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Juan Carlos Moreno García

Donation de terre
Landschenkung

Land donations are frequently attested in the written record of ancient Egypt. Used by the king as a means to recompense and honor high dignitaries, civil servants, and temples, they were in no way a royal prerogative. Private individuals also donated land both to temples and royal statues, which appears to have been a social and economic strategy to strengthen their links with the monarchy and with powerful patrons. In other cases, enough evidence reveals that such donations sought to preserve individual patrimonies from the interference of their owners' kin. Temples figure at the core of land donations, especially as beneficiaries of the king's largesse and of private endowments; their position as local centers of power and authority and their role as heads of patronage networks explain why they received so many donations of land during the Third Intermediate Period and under the Saite rule, when political insecurity and state rebuilding made them privileged tools for the protection of the patrimonies of the elite.

إن عملية وهب الأراضى دائما ما أكدتها النصوص المصرية القديمة، استخدمها الملك كوسيلة لتعويض وتكريم النخبة ، الموظفين الرسميين، والمعابد ، كانوا بأى حال من الأحوال امتيازا ملكيا. وهب الأفراد الأرضي إلى كلا من المعابد والتماثيل الملكية ، وعلى ما يبدو أن هذه كانت إستراتيجية إقتصادية وإجتماعية لتعضيد روابطهم مع الملكية والنخبة. وفي حالات أخرى، تشير الأدلة الكافية إلى أن مثل هذه العطايا كان يعتقد انها طريقة للحفاظ على الأموال والممتكات الفردية من تدخل ورثة الفرد. كان للمعابد دور أساسي في هذه الهبات حيث غالباً كانوا المستفيدون من كرم الملك وهبات الأفراد ، وأن موقعهم كمراكز قوة وسلطة محلية ودورهم كرؤوس شبكات الوهب يشرح سبب حصولهم على هبات كثيرة من الأراضي خلال العصر الإنتقالي الثالث وخلال الحكم الصاوي، في وقت شهد تزعزع في الإستقرار وإعادة هيكلة للدولة مما جعلهم طريقة حصرية لحماية ممتلكات علية القوم.

As in many other pre-industrial societies, land was the most precious asset in ancient Egypt not only as a source of wealth, status, and everyday sustenance but also as an identity marker for social groups and as a symbol of membership of a community. Moreover land was a crossroad of interests, obligations, values, and rights in such a way that it would be rather simplistic to analyze its transfers in terms of modern social values. For instance, a plot belonging to a temple (as it might figure, for example, in documents like the Wilbour Papyrus or the Saite land leases) could simultaneously depend on different institutions and people and, accordingly, concepts like "property" risk being somewhat misleading and not too operative. Under these premises, land donations were intended not only to reward an individual or an institution (i.e., a temple) or to provide them with income so that they could fulfill their ordinary activities. Land donations could also involve subtler considerations, like legitimizing the authority of a ruler, being part of a strategy seeking integration within a selected

network of patronage (the donor thus becoming the client of the patron), displaying the social elevation of the donor, protecting family assets by transferring them to a durable institution, or providing someone with a source of wealth independent of his/her social setting—and thus weakening the cohesion of a kin group and its capacity for taking collective decisions (Moreno García 2009 - 2010, 2013).

The King as Donor to Temples

At the beginning of the Old Kingdom several small step pyramids dotted the landscape in Middle and Upper Egypt, in what seems to have been a network of cultic and economic centers founded and provided for by the kings of the 3rd Dynasty (Pätznik 2005; Seidlmayer 1996: 122 - 125). But from the beginning of the 4th Dynasty on, land donations to specific cults and sanctuaries appear prominently in the royal annals as one of the most ideologically relevant activities of the kingship. It is quite significant that they were concomitant with a thorough policy of monumental building and territorial organization, especially under the reign of Sneferu. In fact, most of the donations benefited sanctuaries located in the Delta, where this policy seems to have been particularly active (Strudwick 2005: 65 - 74). One possible interpretation is that the king sought not only to create, provide, and expand local centers of power and influence, but also to strengthen the links, support, and collaboration between the royalty and the local elite, as well as to reinforce the integration of the provincial temples within the state administration. The case of Nikaankh of Tehna is a good illustration of this policy. This official and his family came to control both the temple of the goddess Hathor and the agricultural centers of the crown in their province at the beginning of the 5th Dynasty. In fact, the links between the local potentates of this region and the court seem to have been rather close and went back to the 4th Dynasty, when some officials buried in the nearby tombs of Gebel el-Teir bore the rare prestigious title of *ḥḳꜣ nswt*, "governor of the king." Such links were further outlined by the donation of a field of two arouras by king Menkaura, subsequently confirmed by pharaoh Userkaf (Sethe 1933: 24 - 31).

Later on, administrative titles as well as the fragments of the royal annals of the 6th Dynasty confirm that creating and providing cultic centers of the crown in the nomes, especially the royal chapels *ḥwt-kꜣ*, was still effective. Epigraphic evidence from Akhmim shows that fields and seasonal workers (*mrt*) were allocated for the provision of offerings to the temple of Min, while the construction of a royal chapel was financed by the king (Strudwick 2005: 360). But it is doubtless the estates granted to the temple of Min of Coptos, during the late Old Kingdom, which best illustrate how endowments and "elite building" affected the organization of a provincial sanctuary. The initial procedure of choosing an irrigated area, subsequently divided into plots and provided with a processing center and workers, was followed by the appointment of state officials and members of the local elite (including chiefs and governors of the villages) to the council (*ḏꜣḏꜣt*) in charge of the management of the domain. Village rulers, chiefs, and overseers of priests were thus essential partners of the central administration in the provinces (Moreno García 1998, 2004, 2006: 103 - 104, 114 - 105, 2007). And land donations to the temples appear as a significant instrument of royal intervention, for they allowed the king to influence their internal affairs, to transform them into attractive foci of wealth and status, and to lure the local elite into the palatial sphere.

Royal grants of land to the temples continued in the Middle Kingdom (Altenmüller and Moussa 1991; Postel and Regen 2005), but it was during the troubled times of the late Second Intermediate Period when the sources highlight the importance of land donations for building up a government structure and tying the local potentates to the crown. The Medamud endowment text states that 39 arouras of fields were granted to the temple of Montu and that its entire domain was reorganized, to the point that former holders of plots belonging to the sanctuary were to be compensated "plot for plot, threshing-floor for threshing-floor" (Helck 1975: 62); the governor Sobeknakht of Elkab boasts of having restructured for the king the fields of the goddess Nekhbet in the town of Ageny, for a total amount of 140 *ḫꜣ* or 1400 arouras (Helck 1975: 16); Sataimau of Edfu was appointed priest of the royal statue in the temple of Horus Behdety by the king, a cult provided with diverse revenues as well as more

than 35 arouras (Davies 2009: 34, 36), a situation similar to that enjoyed by Iuf of Edfu (Sethe 1927: 29 - 31); confiscated fields and priesthood income formerly belonging to rivals were reallocated to temples and new holders (Helck 1975: 73 - 74). These examples confirm that powerful families from Edfu, Elkab, and Coptos formed the main support for the nascent Theban dynasty during the Second Intermediate Period, and that their links to the crown were further strengthened by their participation in the incomes of the temples and the management of their fields.

Land donations to the sanctuaries and royal statues continued to enrich the local elite thus tying them closely to the king, as its members were often appointed priests or managers of such endowments: the High-Steward Amenhotep, who lived in the 18th Dynasty, states that the king built a new temple close to Memphis, endowed it with fields, and appointed priests and prophets from the children of the notables of Memphis (Helck 1958a: *Urk. IV*: 1795 - 1796; similar statements are made in other 18th Dynasty texts: Helck 1957a: *Urk. IV*: 1674, and 1958b: *Urk. IV*: 2029, 2120). In fact, the New Kingdom departs from the preceding periods of Egyptian history by the enormous amounts of land transferred to the temples and by their transformation into institutions specialized in the management of agricultural domains (apart from their ritual and economic functions), both theirs and of the crown (Bigler and Geiger 1994; Gardiner 1941 - 1952; Grandet 1994; Haring 1997). This crucial aspect of the Egyptian economy has never been satisfactorily analyzed, nor the fact that crown centers (like the former ***ḥwt*** in the Old Kingdom or the ***ḫnrt*** in the Middle Kingdom: Moreno García 1999; Quirke 1988) apparently played no significant role then. It would be simplistic to ascribe such donations to the temples to some kind of exacerbated piety or economic unawareness. While their role in ritual activities, income producing, and prestige display could certainly not be underestimated, it is also true that they were crucial in the reorganization of the economic landscape of the kingdom and in the formation and reproduction of the elites who ruled it.

Judging from the figures recorded in the epigraphic and papyrological sources, the amount of land donated to the temples could be quite significant, from just a few hundred arouras (as in the Old Kingdom royal annals) to hundreds of thousands (as Papyrus Harris I evokes), although rather smaller endowments (around one or two arouras) are also attested. Nevertheless these figures might be treated with caution, as the fields donated to a temple could be subsequently transferred to another cultic institution, as in the case of the "temples of millions of years" of the New Kingdom (Haring 1997). The contrast between administrative texts and official inscriptions also point in the same direction: the huge amount of land granted to the temple of Edfu, according to the Great Donation Text, proves to be at least suspicious when considering actual land surveys and patterns of land tenure in the same area (Christensen 2001); finally, it is difficult to determine which percentage of the total assets of a temple consisted of royal donations (liable to further reallotments to other institutions) and which was the stable core of its own landed resources. In any case, royal land donations to the temples continued to be not only a means to provide these institutions with income for their daily cultic activities, but also a precious tool for gaining the support of the local elite, especially during the first millennium, a period of political instability and foreign intervention within Egypt. Temples appear then as stable institutions, source of wealth, power, and legitimacy for the local elites, but also as an instrument enabling the kings to consolidate and spread their control over Egypt, especially under the Kushite and Saite Dynasties (Caminos 1964; Macadam 1949: 32 - 44, pls. 11 - 14; Meeks 1972, 1979a, 1979b, 2009; Perdu 2002: 1235 - 1237, 2004: 102 - 103).

Royal Donations of Land to Individuals

Officials in the service of the king were usually rewarded with fields, manpower, and "houses," benefits which could be confiscated in case of serious misconduct. In fact, the formula ***pr ꜣḫt rmṯ ḫt nb***, "(his) house, field, people and all property," and its variants described such grants (Moreno García 2008: 115). Even entire villages were thus transferred (Strudwick 2005: 190 - 191, 364). The Pharaonic sources distinguished such rewards carefully from the original family assets of their holders; thus, for example, Metjen, an official of the beginning of the 4th Dynasty, proclaimed that he

had inherited 50 arouras from his mother and was granted several domains by the king (consisting of 200, 12, and 4 arouras: Strudwick 2005: 192), while Ibi of Deir el-Gabrawi proclaimed, in a similar vein, that he had inherited the property of his father and obtained from the pharaoh a domain of 203 arouras (Strudwick 2005: 364 - 365); even more clearly, the 12th Dynasty governor Hapidjefa of Siut made a distinction between ***pr jt***, "the house(hold) of the father," and ***pr ḥɜtj-ʿ***, "the house of the governor." But if these allocations constituted the normal remuneration for the services rendered to the crown, special allotments of land rewarded exceptional exploits and emphasized that the holder was a member of the core elite of the kingdom. Thus Sabni of Elephantine was given a substantial amount of land (more than 40 arouras) after having accomplished several successful missions into Nubia; the donation involved his nomination as a ritualist in the pyramid complex of the king (Strudwick 2005: 338). In a similar vein, papyri and decrees from the royal funerary temples show that only certain high dignitaries, courtiers, and local officials were thus honored (Posener-Krieger 1976: 397 - 399; Strudwick 2005: 103 - 104). As for the wars of conquest at the beginning of the New Kingdom, they were accompanied not only by substantial donations of land to the temples but also to courageous soldiers, sometimes settled in the vicinity of the newly incorporated territories (Gaballa 1977: 22; Helck 1975: 79, 116; Sethe 1927: 1 - 10). Courtiers and high officials continued to be rewarded with extensive donations of land too (Habachi 1950; Helck 1956b: *Urk. IV*: 1444, 1958a: *Urk. IV*: 1796, 1975: 116), sometimes in an indirect way, as when the king set up a royal statue provided with fields and appointed an official as priest and beneficiary of the land income, thus enhancing the links between the monarchy and selected members of the elite (Chappaz 2005 - 2007; Davies 2009: 34, 36; Frood 2003; Kitchen 1978: 75, 1983: 227, 270; Sethe 1927: 30 - 31). Later on, during the transition from the second to the first millennium BCE, the inscriptions evoke that some members of the royal family were granted land both by the pharaohs and private individuals (Jansen-Winkeln 2007: 77 - 80, 161; Winand 2003).

However, land donations to individuals were not only a source of income but also a potential cause of conflicts. New Kingdom papyri, for example, mention people involved in lawsuits over family property originally handed over by the king to an individual and subsequently exploited by a group of brothers or by the descendants of a common ancestor; such disputes usually involved the usurpation of the field or the seizure of the rights over it by other members of the kin or by another family (Gaballa 1977; Kitchen 1969 - 1976: 803 - 806). In other cases, the institution could simply remove a person from the land previously granted to him or to her (Demarée 2006: 9 - 10, pls. 5 - 6; Janssen 1991: 43 - 47, pls. 27 - 29).

Land Donations between Individuals and Temples

Land donations involving temples and individuals could be a two-way process. Usually the temple granted somebody a field as a recompense, but in other instances high dignitaries or just ordinary officials handed over to the temple substantial tracts of land in what seems a deliberate strategy to reinforce their links with the crown and to ensure for themselves a source of income (Haring 1997: 142 - 155). The High-Steward of Amenhotep III, for instance, transferred his fields, serfs, and cattle to the statue of the king in the temple of Ptah at Memphis. The amount of land involved was quite impressive: 430 arouras (220 having been given previously to Amenhotep by the pharaoh), and the operation included the reversion of part of the offerings presented to the statue to the funerary cult of Amenhotep himself, who claimed to have no family (Helck 1958a: *Urk. IV*: 1794, 1796 - 1797). A similar statement was made by Simut-Kyky in the reign of Ramesses II, when he transferred all his property to the goddess Mut "as a support of my old age" (Kitchen 1969 - 1976: 336, 339 - 340). Senenmut, a steward of Amun, was authorized by Thutmose III to endow two sanctuaries with three and five arouras of land, respectively, that the king had formerly granted to him (Helck 1975: 122 - 126). Aia, an officer during the reign of Ramesses I, proclaimed that he had given 50 arouras for the sacred offerings of Amun-Ra, 21 arouras for his own foundation, and three more to another person (Kitchen 1983: 395). Ramesses III agreed that the priest Merenptah endow a statue for the king in the temple of Ptah at Memphis, with the condition that

the donor and his descendants would be in charge of the (remunerated) celebration of the rituals (Kitchen 1983: 249 - 250). What is more, Penniut, deputy of Wawat under Ramesses VI, rented several fields to endow the statue of the king and even added a further parcel of land from his own property to this end; his action was followed by an unspecified reward (Kitchen 1990: 350 - 353). These examples show that land donations to a temple or to the foundation of a royal statue cult implied not only that the donor would continue to enjoy the income from the land making up the endowment; he also enjoyed various advantages such as lower taxation and freedom from corvée labor for the field workers, as Papyrus Turin CG 1879+1869+1899 shows (Hovestreydt 1997; see also Fischer-Elfert 2012; Kitchen 1978: 457). Thus land donations to temples were something more than a simple act of piety. It involved a durable relation with powerful patrons (the king himself, the temple) and guaranteed the control over a substantial source of income, free of intrusions by relatives (Fitzenreiter 2007). Such a practice is also well attested in later sources: a Saite papyrus, for example, describes the donation of a field to a temple in order to create a funerary endowment for the husband of the donor, with the explicit interdiction to other relatives to question this decision (Malinine 1953: 117 - 124).

Inversely, it was a common practice that the king honored some individuals by granting them fields belonging to the temples. Land from the royal mortuary temples was thus donated during the Old and Middle Kingdoms (see above), a custom which continued in the second half of the second millennium, when the pharaoh endowed people with ***sꜣḥ***-fields located in the domain of a temple (Helck 1957a: *Urk. IV*: 1637, 1958b: *Urk. IV*: 2078, 1975: 62). Their beneficiaries could even sell them to third parties (Kitchen 1978: 155), and the contemporary sources insist that these fields were a donation (Moreno García 2006: 151 - 152). The same is true of another category of land, the donation fields ***ḥkn***. They only comprised 37 plots in the Wilbour Papyrus (1.6% of the total listed), but they were correlated with the funerary cults of Ramesses III and Ramesses V and with royal institutions, they were mainly located around the locality of Sharope (where many military personnel are attested), and they seem to have been related to statues of the king endowed with fields (Gasse 1988: 228; Katary 1989: 74, 113 - 114, 117 - 119, 121). Judging from the surface of the plots thus granted (modest but not unsubstantial, consisting frequently of 20 arouras, sometimes 100), these fields were a privileged mechanism for strengthening the links between the crown and a certain military elite. The case of the chief of the *thr*-warriors Ramessesemperra is a good example, as he was in possession of a ***ḥkn***-field as well as of other fields; he was also the cultivator (***jḫwtj***) of a plot of 50 arouras and, finally, he worked as an agent for a scribe (Papyrus Wilbour, entries A 85:16; 90:8; 91:20; B 17:24). In fact, the beneficiaries of the fields granted to royal statues, who acted as priests of their cult, were designed by the term ***ḥknj*** (Davies 2009: 34). Finally, the "fields of ***nmḥ***" appear in Upper Egyptian papyri and inscriptions at the very end of the second millennium as a special type of land usually in the possession of the temples, but constituting a modest percentage of their domains and usually held by well-off Egyptians or by members of the elite, who could dispose of it quite freely. Although their origins are obscure, it is symptomatic that they are absent in the Lower Egyptian sources, thus suggesting strong links with the socio-economic conditions prevalent in Upper Egypt, perhaps as a regional practice, which enabled the local potentates to possess and exploit these fields in very favorable terms, as if they enjoyed a donation granted not by the king but by the temple authorities (Katary 2012: 12 - 14; Moreno García fc.). It cannot be ruled out that the "fields of ***nmḥ***" were a recent designation for the former ***sꜣḥ***–fields, as in both cases they were often part of the domains of the temples but held by private individuals who could buy and sell them. They were also reorganized by the monarchy (as the text of endowment for the temple of Medamud or the so-called Stèle de l'Apanage show) and, in fact, some texts suggest a link between the concepts of ***sꜣḥ***, ***ḥnk***, and ***ꜣḫt nmḥ*** (Kitchen 1978: 155; Spencer 1989: pl. 101, 104 - 106).

Therefore land donations to and from the temples appear as a tool used to build up, recognize, and honor high dignitaries and the local elite, as well as to strengthen their links with the pharaoh

through the mediation of powerful economic and symbolic institutions. Both parties (individuals and temples/king) played an active role in what appears to have been a mutually beneficial strategy.

Individual Strategies around Royal Land Donations

Nevertheless, granting land to selected Egyptians might also have helped to break the internal cohesion of social groups by encouraging individual interests and strategies. Thus it is not unusual that the beneficiaries of royal endowments formally forbade other relatives to enjoy the fields granted by the king, which were then kept within the nuclear family of the holder and his direct descendants. This practice is especially well documented in the case of the fields devoted to private funerary foundations or which endowed royal statues. Yet even in these cases conflicts finally arose after several generations, when internal disputes between an increasing number of heirs led to lawsuits, as in the case of the 19th Dynasty official Mose (Gaballa 1977). In most cases a formal clause specified that the endowment was to be transferred from son to son and from heir to heir (Kitchen 1983: 227, 249 - 250, 270), whereas other dispositions prevented the family from dividing or using the field, which was then put under the control of specialized priests with the condition of it being preserved undivided (Kitchen 1978: 336; Malinine 1953: 117 - 130; Strudwick 2005: 189 - 191, 194, 195 - 199, 200 - 201, 203). Given the importance of the extended family in Egyptian society, granting land to an individual not only enhanced his personal status and contributed to his prosperity (while carrying also about obligations). It also implied the establishment of privileged ties with a prestigious institution and, consequently, his recognition as intermediary/ spokesman between the institution and his family or social entourage. Certainly, such individual strategies, which favored a person to the detriment of other members of his kin, provided alternative paths of enrichment and social promotion, which escaped the control of his extended family. But they also opened the path for internal quarrels and rivalries and, in the end, could ruin the solidarity of a family group and weaken its local power. Again, land donations must be set in a wider social context, where piety or rewards were not necessarily the most significant reasons for their existence (Moreno García 2009 - 2010 and 2013).

The Problem of the "Donation Stelae"

The label "donation stelae" is misleading, as it might suggest that these documents formed a coherent and homogeneous corpus, which stands apart from other sets of sources. In fact, land donations are also recorded in papyri (Malinine 1953: 117 - 131), on statues (Lichtheim 1980: 35; Perdu 1990; Ritner 2009: 584 - 585), in tomb inscriptions (Kitchen 1990: 213 - 218), and private biographies (Ritner 2009: 261 - 262), while the purposes and protagonists of the donations registered in the stelae varied greatly; for instance, donations could be royal or private and bestowed on temples, statues, and individuals. Even their chronological and geographical distribution is quite uneven: from the Second Intermediate Period to the 21st Dynasty they are very scarce and only attested in Upper Egypt and Nubia. However, from the beginning of the 22nd Dynasty on, their number increases dramatically, but they are attested almost exclusively in Lower Egypt and the Fayum area. To put it another way, they were very rare where and when an institutional solid power prevailed (i.e., the New Kingdom monarchy or the priestly Domain of Amun) and, quite significantly, they became abundant in areas and periods dominated by political incertitude (with the exception of the Saite Period), when their main beneficiaries were temples. As the "fields of *nmḥw*" are not mentioned in them after the end of the New Kingdom, it might be concluded that the presence or absence of donation stelae in a given region obeys two different strategies aiming to link the members of the local elite to the sanctuaries. In Upper Egypt the institutional continuity over the centuries explains why they remained a rare, selective, and restricted instrument in the hands of the temples. However, in Lower Egypt, the weakness of the last pharaohs (as can be inferred from their modest donations to the temples: Bickel et al. 1998), as well as political unrest and division, were accompanied by the rapid rise and decline of local powers, thus transforming the temples into foci of economic wealth, institutional stability, and permanence as well as guarantors of the goods transferred to their

domains. Not surprisingly the petty kings of the Delta endowed the temples with huge amounts of land in the pursuit of consolidating their own chiefdoms (9500 arouras in one case: Perdu 2004: 98 - 99, 102 - 103). They also probably became centers of patronage networks and helped to preserve the patrimonies of the regional elite (Moreno García fc.). In some instances, the same person or people from a single family obtained several of such donations, as in the case of Gemnefhorbak of Mendes (Ritner 2009: 386 - 388, 432 - 434) and of Esdhuti of Dakhla Oasis (Janssen 1968; Kaper and Demarée 2005).

The restoration of a unitary monarchy under the Saites was accompanied by measures seeking to integrate the temples into the sphere of the new administration. Considerable endowments of land were thus granted again to the sanctuaries, while authorities closely related to the ruling dynasty were appointed at their head (cf. Caminos 1964; Leahy 1996, 2009; Lichtheim 1980: 33 - 36; Perdu 2002: 1236 - 1238). Not surprisingly temples became once more attractive poles of economic and political power, well connected with the royal administration and its agents (an excellent example in Vittmann 1998), while private land donations continued to flow to them (De Meulenaere 1993) and enabled both local and "national" elites to strengthen their links with the crown. In return, the temples provided income (like priesthood or tenures: Clarysse 1979; Johnson 1986) as well as influential social networks and institutional stability to support individual strategies (an excellent example from a Demotic literary text in Tait 2008 - 2009: 114 - 124). Hence Neshor, a high dignitary in charge of the customs at Naukratis and Elephantine, made several donations to the temples of these cities as well as to those of Mendes, Sais, Abydos, and Hermopolis (Perdu 1990). The geographical range of his donations closely matches those made, for instance, by king Psammetichus I (Caminos 1964), thus suggesting that he intended not only to safeguard his own patrimony by putting it under the protection of the sanctuaries most favored by the kings, but also to obtain prestige and social "visibility" thanks to his close association with such institutions. A statue of Harbes, dated in the reign of Psammetichus I, records a donation of 60 arouras to the temple of Osiris Lord of Busiris in return for funerary services (Ritner 2009: 584 - 585), while Peftuaneith reorganized the local temple of Abydos following the orders of the king and endowed it with a thousand arouras (Lichtheim 1980: 34 - 35). In any case, the supposed inalienable nature of the fields donated was more ideal than real: land granted to a dignitary could be subsequently reverted to a temple (De Meulenaere 1993), the same field could be assigned successively to two different cults (Römer 2008), and former beneficiaries of an endowment could be deprived of it to the benefit of a new owner (Ritner 2009: 258 - 261). Quite significantly, the arrival of the Persian conquerors put an end to the practice of private donations of land to the temples, when the agents of the king began interfering with the appointment of priests.

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The royal donations to the temples appear in the royal annals (Altenmüller and Moussa 1991; Strudwick 2005) as well as in single inscriptions (i.e., Bigler and Geiger 1994) and in administrative records among other data (Gardiner 1941 - 1952; Gasse 1988; cf. also Grandet 1994). The so-called donation stelae have not yet been analyzed in depth, but Meeks (1979a) still remains the indispensable preliminary study, and its list of documents has been recently updated (Meeks 2009). As for the donations recorded in private letters and on papyrus, cf. Malinine (1953), Hovestreydt (1997), and Fischer-Elfert (2012). Winand (2003) and Ritner (2009) have provided recent translations and commentaries of many important documents concerning land donations in the Third Intermediate Period. Finally, the social strategies built around land donations seem

more complex than the alleged piety and are beginning to be better understood in their economic and political context (Fitzenreiter 2007; Moreno García 2005, 2010, 2013)

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