

HA IN SHETA

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Abstract: The coronation cycle in the Portico of the Birth in the temple of Deir el-Bahari includes a scene of purification of Hatshepsut by a god captioned as Ha in Sheta. This seemingly *hapax* toponym provides the key to a proper understanding of the highly symbolic meaning of the scene. The place name, composed of basic cosmographical hieroglyphs, has at the same time a spelling that refers to a vast semantic field of the notions of “mystery”, “secret”, “be hidden”, etc. It appears that the purification made by a god of the western desert in a “mysterious” place refers to the initiation of the female pharaoh into the secrets of the sun god, enabling her to fulfill her role as the provider of sustenance for humanity. The role of the god Ha as a protector against hunger, rooted in the Old Kingdom tradition and expressed also in the text of BD 178 in the Offering Chapel of Hatshepsut, is crucial in this respect.

Keywords: Hatshepsut, Deir el-Bahari, Ha, Sheta, enthronement, purification



The upper register of the walls of the Northern Middle Portico (Portico of the Birth) is occupied by episodes of the “youth legend” and accession rites of Hatshepsut. The last but one scene on the west wall, close to its northern end, represents Hatshepsut purified by a god (Naville 1898: Pl. LXIII = Sethe 1961: 262,10) [Figs 1, 2]. The god is wearing a standard wig and divine beard and he is dressed in a simple kilt with a bull-tail attached at the back, the latter missing in Naville’s publication. In the original version of the scene, he poured upon the king a line of *ankh*-signs (hardly visible and not recorded

by Naville) from an *ankh*-shaped vessel (see Sugi 2007). Such a reconstruction is suggested by a Ramesside sketch in red paint above the scene [Fig. 3], again not recorded by Naville but noted by Sethe (1961: 262 note b);¹ actually only the vessel was executed when the relief was restored after it had been destroyed during the Amarna period. The god is captioned *H3 m Št3, Ha in Sheta*. The scene with Ha is preceded by a record of the enthronement ceremonies of Hatshepsut and their date. Below the text, the Iunmutef-priest leads the king towards the “eastern side of the *pr-wr*” [Fig. 4].

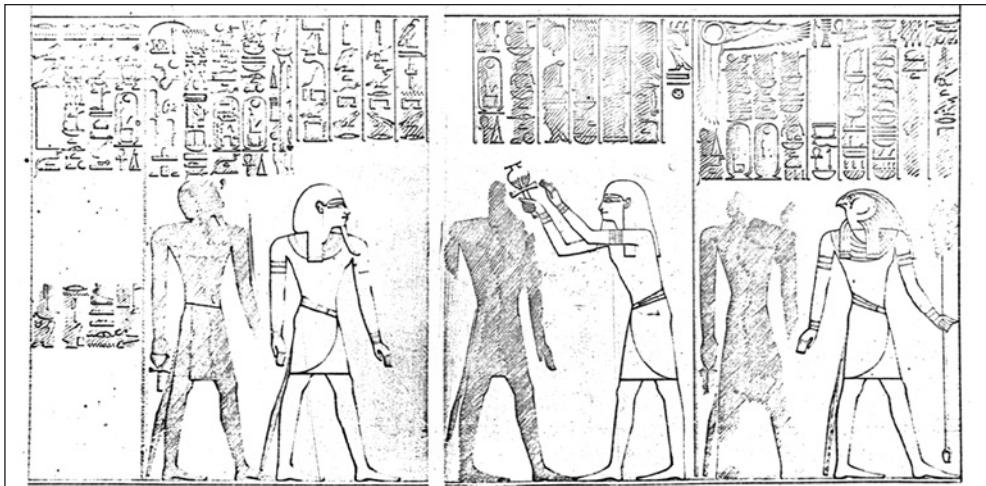
¹ The *dipinto* was painted on the erased columns of text to the right of the cartouche. On the whole set of painted sketches in the Portico of the Birth, which were intended to guide the Ramesside restorers, see Martinez 2007. However, the *dipinto* in the scene with Ha was not recorded by Martinez.



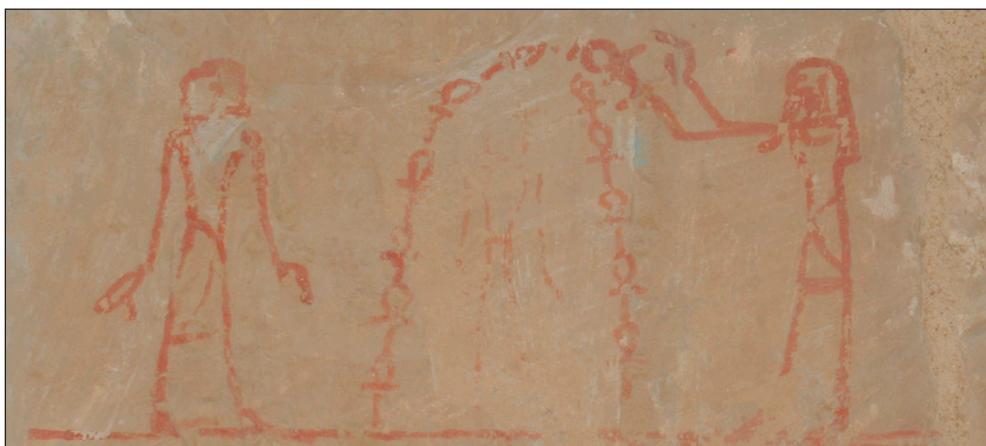
Fig. 1. *Ha purifying Hatshepsut, Northern Middle Portico, west wall, upper register*
(Photo M. Jawornicki)

The ceremony enacted subsequently by Ha seems to take place there. The two pairs of figures: the king and Iunmutef, and the king and Ha, are not separated by any line. According to Naville "the queen is led first to the eastern side by the Anmutef priest,

who is here supposed to be the god Hu or Khes, the god of Metelis, the seventh nome of Lower Egypt. It is difficult to understand why he appears on this occasion." (Naville 1898: 8).² The following scene (this time clearly separated by a vertical line), the last



*Fig. 2. Scene with Ha in Sheta, Northern Middle Portico, west wall, upper register
(After Naville 1898: Pl. LXIII)*



*Fig. 3. Ramesside dipinto in red paint above the scene
(Photo A. Ćwiek)*

² This point of view, identifying the priest and the god as one person, was followed by some scholars (e.g., Sugi 2002: 57), but seems difficult to support.



Fig. 4. *Iunmutef-priest leading the king, Northern Middle Portico, west wall, upper register*
(Photo M. Jawornicki)

one on the west wall, shows Hatshepsut led by falcon-headed Behedety towards the western side of the *pr-wr* (which is not represented, but only suggested by the text), and the coronation shrines, represented on the north wall [see Fig. 2]. The sequence of rituals as well as the topography and orientation of the coronation area is thus revealed (see Fairman 1958: 81): after the rites were finished at the eastern end of the *pr-wr*, the king proceeded towards its western end, where he was crowned as the King of Upper Egypt, then enacting the *zm3-t3wj* and *phr-h3-jnb* ceremonies, *p3 phr r gs j3bt*, “turning to the eastern side” (Ćwiek and Sankiewicz 2008), and subsequently being crowned as the King of Lower Egypt, finally appearing in the Red Crown and a short mantle, going in and out of the *pr-nzr* at the *wsht hb ssd* (Naville 1898: Pl. LXIV).

It seems therefore that the scene with the god Ha at the beginning of this sequence is certainly an important one, but its exact meaning is not clear, beside showing the “standard” purification motif (see Frankfort 1978: 106–107). The accompanying text does not reveal much.³ The fact that Ha is involved is not easy to explain and one shares Naville’s doubts cited above. He is principally the god of the Western Desert (Wildung 1972; 1977). However, his strange affiliation possibly suggests the real meaning of the represented ceremony.



The toponym *Št3*, written ☩, is a *hapax*, occurring only in this epithet of Ha (Leitz

2002: 10–11). The identification of this place name with Libya (Gauthier 1928: 146–147; Wildung 1972: 157) is a pure guess, based on the western associations of Ha. One may rather suggest that this name of a “mythical” place was constructed as a multi-layered word-play. When the hieroglyphs are analyzed separately, the place name consists of three signs:

- ☩ ‘lake’, ‘basin’, ‘watery area’
- *t3* ‘(flat) land’, ‘cultivated area’
- ⊗ *niwt* ‘town’, ‘village’, ‘abode’, ‘civilized land’

The fourth sign representing a landscape feature is included in the god’s name as the hieroglyph of a triple mountain placed on a standard .⁴ The hieroglyph  stands for *h3st*, ‘mountain’, ‘desert’, ‘foreign country’. These signs all represent basic cosmographical elements, complementary or opposite in various contexts, representing water and land, cultivated flatlands and mountain deserts, civilized and wild areas. The whole world is thus encompassed.

At the same time, the place name has the spelling *št3*, “mystery” ( var. — ). The wide semantic field, and many derivatives stemming from this,⁵ might suggest some particular meanings, but certainly the general idea of secret, mystery, hiding, is involved. The placement of the scene suggests its role in the sequence of the coronation cycle. Like “baptism of the pharaoh”, the purification made during

³ *sw^cb.n.(j) tn m mw jpn nw ‘nh w3s nb ddt nb snb nb 3wt-jb jr.t hb(w)-sd ‘\$3 wr mj R^c dt.* “I have purified you with this water of all life and dominion, all stability, all health and joy, that you may make *sed*-festivals in great number, like Ra eternally.”

⁴ Sign N 76A of *Hieroglyphica* (Extended Library). In Hannig 1995: 1221, Ha’s name is determined with the signs N 25 and R 12, but separated from one another. For various orthographies of the god’s name, see Erman and Grapow 1971: Wb 7.14–8.1.

⁵ The *Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae* (2014) lists 53 entries under “*št3*”.

the accession rites is not only an ordinary ritual, meant as physical purification, but also “symbolic cleansing by means of water [that] serves an initiation into a properly legitimated religious life” (Gardiner 1950: 6; see Leclant 1968). The purification made by Ha may thus be a symbolic representation of the initiation into the divine secrets.⁶ This state of being illuminated, introduced into the mysteries of the sun-god, is a condition of becoming a pharaoh. His role in securing *maat* in the world depends on his knowledge of the cosmogonical and cosmological secrets, as is clear from the texts (Quirke 2001: 20, 53). It is perhaps not by chance that the first occurrence of the text known as “Pharaoh as the high priest of the sun” (or the “Theological Treatise”) is in the temple of Hatshepsut (Karkowski 2003: 180–221, esp. 189–201, “The king’s knowledge of the sacred sphere”).

The idea of the initiation is also explicitly expressed in the dedicatory text on the base of Hatshepsut’s obelisk at Karnak (Sethe 1961: 363,1–3, 364,1–6). “I have made this with a loving heart for my father Amun, having entered into his initiation of the First Occasion (i.e., having been given knowledge of Amun’s role in the creation of the world) and having experienced his impressive efficacy” (transl. J.P. Allen in: Roehrig 2005: 84). Similar expressions are attested for Tuthmosis III (Sethe 1961: 157,7–160,3, 160,14). The “purification” made by Ha at the *pr-wr* is thus a confirmation of the king’s initiation. Hatshepsut is now ready to proceed, above her head appears a winged sun-disk,

a symbol which is the sign of a *rite de passage* when placed above the doorways between two spheres (Derriks 2009), here showing the changed status of the king. She is next led by Behedety, an old god of the “Throne-town” playing an important role in the enthronement rites (see Friedman 1995: 18–20; Ćwiek 2003: 194), towards Seth and Horus, who would crown her as the king of Upper and Lower Egypt. It is noteworthy that Ha, the god of the Western Desert, was chosen as the one who initiated Hatshepsut symbolically. One might speculate that the real initiation might have been made during a stay in the desert, in a “mystery place”, thus in circumstances enabling cleansing of the mind, at the same moment reflecting a primitive, natural state of the world. It would be the most proper stage for observation of the sunrise and sunset, and initiation into knowledge of the cycles of the sun and their consequences. An allusion to an enigmatic event taking place in the desert, immediately before the coronation rites, is made by the expression *phr hbst* in the Ramesseum Papyrus (Sethe 1928: line 28; see Frankfort 1978: 127). One may also recall the case of Merenra of the Sixth Dynasty who in his First Year climbed the gebel at the First Cataract “to see that which is in the mountains” (Sethe 1903: 111,1–14; see Breasted 1906: § 318).

There was probably an additional motive for the choice of the god Ha for this multi-layered symbolic scene. In the temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari *h*^c occurs also in the text of chapter 178 of

⁶ Chapter 146 of the Book of the Dead mentions the lustration of Ra with the *hs*-vase on New Year’s Day and the coronation of Osiris, obviously the same event, reflecting a tendency to associate the coronation with New Year’s Day. In fact, the *hs*-vase may stand for the sun-god himself (Graefe 1983).

the Book of the Dead on the south wall of the Offering Chapel of Hatshepsut (Naville 1901: Pl. CX, li) [Fig. 5].⁷ The text says: ‘*M3t-k3-Rc jn hm m-c H3 rdj.f hkr.f*, “Maatkara keeps far, thanks to what Ha gives, his⁸ hunger”⁹ The BD 178 has its antecedent in PT 204 (Pyr. § 119b): “Unis will not thirst, Unis will not hunger: it will not be against the heart of Unis. Ha’s arms are what repel his hunger.” (Allen 2005: 29). The Old Kingdom officials’ title “Follower of the god Ha” (*jmj-h3-H3*) probably referred to the god’s role as the supervisor of the production of commodities in the desert regions (Altenmüller 2013). Ha was therefore the god who protected against hunger and provided nourishment. One might relate this feature of Ha to the theme of food supply occurring in the text spoken by Behedety in the next scene in the coronation cycle (“I give you ... all *htpt* and all *d3w*”), which is often seen as standard expression with no particular meaning.



Fig. 5. Name of Ha in the text of BD 178 on the south wall of the Offering Chapel of Hatshepsut (Photo A. Ćwick)

In this context, however, it seems to be a conscious and important statement of the king’s ability to ensure the prosperity and abundance of food. The king, having been introduced into the universal secrets, can now perform this most important royal duty.

The employment of the ancient deity for Hatshepsut’s mystery initiations should be seen against an extensive background of references to the past, and to the use of Old and Middle Kingdom motifs and patterns in the female pharaoh’s politics and monuments (Ćwick 2014). It is

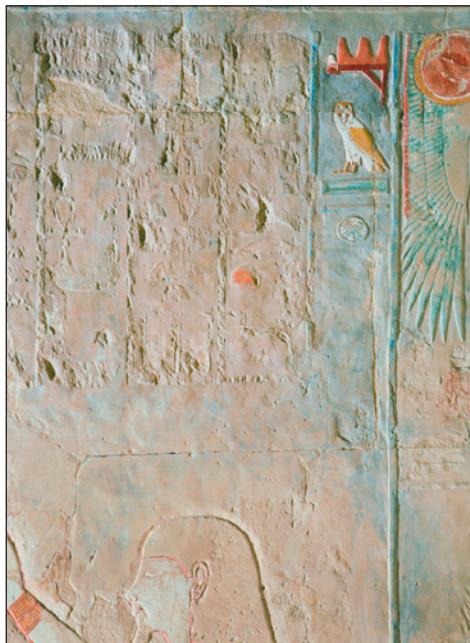


Fig. 6. Text above the scene with the erased columns and the caption for Ha (Photo M. Jawornicki)

⁷ It is noteworthy that the name of the god is written in a unique manner as two joined signs: N 76 A and N 24. Analogous text from the north wall is preserved on a fragment in Berlin, ÄMP 14143 (Königlichen Museen, Berlin 1913: 113).

⁸ Originally the text had the feminine suffix s, changed to f at some point.

⁹ It seems to be a rather strange version of the passage, which is usually translated “N shall not be hungry, he shall not be thirsty, for *h3* has saved him and removed his hunger, and hearts are filled, are filled.” (Book of the Dead 1994: 131).

noteworthy in this respect that Ha appears as the only god in an offering formula (Davies 1923: 5, Pl. XLVII) in the tomb of Puiemra, the second prophet of Amun under Hatshepsut (TT 39).

A separate, but possibly meaningful, issue is the date and mode of erasures of the figures and text of the scene. It is not clear how much the texts were destroyed already by Tuthmosis III (who is certainly responsible for the destruction of Hatshepsut's figures and names). It seems thatatenists at least added to this, when destroying the gods' figures. At any rate, however, it is difficult to explain why the name and epithet of Ha have been left untouched, preserved until now as the only original fragment

of the scene, still revealing the original bluish-grey background. It is noteworthy, moreover, that the name and affiliation of the god from the very beginning filled only half of the column, the rest being left without any hieroglyphs, just painted with the background color [Fig. 6]. This must have been made deliberately, a mistake in the design being highly improbable. It would be quite easy to fill in the rest of the column with any epithet referring to Ha. Even more mysterious is the fact that the uneven surface below the bluish-grey paint in this lower part of the column suggests that some hieroglyphs had originally been executed, but later erased, plastered and covered with the background color.

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