

# THE ROLE OF THE LECTOR IN ANCIENT EGYPTIAN SOCIETY

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Cover illustration: Lectors – from the tomb Qar (G 7101) (adapted from Simpson 1976: fig. 28)

Left Figure: Presenting offerings by the elder lector, Qar (*wdn ḥt in ḥry-ḥbt smsw k3r*).

Right Figure: Reciting numerous transfigurations by the elder lector, the revered one before the great god, Qar (*sdt s3ḥw ʿs3 in ḥry-ḥbt smsw im3ḥw ḥr ntr ʿ3 k3r*).

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## Abbreviations

- BD** Book of the Dead
- CG** Catalogue Général des Antiquités Égyptiennes du Musée du Caire, Le Caire
- CT** Coffin Text
- JD** Journal d'Entrée (Egyptian Museum, Cairo)
- LÄ** W. Helck, E. Otto & W. Westendorf, eds., (1972-92). *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*, 7 vols. (Wiesbaden: Otto Harassowitz)
- LD** Lepsius, C. R. (1849-59), *Denkmäler aus Ägypten und Äthiopien: Nach den Zeichnungen der von Seiner Majestät dem Könige von Preussen Friedrich Wilhelm IV nach diesen Ländern gesendeten und in den Jahren 1842-1845 ausgeführten wissenschaftlichen Expedition*, 12 vols. (Berlin: Nicolaische Buchhandlung)
- PM** Porter, B. & Moss, L. B. & Málek, J. (1927- ), *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs and Paintings*, (1st edn. 7 vols, 2nd edn. ongoing) (Oxford: Griffith Institute)
- PT** Pyramid Text
- Urk IV** Sethe, K. (1906-9) *Urkunden des Neuen Reiches, historische-biographische Urkunden*, Heft 1-16, (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung) continued by W. Helck (1955-8), heft 17-22, (Berlin: Akademie Verlag)
- Wb** A. Erman & H. Grapow, eds., (1926-63) *Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache*, 7 vols (Berlin & Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung)

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# Introduction

## 1. The 'lector priest'

The lector priest (*hry-hbt*) - "he who carries (literally 'is under') the ritual book" has been considered in previous studies to be one of the several categories of priesthood that functioned in ancient Egypt, e.g. Gardiner 1947: II, 55°. There is a perception that he was responsible for the correct performance of rites and that he recited hymns and invocations during temple and state ritual. In addition he was considered to have carried out recitations and performed ritual actions during private apotropaic magic and funerary rites (*LÄ* I: 940-3). Textual and iconographic evidence demonstrates his presence at rituals and frequently refers to the title of lector but these sources do not accurately provide an explanation of his role.

However, the role of the priesthood in ancient Egypt should not be considered in the same manner as today's religious leaders fulfil their obligations. There are significant differences between the functions of the Egyptian priesthood and the modern clergy. The term 'priest' is a modern translation of a number of religious offices that were a feature of ancient Egyptian society. The term priest is a mere label, the idea of a reference in contemporary perception. What this label would mean in a different culture or time period would necessarily change.

The Egyptian priest was not a messenger of revealed truth or a preacher seeking to convert people to a particular faith. He was not an expert in religious doctrine and had no pastoral role. Religious knowledge was not a requirement of the priesthood, and priests were either appointed, inherited their posts from their fathers or in later periods priestly offices could be purchased. The Egyptian priest was an officiant who variously rendered material and magical services to the god in the particular temple that he was based and performed a variety of ritual functions.

In most studies of the priesthood priests are divided into distinct categories often varying with different cults, regions and historical periods, and as stated, the lector is customarily listed as one of the categories of the priesthood.

## 2. Previous Studies Relating to the Lector

This present study aims to explore and define the role of the lector in ancient Egyptian society. Previous approaches to the treatment of the lector have rarely considered the full extent of his activities, either focusing on specific aspects of his work in the academically orientated papers or passing general comments in the more popular textbooks on Egyptology. The only publication that exclusively considers the role of the lector in ancient Egyptian society is '*Der sogenannte oberste Vorlesepriester*' by Hermann

Kees (1962), however, this paper only refers to the workings of the chief lector.

The lector is conspicuous in a number of different working environments and a review of the relevant literature correlating to these separate areas needs to be considered. However, it has to be accepted that such divisions are artificial and do not necessarily represent the actual working practices of the lector but are merely indicative of the main spheres where he was active.

### *Magic*

Ritner (1993: 220-33), in his discussions on magic, analyses the diverse practitioners who were involved in its practice, among them being the lector. He recognises the lector as a ritualist who officiates at temple, state and funerary ceremonies and he particularly associates the chief lector (*hry-hbt hry-tp*) with magical practices. He notes how the title became abridged to *hry-tb* in Late Egyptian and became the word for a magician.

Ritner extensively engages with both primary sources and secondary literature when considering the many examples of the lector in magical practices and performance. He notes the non-exclusive nature of the occupation of the lector in the Old Kingdom, and this is a feature that can also be recognised throughout Egyptian history (1993: 228, n. 1058). The officials of the Middle Kingdom through to the Late Period routinely listed lector among their many titles, and the accumulation of numerous titles by an individual was a typical feature of the ancient Egyptian elite.

Pinch (2006) in her general overview of Egyptian magic considers the various roles of the lector and suggests that when he officiates at private funeral services he forms an important link between the temple priesthood and society in general. She considers that lectors probably did not officiate in the daily service in the sanctuary (Pinch 2006: 51). However, the 'Ritual of Amenhotep I' includes many episodes of the Daily Temple Ritual and specifically mentions that lectors recited various spells (see pages 53-5 of this publication for the Daily Temple Ritual). Additionally, reliefs from the temples of Karnak and Abydos list the lector as being one of the officiants present during the Daily Ritual.

Pinch briefly discusses the remuneration of the lector in relation to the rites he performed at funeral services, debating whether the fee for the service would go to the temple or to the individual lector. As the lector was paid a fixed share of the temple offerings, it was in their own interests to increase temple revenues (Pinch 2006: 52). In another departure from the more popular representation

of the lector she considers abuse of the role of the lector, using examples of the Setna Cycle where princes attempted to steal and misuse spells, and Papyrus Vandier where royal magicians are represented as incompetent, vicious and greedy. In an unreferenced statement she states that protective inscriptions on tombs indicate that the lector was considered to have knowledge of fatal curses. This may refer to Ebers 855u:

‘As to vanishing of the heart and forgetfulness: it is the breath of the (harmful) doing of the lector that does it’ (see page 115 of this publication).

### **Priesthood**

Many popular and academic publications discuss the priesthood in ancient Egypt and within these descriptions a brief account of the lector is routinely included. Such a description usually entails comments about origin, dress, function and the development of the role of the lector throughout Pharaonic history. One of the more concise accounts is that of Doxey (2001), although because of the nature of this type of article, specific references are not included. There is a tendency among these popular publications to separate the various categories of priest and then briefly define their various roles, whereas in reality there may have been an overlapping of functions.

Gardiner (1947: II, 56<sup>\*</sup>) in his *Ancient Egyptian Onomastica* suggests that although lectors were often priests it is by no means certain that they always were, as their magical powers were often exerted for non-religious means such as providing medical treatment (as in P. Berlin 3038, see chapter 9 of this publication) and the ‘tales of wonder’ in Papyrus Westcar (P. Berlin 3033, see pages 135-6 of this publication). Gardiner reviews the development of the office of lector from the Old Kingdom through into the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods noting how they could be distinguished in these later reliefs by feathers worn on their heads.

Sauneron’s (1957) publication *The Priests of Ancient Egypt* provides a useful compendium of the functions and activities of Egyptian priests. The lector is included amongst these officiants and unlike some other publications in this category there are many references to original sources and to the activities of individual priests. Sauneron, similar to Gardiner, suggests that lectors were not always priests as they are frequently mentioned in a purely secular context. He cites funeral ceremonies where they functioned as private ritualists and prescriptions in the medical papyri which are attributed to their science, and he also considers that they were the model of the popular magician found in Egyptian literature. His conclusion, similar to that of Gardiner, appears to be that there were two categories of lector, one attached to the priesthood and another working in the secular field.

The evidence surveyed in this present study will suggest that this apparent division into two categories of lector is unnecessary as lectors were specialists in ritual practices

and operated in a wide variety of spheres. No apparent division of duties is noticeable throughout any of the time periods of ancient Egypt and to avoid possible confusion this publication will use the title ‘lector’ and not lector priest.

There are a number of encyclopaedic publications that refer to the lector within their subject matter. The *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* (1984: 1097, s.v. ‘Priester’) includes the lector amongst its comprehensive summary of the major categories of priest and the organisation of the priestly system. Also in the *Lexikon* (11975: 940-3, s.v. ‘Cherihéb’) in the usual format of this publication is a summary of the activities of the lector.

Grajetzki (2009) discusses in some detail court officials of the Middle Kingdom, differentiating between titles relating to function and those bestowed in an honorary capacity. He considers the lector as a lower ranking title and describes how local governors of the Middle Kingdom were also high priests of their local temples and carried the title of lector or chief lector.

Quirke (1992: 103) considers the lector together with the *sem*-priest and the *imy-hnt*, as the principal officiants at ritual practices. Unlike most of the works on this subject he understands the ranking as ‘ordinary lector’ and ‘master lector’ rather than ‘lector’ and ‘chief lector’ which is the more popular recognised classification. He suggests that the House of Life was an institution for transmitting knowledge and maintaining the Pharaonic world view and comments: ‘The lector priest, the person who spent his life preserving and producing the hieroglyphic core of that tradition.’ He recognises that the terms ‘physician’, lector’ and ‘embalmer’ became interchangeable in the late first-millennium BC texts (Quirke 1992: 152).

A different approach in researching the role of the priesthood in the Graeco-Roman Period is that taken by Dieleman, in which he considers the prestige attached to the different priestly titles and explores the image that the priests tried to portray to the outer world. Dieleman understands the lector as playing a major role in the transfer and translation of temple knowledge. He identifies him as a ‘scribe of the divine book’ and distinguishes lectors from ‘scribes of the House of Life’, although Gardiner (1938a: 157-79) tends to see some connection between these titles. Dieleman considers how the priests in general presented themselves in the documentary sources of the time, such as inscriptions on private monuments as well as in the ‘official’ temple ideology with its requirements for priestly purity and social morality (Dieleman 2005: 211-21).

In a discussion of Egyptian literary texts, Dieleman (2005: 222-38) suggests that lectors were prominent characters in these types of scripts either as sages or as miracle workers. He selects the *Tale of King Khufu’s Court* together with *Setna I* and *II* as examples, noting how the lector utilised magical practices and how his engagement with books and ritual texts was repeatedly emphasised.

Unlike Dieleman who predominately refers to Greek texts to study the priesthood, Johnson's (1986) short study of the economic and social role of the Egyptian priesthood in Ptolemaic Egypt is based largely on Demotic materials. Her study involved the examination of marriage contracts, sale documents, loans and other economic agreements, from which she was able to identify different sources of priestly income. She recognised remuneration of the lector as derived from regular temple income, from performing private burial rites and from servicing communal funerary chapels as well as in buying and selling 'days of endowment'.

Shafer (1997: 1-30) in his review of the priesthood considers the position of the lector throughout ancient Egyptian history recognising that the priesthood was not an unchanging institution. He states that the earliest lectors were members of the royal family or from the highest nobility with the position later being held by nomarchs, overseers of priests and great *wab*-priests, information that is also available in the *Lexikon* (Brovarski, *LÄ* VI: 389). Shafer (1997: 15) also refers to the existence of the categories of Second, Third and Fourth lectors and how lectors presided at oracles and divinations, but these comments are unreferenced.

Lloyd (1983: 306-9) examines the priesthood and temple staff in his study of the Late Period and considers that there were no significant changes in their organisation during that time. He bases this view on a series of inscriptions ranging from the biographical texts of Montuemhet at the beginning of the period to those of Petosiris at the end.

### **Funerary Ceremonies**

One of the prime roles of the lector was his carrying out of 'transfiguration rites' during funeral ceremonies. Early studies of ancient Egyptian funerals by Kees (1926, 1956) and Junker (1940) suggested a protocol for funerary ceremonies, but these included few details concerning the role of the lector. Wilson (1944) in his study of funeral ceremonies in the Old Kingdom analysed these rites as separate episodes commencing with the period of embalment and ending with the service at the tomb. He comprehensively reviewed a large number of tomb scenes in which the actions and words spoken by the various officiants were studied, among whom was the lector. This detailed analysis has been referred to in many later publications (Brovarski 1977, Assmann 2005 and Snape 2011).

Wilson concluded that in the earlier burial ceremonies the major officiant was the embalmer or *wt*. Using the 4th Dynasty tomb of Debehni as an example he noted that it was the embalmer who carried out some of the ritual functions which were later performed by the lector. He makes reference to a scene from the tomb of Mereruka which depicted a selection of boxes, baskets, jars, sandals and amulets and which was labelled 'the requirements of the craft of the lector'. This particular relief provides some

insight into the equipment a lector might have used in a funeral ceremony, but the equipment that a lector used in the pursuit of his professional duties is a topic infrequently examined in the literature.

Badawy (1981) studied the transfiguration rites (*s3hw*) portrayed in the 6th Dynasty tomb of Kagemni. This is an informative study, for this research, as the funeral of Kagemni is rather elaborately rendered with the depiction of sixteen officiants, eight of whom are lectors. Badawy (1981: 93) compared the Kagemni inscriptions with a number of similar funeral scenes of different periods such as those of Userhat, Pepyankh and Akhetotep, in order to consider variations in funeral ceremonies. A more recent study of the tomb of Kagemni is that of Harpur and Scremin (2006), a publication in which the much improved black and white photographs assist further with the analysis of funerary ceremonies.

Other important studies of ancient Egyptian funerals include Settgast (1963) who provided a detailed analysis of funeral scenes from the Old, Middle and New Kingdoms, and Bolshakov's studies (1991, 1997) of Old Kingdom representations of funeral processions. However, the emphasis of these investigations was on the development and representation of tombs and funerary scenes rather than an examination of the roles of the officiants.

Comprehensive discussions of funerary rituals also include those of Assmann *et al.* (2002-10) and Assmann (2005) which incorporate perceptive studies of the concepts of transfiguration and transfiguring speeches. Assmann notes how the lector directed the oral aspect of the proceedings - 'a recitation that, in the mouth of the lector and at the moment of cultic action, became divine speech'. In a complex and philosophical discourse, Assmann analyses the semantics of the transfigurative speech delivered by the lector. Using the Ramesseum Dramatic Papyrus as an example, the mortuary cult is acknowledged as where there is a distinction between this world and the next, the 'cultic realm' and the 'divine realm'. Transformation of the deceased is achieved through the establishment of a relationship between these two realms, using the medium of the transfigurative speech delivered by the lector (Assmann 2005: 349-55).

Assmann (1990: 1-45) makes a clear distinction between mortuary literature and mortuary liturgies, with the former being recognised as texts placed in the tomb in order to be of use to the deceased in the afterlife, and mortuary liturgies as texts intended to be recited for the mortuary cult. Following the embalment rituals the various mortuary liturgies are considered as rituals of transition, commencing at the home of the deceased and ending with the final interment in the tomb. It is from these mortuary liturgies that the lector would recite the various funerary rites. The depiction of the lector with his papyrus roll, upon which were written the ritual texts, is portrayed in many tomb scenes and symbolically ensures the exactitude of the recitation. Assmann examines the type of ritual

action that might have been carried out by the lector when carrying out recitations using examples such as the *hnw* rite and the handling of the leg of the bull by the chief lector during the Opening of the Mouth ritual.

A more recent study by Hays (2010) provides an overview of funerary rituals which includes a brief mention of the role of the lector. Snape (2011) examined ancient Egyptian tombs throughout the Pharaonic Period and within the work included a standard reference to the role of the lector. He suggests that in the early Old Kingdom the function of the *wt* may have been to organise a broad range of activities connected with the funeral ceremonies, a role which would later fall to the *sem*-priest and the lector (Snape 2011: 73). Interestingly, as late as the 6th Dynasty, a text from the tomb of Idu indicates that the *wt* was still performing the same transfiguration roles along with the lector (G 7102, *PM* 111<sup>2</sup>: 185-6):

‘and that he might be greatly transfigured by the lector and the *wt*’ (translation after Strudwick 2005: 278).

The Opening of the Mouth ceremony, an important element during the funerary rituals and a rite in which the lector actively participated, has been addressed by many of the above authors. Otto’s synoptic edition (1960) is still one of the definitive studies, whilst Schulman (1984) provides a study of this rite based on an in-depth analysis of ‘commemorative’ New Kingdom stelae. Schulman commented that this genre of stela provides a useful source of historical documents, illustrating as they do specific real events. Altenmüller (2010) is a more recent treatment of this ritual.

### **Healing**

There is some evidence to indicate that the lector was involved with healing practices, and publications addressing medicine in ancient Egypt have long recognised this association. Jonckheere (1958) was the first to publish a catalogue of physicians which listed a number who were also lectors. This catalogue was supplemented by the work of van der Walle and de Meulenaere (1973), and revised by Ghalioungui (1983) and again by Nunn (1996). Ghalioungui (1983), additionally, cited a number of examples from the medical papyri of the lector’s connection with healing practices.

Other major accounts of ancient Egyptian medicine such as that of Worth Estes (1993) and Nunn’s *Ancient Egyptian Medicine* (1996), a comprehensive review of disease and healing in ancient Egypt, contain only brief references to the lector. Halioua & Ziskind (2005) wrote a similar general text on medicine, and commented on the Middle Kingdom stela of Nemtyemhat from Abydos, a physician and *kheryp* priest of Serkhet (CG 20088; Lange & Schäfer 1902: 105-7). Among the inscriptions on the stela is a reference to the brother of Nemtyemhat, a *sem*-priest and a *wt*, and also to his son, a lector. Halioua & Ziskind (2005: 44) suggest that the existence of these titles within a single

family was not accidental but infers that they enjoyed a common technical training. Although, an interesting assumption, little evidence is provided to support this statement, but nevertheless this is a comment that perhaps warrants further research.

### **Temple and Royal Ritual**

One of the key roles of the lector was his involvement in temple and festival rituals and to be able to comprehensively research this, an understanding of the nature and function of ritual is necessary. Shafer (1997: 18-22) provides an overview of the theories of ritual and Bell (2009), in a perceptive study, examines the linkages between ritual and social processes.

An early investigation into temple and festival ritual was that of Fairman (1954-1955) who based his study on the Temple of Horus at Edfu. This study included many references to the detailed recordings of the temple inscriptions carried out by Chassinat. From these Fairman was able to analyse the varied religious activities that took place within the temple throughout the year, including comments on the role of the lector. Another important study is that of David (1973, 1981) who provides a detailed examination of the temple of Sety I at Abydos again presenting a useful insight into the rituals performed in an Egyptian temple.

Černý (1952: 97-123) briefly addresses the role of the lector in his analysis of Egyptian religion. He states that the chief lector ‘stretches the cord’ in the absence of the king, although there is only one recorded example of this occurring. Gillam (2009), in a departure from the earlier standard themed accounts relating to ancient Egypt, considers the relationship of archaeology to performance, using textual and inscriptional sources. She analyses a number of the standard roles of the lector and affirms that he was also a co-ordinator of ritual activities (Gillam 2009: 151).

There is a wealth of material discussing festivals and festival ritual and a useful starting point in such an investigation is the study of Egyptian processions and processional routes. Stadelmann (1982) provides a concise overview and Stadler (2008) a more recent account of this topic. Evidence for the involvement of the lector in Egyptian festivals is limited and it is perhaps only the scenes relating to the Festival of Sokar, inscribed on the walls of the mortuary temple of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu, which provide some meaningful information (Epigraphic Survey 1940: pls. 196, 218-26; Gaballa & Kitchen 1969: 1-76).

The lector is seldom absent from scenes depicting the *Sed*-festival, and a rich source of information, therefore, concerning his ritual activities. Bleeker (1967) studied the relationship of the *Sed*-festival to other festivals and questioned whether previous studies had properly reconstructed the correct sequence of events. Lange (2009:

218) in a more recent analysis considered that the emphasis of the festival was not on the physical powers of the king but rather was a renewal of the special abilities and rights ascribed to the king by virtue of being legitimate successor of the ruling monarch.

### **Miscellaneous**

Other than these principal areas of ritual activity, the lector is also to be found active in other sectors of ancient Egyptian life. Lectors are known to have accompanied state organised expeditions that travelled outside Egypt and recorded their presence by inscriptions on rock faces and stelae. Many authors such as Simpson (1959), Rothe *et al.* (1996), Shaw (1998, 2010) and Enmarch (2011) have analysed these inscriptions left behind by such expeditions, but the lack of evidence for the lector has resulted in few meaningful discussions for his role on these missions.

There is some evidence that the lector was involved in the legal processes of ancient Egypt, but again support for this is not strong. The presence of the lector sitting on local and temple councils (*knbwt*) has been noted by a number of authors such as Helck (1963) in his study of Papyrus Berlin 3047, and both Reisner (1918) and Spalinger (1985) recognise him in the inscriptions in the tomb of Hapidjefa at Asyut. However, no studies concerning the significance of the lector in these situations have been undertaken.

Finally, the lector was a prominent actor in a number of the literary works from ancient Egypt: such as Papyrus Westcar (tales of wonder at the court of King Khufu); Papyrus St. Petersburg (the prophecies of Neferty); Papyrus Vandier (the tale of Meryre); Papyrus Cairo 30646 and Papyrus British Museum 604 (the Setna Khaemwase Cycle). These texts are useful in providing information about the workings of the lector as well as the esteem in which this individual was held by society in general.

### **3. Methodology**

As commented previously, other than Kees's paper on the chief lector, no single study has as yet exclusively examined the role of the lector but rather has included elements of his various activities in the material being reviewed. The present study aims to challenge this selective approach and explore his diverse functions in a wide ranging review of the pertinent evidence.

The principal source materials used in this study are the relevant textual and iconographic sources inscribed in temples, tombs, on artefacts and extant papyri. A broad range of these materials has been analysed as the portrayal of the lector differs from context to context. Temple inscriptions and reliefs depict the lector engaged in ceremonies that occurred within the temple precinct; tomb scenes demonstrate his role in funerary activities, and medical papyri highlight his interest in healing practices. The translations of the ancient inscriptions and texts in this work have been translated by the author except in those

cases where reference is made at the end of a text to a translation from another source.

This evidence has to be evaluated in the context of decorum, a principle of representation which is relevant to some of the questions being addressed in this research. Decorum can be specified as 'a set of rules or practices defining what may be presented pictorially with captions, displayed, and possibly written down, in which context and in what form' (Baines 1990: 20). Decorum has much to do with enacting and representing the proper order of the world, although the conventions of decorum tended to weaken through the course of Egyptian history (Baines 2007: 21).

The value of the information obtained from the source materials can be limited by factors such as deliberate distortions that have been imposed by the social importance of the subject matter. In addition the aims of the work, symbolic considerations and current attitudes all have to be taken into account in any analysis. The extent of the preserved record has to be considered as well as the manner in which it has been interpreted. A writer's interpretation of the significance can be dependant on whether he or she subscribes to the beliefs in question. Additionally, analysing the past in terms of modern concepts can be misleading and interpretations need to be based as much as possible on understandings likely to be prevalent in an ancient society at that time.

The study of the source materials referred to above has permitted the identification of a number of different roles for the lector. This publication is divided into sections examining these separate functions aiming to determine what his function was in particular situations. Although these divisions are of necessity artificial and the working practices of the lector may encompass several of these separate activities at any one time, nevertheless such a separation helps to analyse in depth and better appreciate each of these interests.

Before the evidence for these individual functions is presented and analysed, the question of how the lector is recognised in the various scenes needs to be addressed. Chapter 1, therefore, examines the varying representations of the lector, considering iconography and gestures together with an analysis of the hieroglyphic titles associated with the lector. 'Recent scholarship has consolidated that magic was integral to Egyptian thought, in which it was a basic cosmic thought, not a marginal or disruptive phenomenon' (Baines 2006: 1). The lector has been closely associated with magical practices and chapter 2 examines the concept of magic, the spoken word and the performative aspect of this activity. Execration rituals and the involvement of the lector are highlighted to further explore the ancient Egyptian perception of magic.

The implements or equipment that a priest or ritualist might utilise in the course of his professional duties may be informative as to the working practices of such

an individual. This is a topic infrequently addressed in the literature and chapter 3 examines tomb scenes and burial assemblages for evidence of any such ritualised apparatus, and attempts to surmise a function for these artefacts. This section also includes an in-depth study of the burial assemblage found in Tomb 5 located underneath the Ramesseum, which is suggested by a number of researchers as being the accoutrements of a magician, possibly a lector.

Chapter 4 briefly reviews the evidence for the sources of remuneration of the lector. It is established that the lector was a frequent officiant in temple and festival practices and chapter 5 explores this role commencing with discussions of ritual and purity. The Daily Temple Ritual, the main service that was celebrated in every functioning Egyptian temple, and the great festivals which typically involved a procession of the image of the god in a sacred barque, are also central to this part of the study.

The major royal event in which the lector was known to participate was the *Sed*-festival, a celebration which is attested throughout all periods of Egyptian history. However, only four detailed representations of this festival exist, these being accompanied by short labelling texts. Chapter 6 examines the association of the lector with this festival and also explores the direct involvement of the lector with the monarchy.

In academic and popular literature the lector is perceived as an important officiant at funeral ceremonies in ancient Egypt. Following death it was believed that only by elevating the deceased individual to becoming a 'transfigured being', an *akh*, could the immortality of the departed be assured. This process of transfiguration (*s3h*) involved various magical rituals and recitations, a ceremony in which the lector was the main actor. Chapter 7 analyses the textual and iconographic evidence available in the many funerary representations. Related to the funeral ceremony is the rite of Opening the Mouth and chapter 8 examines the extent of the participation of the lector in this ritual.

There is evidence to suggest that the lector was one of the categories of healers involved in treating illness. The medical papyri, which are a rich source of information on medicine in ancient Egypt, together with extant historical and literary records are among the materials that are evaluated in chapter 9 in order to critically examine this association.

The lector is known to have accompanied some of the state organised expeditions that travelled outside the Nile Valley. Chapter 10 reviews the archaeological and inscriptional evidence left behind by these expeditions and attempts to determine his function on such missions. This source material is not normally taken into account in discussions involving the lector.

Chapter 11 looks at the association of the lector with the legal processes of ancient Egypt and the evidence for him sitting on local and temple councils (*knbwt*). Within this topic is reviewed the extent of the lector's involvement in major criminal investigations such as the 'Harem Conspiracy' and the 'Great Tomb Robberies of the 20th Dynasty'.

Finally, chapter 12 examines the extant literary corpus, as a number of these texts cite the lector as one of the principal actors. These works emphasise the lector's use of magical practices, his engagement with ritual texts and as previously mentioned the esteem with which society regarded him.