ON THE STATUE CULT OF NEKTANEBOS II*

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One of the many interesting features of the 30th Dynasty is the statue cult of Nektanebos II, a phenomenon already discussed by Yoyotte and De Meulenaere.¹ To summarize briefly: the priests connected with the cult are designated as *hm-ntr (n) (twi)* + royal nomen, but several with the title *hm-ntr (n) twi pr-c3* or the like, who are known from monuments more or less contemporary with the 30th Dynasty, may with a high degree of certainty be assigned to this king. The cult occurs at several places in Egypt, and in at least one instance was maintained until the time of Ptolemy IV or V.² In a number of cases the nomen of Nektanebos II, *Nht-Hr-Hbt*, is followed by the epithet *p3 bik*, "the falcon",³ which it has been suggested may be connected with the occurrence of a special group of falcon statues, where a small figure of Nektanebos II stands between the bird's legs.⁴ The inscription on these statues, which runs around the base, consists of the royal protocol + *mry* + the name of a god, and there is one interesting example of the epithet *bik ntr pr m 3st*, "divine falcon, which has come forth from Isis".⁵

It seems that the priests of the statue cult were attached

* I am indebted to Professor J. R. Harris for revising my English text.

¹ Yoyotte, *Kémi* 15 (1959), pp. 70-74; De Meulenaere, *CdE* 35 (1960), pp. 92-107.

² De Meulenaere, *op. cit.*, pp. 94: doc. 6, 99.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 99 and 93, n. 6 in fine. This epithet also occurs on a statue base in West Berlin, Nr. 11577, cf. Vandier, *RdE* 20 (1968), p. 145, and upon the shawabti of *W3h-ib-Rc* in Stockholm, NME 191, cf. Peterson, *Medelhavsmuseet Bulletin* 12 (1977), pp. 33-34.

⁴ Yoyotte, *op. cit.*, p. 73. See also Brunner-Traut, *ZÄS* 97 (1971), p. 21.

⁵ Yoyotte, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

to places where the king had undertaken some kind of building activity, and De Meulenaere has further emphasized that the king is designated as a builder on the falcon statue from Bahbît el-Ḥigâra.⁶ Thus, according to De Meulenaere, the cult of Nektanebos II was closely associated with his monumental work.⁷

In 1963 Habachi published a fragmentary statue similar to the ones described above,⁸ and on this basis alone assumed that there had been some building activity of Nektanebos II at the place at which it was found. There seems, indeed, to be a general tendency to conclude that evidence of a statue cult of Nektanebos II, whether in the form of a falcon statue or through a priestly title, is in itself an indication of monumental work, even where such work has not been proven archaeologically.⁹ I cannot, however, agree with this view, and feel that two points should be stressed: the priestly titles alone tell us nothing about why the cult was established, and only one of the five inscribed falcon statues specifically qualifies the king as a builder.

There is a group of monuments from a later phase of Egyptian civilization, which may help in the understanding of this question, namely the famous trilingual *Priesterdekrete*.¹⁰ The text in these follows the scheme:

1. Dating.
2. Resolution by . . . (the priests are enumerated, and the place of the assembly is indicated).
3. Reasons for the resolution.
4. The resolution proper.
5. Decisions about its publication.

The content of three of the most important decrees has recently been examined by Thissen and Onasch, namely those of Canopus,

⁶ De Meulenaere, *op. cit.*, p. 100 and n. 3.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 100 and 107: "monumental work" in the sense of "building activity".

⁸ Habachi, *ZÄS* 90 (1963), pp. 46–47, pl. 8.

⁹ De Meulenaere, *op. cit.*, p. 100; Habachi, *op. cit.*, p. 47; Wildung, *Die Rolle ägyptischer Könige im Bewusstsein ihrer Nachwelt*, I, pp. 16, 82–83.

¹⁰ W. Otto, *Ägyptische Priestersynoden in hellenistischer Zeit* (SBAW, Phil.-Hist. Kl., Sitz.-Ber. 1926, 2. Abh., pp. 18–40); Säve-Söderbergh, *Einige ägyptische Denkmäler in Schweden*, pp. 39–41; Daumas, *Les moyens d'expression du grec et de l'égyptien*, pp. 253 ff.

Raphia and Memphis (Rosettana).¹¹ Although the composition of these is that of an Attic *Volksbeschluss* (protocol, reasons, resolution), they are strongly Egyptian in content, and the king's Horus-role is stressed. The reasons for the resolution consist of an enumeration of all the king's (or the royal couple's) benefactions, and it appears from these that the Ptolemaic king's obligations are just the same as in pharaonic times:¹² he is the one to care for the gods, their temples and the sacred animals, and to protect Egypt and its inhabitants and defeat the enemies of *maat*.

The resolution proper, which then follows, is a list of the honours bestowed upon the king by the priests in recognition of his deeds, namely the introduction of a special cult for him with statues, priests and festivals.

Of course there are elements in the Ptolemaic ruler cult as evidenced in these decrees which differ from or are wholly unknown in pharaonic practice,¹³ and this must not be forgotten; but nevertheless the whole tenor of the texts is markedly Egyptian.

Nektanebos II's many surviving monuments (taking the word in its broadest sense) are clear evidence of the manner in which he accomplished his royal duties:¹⁴ donation of land to the temples,¹⁵ renovation of the gods' cult-statues,¹⁶ (re)construction of

¹¹ Thissen, *Studien zum Raphiadekret* (Beiträge zur Klassischen Philologie, Heft 23, 1966); Onasch, *Archiv für Papyrusforschung* 24/25 (1976), pp. 137–155.

¹² Hornung, *MDAIK* 15 (1957), pp. 120–133; Blumenthal, *Untersuchungen zum ägyptischen Königtum des Mittleren Reiches*, I. The similarity has also been noted by Thissen and Onasch, both of whom quote many parallels from pharaonic sources (cf. the preceding note).

¹³ Otto, *MDAIK* 15 (1957), pp. 194–196, and the works by Thissen and Onasch, cf. note 11.

¹⁴ Kienitz, *Die politische Geschichte Ägyptens vom 7. bis zum 4. Jahrhundert vor der Zeitwende*, pp. 214–230, lists 116 monuments relating to this king. Since the publication of Kienitz's book (1953) many new items have come to light, the total increase being about one-third; cf. Holm-Rasmussen, *The Monuments of Nektanebos II* (forthcoming).

¹⁵ The list of donations in the temple of Edfu enumerates Nektanebos' donations of land to Horus Behdety in the nomes of Pathyris, Esna, and Edfu: 1500 arouras in all. Cf. now Meeks, *Le grand texte des donations au temple d'Edfou* (*Bibliothèque d'Étude*, t. LIX, 1972), p. 52 and n. 282.

¹⁶ The famous cylindrical altar in Turin, no. 1751, is taken to be an inventory of those gods whose images, statues, and chapels had been destroyed or displaced during Nektanebos' works at Tell Atrib; cf. Vernus, *Athribis*, p. 133 (forthcoming).

temples and chapels,¹⁷ erection of obelisks,¹⁸ care for the Apis, Buchis, and other sacred animals,¹⁹ and the making of naoi.²⁰ From Greek writers we learn of the suppression of a Mendesian rival at the beginning of the reign, and no doubt this rival was designated as an enemy of *maat*, and Nektanebos as its upholder.²¹ The heavy taxes which Tachos had imposed upon the temples, and which led to uprisings in his absence and ultimately to his fall, must of course have been rescinded by the new king (Nektanebos), who would thus have appeared as a true benefactor of the temples and the priesthood.²² Very little is known about the abortive Persian attacks on Egypt in 360 (or 359) and 351 B.C., only briefly referred to by a few Classical authors, but if there were border clashes or battles, the pharaoh would, in Egyptian eyes, have acted as the saviour of Egypt.²³

Professor Vernus kindly sent me a xerox-copy of his discussion of this altar). It has recently been republished by Habachi, *Tavole d'offerta, are e bacili da libagione*, pp. 92–105.

¹⁷ To Kienitz's list must now be added the king's activities at North Şaqqâra. For a review, see Smith, *JEA* 62 (1976), pp. 14–17.

¹⁸ British Museum, nos. 523–524: Iversen, *Obelisks in Exile*, II, pp. 51–61. Cairo Museum, CG 17030 and 17031: Kuentz, *Obélisques (Cat. gén.)*, pp. 61–63 (CG 17030 belongs to BM 524). Brooklyn Museum, no. 36.614, unpublished, is either a fragment of CG 17031 or of its pair. It is possible that Nektanebos erected two obelisks in front of the portico of the temple of Hibis in Khârga Oasis: Winlock, *The Temple of Hibis in el Khârgah Oasis*, I, pp. 34–35.

¹⁹ Kienitz, *op. cit.*, pp. 214–230, nos. 1, 2, 3, 5, 45–49, 54, 89–91 and 109, to which must be added the material from the sacred animal necropolis at North Şaqqâra, see note 16. The obelisk fragments Brooklyn Museum, no. 36.614, and Cairo Museum, CG 17031, mentioned in the preceding note, are dedicated to the bull god from Hurbeif.

²⁰ Kienitz, *loc. cit.*, nos. 18 (= 22), 21, 30, 31, 66, 68, 70, 71, 93 and 97. The list may be supplemented with Habachi, *Tell Basta*, pp. 82–84; Riefstahl, *Ancient Egyptian Glass and Glazes in the Brooklyn Museum*, p. 109, no. 69; Haeny, *MDAIK* 27 (1971), p. 182; Yoyotte, *ASAE* 61 (1973), p. 83. A fragment, possibly from Tell Basta, is in the possession of the dealer Hatoun in Cairo (I owe Dr. Málek this reference). Another fragment, said to be in the Greek Orthodox church of St. George in Old Cairo, could not be examined; cf. Habachi, *JNES* 11 (1952), p. 259, n. 30.

²¹ Kienitz, *op. cit.*, pp. 97–98.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 119–121.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 99–101; H. M. Parker, *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 68 (1978), p. 155.

The Ptolemaic decrees show that the honouring of the king by a statue cult and festivals is formally recorded in connection with the listing of *all* his benefactions, and I am inclined to think that the statue cult of Nektanebos II had a similar justification in terms of his multifarious deeds, through which he fulfilled his role as Horus. This would be more in accordance with Egyptian ideology than to regard the statue cult as a result of his building activity alone.

The Nektanebos-cult (as it has come down to us) should not be confused with the cult of the so-called "*Gründerkönige*",²⁴ which was indeed a consequence of their building activity. The latter was predominantly popular,²⁵ and confined to a single place, whereas the Nektanebos-cult was official, and occurred all over Egypt.

In conclusion, a few words must also be said concerning the falcon statues of Nektanebos. Over the years it has generally been assumed that these monuments show the king protected by the Horus-falcon. However, Yoyotte has observed that the inscriptions around the base do not in fact mention Horus at all, but the deity in whose temple the statues were placed, suggesting instead that what is intended is the identity of the king and the divine falcon.²⁶ The cult-name "*Nektanebos p3 bīk*", which occurs in the priestly titles, is evidence of a particular divine form of the living king, and that form was manifest in and worshipped through these statues.²⁷ The motif of the king with the bodily appearance of a falcon was created in the Old Kingdom, but at the very end of the pharaonic period it was still expressed in a masterly way in these statues of the last native pharaoh (pl. 1).

²⁴ Wildung, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 150; Quaegebeur, *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 8 (1977), p. 135.

²⁶ Yoyotte, *Kémi* 15 (1959), pp. 73-74.

²⁷ Wildung, in *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*, II, col. 98. For royal nomen + epithet, cf. Yoyotte, *Akten des XXIV. Internationalen Orientalisten-Kongresses München* 1957 (1959), pp. 54-56, and Wildung, *OLZ* 68 (1973), col. 557-558.