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Christophe Thiers

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Armant (Hermonthis)

CHRISTOPHE THIERS

CNRS, UMR 5140, Montpellier, France

The ancient city of Armant (ancient Egyptian names: Iuny, Iunu, Iunu-shema, Iunu-Montu), the Greek Hermonthis and Coptic Ermont, was located 15 km south of Thebes on the west bank of the Nile (Mond and Myers 1940; Thiers 2019). It has been investigated since 2004 by an archaeological mission under the auspices of the French Institute of Oriental Archaeology (IFAO, Cairo) and the CNRS-University Paul-Valéry Montpellier. Armant was the main city of the cult of MONTU, the falcon-headed god, protector of the Egyptian kingship and warrior, and the main god of the Theban area since the 11th Dynasty, before the emergence of AMUN-RE at the beginning of the 12th Dynasty. He was worshipped here with his divine consort Rattawy/Tjenenet/Iunyt. The temple of Montu dates back to the Middle and New Kingdom, but only the foundations of the late Ptolemaic and Roman temple survive. Below the latter, excavations revealed occupation layers back to the Old Kingdom, and on the edge of the temple, levels from the Middle Kingdom have also been uncovered.

The layout of the Ptolemaic foundations is based on a specific underground series of spaces (including rooms, crypts, a cella surrounded by its “mysterious” corridor, and foundation cells), and main walls, allowing better understanding of the layout of the now completely vanished temple’s rooms (Zignani 2014). Although some blocks from a gate (propylon?) bear the name of PTOLEMY VI PHILOMETOR, the temple of Montu-Re (Figure 1) seems to have been built anew during the reign of PTOLEMY XII NEOS DIONYSOS AULETES, who is mostly attested in the naos and on numerous scattered blocks. The temple is largely built of earlier decorated materials/blocks. The limestone Middle Kingdom temple, mainly built by Amenemhat I (Postel 2015), was completely dismantled and reused in the foundations of

the Ptolemaic temple. Kings from the 11th and 12th Dynasties, found on temple reliefs or statues, are: Nebhepetra Mentuhotep II, Seankhkara Mentuhotep III, Amenemhat I, Senwosret (Sesostris) I and III, and Amenemhat III. The New Kingdom temple, mainly made of sandstone, was erected by Thutmose III and Hatshepsut (Biston-Moulin and Thiers 2018). The stones from this were later reused in the pronaos of the temple. The images of Hatshepsut have always been mutilated; the figures of the king show him offering to deities and slaying enemies, along with an historical text (military campaign). Other kings from the 17th and 18th Dynasties are attested on stelae, statues, or blocks: KAMOSE (historical stela), AHMOSE I, Amenhotep II, Thutmose IV, Amenhotep III, and Amenhotep IV (talatat, most of them reused by Rameses II).

The Ptolemaic/Roman temple was built of earlier blocks but various other elements, such as statues and colossi, were also reused: for example, an Osirid colossus of Sety II, and the head of a colossus of Thutmose III belonging to a pillared hall, were found reused in the foundation platform of the pronaos; five heads of New Kingdom royal colossi, along with private statues, dating to the late 18th Dynasty–early 19th Dynasty, were also found in a cache made in the first course of the foundation platform (Thiers 2014). Only the New Kingdom pylon (monumental gateway) was kept at its original location, although its eastern wing was destroyed to build a Ptolemaic or Roman enclosure wall (left unfinished) running along the east side of the temple (Zignani 2014). The pylon bears a famous depiction of a rhinoceros, several Nubians bringing African offerings, and a list of foreign countries. There is no clear evidence to support the traditional dating of this relief to the reign of Thutmose III, even if the famous stela Cairo JE 66377 (Beylage 2002: 157–69) of this king mentions a Nubian rhinoceros. The pylon was restored by Rameses I, as attested by blocks bearing a restoration inscription. On the eastern wing of the pylon, the remaining reliefs of the lower register bear the name of Rameses III. On the



FIGURE 1 View of the Montu-Re temple at Armant. © Chr. Thiers.

eastern doorjamb of the gate, three lines of a five-line inscription in the name of Rameses II were recut by MERENPTAH, Amenmeses, Sety II, Rameses IV (the sixth original line), and Rameses VI. The entrance wall (east side) bears the names of Rameses II (linked with the *heb-sed* festivals of Years 9, 10, and 11) (Mond and Myers 1940: 161–5). Merenptah also reused osirid colossi, generally thought to be made originally for Mentuhotep III. Nektanebo II also constructed at Armant (Mond and Myers 1940: 8).

The names of Roman emperors are present on scattered blocks (Nero, Vespasian, Hadrian) (Biston-Moulin and Thiers 2018) and at the gate of Bab el-Maganin (Antoninus Pius), built at some distance from the main temenos. During the Roman–Byzantine period (David 2012), an important settlement was built around the New Kingdom pylon and in the

main courtyard, and a basilica was also erected south of the temple (Grossmann 1986). The temple was subsequently used as a quarry.

Close to the temple and the sacred lake, a *MAMMISI* was built during the reign of CLEOPATRA VII and her son PTOLEMY XV CAESAR in honor of Rattawy and his son Harpra-the-child. This temple was completely dismantled in 1861–2 to build the sugar cane factory at Armant. A reconstruction of scenes of this monument was, however, made possible through drawings and photographs, first from travelers and then from scientific expeditions led by J.-Fr. CHAMPOLLION and R. Lepsius (Rutica 2015). The study of the inscriptions of the *mammisi* is ongoing, alongside the fieldwork at the site as a whole.

The Bucheum/Bucheion, the burial place of the Buchis bulls, sacred to Montu, is located at the desert edge, north of the city (Mond and

Myers 1934). The bulls were buried here from the time of Nektanebo II until the end of paganism in Egypt: the last Buchis was buried on November 4, 340 CE, during the reign of CONSTANTINUS II (Grenier 1983). North of this area, on the site of Baqaria, the Buchis' mothers were also buried (Grenier 2002, 2003). Local personal names also attest the privileged link between the inhabitants of Armant and the Buchis bull (Lippert 2015).

As lord of Armant, Montu is attested from the First Intermediate Period in the Theban Tomb 186. The theology of Montu was clearly influenced by Heliopolitan tradition, as Armant was the "Southern Heliopolis." Thereby, Montu was a solar god, especially in his names of Montu-Re and Montu-Re-Horakhty. As a warrior god, he was worshipped also in the temples of Tod, Medamud, and North-Karnak, these three cities along with Armant (together known as the "Theban Palladium") having been charged with the protection of the city of Thebes. Montu was also venerated as a form of Osiris at Armant, especially in the Ptolemaic crypts, which seems closely linked to the Djemaic rituals from Medinet Habu: once a year, on the twenty-sixth day of the month of Khoiak, Montu-Re-Horakhty from Armant visited Amun and the primeval gods of the mound of Djeme (Thiers and Volokhine 2005). In the crypts he was "Montu-Re, lord of Armant, king of the gods, Osiris whose limbs are completed, father of the fathers of all the gods."

SEE ALSO: Amenemhat I–VII; Mentuhotep I–VII; Nektanebo; Rameses I–XI; Re and Re Horakhty; Senwosret (Sesostris) I–IV; Sety (Seti) I–II; Temples, Pharaonic Egypt; Thutmose I–IV.

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