

Toponomastic Patterns of Ancient Egypt

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THE HIGHLY PRODUCTIVE NILE VALLEY between the First Cataract and the Delta and the even more extensive and fertile Delta itself made it possible to establish numerous villages and towns in the country to which the Egyptians applied the name of *Kēmet*, "the black (earth)," relative to the black coloring of the Nile deposits. The labors of identifying ancient town-sites have been crowned with remarkable success owing, in large measure, to the continuance of some ancient names in more or less corrupted form into the present time, the Greek transcriptions of others, or the particular theophorous names with which various places were denominated.

The latter instance is of surpassing importance, for to the ancient Egyptian every hamlet, town or city was a sacred place, sanctified by its shrine or temple as the home of the village or town-god; and it is for this reason that Egypt's cities, with comparatively few exceptions, bore theophorous names, or names indicative of some sacred object or event. And one may assume this to hold true also in those cases where no explanation of a particular proper name of a city can be given. The surnames, as a rule, testify to this observation and in broad generalization one may say that some phase of religious culture always mirrors itself in Egypt's place-names. The sanctity of a locality, moreover, even preceded in time the establishment of a village or town itself, in so far as it was conditioned upon the manifestation of a local spirit who had chosen, according to animistic beliefs, as the place of his favorite haunt some object, be it a stone, a mountain, a tree, or some entity of consequence. When once the idea had taken root of spirits having their special places of residence, shrines and temples were erected in their honor taking the shape of circular structures¹ and corre-

¹ For the remains of a circular temple structure see James Edward Quibell, *Hierakonpolis* II, pl. 65, 72, 73 and p. 3ff.

sponding to the round form of the pre-historical oldest dwellings of Egypt.

This circular structure of dwellings and temples gave rise to the circular shape of the earliest towns, but, although no city thus laid out is preserved, the idea was kept alive in the determinative of city names, and the ideograph of the concept of "city" was rendered in writing by a circle divided by four triangular sections within, indicative of cross-roads. The oldest Egyptian town thus was a true *urbs*, the latter word being derived from *orbis*², a circle or ring. In time, changes were wrought whenever the boundaries of municipalities were extended to form a more oblong shape, being frequently walled in, as is shown by the oblong ring with spiked points signifying bastioned out-works within which the city name was enclosed. This change must have occurred even quite early with buildings themselves, as the elongated sign with two oblique strokes within, picturing a pre-historical building, would indicate, and which was employed for the designation of the city of Nekhen³. Smaller towns and villages were called *demyu* with the somewhat colorless meaning of "the locality which one touches or arrives at."⁴ Large cities bore the name of *neywet*,⁵ with unknown meaning.

As one meets in ancient Egypt stone-cult as well as mountain-cult, tree-cult and animal-cult, the nomenclature of the country's oldest towns bring into correlation the particular cult of a deity with its erstwhile animistic nature and function. This, of course, is not valid anymore in the case of later city-foundations. Well-cults being unknown to the country owing to the almost total absence of springs and wells,⁶ no ancient city bears a name which would refer to it.

² [The connection of *orbis* with *urbs* is questionable. Ed.]

³ Hieraconpolis, modern Kôm el-Aḥmar.

⁴ *dmy* (touch, come near to, arrive).

⁵ *nîw.t*.

⁶ 'Ain Mûsa, the Spring of Moses, in the Moḳaṭṭam Hills to the east of Cairo, can hardly be called a spring. It furnishes only dribbles of bitter and brackish water. To the south of Cairo, Ḥelwân, has a number of sulphurated and saline springs. The only drinkable fresh-water spring of any importance is found at Maṭârîye, in the immediate neighborhood of Heliopolis. The Egyptians believed the water of this spring to be the milk of the heavenly ocean in which the sun-god was believed to wash his face.

The local spirits, assuming in historical times the position of deities, at first were frequently nameless and were alluded to simply as "He or she of such-and-such a place." One encounters, thus, the cat-shaped goddess Bastet being raised to the position of a city-goddess with the sole designation of "She of the town of Bast," i. e., Bubastis.⁷ The name of Bast itself has no reference to the cult of the deity as an animal deity, but is determined with the ideograph of a sealed oil-jar. The city's name might, therefore, have some such meaning as "the town of the (sacred) anointing jar." As the ancient patroness of the earliest capital of Upper Egypt, Nekheb⁸, the vulture-goddess Nekhbeyet too is nameless and is simply known as "She of Nekheb." This is true also of the goddess Ewenit or Enit of Hermopolis, whose name proclaims her as "She of On."⁹

Cities which by their names identify themselves with original stone-cult places are recognized by the writing of a pillar or column. These cities are Dendera, Heliopolis, Hermonthis and Esna, all of whom were known merely by the name of "the pillar town." Dendera¹⁰ and Esna¹¹ reveal by their writing with feminine *t* that they were cult-places of female spirits or divinities, becoming at a later time identified with the great sky-goddess Hathor. Heliopolis,¹² in order to distinguish it from the southern city of the same name, i. e., Hermonthis, is also called "the northern pillar town,"¹³ while Hermonthis presented "the Upper-Egyptian pillar town,"¹⁴ also named "the pillar town of Monthu" (whence the Greek name of Hermonthis), or simply "the abode of Monthu."¹⁵ In antiquity Hermonthis adjoined the town of Esna, which the Greeks called Latopolis, "the *latos*-fish town," from a fish (*perca nilotica*?) there venerated. Its ancient name *Ta senēt*,¹⁶ Coptic *Sne*, whence its present Arabic name *Esna*, evades translation.

Aphroditēspolis, also called Pathyris,¹⁷ "the abode of Hathor" appears occasionally as "the town of the two rocks,"¹⁸ while the near-by town of Crocodilopolis, whose ruins lie at the site of the modern village of Gebelēn, whose Arabic name means "the two mountains," seems likewise to have been known as "the town of

⁷ *b's.t* (city), *b's.t* (goddess).

⁸ Eileithiaspolis, modern el-Kâb.

⁹ *Īwny.t*.

¹⁰ *iwn.t*.

¹¹ *īwny.t*.

¹² *īwnw*.

¹³ *īwnw mḥw*.

¹⁴ *īwnw šm'w*.

¹⁵ *pr Mntw*.

¹⁶ Heinrich Karl Brugsch, *Dictionnaire géographique de l'ancienne Égypte*, p. 720ff.

¹⁷ *pr Ḥw.t-ḥr*.

¹⁸ *īnrty*.

the two rocks," judging from the determinative of two stones, although the reading would be "the town of the two valleys."¹⁹

One of the names of Akhmîm, according to the Ramesseum Onomasticon,²⁰ was "the stone-face of Min," apparently pointing to some rocky mountain projection. This seems to have been the most generally applied name to the town, giving rise to Greek Χέμμιν and later Arabic Akhmîm or Ikhmîm; however, the town's name of *Ipu*²¹ is not uncommon on monuments of Akhmimic provenance. It is here listed among places named after rocks and stones without implying any necessary early stone-cult at this site.

Indications of the existence of localities where mountain-cult has left traces would naturally be exceedingly rare in the Nile Valley itself where all Egyptian towns with few exceptions were established. One instance is registered²² in which a place-name of this pattern occurs, being determined with the city sign. This city determinative is given to a site called "the great mountain."²³ Another reading specifies the town more accurately as "the mountain of the great one,"²⁴ and the "great one" bears the name of "She on the mountain-top."²⁵ In this case the mountain is localized, is a definite place-name, which cannot be said of Anubis who is surnamed "He on his mountain," where "the mountain" could be interpreted in its literal sense, or as the tomb, or the coffintop. Mountains, as stated, were not suited for *oppidorum vocabula* in the Nile-Valley, yet the common folks of Egypt clung to ancient beliefs of the sacredness of mountains, as is illustrated by the name of the goddess named "the western mountain-top," a spirit who was still revered as a special protectress of the necropolis of Thebes.²⁶

From its Coptic form of *ebôt* one would be unable to bring the name of Abydos into any relationship with a mountain. However, the Coptic name is so far from the ancient writing of the city's name that all that can be said is that the later Egyptians themselves had become unable to comprehend its original meaning. The writing of the name of Abydos is composed of a chisel and a mountain, transliterated *abdju*.²⁷ Now a rock-stela dating from as late as the year 374 B. C. may in some way give a clue to the meaning of

¹⁹ *inty*. ²⁰ Alan Henderson Gardiner, *Ancient Egyptian onomastica*, II, 40*, 41*.

²¹ *ipw*. ²² Brugsch, *op. cit.*, p. 885. ²³ *d̄w* "y. ²⁴ *d̄w* "y. t. ²⁵ *tp d̄w-s̄*.

²⁶ Adolf Erman, *Aegypten und aegyptisches Leben im Altertum*, neu bearb. von Hermann Ranke, p. 310. ²⁷ 'bd̄w.

Abydos' name. The stone contains the decree of the thirtieth Dynasty king Nektanebēs forbidding the cutting of stone in the "sacred mountain of Abydos." The holy mountain, described as being situated "between the two falcons," is thought to be the mountain south of Abydos, facing the village of Nag' el-Ghâbât.²⁸ The occurrence of a sacred mountain in the close vicinity of Abydos thus strengthens the assumption that Abydos owes its name to the erstwhile worship of a mountain spirit and accordingly was named "the town of the mountain chiseler," a concept so primitive that it would naturally find no place in later official theology. A later name given to the town of Antaeopolis, some thirty one miles south of Assiût, was "the high mountain town,"²⁹ which name, through Coptic *Tkow*, passed into Arabic *Ķâw el-kebîr*, "the great *Ķâw*."

Towns containing the pattern of names of trees are more numerous, even though most trees held sacred were generally to be found only within the temple precincts.³⁰ One city bore the name of *Atef*, "the sycamore town," which may have been a surname of Assiût (*Siût*), the ancient *Sauty* or *Siyauty*,³¹ Greek Lyconpolis, "the wolves' town," which was the capital of the thirteenth nome of Upper Egypt bearing the name of "the anterior nome of the sycamore tree."³² This widest branching tree of Egypt gave its name also to the fourteenth Upper Egyptian nome as "the posterior nome of the sycamore,"³³ so that it is possible that the capital of this nome, i. e., Cusae (*Kussai*, modern *el-Ķûşîya*), may also be considered as a most likely "sycamore town." Near the village of *Ahnâs* we meet with "the town of the oleander tree,"³⁴ the capital of the twentieth nome of Upper Egypt, called "the anterior oleander nome,"³⁵ and thus distinguished from the twenty-first Upper-Egyptian nome with Nilopolis as its metropolis, which bore the name of "the posterior oleander nome."³⁶ In the immediate neighborhood of *Ķaşr eş-Şayyâd* was situated a town to which the Greeks gave the odd name of *χρηνοβοσκία*, "the pastures for geese." Its

²⁸ Daressy, *Recueil de travaux relatifs à la philologie égyptienne*, XVI, 126, 127; Borchardt, *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache*, XLIV, pp. 55 ff.

²⁹ *dw k'y.* ³⁰ Brugsch, *op. cit.*, 1362, 1370. ³¹ *s'uty*, Assyrian *Siyāutu*.

³² *'tj hnt.t.* ³³ *'tj phw.t.*

³⁴ *n'r.t.*; the translation of *n'r.t* as the "oleander (Laurier Rose)" is here retained. Newberry, in *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache*, pp. 78 ff. argues for "pomegranate."

³⁵ *n'r.t hnt.t.* ³⁶ *n'r.t phw.t.*

Egyptian name was "the town of the trees of Seth."³⁷ The capital of the third nome of Lower Egypt was known as "the town of the abode of the mistress of the *ima*-trees,"³⁸ apparently having reference to Hathor of Momemphis, who carries three such trees on her head. An unidentified town went by the designation of "the town of the cypress-grove."³⁹ "The abode of the fig-mulberry"⁴⁰ was the name of a suburb of Memphis. Metelis, the capital of the seventh nome of Lower Egypt, bore the name of "the town of the temple of the fig-mulberry."⁴¹ The Arabic place-name Benha, the chief city of the province of Kalyûbiya, appears to be a corrupt rendering of ancient *Per-neha*, *Pi-nha*,⁴² "the abode of the fig-mulberry," as the name of a town close to Athribis (Tell Atrib). Two Egyptian towns of unknown location bore the name of "the mansion of the *nebes* tree."⁴³ Here may be mentioned also Busiris (modern Abû Şîr), which is the Greek rendering of Egyptian "the abode of Osiris." Its name proper was *djedu*,⁴⁴ written with an hieroglyph which is taken to mean "the sacred pillar of Osiris." The original sign, however, must have represented a tree, which I believe to have been the date-palm,⁴⁵ in which case Busiris must also be classed with towns named after trees. Its meaning must have been "the town of the sacred palm-tree." Another Delta town was known by the name of "the acacia town of (the goddess) Neith."⁴⁶

Turning next to the toponomastic pattern with names of sacred animals we meet with the name of Crocodilopolis, "the Crocodile town." In Egyptian the town bore the name of *Shedyt*⁴⁷ with the determinative of an ox-head on top of a shrine. What significance was attached thereto is a mute question. The occurrence of *shed* as a designation of the crocodile is rare⁴⁸ and may have been influenced by the city's name as the home of the crocodile-god. The determinative, however, of the city would still point to some kind of animal worship within the town of *Shedyt* with a direct bearing on its name.

³⁷ *n' šnyw n Stḫ.* ³⁸ *pr nb.t lm'w.* ³⁹ *i'rw mnw.*

⁴⁰ *pr nb.t nh.t* or simply *nhy*, *nh.t* with the determinative of the city sign.

⁴¹ *ḥw.t nh.t.* ⁴² *pr nh.t*, Neo-Egyptian *pr nh'*. ⁴³ *ḥw.t nbś.* ⁴⁴ *ḏdw.*

⁴⁵ Lutz, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, XXXIX, pp. 196–205.

⁴⁶ *šnd N(r).t.* ⁴⁷ *šdy.t.*

⁴⁸ Gaston Camille Charles Maspero, *Mémoires ... de la Mission Archéologique Française au Caire*, I, 229.

The name of the birthplace of the Egyptian historian Manetho, who lived during the reigns of Ptolemy Lagus and Ptolemy Philadelphus, was called by the Greeks Sebennytos, being a corrupt rendering of Egyptian *Tjeb nuter*,⁴⁹ Coptic *Jemnuti*, with the meaning of "the town of the calf of god," or "the town of the sacred calf." Whether this name is due to an ancient worship of a calf at this place, or is occasioned by assimilation with other names of cities named after their sacred animal is obscure. Later on it is Onuris (the Greek Ares), identified also with Shu, the god of the air, who is localized in Sebennytos and elsewhere. Akhmim whose name was treated above, also was known as "the city of the bull in heat."⁵⁰ The ithyphallic city-god Min of that town was identified by the Greeks with Pan, most likely owing to Min's pillar-like archaic statues,⁵¹ and was named by them Panopolis accordingly. But it seems that Min at some time must also have assumed the character of a moon-god, of whom it is said that when he is rejuvenated he is a bull in heat, while at his old age he is a castrated bull.⁵² The name of "the town of the bull in heat" is thus employed only metaphorically. "The town of the female ibexes"⁵³ was situated somewhere in the neighborhood of Abydos. An ancient town of unknown location appears under the name of "the ichneumon town."⁵⁴ While ichneumon mummies have been found in a number of places, the "ichneumon town" is most likely to be placed in the neighborhood of Heliopolis on account of the fact that Atumu of Heliopolis was once worshipped in that animal's form. Near Gebelén was situated the "guinea-fowl town,"⁵⁵ this town to be distinguished from one called "the town of the guinea-fowl of Horus."⁵⁶ The latter was an important place, functioning as the capital of the twenty-first nome of Upper Egypt, to which the Greeks applied the name of Nilopolis. No religious meaning is implied in the name of the city of Elephantine, "the elephant town,"⁵⁷ on the southern part of the island bearing the same name. The earliest capital of the "Hare nome," the fifteenth nome of Upper Egypt, which later was incorporated within the territory of Hermopolis, bore the name of "the hare town."⁵⁸ There are at least two more Egyptian towns of the same name known, although their sites remain unidentified.

⁴⁹ *t̄b n̄tr.* ⁵⁰ *nw.t n k' ps̄y.* ⁵¹ Wilhelm Max Müller, *Egyptian mythology*, p. 139.

⁵² Brugsch, *op. cit.*, p. 1022. ⁵³ *ny'w.t.* ⁵⁴ *h̄dr.t.*, Brugsch, *ibid.*, p. 549.

⁵⁵ *šmn.t, šmnw.t.* ⁵⁶ *šmn Hr, šmnw Hr.* ⁵⁷ *'bw*, Greek *iēb.* ⁵⁸ *wnw.*

Modern Atfih was known by its full name as the town of "the abode of the mistress of the most excellent cow,"⁵⁹ and in its abbreviated form as the town of "the most excellent of cows."⁶⁰ This has reference, no doubt, to the white cow, the sacred animal of Hathor, which, according to Strabo, was worshipped here.

A favorite pattern of name-giving was that of designating a town from some mythological event supposed to have taken place at its site. An interesting case in point is Edfu (Apollinopolis magna), commonly known as *Djebu* (Coptic *Atbô*).⁶¹ Its deity was Horus, represented as a flying falcon, as a winged solar disk, or as a man with a falcon's head. Whatever the original meaning of *Djebu* may have been, it was lost by the Egyptians themselves, who after all never concerned themselves with problems of "meaning" in a strict sense but rather exhausted their ingenuity on etymological play on words. Thus they later explained the name of *Djebu* as being derived from a verb meaning "to pierce" or "to stab," and thereby connecting the city's name with the great combat fought between Horus and Seth, explaining *Djebu* as "the city of stabbing," and Horus as the *Debty*, "the stabber" of the serpent Seth-Apophis.⁶² It may be added here that Fustât (old Cairo) was similarly brought into connection with the body of Horus-Seth myths and received the name "the town which was under combat,"⁶³ at the time when the two antagonists struggled for possession of the country. Its Greek rendering of Babylon is supposed to be due to assonance with the name of the island of Rôda and its town called "the town of the abode of the Nile(god) of Heliopolis."⁶⁴ Any objection that might be raised against such a derivation of Babylon could involve only minor topographical considerations.

The seat of the white ibis-god Thouty, the deity of writing and science, was the once famous city of Hermopolis in Middle Egypt. To the ancient Egyptians it was known as "the city of eight,"⁶⁵ which, later, owing to New Empire speculations, was believed to be so-named because the eight primeval deities, as ancestors of the sun-god, were thought to have arisen at this site. Mythopoic interpretation, too, gave to Cusae, the capital of the fourteenth nome of Upper Egypt the name of "the city of Binding,"⁶⁶ with the

⁵⁹ *pr nb.t tpy ih.* ⁶⁰ *tpy ihw.* ⁶¹ *dbw, db'.* ⁶² Brugsch, *op. cit.*, 921, 922.

⁶³ *hry 'h'.* ⁶⁴ *pr h'py n lwn.* ⁶⁵ *hmnw.* ⁶⁶ *k's, k'sy.*

allusion to some legend about Osiris. "The consecrated place of the (bull's) hide"⁶⁷ represents a surname of Abydos. Probably some mythological feature is connected also with the name of a place called "the town of the bull's back,"⁶⁸ that is, Sakō, probably preserved in modern el-Kêš.

Dendera was not only one of the most ancient, but also one of the most celebrated cities of ancient Egypt, to which testify the numerous surnames heaped upon the place. Because it contained within her temple an Osirian memorial, it was called "the abode of the vase of the sacred fluid of Osiris."⁶⁹ As "the seat of drunkenness"⁷⁰ it memorialized an episode in the myth of the Destruction of Mankind when Hathor-Aphrodite, the chief deity of Dendera, had become intoxicated and thereby had caused the sun-god to discontinue the slaughter of men. It was "the abode of her who is beautiful of face,"⁷¹ i. e., Hathor, most likely again with allusion to the same myth; "the abode of the flowers of the goddess,"⁷² and "the city of the impregnation of Isis."⁷³ Other surnames of Dendera were "the birthplace of Nut,"⁷⁴ "the birthplace of Rekhit,"⁷⁵ and "the birthplace of Horus, son of Isis."⁷⁶ Here may be registered also "the town of the two divine sandals"⁷⁷ although none of the attempts at identification are satisfactory. It is variously placed at Atf where the Maḥmūdiyyeh Canal diverges from the Rosetta arm of the Nile, and at Atfīḥ. Canopus, in the vicinity of Abū Kīr, is derived from Egyptian, with the meaning of "the city of the Chest of Heaven."⁷⁸

The name of what remained for a long time an insignificant place but rose to become afterwards the mighty capital of Egypt, that is, Thebes, I shall mention also under this category of toponomastic patterns in so far as the Greek name is concerned. The Egyptians called it *Waset*.⁷⁹ The name-comparisons between Boeotian Thebae and *Waset* as Egyptian Thebes have been carried on hitherto on the basis of sound similarities, of which an earlier proposal of connecting Thebes with *Tjemet*,⁸⁰ Coptic Djēme, is for various reasons the most unlikely. Luxor, which was afterwards joined

⁶⁷ *ḥ't mšk.* ⁶⁸ *s' k'.* ⁶⁹ *pr šdy n Wš-ir, pr šd rdw ntr n Wš-ir.* ⁷⁰ *s.t th.t.*

⁷¹ *pr nfr hr-s.* ⁷² *pr rnpw.t n t' ntr.t.* ⁷³ *pr rḥ n Š.t.* ⁷⁴ *pr mš.t n Nw.t.*

⁷⁵ *pr mš Rhy.t.* ⁷⁶ *pr mš Hr s' Š.t.* ⁷⁷ *nw.t nt tb.ty.*

⁷⁸ Lutz, University of California *Publications in semitic philology*, vol. 10, no. 16, pp. 295-300. ⁷⁹ *w's.t.* ⁸⁰ *t'me.t.*

with *Waset* bore the name of "the southern harim,"⁸¹ and it is believed that *T(a)-ipet*,⁸² "the harim," offers the nearest assonance to Thebae. But the feminine article *t(a)* is never used with the name *Ipet resyt*, nor was *Ipet* ever applied to comprehend the whole territory of *Waset*. Now the ancient and important town in Boeotia, Thebae, was the scene of many mythological tales, such as those of Cadmus, Dirce, Amphion, Pentheus, Oedipus, the Seven against Thebes, and the Epigoni. It is perhaps with some significance that Pliny and Juvenal used the name Thebe when referring to Egyptian Thebes. While unable to account for the Greek name the opinion may at least be stated which would connect the name with Thebe, the nymph and beloved of the river-god Asopus, but as the Greek idea of nymphs was foreign to Egyptian thought, one might conceive *Waset* to have been an ancient river-spirit whose memory, though not rising to godhood, might have been kept alive by the populace and transmitted to the story-loving Greeks, who were reminded especially of Thebes, rich in stories, and the Boeotian nymph.

In its numerous surnames Thebes was only rivalled by Dendera. To the Egyptians Thebes was simply "the city," or "the great city," "the vast city," "the city of Amon" (No-Amon, Nahum 3, 8), "the city of the lord of eternity," "the city before the face of the eye of Rê," "the mistress of the two lands," "the city of the mystery of Amon," "the horizon of Amon whose name is hidden," "the heaven of Egypt," "the city which has given birth to cities," "the egg which bore the gods," "the mother of cities," etc. In a hymn of praise and glorification of Thebes⁸³ some light is perhaps shed on the name of *Waset*-Thebes. It is there maintained that the name for city (*neywet*) was first given to Thebes, and was later bestowed upon all other towns under the supervision of *Waset* as the eye of the sun-god. The eye of Rê, however, is always a goddess, and *Waset* is described as a goddess (although the determinative does not indicate it), as the excellent *wedjat*-eye, assuming the form of Sekhmet, the mistress of the two lands. The author of this strange literary effusion cannot have become so confused as to identify a city with a goddess. Here is a case of no mere personification as one meets in pictorial representations of geographical

⁸¹ *ip.t rsy.t.* ⁸² *t' ip.t.*

⁸³ Gardiner, *Zeitschrift für Aegyptische Sprache*, XLII, 20, 21.

names, nor can the scribe have held so foreign an idea of *Waset* as a kind of Tyche swaying the fortunes of city and country. To him *Waset* was a deity testifying to every other town that the city bearing her name has become the metropolis of all cities. Thus, while the meaning of *Waset* itself still remains unexplained, the scribe clearly treated it as a theophorous name.

The toponomastic pattern of "the house or abode of such-and-such a god or goddess" is employed in both proper as well as surnames of Egyptian cities. As a proper name may be cited the town called Pithom in Exodus 1, 11, that is, "the abode of Atumu,"⁸⁴ which functioned as the capital of the eighth nome of Lower Egypt. The earliest capital of Lower Egypt bore the name of "the abode of (the goddess) Uazit,"⁸⁵ and the capital of the twentieth nome of Lower Egypt at the western entrance to the valley of Goshen was known as "the abode of Sopdu."⁸⁶ This pattern is of frequent occurrence. Not infrequent is also the reading of "the mansion of such-and-such a divinity," where the word for mansion⁸⁷ may designate a large house, a temple, or in older times even a town. Diospolis parva, modern Hôu, which preserves the ancient name, was simply known as "the mansion" or "the town." A surname of Xoïs (*Khasuu*) was "the mansion of the royalty of Rê,"⁸⁸ and that of Memphis "the mansion of the vital spirit of Ptah."⁸⁹ "The town of the king's mansion"⁹⁰ was situated in the seventeenth nome of Upper Egypt as was "the mansion of the phoenix bird,"⁹¹ etc.

The naming of Egypt's older capital of Memphis was rather incidental. Memphis was founded in historical times and was an enlargement of the old fortress called "the White Wall," to the south of which Pepy I of the Sixth Dynasty built a quarter where he fixed his residence and his near-by pyramid which he named *Men-nefer-Meryrê*, "the beauty of Meryrê endures," and this became also the city's name. Later, however the name was abbreviated to *Men-nefer*, "the beauty endures." Pepy's successor Merenrê built himself a pyramid and called it "(Merenrê's) beauty

⁸⁴ *pr* *Ītm.* ⁸⁵ *pr* *W'dy.t.* ⁸⁶ *pr* *Spdw.* ⁸⁷ *hw.t.* ⁸⁸ *hw.t nsy.t n R'.*

⁸⁹ *hw.t k' Ptah.* which many scholars believe to have given rise to the Greek rendering of Αἴγυπτος, Egypt. ⁹⁰ *hw.t nsu.*

⁹¹ *hw.t bnw*; "the mansion of the phoenix bird" may have been situated in the southern part of the eighteenth nome of Upper Egypt; see Gardiner, *op. cit.*, II, 107*.

appears gloriously," which caused the city of Memphis occasionally to go by the name of "the beauty appears gloriously."⁹²

Frontier towns, as might be expected, did not share as a rule in the usual patterns of Egyptian toponomastic. Remaining for centuries outside of the Egyptian culture orb proper the city of Aswân (Syene) appears under a name which seems to indicate that it was at first merely a "trading-town"⁹³ where the Egyptians exchanged goods with the Nubian inhabitants of Wawat. Tanis,⁹⁴ which had become the capital of the fourteenth nome of Lower Egypt after the Twentieth Dynasty, was a town in which Rameses II took great interest, who, after its reconstruction, turned it into a fortified place and named it "the very strong castle." In Egyptian texts the name of Tanis appears in three various ways, all of which make it quite certain that it was originally a settlement of Semites. One reading presents us with *Sekhet Dja'*,⁹⁵ another with *Sekhet Dja'net*,⁹⁶ and a third drops the first element *Sekhet* and writes simply *Dja'net*. The variant readings of *Dja'* and *Dja'net* do in no way present any difficulty, but, as a matter of fact, rather testify clearly to a Semitic origin of the town's name. *Dja'* goes back to Semitic *š'h*, with the meaning of "peragravit, peregrinatus est," while, on the other hand, *dja'net* is derived from the verb stem *š'n*, "migravit (de nomadibus)." The city's name may thus be translated as "the town of the migrant (colonist or new-comer)." This would explain at the same time the earlier name with prefixation of *sekhet*, "field," i. e., "the migrant's field," a name which harkens back to a time when the Semitic new-comers still lived in tents prior to the establishment of the city itself.

Whereas the above given explanation of the name of Tanis is etymologically sound, this cannot be said without some misgiving of the explanation given to the name of the capital of the seventh nome of Lower Egypt, i. e., Metelis. Brugsch⁹⁷ considered its name to be of Greek origin, deriving it from μέτηλις, "migrator, advena," but it might be asked why it was then not written thus instead of μέτηλις.

Without religious significance appear the names of a number of Egyptian towns where topographical or other factors entered

⁹² *h'y nfr.* ⁹³ *šwnw.*

⁹⁴ *d'n.t.*, Assyrian *Ša'nu*, Hebrew *Šo'an*, modern *Šân el-Hagar*.

⁹⁵ *šht d'.* ⁹⁶ *šht d'n.t.* ⁹⁷ Brugsch, *op. cit.*, p. 1290.

into play. Thus the town of *Kheni(t)*⁹⁸ at the north end of the quarries of Silsileh was simply called "the rowing place," because here the Nile was too swift and narrow, forcing the crews of sailing-vessels to employ their rudders. Crocodeilōnpolis, because it was situated on an island near Gebelên, bore the descriptive name of "the town of the river-island."⁹⁹ A name like that borne by the village or town of "My face is upon Amon"¹⁰⁰ is apparently due to its situation facing Karnak from the eastern bank of the Nile. As a new foundation reveals itself by its name the town of "the abode of the newly-cleared tract of *Isha*,"¹⁰¹ located somewhere south of modern Ṭahṭa. And as a final example of the naming of a new colonizing or settlement project undertaken by Rameses III may be mentioned the town to which the Greeks applied assonantically the name of Natho. It has its origin in Egyptian *Na-t-ko*,¹⁰² "those belonging to the mansion," that is, of Rameses III.

⁹⁸ *hny.* ⁹⁹ *iw n itrw.* ¹⁰⁰ *hr.y hr Imn.* ¹⁰¹ *pr nḥb n Iṣ'.*
¹⁰² *n'y t' ḥw.t (R'-mss ḥk' Iwnw).*