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THE GIFTS OF “DARKNESS” (*KKW*).  
THE DARK WATERS OF THE NILE INUNDATION  
IN HYDROLOGICAL PROCESSIONS OF THE PTOLEMAIC  
AND ROMAN ERA

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**ABSTRACT:** The article takes a closer look at a specific feature of the Nile, and more in particular an aspect of its life bringing inundation known to the ancient Egyptian priests as *Keku* (“Darkness”). This facet of the inundation occurs seven times among the gifts brought by offering bearers in hydrological processions on the *soubassement* in the Horus temple of Edfu, the Opet temple at Karnak, the Hathor temple of Dendara and the small Isis temple of Dendara dating from the reigns of Ptolemaios IV Philopator (221–204 BCE) to that of Emperor Nero (54–68 CE). The study of its location on the temple walls as well as the inscriptions accompanying this specific personification of the Nile inundation indicates the existence of patterns in the distribution of these texts not only within a single temple, but also between temples over time and space.

**KEY WORDS:** Hydrological procession – Nile inundation – Ptolemaic and Roman era – Darkness – Dendara – Edfu – Opet Temple (Karnak)

The river Nile represented to the ancient Egyptian mind two main aspects: a bringer of life as well as a means to achieve ritual purity. The Nile formed an inseparable component of the Egyptian cycle of life – the arrival of the inundation (*h'py*) coincided ideally with the beginning of the New Year, delivering in its wake the fertile black silt that would rejuvenate the land and provide its inhabitants (under ideal circumstances) with an abundant yield during the harvest. Always in motion and concomitantly taking on new forms, it can come as no surprise that the transformative nature of the Nile

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found its reflection in the many designations and personifications associated with the river and its inundation. In this paper I would like to take a closer look at one specific personification of the inundation that regularly occurs in hydrological processions on the so-called *soubasement* of temples from the Ptolemaic and Roman era in Egypt: *Keku* (*kkw*) or “Darkness” (Wb. V, 144.15; Wilson 1997: 1092; TLA 165700).

The *soubasement* – the lowermost area of a temple wall – of most Egyptian temples built during the Ptolemaic period and subsequent Roman era contain long processions of offering bearers providing the main deities of the temple with a series of products, such as the annual yield of the fields or the produce of specific (mountainous/foreign) regions, but also aspects of the Nile inundation. Initially these processions give the impression of being merely repetitive, monotonously duplicating one offering bearer after another. The texts associated with each figure contain however vital information, almost of an encyclopaedic nature, on the land of Egypt, providing for instance detailed descriptions of a geographic, cult-topographic and religious nature for each *nome* (general overview in Baumann 2014: 1050–1056; most recently Leitz 2017).

In hydrological processions offering bearers deliver a large number of personifications of different aspects of the inundation to the deities of the temple, providing the temple and its staff with the produce of the land as well as ritually clean water for purification. This type of procession is attested 65 times – either as a stand alone or in combination with other types of processions – in 17 temples of the Ptolemaic-Roman period throughout Egypt and Nubia (overview in Tattko 2014: 382–437). Over 50 individual personifications of a particular aspect of the Nile inundation are currently known by name, but in numerous cases the exact meaning of the Egyptian term designating a specific personification is problematic, if at all comprehensible (Coppens 2014: 470–471; Tattko 2014: 367–368). The designations could reflect a variety of sensory experiences – first and foremost of a visual nature (e.g. *mw-wr*, “abundant water” – Wb. II, 50–53; Wilson 1997: 417–419 – or *3gb* “overflow (of water)” – Wb. I, 22; Wilson 1997: 24–25, TLA 314). The arrival of the inundation did however not only imply a very visual transformation of the riverbed and its surroundings, but must have gone hand in hand with remarkable audible changes (the “roaring” water) that might have also been reflected in some of the designations that are currently still unclear. Other designations refer to the actual result of the inundation: renewal of the land and its fertility (e.g. *mw-rnp*, “rejuvenating/renewing water”).

One of the personifications of the inundation brought in hydrological processions is designated *Keku* (*kkw*) or “Darkness”. Next to the hieroglyph of the canal () the term is also always determined with the sign of the sky at night () commonly used to determine words designating the night (e.g. *wh(3)*, *wš3* or *grḥ* – Wb. I, 352 and 370; Wb. V, 138–185; TLA 49060, 50230 and 167920) as well as darkness (*kkw*). While darkness has in general negative connotations in the ancient Egyptian worldview (Hornung 1965; Hornung 1975), in the case of the hydrological processions it represents an aspect of the inundation that rejuvenates, purifies and provides an abundance of produce. The choice for the term “darkness” might well be a reflection of the fertile black/dark silt that was carried by the inundation – the true “gift of the Nile” (Herodotos, *Historiae* II.5) responsible for the agricultural miracle that took place year after year along the riverbanks after the inundation had receded. The ancient Egyptians did not for no reason refer to their land as “The Black Land” (*Km.t*; Wb. V, 127; TLA 164430).

Text	Temple	Location	Date	Wall	Procession Type	U./L. Egypt	Position	Opposite
1	Horus temple, Edfu	Sanctuary	Ptolemaios IV	West	Hydrological	Lower Egypt	6 of 15	<i>hh(w)</i> ("Infinity")
2		Chamber of the Nile	Ptolemaios VI	West	Hydrological	Lower Egypt	6 of 6	<i>hh(w)</i> ("Infinity")
3		Eastern doorway from court	Ptolemaios X	East	Agricultural / hydrological	Upper Egypt	7 of 24 / 4 of 12	no opposite scene
4	Hathor temple, Dendara	Sanctuary	Cleopatra VII	West	Hydrological	Lower Egypt	6 of 14	<i>hh(w)</i> ("Infinity")
5		Interior of pronaos	Nero	West	Agricultural / hydrological	Lower Egypt	17 of 26 / 9 of 13	<i>sm3-nwn</i> ("United with the Nun")
6	Isis temple, Dendara	Vestibule D / Offering hall	Augustus	North	Hydrological	Upper Egypt	10 of 15	<i>nt</i> -inundation
7	Opet temple, Karnak	Naos, exterior rear wall	Augustus	East	Geographical	Upper Egypt	11 of 16	<i>w3r</i> -inundation

Table 1. Overview of the occurrence of the Keku inundation in subassement-processions in Egyptian temples of Ptolemaic and Roman times.

The *Keku* or “Darkness”-inundation occurs a total of seven times in hydrological processions:

1. Edfu, Temple of Horus

- Document 1: Sanctuary = Edfou I, 321, 3–5, plate XI
- Document 2: Chamber of the Nile = Edfou II, 243, 8–11, plate XLIVc
- Document 3: Eastern doorway from the courtyard to the ambulatory = Edfou VI, 224, 6-8 and Edfou X, plate CLIX (Kurth 2014: 397)

2. Dendara, Temple of Hathor

- Document 4: Sanctuary = Dendara I, 56, 10–12 and plate XLVII (Cauville 1998: 90–91)
- Document 5: Interior of pronaos = Dendara XIV, 151, 8–10 (Cauville 2011: 206–207)

3. Dendara, Temple of Isis

- Document 6: Vestibule D = Cauville 2007: 227 and plate 202 (Cauville 2009: 210–211)

4. Karnak, Opet temple

- Document 7: Rear wall of naos = Opet I, 214; Opet II, plate 20 (Paulet 2006; Leitz 2017: 204)

The seven occurrences cover a period of almost three centuries. The oldest, depicted on the walls of the sanctuary of Edfu’s Horus temple is dated to the reign of Ptolemaios IV Philopator (222–204 BCE), while the youngest occurs on the walls of the pronaos of Hathor at Dendara from the reign of Emperor Nero (54–68 CE). Of the seven appearances of this specific personification (Table 1), 4 times it is part of a hydrological procession *sensu stricto*, twice it occurs in the combination of a hydrological and agricultural procession – with male Nile offering bearers alternating with female field goddesses (i.e. Documents 3 and 5) – and a single time, in the case of Karnak’s Opet temple, it features in a geographical procession (Document 7). The overview of all occurrences of the personification in Table 1 indicates that no obvious pattern exists regarding the exact position of *Keku* in the processions.<sup>2</sup> While one notices a slight preference for the west wall (four times; Documents 1, 2, 4, and 5; see also further), no distinct predilection can immediately be established for Upper or Lower Egypt (four and three occurrences respectively). It is likewise impossible to straightaway distinguish a recurring pattern regarding the offering bearer *Keku* is paired with in the procession on the opposite temple wall. Thrice the opposite personification is *Heh(u)* (“Infinity”; Documents 1, 2 and 4), while once *Heh(u)* follows immediately upon *Keku* in a procession (Document 6). It is still worth noting that in the pronaos of the Hathor temple (Document 5) *Keku* is positioned opposite (*sm3*)-*nwn* (“United with the Nun/the primeval waters”). The three personification – *kkw*, (*sm3*)-*nwn* and *hh(w)*, together with the rarely ever occurring personification *ny(3)w* (“Emptiness”),<sup>3</sup> all form aspects of the primeval ocean from which the inundation sprang forth; an obvious association to the ancient Egyptian

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<sup>2</sup> In case of the *Keku*-inundation appearing in a combined procession (i.e. an agricultural and hydrological procession), the table indicates first the overall position of the inundation in the combined procession and secondly its position in the hydrological procession *sensu stricto*.

<sup>3</sup> The only known examples of this personification of the inundation are in two agricultural/hydrological processions: a) on the western exterior of the pronaos of the Horus temple at Edfu from the reign of Ptolemaios IX Soter II – Edfou IV, 338, 10–12 and b) on the northern exterior of Medamud’s Montu temple from the reign of Emperor Nerva – Drioton 1926, 115–116 (no. 273).

mind as partially expressed by their positioning within the hydrological processions (see further). The four personifications represent moreover the four male primordial deities of the Ogdoad of Hermopolis (Sethe 1929: 74–78). This foursome also played a central role in the Theban religious landscape of New Kingdom and Ptolemaic-Roman times (Klotz 2012: 174–185; Zivie-Coche 2009, 2013, 2015), as well as in Dendara during the latter era (Coppens – Janák 2015).

The general appearance of offering bearers bringing the *Keku*-inundation is in essence very similar to many of the other members of hydrological processions. All offering bearers are portrayed wearing the typical headdress of papyrus clumps (Lower Egypt) or lotus buds (Upper Egypt) on top of a long wig. All figures are depicted with pendulous breasts and full heavy stomachs, and wear a large collar and a belt with stripes of cloth covering the genitals. The offering bearers hold with both hands a platter containing two *hes*-vessels separated by a *was*-sceptre. Frequently the vessels are covered by papyrus or lotus blossoms (Documents 3, 4, 5 and 6). Long stems, ending in a papyrus or lotus blossom and the sign of life (*ankh*), are falling down from their hands towards the ground. On two occasions the tray is held in one hand, while the offering bearer performs a libation with a *hes*-vessel in the other hand (Documents 1 and 4). A single time the offering bearer is preceded by a striding bull (Document 6). In appearance nor position can the *Keku*-inundation be easily distinguished from its many counterparts in the hydrological processions.

A study of the inscriptions accompanying this specific personification of the Nile inundation reveals interesting patterns in the distribution of these texts not only within a single temple (e.g. from one space to the next), but also between temples over time. Many of the inscriptions also show the use of stylistic literary devices, such as alliteration. The inscriptions follow a basic pattern that is known from a variety of similar processions (e.g. Coppens 2014: 468 or Tattko 2014: 367). The inscriptions consist of two basic elements: a first one providing information on the offering bearer and aspect of the inundation presented, and a second one characterizing the divine recipient.

The basic structure of the text is as follows:

- a) Introduction of the pharaoh: *ii.n* + royal titulary + *hr=k/t* (“The king has come to you”).
- b) Identification of the divine recipient + epithets.
- c) Offering formula: *in=fn=k/t* (“so that he may bring to you”) + personification of an aspect of the inundation (*kk(w)*; “Darkness”) + more specific information on the inundation.
- d) Characterization of the divine recipient: nominal sentence: *twt r=t* + epithets (“For you are ...”). The latter component is in the case of the *Keku*-inundation only present in the inscription from the Isis temple in Dendara (Document 6): “For you are the Primordial One /// infinity” (*twt tpy.t-ꜥ /// hh.w*).

The introduction of king and deity differ from one text to the other, while the opening line of the offering formula is virtually the same in all documents – the only exception being the use of the suffix =*k* (male deity as the recipient in Edfu) or =*t* (female deity as the recipient in Dendara).

Basic structure a/b: Introduction of the pharaoh and identification of the divine recipient (with epithets)

Doc. 1 Edfou I	<i>ii.n s3 R<sup>c</sup> nb h<sup>c</sup>.w (Ptwrmys ḥnh-dt mry S.t) hr=k Hr-Bhd.ty ntr ʿ3 nb p.t</i>	The son of Ra (Ptolemaios [IV Philopator]), living forever, beloved of Isis) has come to you, Horus-Behdety, the great god, the lord of heaven,
Doc. 2 Edfou II	<i>ii.n nsw-bity (iw<sup>c</sup> n ntr: wy prj.wy stp-n-Pth-Ḥpri iri m3<sup>c</sup>.t Imn-R<sup>c</sup>) s3 R<sup>c</sup> (Ptwrmys ḥnh-dt mry Pth) hr=k Hr-Bhd.ty ntr ʿ3 nb p.t</i>	The King of Upper and Lower Egypt (The Heir of the two gods that manifest [themselves] (i.e. <i>Theoi Epiphanoi</i> ), the chosen of Ptah-Khepri, who performs the Maat of Amun-Ra), the son of Ra (Ptolemaios [VI Philometor]), living forever, beloved of Ptah) has come to you, Horus Behdety, the great god, the lord of heaven,
Doc. 3 Edfou VI	<i>iw.n nsw-bity (iw<sup>c</sup> ntr-mnh ntr:t-mnh[.t] s3.t-R<sup>c</sup> stp-n-Pth iry m3<sup>c</sup>.t snn ḥnh n R<sup>c</sup>-Imn) s3 R<sup>c</sup> (Ptwrmys dd.tw n[=f] irk[s]n[t]rs [ḥnh]=d.t mry Pth) hr=k hr-bhd.ty ntr ʿ3 nb p.t</i>	The King of Upper and Lower Egypt (The heir of the excellent god and the excellent goddess (i.e. <i>Theoi Euergetai</i> ), the daughter of Ra, the chosen of Ptah, who performs Maat, the living image of Ra-Amun) son of Ra (Ptolemaios [X], called Alex[s]an[d]eros [I], [living forever], beloved of Ptah) has come to you, Horus, the great god, the lord of heaven,
Doc. 4 Dendara I	<i>ii.n nsw-bity nb t3.wy (Empty) s3 R<sup>c</sup> nb h<sup>c</sup>.w (Empty) hr=t h.t-hr wr.t nb.t t3-rr</i>	The King of Upper and Lower Egypt ( <i>Empty</i> ), the son of Ra ( <i>Empty</i> ) has come to you, Hathor, the great one, the mistress of Tarer (i.e. Dendara),
Doc. 5 Dendara XIV	<i>[ii.n] nsw-bity nb t3.wy (hk3 hk3.w 3wtwgrdr) s3 R<sup>c</sup> nb h<sup>c</sup>.w (N3riny) hr=t s.t wr.t mw.t-ntr nb.t p.t hnw.t ntr:w nb.w</i>	The King of Upper and Lower Egypt (The Ruler of Rulers, Autokrator), the son of Ra (Nero) [has come] to you, Isis, the great one, the god's mother, mistress of heaven, the lady of all the gods,
Doc. 6 Dendara, Isis Temple	<i>[ii.n] nsw-bity nb t3.wy (hk3 hk3.w stp-n-Pth) s3 R<sup>c</sup> nb h<sup>c</sup>.w (k3ysrs ḥnh-d.t mry Pth s.t) hr=t h.t-hr nb.t ///</i>	The King of Upper and Lower Egypt (The Ruler of Rulers, the chosen of Ptah), the son of Ra (Caesar, living forever, beloved of Ptah and Isis [= Augustus]) [has come] to you, Hathor, mistress ///,

Basic structure c: Offering formula – The presentation of the “Darkness”-inundation to the deity

1) Edfou I	<i>in.f n=k kkw</i>	so that he may bring to you the “Darkness”-inundation,
2) Edfou II	<i>in.f n=k kkw</i>	<i>idem</i>
3) Edfou VI	<i>in.f n=k kkw</i>	<i>idem</i>
4) Dendara I	<i>in.f n=t kkw</i>	<i>idem</i>

5) Dendara XIV	<i>in.f n=t kkw</i>	<i>idem</i>
6) Dendara, Isis	<i>in.f n=t kkw</i>	<i>idem</i>

The part of the inscriptions that provides specific information on the inundation is interesting from a stylistic point of view as well as for understanding the relation and possible transmission of parts of the inscription(s) within a single temple and between temples. In most inscriptions this passage is divided over four phrases, each one beginning with a verbal form (a *participium* in the first phrase – *krkr / šfy / km3* – and a *sdm(.n)=f* construction in the other three phrases – e.g. *h3<sup>c</sup>=f / kis=f / b<sup>c</sup>h(.n)=f / (s)nt<sup>r</sup>=f*). The four phrases provide an overview of the main function of the *Keku*-inundation: as a result of a successful inundation (phrase 1), the abode of the deity is provisioned (phrase 2) with the yield of the fields (phrase 3). Alongside the flood waters also purify the temple (phrase 4).

#### Basic structure c: Specific information on the inundation

##### Phrase 1: The inundation of the fields

1) Edfou I	<i>krkr r k3y.t=k</i>	that spreads over your high lying fields.
2) Edfou II	<i>krkr r k3y.t=k</i>	that spreads over your high lying fields.
3) Edfou VI	<i>šfy r mrw(.t)=f hr hy r bw dr-ib=k</i>	that swells according to its wish, rising to the limit of your desire.
4) Dendara I	<i>km3 wnn.t</i>	that creates that which exists (i.e. the produce of the land)
5) Dendara XIV	<i>krkr r k3y.t</i>	that spreads over the high lying fields.

##### Phrase 2: Provisioning the abode of the deity

1) Edfou I	<i>h3<sup>c</sup>=f k3.w k3.tw m pr=k</i>	It thrusts/places provisions, piled up high in your abode;
2) Edfou II	<i>h3<sup>c</sup>=f k3.w k3.tw m pr=k</i>	It thrusts/places provisions, piled up high in your abode;
3) Edfou VI	—	—
4) Dendara I	<i>h3<sup>c</sup>=f k3.w k3.tw hr k3=t</i>	It thrusts/places provisions, piled up high for your Ka;
5) Dendara XIV	<i>h3<sup>c</sup>=f k3.w k3.tw n pr=t</i>	It thrusts/places provisions, piled up high for/in your abode;

Phrase 3: Production of the inundated fields

1) Edfou I	<i>k̄is=f n=k</i> <i>šh.t k̄3s.tw hr kn.w</i>	It pours out (i.e. produces) for you, while the field is tied up (covered) under plants;
2) Edfou II	<i>k̄is=f n=k</i> <i>šh.t k̄3s.tw hr kn.w</i> <i>3h.t=k rwd.tw hr k3.</i> <i>w=s</i> <i>thn=f š3 nw tp.w=k m</i> <i>w3dw3d.w</i>	It pours out for you, while the field is tied up under plants and your <i>Akhet</i> -field firmly under its provisions. It makes bright/colourful the vines of your (best) fields with green plants.
3) Edfou VI	<i>b<sup>c</sup>h=f n=k t3.wy m mw</i> <i>im=f</i> <i>šfy s(w) hd s(w) r</i> <i>mrw(.t)=k</i>	It floods for you the two lands with the water that is in it, swelling and seizing it (i.e. the land) according to your wish.
4) Dendara I	<i>špss.n=f šspw=t hnty</i> <i>Pr-Šps.t</i>	It provisions your images in the 'Abode of the Noble One' (i.e. Dendara)
5) Dendara XIV	<i>b<sup>c</sup>h.n=f ///</i>	It floods ///

Phrase 4: Purification of the abode of the deity

1) Edfou I	<i>sntr=f ns.t-R<sup>c</sup> r snn</i>	It purifies the 'Throne of Ra' (i.e. Edfu) from impurity.
2) Edfou II	<i>sntr=f ns.t-R<sup>c</sup> r [s]nn</i>	It purifies the 'Throne of Ra' from impurity.
3) Edfou VI	—	—
4) Dendara I	<i>ntry=f Ntry.t r nf.w</i>	It purifies 'The Divine One' (i.e. Dendara) from evil air.
5) Dendara XIV	—	—

The inscription associated with the *Keku* or Darkness-inundation in the temple of Opet at Karnak (Document 7: Opet I, 214; Opet II, plate 20) falls entirely outside the pattern attested in the six texts from the Horus temple of Edfu and the Dendara temples of Hathor and Isis. Although the inscription refers to the Darkness-inundation and the produce it brings – be it in a very general manner – there is no trace of the four phrases clearly recognisable in the Edfu and Dendara texts. The Opet inscription focuses first and foremost on the lion(-headed deity) that avenges and strikes at the enemies (e.g. Leitz 2017: 208–209). For completeness' sake the transliteration and translation of the inscription in question is given here:

“Osiris-Wennefer, justified, king of the gods. The King of Upper and Lower Egypt, lord of the two lands (Autokrator), the son of Ra, the lord of the crowns (Caesar [= Augustus]) has come to you, so that he would bring to you the inundation, (namely) the *Keku*/Darkness-inundation /// with/under its offerings/produce consisting of all offerings that have come into being through it. It/he has come from Wadjet

[i.e. Aphroditopolis or the 10<sup>th</sup> Upper Egyptian nome], the lion, the fierce lion that stabs/kills the enemies in/with ///. He revenges [*lit.* returns an answer; Wilson 1997: 154] for you on the Day of Judgment /// with the awe-inspiring terror of you. You are Wadj [who comes out(?) of the lake(?), who overflows the canal(?)] /// in the flood” (*Wsir wnn-nfr m3-hrw nswt ntr:w ii.n nsw-bity nb t3.wy (3wdgrtr) s3-R<sup>c</sup> nb h<sup>c</sup>.w (kys3rs) hr=k jnj=f n=k h<sup>c</sup>pj kkw [hr=f]3w=f m ih.t nb.t hpr.t m-<sup>c</sup>=f iw=f m W3d.t rw m3j hs3 wnp sby.w m /// [ir]=f n=k <sup>c</sup>n-wšb m hrw wp.t /// m šfy.t=k ntk w3d [pri m? š? h<sup>h</sup>hf itr.w?] /// m hr:t*) (see also Paulet 2006, Leitz 2017: 204).

On the basis of the expressions used in the four key phrases, as found in the Edfu and Dendara temples that describe the effect and function of the *Keku*-inundation, it is possible to identify a text tradition that transcends a single temple and is used over several centuries. The basic information is already found in the oldest document from the sanctuary of the Horus temple in Edfu (Document 1; reign of Ptolemaios IV Philopator). The second oldest inscription, engraved upon the walls of the Chamber of the Nile (Document 2; reign of Ptolemaios VI Philometor) in the same temple, is almost completely identical. The only exception is found in the third phrase, dealing with the production of the inundated fields, which is more elaborate in the case of the inscription from the Chamber of the Nile. Both inscriptions are also characterised by a repeated occurrence of the first sound in a series of multiple words in the first three phrases (alliteration): *kkw kṛkr r k3y.t=k h3<sup>c</sup>=f k3.w k3.tw m pr=k kis=f n=k sh.t k3s.tw hr kn.w*. The effect is still augmented as the recipient of the offering is the male deity Horus and hence the suffix of the second person masculine =*k* is regularly used. The frequent use of alliteration is not accidental, but rather illustrates the deliberate act of the composers of the inscriptions to choose – out of a plethora of possible synonyms – precisely nouns and verbs that start with the sound *k*, based on the Egyptian term of this particular aspect of the inundation – *kkw*. A similar situation has been observed by the author in a hydrological procession in the Chamber of Linen and Oils in Dendara (Dendara IV, 112–117, 129–134; Cauville 2001: 200–207, 222–227) where a clear link can be established between the name of the inundation and the offering it brings (e.g. the *W3d-wr* inundation presents *w3d.t*-linen or the *stf* inundation brings *sty-hb* oil; Coppens 2014: 470–471).

Document 3 (reign of Ptolemaios X Alexander I) dealing with the presentation of the *Keku*-inundation in the temple of Edfu has an entirely different content when compared with the other two texts (Documents 1 and 2). The opening verb of its third phrase (*b<sup>c</sup>h*) does occur in the same position in the inscription located in the interior of the pronaos of Dendara’s Hathor temple (i.e. Document 5; reign of Emperor Nero), but no other link with any of the other documents can be established. Contentwise Document 3 also differs from the other texts as it deals only with the inundation itself and not with its results (such as a bountiful harvest or the purification of the temple).

The aforementioned inscription from Dendara (Document 5), together with the text located in its temple sanctuary (Document 4; reign of Cleopatra VII), shows on the other hand remarkably greater similarities with the two other inscriptions from Edfu (Documents 1 and 2) despite the gap in both time and space. Both inscriptions (Documents 4 and 5) have taken over half of the phrases from the two Edfu inscriptions:

a) The text from the sanctuary (Document 4) was clearly inspired by phrases 2 (Doc. 4: *h3<sup>c</sup>=f k3.w k3.tw hr k3=t*) and 4 (Doc. 4: (*s*)*ntry=f Ntry.t r nf.w*) and only the name of the temple and the suffices related to the main temple deity were altered.

b) The first two phrases from the Edfu inscriptions (Documents 1 and 2: *krkr r k3y.t=k* and *h3c=f k3.w k3.tw m pr=k*) can be observed in the text from the pronaos (Document 5) with similar adaptations. The latter text is unfortunately destroyed at the very beginning of the third phrase, which opens like the third document from the Horus temple with the verb *bch*. It appears rather likely that Document 5 would have followed the Edfu examples in the final phrase as well.

Whether Document 6, located within the Isis temple at Dendara, was once also part of this tradition is now impossible to establish as none of the phrases describing the effect of the inundation have been preserved.

It is also worth noting that the four documents (1, 2, 4 and 5) not only share a large part of the same text (especially phrases 1, 2 and 4), but all four are also part of a Lower Egyptian procession and all are located on the west wall (Table 1). The choice to position the “Darkness”-inundation on the west wall might be far from accidental. To the ancient Egyptian mind the west(ern horizon) was fundamentally associated with the setting sun, the entrance to the underworld and the journey of the sun through the (dark) night to be reborn at the eastern horizon in the morning. The personification of the Nile inundation on the opposite east wall is in the case of these particular four documents always another male member of the aforementioned Ogdoad – the eight primordial deities that were present at the time of creation and form aspects of the primeval ocean from which the inundation sprang forth: *hh(w)* (“Infinity”) in Documents 1, 2 and 4 – moreover always as the sixth offering bearer in the hydrological procession – and *sm3-nwn* (“United with the primeval waters”) in Document 5 (Table 1). The reasoning behind a preference for positioning these four personifications of the “Darkness”-inundation always in a Lower Egyptian procession can at present not be satisfactorily explained. It is possible that the general look of the Lower Egyptian floodplain – the Delta – following the inundation and the deposition of the fertile black silt, evoked the idea of a dark (*kkw*) land intersected by the arms of the Nile branches and its minor distributaries.

The overview of the individual texts and their position on the temple walls indicates that the main characteristics associated with the *Keku*-inundation in the core group of documents (i.e. inundating the fields to produce a successful harvest to provision the abode of the deity and cleaning the temple of impurity, a preference for Lower Egypt/ the Delta and the west and an association with other male members of the Ogdoad) were shared not only within a single temple, but also transmitted between temples separated by hundreds of kilometres and a period of several centuries. The overview of the four phrases that provide specific information on the nature and function of the *Keku*-inundation eloquently illustrates the complexity involved for the ancient Egyptian editor-priests when composing the inscriptions to accompany a singular facet of the inundation. A similar situation of an intricate nature must have occurred when deciding about the exact position of the personification within a procession. A process that was to be repeated multiple times as hydrological processions often consisted of over a dozen personifications of the Nile inundation.

## Abbreviations:

TLA: *Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae* – <http://aaew.bbaw.de/tla/index.html>

Wb.: ERMAN, Adolf – GRAPOW, Hermann. *Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache* I–V, Leipzig–Berlin: J. C. Hinrichs's Buchhandlung, 1940–1959.

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