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## QUICK SPARKLE OF A GOD: HORUS OF THE CAMP IN THE THIRD INTERMEDIATE PERIOD

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### ABSTRACT<sup>1</sup>

*This paper discusses the role and significance of Horus of the camp in ancient Egyptian religion in the temples of the Third Intermediate Period (1077-664 BC). This paper proposes that Horus of the camp was linked to the construction of a military fortress at El-Hibeh. The local Horus acquired this epithet and became its patron god as Herihor first attempted to promote Horus-of-the-Camp by integrating him into his extensive building program at the Khonsu temple. This paper concludes that the major aspect of Horus of the camp was to give oracular answer in the juridical consultation of some local disputes concerning debts, robbery, cattle property, etc.*

**KEYWORDS:** Horus of the Camp – Third Intermediate Period – El Hibeh – Ancient Egyptian Religion.

### INTRODUCTION

Horus-of-the-Camp, a deity whose enigmatic character and functions have posed a conundrum for scholars, remains an elusive figure in historical records. Despite historical attestations to the existence of a temple dedicated to this deity in his residence, El-Hibeh,<sup>2</sup> no formal

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<sup>1</sup> This article is part of the requirements of obtaining Master degree in tourist Guidance at Luxor University.

<sup>2</sup> The name was( *t3y-wd3yt*) Teudjoi or (Teuzoi) which means "Their walls". This name refers to the two founders Menkheper re and Istemkeb, "his wife" whose names were founded on its bricks. No evidence that the name (*ꜥh-bity*) was ever refer to the city of El- Hibeh. There is no ancient Egyptian origin to the modern word (El- Hibeh). Perhaps, it is purely Arabic origin and connected with the word

documentation of such a temple or directly associated monuments has thus far surfaced. However, a significant development emerges with the recent discovery of an archival repository connected to two scribes affiliated with this temple.<sup>3</sup> The archive is dated to the Twenty-first Dynasty by the mention of the high priests Masaharta and Menkheperre.<sup>4</sup> As noted by Cerny, El-Hibeh evidently functioned as the residence for the high priest of Amun.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, it is less astonishing that the custodianship of the local temple of Horus-of-the-Camp was entrusted to the high priest of Amun rather than a dedicated high priest exclusively devoted to Horus-of-the-Camp.<sup>6</sup> Otherwise, Horus-of-the-Camp had his own

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(*hyh*) the name of a substance found in the desert and largely used by the natives today for making good quality of the plaster for their houses. Another names were "*ihw*" or (*pꜣ ihy*) means "the camp". Wenke, R.J., *Archeological investigation at El-Hibeh, Malibu*, 1984, p.7.

<sup>3</sup> These papyri have encountered a similar destiny as the Late Ramesside Letters and are presently dispersed across diverse museum collections. It seems that there are five distinct sets, housed within institutions located in Berlin, the British Museum, the Louvre, Moscow, and Strasbourg, respectively. Berlin: H.-W. Fischer-Elfert, "*FsHelck: Miscellanea Aegyptologica*" (Hamburg, 1989), 62-5, pl. in (P. Berlin 23098), 40-62, pls. 1-11 (P. Berlin 14.384). Another set is referred to by Cerny, in ČERNÝ, "*Egypt: from the death of Ramesses III to the end of the Twenty-first Dynasty*," In Edwards, I. E. S., et al. (eds.), "*The Cambridge Ancient History, Volume II, Part 2: The Middle East and the Aegean Region, c. 1380-1000 B.C.*" (Cambridge, 1975), 653 n.4 (P. Berlin 8527). For the Berlin papyri, see further G. Burkard and H.-W. Fischer-Elfert, "*Katalogisierung Orientalischer Handschriften in Deutschland (KOHD 19 iv, in press)*," nos. 1-69. British Museum: J. Bourriau, "*JEA 77*" (1991), 161 (P. BM EA71509). Louvre: J.-L. de Cenival, "*Naissance de l'écriture*" (Paris, 1982), 285-6 (241) with fig. (P. Louvre 25359). Moscow: Posener, "*JEA 68*" (1982), 134-8, pi. 14. E. Wente, "*Letters From Ancient Egypt*" (Atlanta, 1990), 208-9 (P. Moscow 5660). Strasbourg: W. Spiegelberg, "*ZAS 53*" (1917), 1-30, pls. 1-7 (P. Strasbourg 21, 22 1, 22 11, 23 1, 23 11, 24 1, 24 iv, 24 v, 25, 26, 31, 32, 33, 39, 43 and 59). S. Allam, "*Hieratische Ostraka und Papyri aus der Ramessidenzeit*" (Tubingen, 1973), 307-8 (no. 274), pls. 104-5 (P. Strasbourg 39). P. Vernus, in *Tanis. Uor des pharaons* (Paris, 1987), 106 (P. Strasbourg 33, incorrectly referred to as P. Strasbourg 31). Wente, op. cit. 206-8 (P. Strasbourg 21, 25, 26, 31, 33, 39).

<sup>4</sup> Masaharta is mentioned in P. Strasbourg 21. Although this Masaharta is untitled, Cerny (op. cit. 653) has plausibly suggested that the petitioner is the high priest Menkheperre and that Masaharta was his brother of that name and his predecessor in the office of high priest. Menkheperre is mentioned in P. Louvre E 25559, P. Moscow 5660 and P. Berlin 8527.

<sup>5</sup> J., Cerny, *Egypt: from the death of Ramesses III to the end of the Twenty-first Dynasty*, 652-3.

<sup>6</sup> In the letter P. Louvre E 25359, IX is the high priest of Amun who orders the temple scribe of Horus-of-the-Camp to bring a general and his brothers before the oracle of Horus-of-the-Camp.

temple staff.<sup>7</sup>

With the exception of the published letters from this archive, scant significant information is available regarding El-Hibeh and the enigmatic Horus-of-the-Camp during this particular era.<sup>8</sup>

Spiegelberg published the first of these letters,<sup>9</sup> including the first mention of Horus-of-the-Camp. Only once in these letters is the god actually called 'Horus-of-the-Camp' (P. Strasbourg 39); in the rest he is simply 'He-of-the-Camp' (*p3-n-p3-ih3y*). Spiegelberg, doubting the reading of Horus in this particular case, suggested that 'He-of-the-Camp' was an epithet of Amun, who is found as the deity of El-Hibeh in later times, and referred to a form Amun *p3-ih3y*. This identification has been repeated uncritically down to the present. But this information is incorrect. First, Horus appears with the epithet 'He-of-the-Camp' in the two oracle petitions and there can thus be no doubt that 'He-of-the-Camp' was an epithet of Horus.

The form of Amun referred to by Spiegelberg is written *p3-ih3y*, whereas 'He-of-the-Camp' is invariably written *p3-n-p3-ih3y* in the archive. In fact, Amun *p3-ih3y* is not found in connection with El-Hibeh. It is also clear that 'He-of-the-Camp' does not refer to Amun since the temple scribes of 'He-of-the-Camp' sometimes use the greeting 'In the favour of Amun-Re, king of the gods, your good lord'.<sup>10</sup> The words 'your good lord' are added only when the god invoked in the greeting is not identical with the god of the writer,<sup>11</sup> thus Amun-Re was not the god of this temple scribe who served 'He-of-the-Camp'.

It should be noted that both of the identified temple scribes associated with 'He-of-the-Camp' possess names imbued with theophoric elements containing "Horus," as opposed to "Amun." Both the known temple scribes of 'He-of-the-Camp' bear theophorous names—Harpenese and Haremkehe.<sup>12</sup> It is noteworthy that only in a subsequent era, specifically during the late Twenty-first or Twenty-second Dynasty, did Amun ascend to prominence as the principal deity of El-Hibeh, and even then, under the epithet "Amun hmhm," signifying "great of roaring."

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7 W. Spiegelberg, "Briefe der 21. Dynastie aus El-Hibe", ZAS 53 (1917), 29 (66).

8 For a brief historical outline of el-Hiba, see R. J. Wenke, *Archaeological Investigations of el-Hibeh 1980: Preliminary Report* (Malibu, 1984), 7-9.

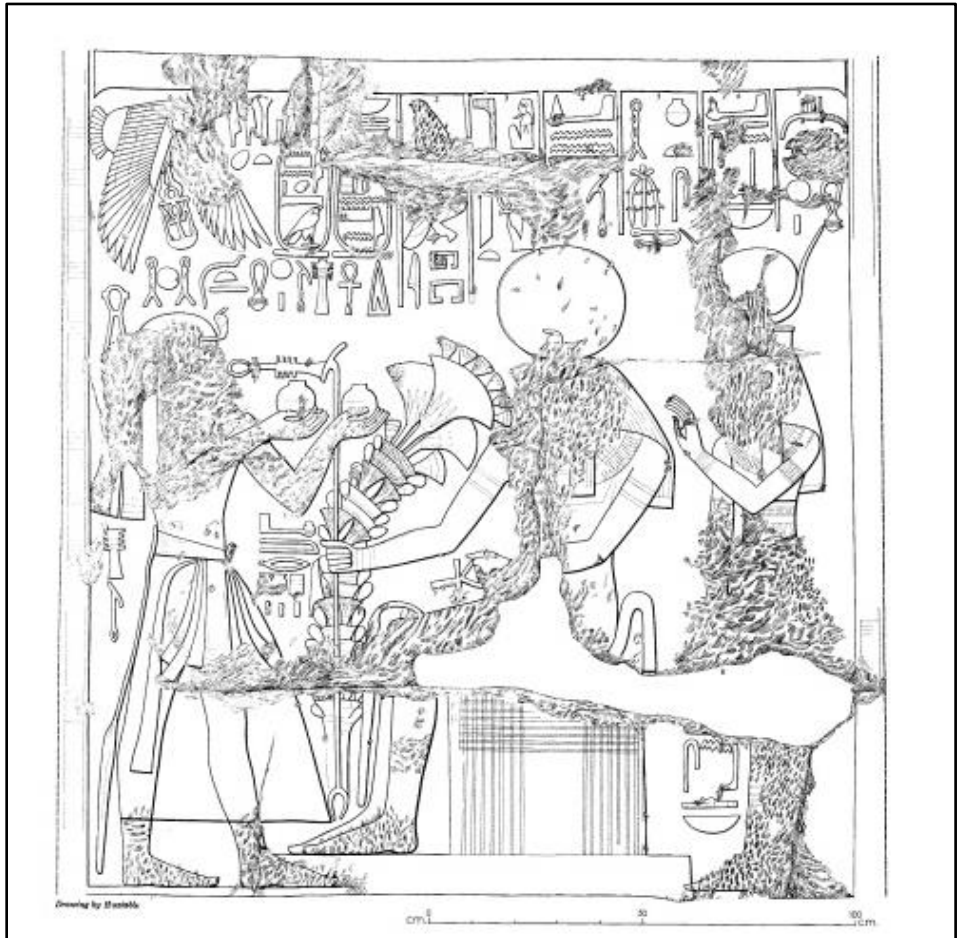
9 W. Spiegelberg, "Briefe der 21. Dynastie aus El-Hibe" 1-30, pls. 1-7.

10 P. Strasbourg 24 iv, 24 v, 25, 31, 33.

11 A., Bakir, 1952. Slavery in Pharaonic Egypt. Supplement aux Annales du Service des Antiquites de l'Egypte 18. Cairo: IF AO. 61.

12 K. Ryholt (1993), 193.

The earliest reference to Horus-of-the-Camp, and the only representation of him, is to be found on the façade of the pylon of the temple of Khonsu in Karnak.<sup>13</sup>



**King Herihor presenting offerings to Horus of the Camp**  
*The Temple of Khons, i (Chicago, 1979), 4, pl. 14.*

This façade is decorated with a large-scale composition of offering-scenes, in one of which Herihor stands as king before the falcon-headed Horus-of-the-Camp. That Horus-of-the-Camp was included in a list so far from El-Hibeh, and among the highest-ranking gods of Egypt, would suggest that he was a god of some renown at the time.<sup>14</sup> The earliest reference to a form of Horus associated to El-Hibeh can

<sup>13</sup> *The Temple of Khons, I* (Chicago, 1979), 4, pl. 14.

<sup>14</sup> For the list of these gods, see *The Temple of Khons, i* (Chicago, 1979), 4., xxiii.

be found in the Book of the Dead (Ch. 168). The god is mentioned as *hrw nb tt-dhnt*, or *Hrw-p3-n-p3-jh3y* then became *p3-n-p3-jh3y* which meaning Horus of the camp Because he was worshiped in El Hibeh , he was called ‘Horus, lord of El-Hibeh’. In the Book of the Dead, he does not bear the epithet ‘He-of-the- Camp’, which is important for the discussion that follows. A clue to the nature of this local form of Horus is offered by his particular epithet ‘He-of-the-Camp’. In view of the presence of military installations at El-Hibeh,<sup>15</sup> it would seem likely that ‘The Camp’ refers to these camps like the castle that was located in El hibeh in the past.<sup>16</sup>

From the references cited above, it is possible to present an outline—admittedly rather tentative—of the rise and fall of Horus-of-the-Camp. A local form of Horus existed at El- Hibeh before the pontificate of Herihor, but it was only in his time that this Horus acquired the epithet ‘He-of-the-Camp’. It seems reasonable to suggest that it was in connection with the building of military installations at El-Hibeh that the local Horus was given this epithet and became its patron god. This work would then have been started late in the Twentieth Dynasty, when Herihor made the first attempt to promote Horus-of-the-Camp by including him in his large-scale building programme at the Khonsu temple.<sup>17</sup>

These were, indeed, the major building activities at a time when little appears to have been undertaken. Work on the military installations

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. J. Černý, « Egypt: from the death of Ramesses III to the end of the Twenty-first Dynasty », In Edwards, I. E. S., C. dans J. Gadd, N. G. L. Hammond, E. Sollberger (éd.), *The Cambridge ancient history. Volume II, part 2: the Middle East and the Aegean region, c. 1380-1000 B.C.*, Cambridge, 1975, 606-657

<sup>16</sup> A similar conclusion was reached by Spiegelberg (op. cit. 3, 5, 25 (11)), although he distinguished *pA-iHAY* from the epithet ‘He-of-the-Camp’ and took it to be the name of the fortification of El-Hibeh. This idea seems to derive from his incorrect translation of *it-ntr ss-hw.t-ntr hrw-pf-is.t (n) pA-n-pf-ihAy* as ‘Gottesvater (und) Tempelschreiber Harpaese von dem Lager’ (op. cit. 25 (11, b)), followed by Vernus (loc. cit.). The title occurs twice with an indirect genitive before the following *pt-n-pi-ihy*, so that there can be no doubt that the phrase reads ‘The god’s father and temple scribe, Harpenese, of He-of-the-Camp’; so too Allam (307) and Wente (op. cit. 206-8). *pA-iHAY* is never found distinguished from *pA-n-pt-iHAY* in connection with El- Hibeh, and in the epithet it is never determined by the town-determinative, so that there is no reason to consider ‘The Camp’ as a proper name of El-Hibeh (as e.g., Černý, loc. cit.). El-Hibeh was, in fact, called *tA-dhnt*, ‘The Crag’. For *pA-iHAY* in geographical names, see J. Yoyotte, *MDAIK* 16 (1958) 418-19.

<sup>17</sup> Gregory Steven “*Piankh and Herihor: Art, Ostraca, and Accession in Perspective*” *Birmingham Egyptology Journal*. 1: 5-18. *Journal of the Faculty of Arts, Fayoum University*. March 2013.p6

at El-Hibeh was evidently continued into the Twenty-first Dynasty by the succeeding high priests Pinudjem, possibly Masaharta, and Menkheperre.<sup>18</sup>

In the course of some conflict, perhaps between the Tanite<sup>19</sup> and Theban rulers, whose northern boundary El-Hibeh was, these installations and the cult-place of Horus-of-the-Camp were destroyed and, since they were not restored, the cult of Horus-of-the-Camp disappeared, and the god with it. Indications of military action may be deduced from a letter (P. Strasbourg 33)<sup>20</sup> to a captain named Shaputa. This mentions that repulsed soldiers were dwelling in El-Hibeh and were to be treated with severity. It also reveals that a form of curfew was imposed so that nobody was allowed out to the countryside, not even soldiers. Lastly it is clear that the arrival of horses was expected; these may have been destined for warfare.

### **HORUS OF THE CAMP AND HIS SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN TRIALS BY ORACLE**

Ancient Egypt has a long and rich history with the practice of contacting the gods. The term "oracle" is frequently used to refer to certain elements of this activity, utilizing a contemporary phrase to characterize a number of ceremonies.<sup>21</sup>

Oracles were practices that gave individuals or groups of people the chance to ask questions of gods or other supernatural beings<sup>22</sup> and obtain precise responses.<sup>23</sup> They included declarations made by humans and gods in writing or person.<sup>24</sup> The processional oracle, which took place during holy festivals when an image of the deity was brought out in procession and carried down a sacred route, was

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<sup>18</sup> "The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology" Volume 79.1993. Egypt Exploration Fund. the University of Michigan. August 27, 2010.197.

<sup>19</sup> mean Tanis, Tyldesley Joyce (2019). "The Pharaohs". Quercus.p. 174

<sup>20</sup> See Spiegelberg ZAS 53 (1917), 1-30 n, 29.

<sup>21</sup> Ritner, R. K. 1993. *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice. Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization* 54. Chicago: The Oriental Institute, University of Chicago., 8.

<sup>22</sup> Cerny, J., "Egyptian Oracles." In *A Saite Oracle Papyrus from Thebes in the Brooklyn Museum [Papyrus Brooklyn 47.218.3]*, by R. A. Parker, 35-48. Providence: Brown University Press. 1962, 35.

<sup>23</sup> Graf, F., 2005. "Rolling the Dice for an Answer", In *Mantike. Studies in Ancient Divination*, edited by P. T. Struck and S. I. Johnston, 51-98. Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 155. Leiden: Brill, 2005, 52.

<sup>24</sup> Vernus, P., "La grande mutation ideologique du Nouvel Empire: une nouvelle theorie du pouvoir politique. Du demiurge face a sa creation." BSEG 19 (1995) 84. [69-95]

one of the earliest and longest-lived types of oracle in ancient Egypt. They were originally recognized as a major kind of religion in the New Kingdom and persisted at least until the fifth century CE.<sup>25</sup>

An oracle can be defined as "a divine answer to a specific question" in its most basic form.<sup>26</sup> It is a method of accessing knowledge via speaking with divine powers, similar to other divinatory traditions. An oracle is defined as the act of posing queries to deities or other entities in the hope of getting precise responses.<sup>27</sup> The established communication is sophisticated, discriminating, and goal-oriented.

Cerny<sup>28</sup> described an oracle as "the practice of approaching a god and consulting him". Other Egyptologists have variedly described oracles as a "god's arrival",<sup>29</sup> "audience divine, atteindre le dieu"<sup>30</sup> and a "form of divination or of delegated decision-making".<sup>31</sup>

The traditional processional oracle in Egypt was a social event. The Egyptian gods had frequent consultations in a number of locations. Amun, for instance, dispensed oracles in the Kamak temple and numerous other locations in western Thebes throughout the Ramesside dynasty. They took place in well-known holy locations or along well-known routes, such as processional routes or temple precincts. Because oracles took place during processional celebrations, they occasionally gave participants the opportunity to stand before a god and engage in brief, direct dialogue with the deity. As a result, they served as "a two-way religious practice" between humans and more advanced entities and realms of existence.<sup>32</sup>

Menkheperre became High Priest in 21<sup>st</sup> Dynasty (1045 BC to 992 BC) wrote a letter on Papyrus Louvre 25359. It adds that while he was stationed in El-Hibeh, he advised his readers to settle conflicts by presenting them before the god Horus-of-the-Camp, thereby utilizing that cult to find resolution to community problems. This text also seems that consulting God in disputes was not limited only to the common people, but was also a means for the royal family that

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<sup>25</sup> Tameem Bayoum "Oracular Gods in Ancient Egypt", Faculty of Tourism and Hotels.vol22.no2.2022. Faculty of Tourism and Hotels, Matrouh Universit.june 2022, p. 2

<sup>26</sup> Graf, F., Rolling the Dice for an Answer, 52.

<sup>27</sup> Quaegebeur, J., "L'appel au divin", 17.

<sup>28</sup> Cerny, J., *Egyptian Oracles*. 35.

<sup>29</sup> Johnson, J. H., "Louvre E 3229." *Enchoria* 1 (1977), 90. [55-102]

<sup>30</sup> Kruchten, J.-M., "Un instrument politique original: la 'belle fete de ph-ntr' des rois- pretres de la XXIIe dynastie." *BSFE* 103 (1985), 21, 23, [6-26],

<sup>31</sup> Baines, J., "Practical Religion and Piety." *JEA* 73. 1987, 88. [79-98]

<sup>32</sup> Cumow, T. 2004. *Oracles of the Ancient World*. London: Duckworth., 1-2.

members of a family might consult the god collectively, and that in this situation, Horus was expected to handle the distribution of servants.<sup>33</sup>

At El-Hibeh in the 18<sup>th</sup> upper Egyptian nome and dated to the 21st dynasty, texts and pleas for oracles were discovered. The papyri Berlin 8525 and 8526 are addressed to *Hrw-Xaw*, Horus- Khau, a form of Horus that is hardly ever mentioned in other sources. Papyrus 8525 also makes reference to the goddess Mhit, which led to talk of Thinis as a potential provenance. One individual addressed the two prior papyri.

Papyrus Boston a-b, is addressed to Horus of the camp, the deity of El-Hibeh. The papyri were discovered in an ancient tomb at Nag3 el Deir around 325 km to the south of El Hibeh. The two petitions relate to an oracle consultation to settle a dispute over a cow. Karsasi apparently of Hittite origin, had sold a cow to Pameshem who paid only the first instalment and failed and denied paying the rest of the acquired cost. The oracle appears to have decided in favour of Karsasi. Papyrus Strasbourg 21 and Papyrus Moscow 5560 are addressed to “He -of-the- Camp”, and that of Strasbourg 21 was written by or on behalf of the high priest of Amun Masaharta. Papyrus Louvre 25359, Papyrus Strasbourg 51 are both addressed to middlemen who are asked to make arrangements to obtain the oracle decision from the god.<sup>34</sup>

The two petition documents pertain to an instance of oracle consultation aimed at resolving a conflict concerning ownership of a cow. It is worth noting that during the Ramesside era, cattle were recognized as among the most valuable assets, and historical records attest to similar situations where disputes regarding cattle ownership were ultimately adjudicated through the intervention of oracles.

## CONCLUSION

- The sudden appearance and disappearance of the particular form of Horus specialized in the oracular consultation and trials by oracles may be part of a unique phenomenon unrelated to oracles. The god's short-lived existence as a military camp and single representation in a relief commissioned by Herihor might

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<sup>33</sup> Hemen is a falcon god who was worshiped at Hefat, the modern town of El Mo'alla

<sup>34</sup> Tarneem Bayoum “*Oracular Gods in Ancient Egypt*”, Faculty of Tourism and Hotels.vol122.no2.2022. Faculty of Tourism and Hotels, Matrouh Universit.june 2022.p7



be the backdrop. The priest and 'king' began his recorded career as a military leader during most of Thebes' crises. Herihor and Paiankh were both generals, maybe at the same time.

- These oracle petitions addressed to Horus of the Camp describe features of personal religious practice as they relate to concerns experienced in antiquity. Both oracle requests are sent to Horus-of-the-camp. Oracle petition A translates facts on a cow and how one petitioner claims it was purchased, whilst Oracle petition B claims the cow was not purchased. What appears to be a little disagreement demonstrates how they were assessed during this time period through their commitment to religion.
- These petitions demonstrate the importance of resolving such a conflict in Egyptian daily life by invoking God Horus of the camp and expressing his opinion in favor of the oppressed person.
- The hypothesis put forward here would account for the fact that the sanctuary of Horus-of-the-Camp in El-Hibeh is completely lost and that Horus-of-the-Camp is attested only for the short period from the end of the Twentieth Dynasty to the beginning of the Twenty-first Dynasty, and so remains utterly obscure. One may hope that the publication of further documents from this archive will clarify the situation at El-Hibeh during this period.

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