶ H. DE MEULENAERE, *BIFAO* 54, 1954, p. 74, with n. 4.

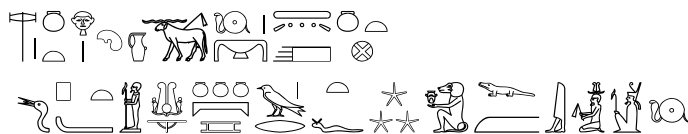
¹²⁷ Cf. E. DELANGE, *Le scribe Nebmeroutef*, 1996.

sšp (r)-h3.t N.t

“Make a light in front of Neith!”¹³¹

A second example comes from the opening of a difficult hymn to Khnum:

Esna III, 387, 1:



Sauneron correctly deciphered the difficult final group (𓂏𓂐𓂑𓂒) as the epithet *h'i m itm*, “he who appears as the sundisk,” but he did not remark on the baboon sign, and appears to have skipped over it in his translation.¹³² To support his interpretation of the final epithet, one may compare other spellings of *itm* featuring Tatenen, his crown, and the walking legs:



Esna III, 259, 2



Esna III, 260, 4



Esna III, 379, 24 (*itm wr*)¹³³



Esna III, 318, 7, §4 (*itm wr h3y-hprw*)¹³⁴

Furthermore, the use of the crocodile to write *h'i*, not uncommon at Esna and elsewhere,¹³⁵ may occur in another obscure passage (*Esna IV*, 424, 1):



wpš t3.wy

He who brightens the two lands,

h'i m itm pšd m hr.t

who appears as the sun-disk,¹³⁶ and shines in heaven.

¹³¹ For the final phrase, see S. SAUNERON, *Les fêtes religieuses*, p. 270, n. c; cf. also the Theban form of Osiris-*p3-wyn-(r)-h3.t3f* (lit. “he before whom is light”): L. COULON, “Les sièges de prêtre d’époque tardive. À propos de trois documents thébains,” *RdE* 57, 2006, p. 14, with n. 23-24. The second text (*Esna III*, 206, 15), specifies later that the gods carry torches in front of Neith during this procession.

¹³² S. SAUNERON, *Les fêtes religieuses*, p. 219, 221 n. (b): “Noun l’ancien, père des dieux, celui qui apparaît sous la forme du disque solaire.”

¹³³ The double crown writes *wr* < *wrr.t* (D. KURTH, *EP I*, p. 375), here serving as a superfluous phonetic complement.

¹³⁴ S. Sauneron tentatively read these epithets as: “... Geb (?), Tanen l’Ancien, Khnoum radieux de forme” (*Les fêtes religieuses d’Esna*, p. 87, 90, n. a). However, as discussed above (Ex. 23, n. b), Geb simply writes the uniliteral value *t*.

¹³⁵ E.g. *Esna III*, 204, A; 264, 26.

¹³⁶ The second crocodile writes *it* < *3d*, “to rage,” a phonetic value already attested in the Middle Kingdom (*Wb. I*, 143, 4; D. KURTH, *EP I*, p. 276). A. von Lieven rendered this passage differently (*h'i m hnt* (?), “der an der Spitz erscheint”; *Der Himmel über Esna*, p. 96-97), but this interpretation does not account for the final *n*. For more examples of this epithet at Esna, cf. *LGG V*, 642-643.

But back to the main text, and how to interpret the baboon. The editors of the *Lexikon* registered this example as uncertain and tentatively suggested the epithet *ip-ib* (*LGG* VII, 693c), which would hardly fit the present context. As Joachim Quack noted, the disembodied bird's head on the second line writes (*r*)-*dd*, introducing an explanatory gloss, similar to Coptic ⲬϮ.¹³⁷ Just as in the previous example (*Esna* II, 77, 16), the composite baboon holding the heart should also write *dd* here, resulting in the following translation:

<i>ind-ḥr=k Hnmw-R' nb T3-Sn.t</i>	Greetings, Khnum-Re Lord of Esna!
<i>(r)-dd Pth-t3-ṯnn Nwn-wr it-nṯr.w</i>	i.e. Ptah-Tatenen, Great Nun, Father of the Gods,
<i>(r)-dd ḥ'i m itn (...)</i>	i.e. he who appears as the sun-disk (...).

Each iteration of (*r*)-*dd* thus introduces a different aspect of Khnum-Re: first the demiurgic (Ptah-Tatenen), then the solar.

(3)  = '3, "great"

Although not registered in previous lists, this logographic value is hardly surprising, since it is a frequent epithet of Thoth, and he can often write this adjective.¹³⁸

Esna III, 394, 25:



wr-wr.w '3-'3.w Greatest of the great, best of the best,
wr.w(y) sw r nṯr.w nb how much greater is he than all the gods.

Sauneron tentatively translated the first phrase: "le grand des grands, le considérable des considérables (?)," but did not discuss this unique use of the baboon sign.¹³⁹

(4)  = *mnḥ*, "excellent; beneficent"

Just as with the preceding example, *mnḥ* is a standard epithet of Thoth, and is regularly spelled with the simple ibis. Unrecorded with this value elsewhere, even at Esna, the baboon writes this word on a Late Period statue from Thebes (Hannover, ex-Museum August Kestner, S. 0366),¹⁴⁰ as confirmed by a nearly identical parallel (Cairo, JE 37199):¹⁴¹

¹³⁷ J.Fr. QUACK, "Philologische Miszellen 3," *LingAeg* 5, 1997, p. 239.

¹³⁸ D. KURTH, *EP* I, p. 143 (human with ibis head), 252 (ibis on a standard)

¹³⁹ S. SAUNERON, *Les fêtes religieuses*, p. 206.

¹⁴⁰ Chr.E. LOEBEN, *Die Ägypten-Sammlung des Museum August Kestner und ihre (Kriegs-)Verluste*, *MusKest* 15, 2011, p. 218, 266; fully published by D. KLOTZ, "A Theban Devotee of Seth from the Late Period – Now Missing: Ex-Hannover, Museum August Kestner Inv. S. 0366," *SAK* 42, 2013 (in press).

¹⁴¹ K. JANSEN-WINKELN, *Biographische und religiöse Inschriften der Spätzeit aus dem Ägyptischen Museum Kairo* I, *ÄAT* 45, 2001, p. 190; II, p. 412 (31a, line 3), Pl. 67.

Hannover:



Cairo:



ntr pfy ʕ (var. ʕ *mnḥ*)

O this great god (var. “O great and excellent god”),

nb ʿIp.t-s.wt

lord of Karnak,

nḏ mnḥ n sš.w

excellent guardian of those who pass by.