

The Beautiful Feast of the Valley

JACK BROOKER

The nature of religion

- ❑ The myth(odology) (and theology)
- ❑ The cult
- ❑ Gods and Goddesses
- ❑ Temples
- ❑ Festivals and Processions
- ❑ Kingship
- ❑ Afterlife beliefs

Beautiful Festival of the Valley chosen because it reflects or relates to all elements of the nature of religion outlined in the course.

The Procession

- Occurs annually in the second month of summer (Shemu).
- Statue of Amun-Ra goes to Deir el-Bahari to visit Hathor in a procession led by the king
 - Later joined by statues of other gods (Mut, Khonsu) and deceased kings
- Public festival involving the wider population of Thebes (both living and dead)
- Procession moves from east bank → west bank of the Nile
 - Movement from land of the living to the land of the dead → funerary connotations
 - Mimics the solar path through the sky (though not exactly...)

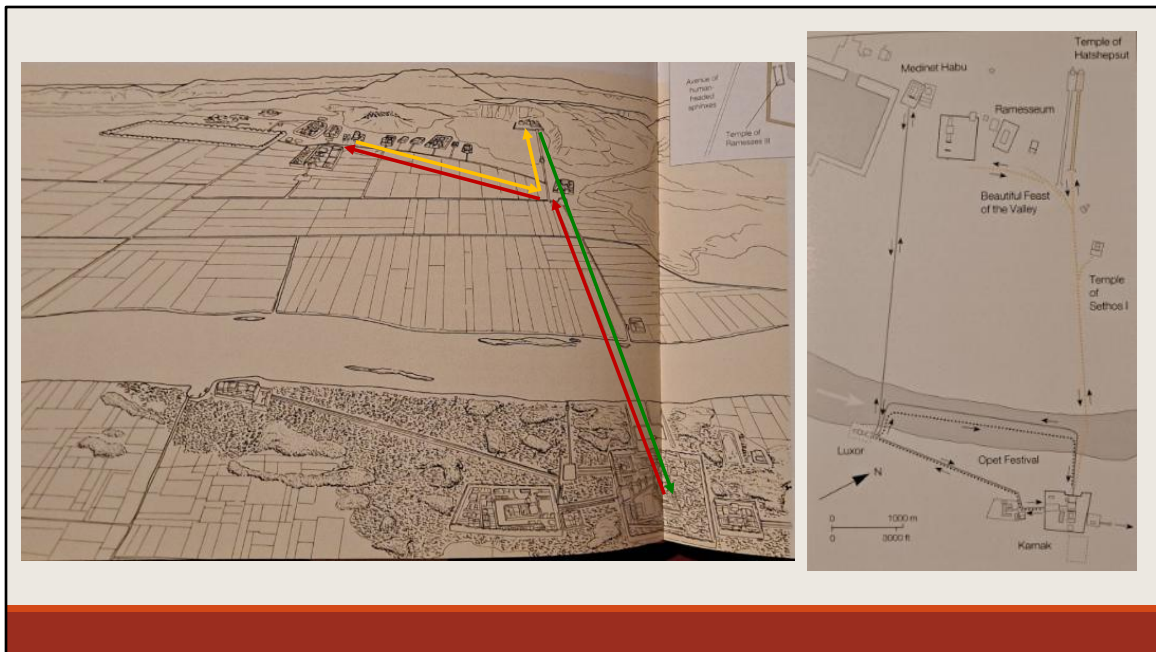
- Interesting that the festival takes place in Shemu rather than Akhet (Inundation) given Hathor's reunion with Ra connects to the myth of the Distant Goddess whose return brings the inundation – seems like the festivals are the wrong way around?

- Worth highlighting that the statue of the god was not merely a representation of the god, but actually served as a vessel of the god (or, cognitively, WAS the god – intuitive belief, HADD).

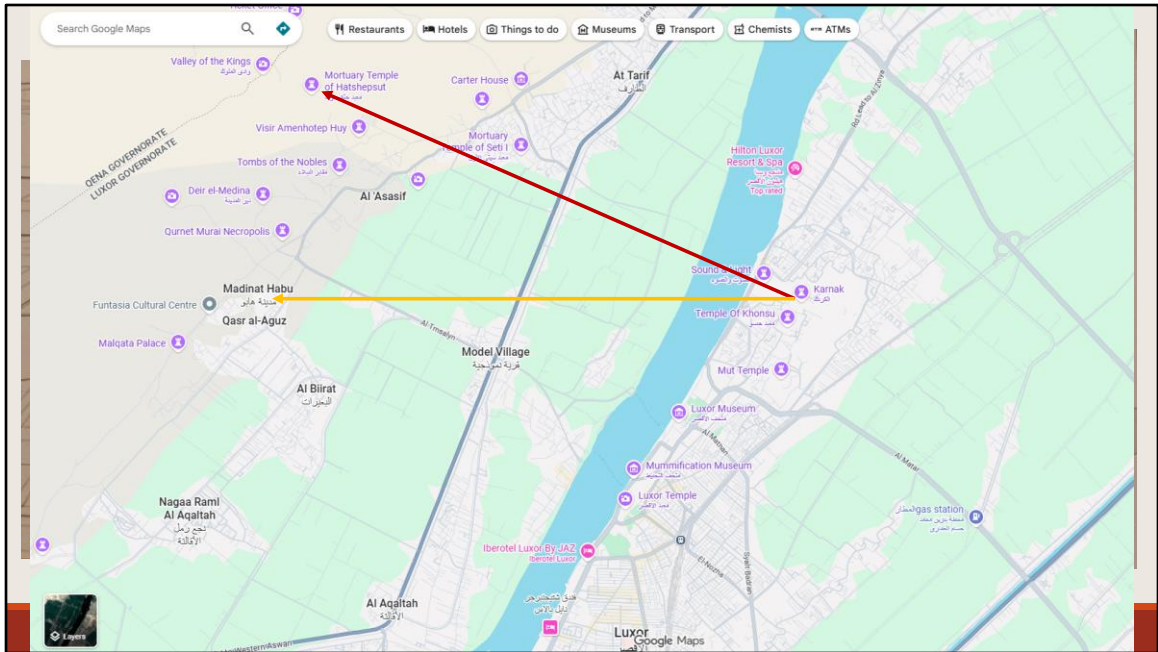
- Move through this quickly – overview should have been picked up through reading (Teeter, 2011, pp. 66-73).



Festival routes (Beautiful Festival of the Valley; Opet Festival) with reconstruction of temple positions in Thebes and the Necropolis.



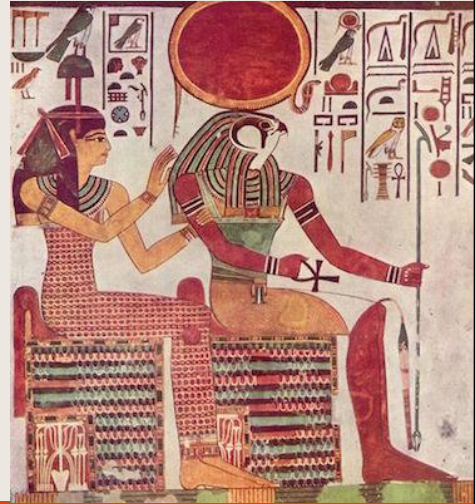
Arrows indicating route of the Valley Festival, from Karnak to the mortuary temples (red), from the mortuary temples to Hathor's chapel at Deir el-Bahari (yellow), and from Deir el-Bahari back to Karnak (green).



O'Connor (1998) argues for the conceptual significance of the spatial relationships between the four “cardinal points” of Thebes (Karnak temple, Luxor temple, the Hathor chapel at Deir el-Bahari, and Amenhotep III’s palace and mortuary temple). O'Connor comments on the difference between the “local” east-west axis connecting Karnak to Deir el-Bahari, and the true celestial east-west axis connecting Karnak to Amenhotep III’s mortuary temple (and later mortuary temples e.g. Medinet Habu), or more strictly speaking the “mound of Djeme”. The Beautiful Festival of the Valley travels to both West Bank sites, thereby activating solar connotations in both “local” and truly celestial terms.

Renewing Kingship, Renewing the Universe

- King leads procession – associated with Amun-Ra
 - Visit of Amun-Ra to the mortuary temple of the king restores the king's life and ability to maintain ma'at.
- Night of the first day → 'sacred marriage' between Amun-Ra and Hathor at Deir el-Bahari
 - Hathor as mother, wife and daughter of Ra → her union with the sun-god restores his potency to rule the cosmos
 - Cf. *The Contendings of Horus and Seth*



- NB: Teeter (2011, p. 68) and Lloyd (2014, p. 244) disagree on the order of the visits – Teeter has Amun-Ra visit the mortuary temples first; Lloyd has him visit Hathor first. On balance, Teeter offers stronger evidence for her position.

- One key purpose of the Valley Festival was to affect the sexual union of Amun-Ra (and by extension the reigning king) with Hathor, which was achieved through a ritual visit of the Amun-Ra cult statue to the Hathor chapel at Deir el-Bahari (in Hatshepsut's mortuary temple). As the mother, wife and daughter of Ra, union with Hathor restored the energy of the sun-god, allowing the cosmos to remain stable and in accordance with ma'at.

- Regularity of festival (annually) works as an expression of the cyclical concept of time (neheh) in Egyptian thinking; as part of Theban festival set it is a much more regular cycle (Valley Festival & Opet are two per year, plus longer-term Heb-Sed, plus more regular 10-day festivals from Luxor to Malqata).

- The Contendings of Horus and Seth: The baboon god Babi insults Pre (Ra) and he stops performing his cosmic function. Hathor shows him her genitals and he is cheered up, so goes back to administering ma'at. (Pinch, 2002, p.138)

- NB: Image is Hathor (as Imentet) with Ra-Horakhty, NOT with Amun-Ra.

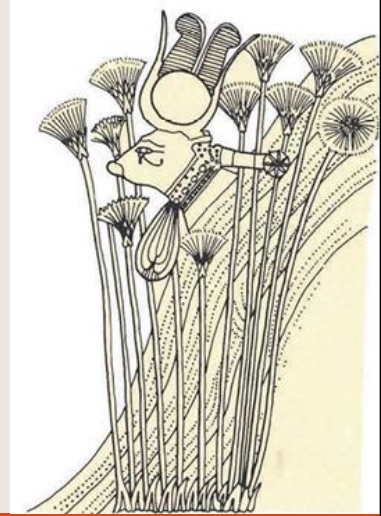


Plate VIII. Procession during the Beautiful Feast of the Valley showing statues of the deceased Amunhotep III and Queen Tiye. The large fans held over the statues proclaim their divinity. Tomb of Amuneminet at Thebes (TT 277). Dynasties 19–20. Photo: C. F. Nims. Courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

Later iterations of the Valley Festival added further statues to the procession, including statues of deceased kings, who were also renewed during the festival.

Hathor, Lady of the West

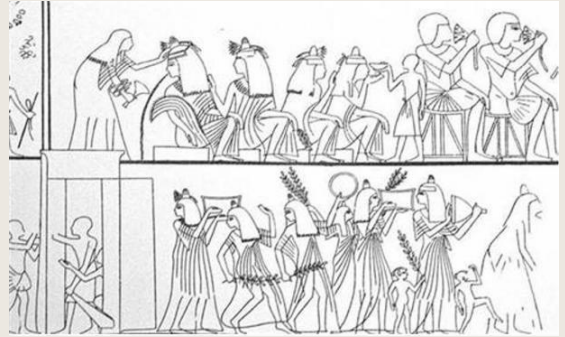
- As Lady of the West, Hathor greeted the setting sun as it began its travels through the Underworld
- Hathor also greeted the dead when they arrived in the Underworld to transition to their new life
- As the Festival procession moved through the necropolis, the dead were called from the Underworld by the noise to join with the living.
 - Statues of the dead brought out from the tombs to be with the living
 - Solar rebirth and renewal for Amun-Re and the king also conveyed to the dead in the necropolis



Bring up HADD for statues if not already covered earlier (or remind here if it was). The key point here is that the same solar connotations which drive the renewal of the king/Amun-Ra (cosmic significance) take effect on the 'common' dead of the Necropolis (and thus is promised in the future for the living = personal significance; strong aspect of the Amun-Ra 'religion' according to O'Connor (1998)).

Hathor, Lady of Drunkenness

- Festival culminates in a celebration of the living with the dead in the Theban necropolis.
 - Like the king, the dead are given new life by the presence of Amun-Ra / offerings from the living.
- Music, dance and consumption of excessive amounts of alcohol (and poss. other intoxicants) helped to induce trance-like state.



“It was proper for the whole of creation to rejoice when Hathor ... joined forces with her father.”

Quotation: Pinch 2002, p. 138.

Regarding trance: remember Lloyd (2014, p. 244, n.3) highlights that “we can be confident that the Egyptians could very easily turn a holy day into a holiday”.

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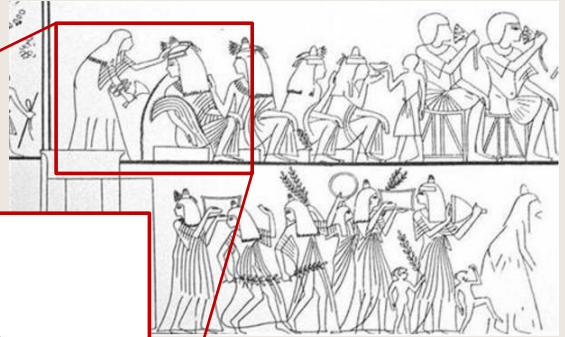


Figure 16 - Excessive consumption in Ancient Egypt, Theban Tomb, New Kingdom (D. Brewer, D. Redford, S. Redford, *Domestic plants and animals: The Egyptian Origins*, p. 60)

... when Hathor ... joined

End on a joke.

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