

MAGICAL HEALING STATUES IN ANCIENT EGYPT

SUMMARY

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Snake bites and scorpion stings presented a grave danger in villages and cities of Ancient Egypt, as they present also to-day. One would expect, therefore, to find a lot of medical prescriptions to treat these injuries in the numerous Egyptian papyri dealing with the cure of different illnesses. Actually, this is not the case, and one finds that the medical literature of the New Kingdom almost fully ignored this subject. The researcher must go down to the Late Period to obtain real information on treatments for the venom of scorpions and snakes (Pap. in the Brooklyn Museum 47.218.48 and 85).

In general, most of the Egyptians put their trust in supernatural powers inhabiting in magical spells against noxious animals which were engraved on the so-called Horus *cippi* or on statues which in most cases hold a Horus *cippus* before them. The first healing statue dates from the reign of Ramesses III (12th cent. B.C.). Apart from this unique piece all the other examples are from the 4th cent. B.C. or are later. Also the Horus *cippi* make their first appearance in the New Kingdom.

The way these statues and Horus *cippi* were thought to transfer their power to the patient is well known. Water was poured on them and as it flowed over the inscriptions, it absorbed their power and became a potent drug against scorpions and snakes.

Most of the healing statues are unpublished so far. I prepare the edition of the statues kept in the museums in Turin, Florence and Naples.

LITERATURE

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