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# Dendera Light Bulb – Explained

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The “It Looks-Like...” method of teaching is unscientific and unscholarly. What is the “It Looks-Like” method? Well, it works this way: “I think that looks like a tank, a submarine, a light bulb – so it must be one.”



(../wp-content/uploads/images/stories/denderalights1.jpg)

Fig. 1 Click image for larger view

The “It Looks-Like...” method of teaching is unscientific and unscholarly. What is the “It Looks-Like” method? Well, it works this way: “I think that looks like a tank, a submarine, a light bulb – so it must be one.” There is a history of gullibility when it comes to explanations of ancient Egyptian cultural phenomena. A case and

point – the so called “**Dendera Light Bulbs.**” This is a picture of a partial wall located in a crypt in the temple dedicated to Het-Heru (Hathor) located in Dendera Egypt.

People are under the false impression that the images are depicting ancient light bulbs and conclude the ancient Egyptians made use of light bulbs. These false ideas are repeated and parroted quite often all over the internet and sensationalized on TV shows such as “Ancient Aliens.” It’s quite puzzling that so many people accept these ideas coming from people who don’t show a proficiency in the language of the ancient Egyptians in order to convey what the ancient Egyptians said of the images themselves. Out of all of the far fetched ideas floating around today related to ancient Egyptian cultural phenomena, the people who promote such ideas NEVER give a translation of any inscriptions that accompany such images.

## What Are People Saying About It?

There’s not enough space to include everything people say but let’s deal with the most popular arguments.



In Egypt there is this underground crypt at Dendera that was always secret and only the high priests had access to that crypt. It is very narrow, low ceiling, and on the walls you have

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these reliefs of what looks like ancient light bulbs. Because we have to question one thing: How did the ancient Egyptians light the inside of their tombs? According to most mainstream archaeologists torches were used by the ancient Egyptians to light the pitch black chambers of tombs and temples, yet nowhere on the ceilings it there even the slightest evidence of soot or smoke residue.

Also, there isn't enough oxygen inside those tombs with which to support or feed a flame of a torch. I was once inside the Kings' chamber inside the pyramid of Giza and someone turned off the lights and immediately we were in pitch darkness, and I said 'no problem, I'll just take out my lighter from my satchel, and I turn on the lighter and it didn't work'.

But if the ancient Egyptians had used some kind of electric light to illuminate their passageways, why does the visual evidence exist only in the ancient temple of Dendera? In Egypt you had different areas of specialty and Dendera was the area where the knowledge of the light-giving source was kept, and this secret knowledge was kept by the high priests. They were the only ones that were privy to this type of information, because Dendera was the special place where this specific knowledge was guarded and kept.

— *History Channel's Ancient Aliens*

In their book *Das Licht der Pharaonen. Hochtechnologie und elektrischer Strom im alten Ägypten* (<http://www.amazon.com/Licht-Pharaonen-Hochtechnologie-elektrischer-Ägypten/dp/3776617179>) (Light of the Pharaohs. High Technology and Electricity in Ancient Egypt), Austrian authors Peter Krassa and Reinhard Habeck puts forth an "Electric Thesis" and says this of the carvings:





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The walls are decorated with human figures next to bulb-like objects representing oversized light bulbs. Inside these “bulbs” there are snakes in various lines. The snakes’ pointed tails issue from a lotus flower, which, without much imagination, can be interpreted as the socket of the bulb. Something similar to a wire leads to a small box on which the air god is kneeling. Adjacent to it stands a two-armed djed pillar as a symbol of power, which is connected to the snake. Also remarkable is the baboon-like demon holding two knives in his hands, which are interpreted as a protective and defensive power.

— *Das Licht der Pharaonen. Hochtechnologie und elektrischer Strom im alten Ägypten*, 1996



(../wp-content/uploads/images/stories/BuchmesseKrassaGarnHabeck1982-klein.jpg)

Fig. 2 Peter Krassa, Walter Garn and Reinhard Habeck in 1982 with a the Leuchttkörper models constructed by Garn at the Frankfurt book fair.

Photo Source

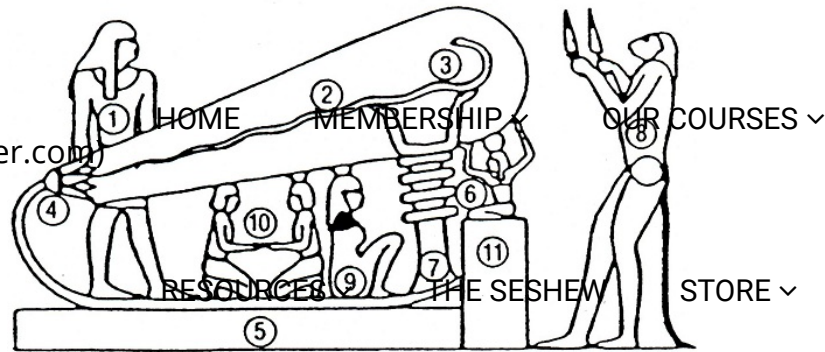
([http://atlantisforschung.de/index.php?title=Reinhard\\_Habeck,\\_Peter\\_Krassa\\_und\\_das\\_'Licht\\_der\\_Pharaonen'](http://atlantisforschung.de/index.php?title=Reinhard_Habeck,_Peter_Krassa_und_das_'Licht_der_Pharaonen')).

Click image for larger view

This was made popular by the Austrian electrical engineer Walter Garn who constructed a working model (**Fig. 2**). This is a summary of how these images are being misinterpreted as a result of the “It Looks-Like” method of analyzing Egyptian records.



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1 Priester 2 ionisierte Dämpfe 3 elektrische Entladung (Schlange)  
 4 Birnenfassung (Lotos) 5 kabelartiger Strang (Lotosstengel)  
 6 Luftgott 7 Isolator (Djed-Pfeiler) 8 Lichtbringer Thot mit Messern  
 9 Ausdruck für »Spannung« 10 entgegengesetzte Spannung  
 (Haarpolarität +) 11 Energiespeicher (elektrostatischer Generator ?)

(../wp-

content/uploads/images/stories/ReliefElektrothese-  
 klein.jpg)

Fig. 3 The details of the electric thesis by  
 Krassa, Habeck, and Garn. Photo Source

(<http://atlantisforschung.de/index.php?>

title=Reinhard\_Habeck,\_Peter\_Krassa\_und\_das\_'Licht\_der\_Pharaonen').

Click image for larger view

- 1. Priest
- 2. ionised fumes
- 3. electric discharge (snake)
- 4. Lamp socket (Lotos)
- 5. Cable (Lotos stem)
- 6. Air god
- 7. Isolator (Djed-Pillar)
- 8. Light bringer Thot with knives
- 9. Symbol for "current"
- 10. Inverse polarity (Haarpolarität +)
- 11. Energy storage (electrostatic Generator?)



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Fig.4 Picture of actual relief – Photo credit: Mick Palarczyk

(<http://paulsmit.smugmug.com/Features/Africa/Egypt-Dendera-temple/i-MQFzPHS/1/L/29607-egypt-L.jpg>)

This misinterpretation completely ignores the inscriptions found all around the images (not depicted in the picture). **When viewing an Egyptian temple wall that contains both inscriptions and vignettes (images or depictions), those inscriptions and vignettes nearly always go together and must be viewed and interpreted as a unit. One does not necessarily make sense without the other. This is how the ancient Egyptians perceived it, which of course means this is how you are obligated to view it—if you want to make real sense of a “decorated” wall. You must immediately divorce yourself from modern attitudes, values, perceptions, and assumptions and try diligently to think like the ancient Egyptians would have.** Most if not all Egyptian concepts are not in isolation and can be compared to more than one instance of the same expression elsewhere in Egypt.

## What Are These Images Depicting?

In order to explain what these images are, we have to detour a little and gain some insight on the background, use, and function of the temple. In other words – **context.** German author Frank Dörnenburg (<http://doernenburg.alien.de/alternativ/dendera/dend00.php>) has done a good job addressing many of the claims made by the proponents of the “Electric Thesis.” He says this of the “Look-Like” method:






The way some authors work – pulling some details out of the context and molding them together to create a new reality – will produce spectacular results, but not reliable ones. Egyptian reliefs


have the characteristic not to be located simply connectionless in the area. We find them usually in temples or graves. Unlike today's "general-purpose churches" Egyptian temples normally served special purposes. Temples in Egypt were normally dedicated to certain gods and associated festivals.

— Frank Dörnenburg's *Mysteries of the Past*

(<http://doernenburg.alien.de/alternativ/dendera/dend00.php>)

What is commonly called the Dendera Temple is located about 2.5 km south-east of Dendera, Egypt. It was part of a temple complex originally called  /iwnt/ lunet in mdw-nTr (Medew Netcher), the language of the ancient Egyptians. The whole complex covers some 40,000 square meters and is surrounded by a hefty mud brick enclosed wall. Dendera was a site for chapels or shrines from the beginning of history of ancient Egypt. There's evidence that pharaoh Pepi I (ca. 2250 BC) built on this site and evidence exists of a temple in the eighteenth dynasty (ca 1500 BC). But the earliest extant building in the compound today is the Mammisi raised by Nectanebo II – last of the native pharaohs (360–343 BC). The features in the complex include:

- Hathor temple (the main temple),
- Temple of the birth of Isis,
- Sacred Lake,
- Sanatorium,
- Mammisi of Nectanebo II,
- Christian Basilica,
- Roman Mammisi,
- a Bark shine,
- Gateways of Domitian & Trajan and
- the Roman Kiosk.<sup>1</sup>

The main temple is called Hathor's Temple today but was originally called /t3 iwnt ntrt/ Ta lunet Netcheret "she of the divine pillar" in dedication of the goddess  /hwt hrw/ Het-Heru (Hathor). Het-Heru was known, among other things, as a goddess of joy, and so she was deeply loved by the general population, and truly revered by



women, who aspired to embody her multifaceted role as wife, mother, and lover. In this capacity, she gained the titles of Lady of the House of Jubilation, and The One Who Brings Joy. The worship of Hathor was so popular that a lot of festivals were dedicated to her honor than any other Egyptian deity, and more children were named after this goddess than any other deity. Even Hathor's priesthood was unusual, in that both women and men became her priests. She was also known as the mistress of the "Festival of the Drunkenness of the Mistress of Dendera" in which it is said the Pharaoh danced with the wine amphora of the goddess. The temple and its crypt, in which the mysterious figures are, serves a purpose: **The yearly cycle of the sun, the New Year and its celebrations.** The complete temple is dedicated to this topic. The temple was separated into a large number of cult rooms. Relics were stored in these cult rooms, like in today's churches, and the walls contained texts about the dedicated festivals. The most expensive relics were stored between festivals in those crypts, for safe keeping. And some of those expensive relics were, as inscriptions there say, shrines, which were carried around in processions. During the festivals the objects were taken out of the shrines and placed in the cult rooms. Every crypt contains pictures and inscriptions about the objects stored there, which purpose what statue had, how big they were, what materials they consisted of and what was done with them during New Year's Eve and therefore we have a fixed connection between the objects stored in the crypts, their description there and in the cult rooms, and the festivals celebrated there. So let's take a look at the festivals celebrated at Dendera.



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Fig. 5 Front view of the temple of Het Heru (Hathor).



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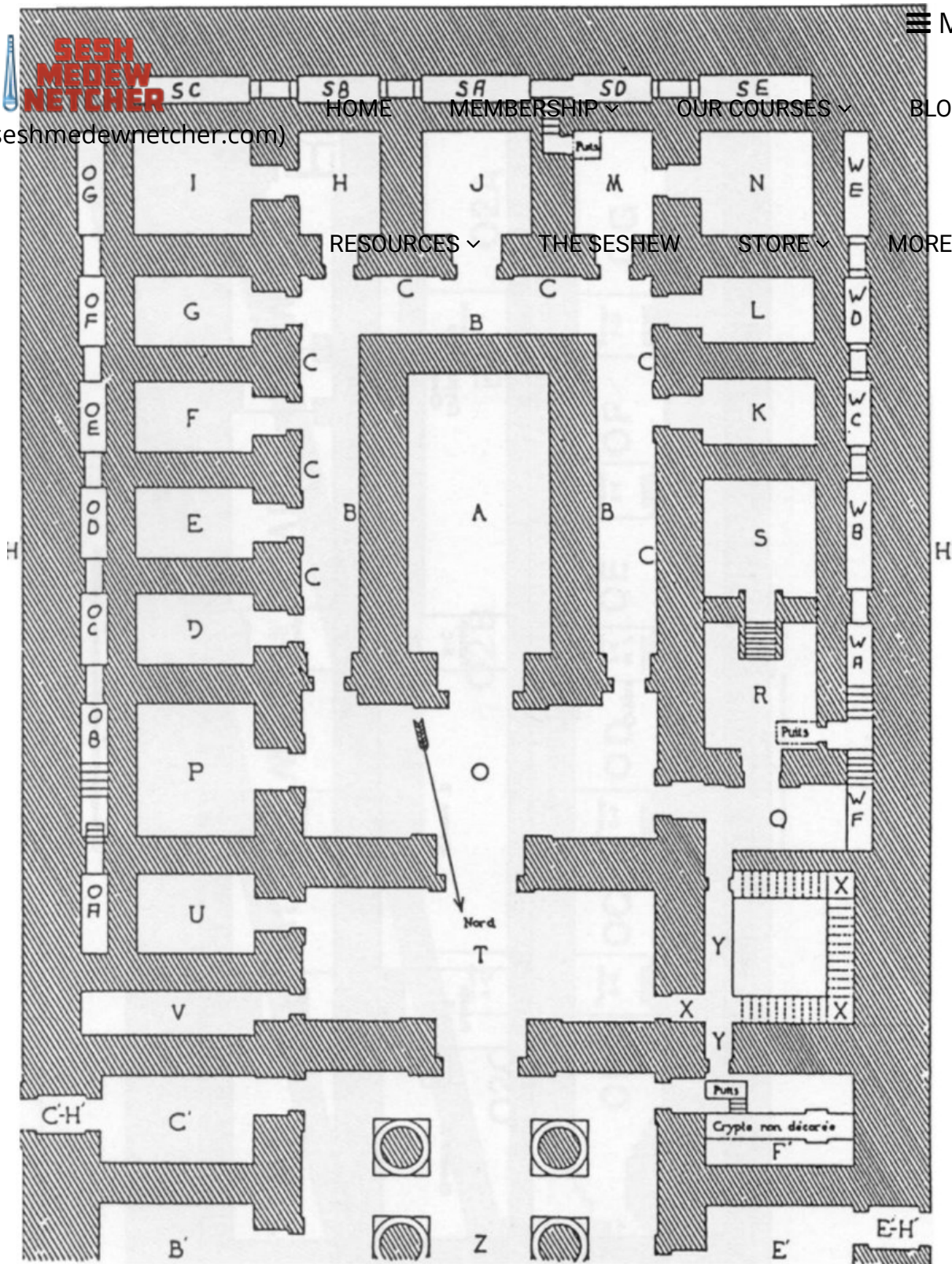


Fig. 6 Floor plan of the temple of Het Heru (Hathor).

The pictures above are the front entrance to the Temple of Het-Heru and its floor plan. The crypts are the small rooms in the three walls (east, South, and West) surrounding the hall with the cult rooms. The "Light Bulb Crypt" is labeled "SC"



(chamber C of the South crypts) is located above the room labeled "I" and entered with the stairs shown in room "M." The rooms were dedicated to the following festivals:

(<https://seshmedewnetcher.com>)

- Room D was for the "new dressing of Osiris"

- Room F was for the Sokar-festival

- Room G was used for many festivals:

From the crypt with the "light bulbs" (SC):

- Sed-Fest (30 year throne jubilee)
- Festival of the new moon of the 4th month of the Prt-season
- Day of the wp-rnpt (New year festival)
- Night of the child in his nest
- Festival of the New Year (tp-rnpt)

From the last crypt in the eastern wall (OG):

- 10 Day festival

From the east wall crypt before it:

- Festival of going to the festival place on the eastern shore of Dendera (h3-dj-ntr)
- Festival of the hntj-Statue of Harsomtus in the first month of the Shemu-season (New Moon Festival of the 1st month of the 3rd season)

- Room H:

- Festival of going to Behedet
- New Moon Festival of the month of Ephiphi (3rd month of the Shemu-season)

- Room I:

- Festival of the repeated drunkenness
- Day of the place of drunkenness

- Room K:

- Festival of receiving the heritage
- Day of receiving both halves
- Festival of entering the house of the barge
- Festival of crowning the king
- Sed-Fest

- Room L:

- Day of the festival of drunkenness
- Day of bringing the thw-plant

With the exception of the festivals in room K, which served the purpose of inthronisation of the king and his Sed-festival, all of the rooms serve season festivals. Most of them are new moon and new year festivals. The festivals celebrated with help of the "light bulb" shrines are clearly the Sed festival (throne






jubilee), two new moon, three new year festivals, and the “child in his nest” festival which is another name for the new sun of the new year, a common festival and the Wekhet Festival (the Egyptians had a 10 day week). Even more specific are the texts (https://seshmedewnetcher.com/), which include the light bulb pictures. The picture on the northern wall is dedicated to the

sed festival and the New Moon Festival, the two pictures on the southern wall are connected with a New Years Festival and the first day of the new year as we will see later.<sup>2</sup>

Although the temple dates to the late Ptolemaic period and was built by Greeks, the builders used the Egyptian symbolism and world view. Also interesting is an architectural element found on every passage to a group of crypts: a band of inscriptions explaining the usage of the rooms. The two southern “lamp” crypts are, according to the text, “*Secluded rooms of the statues of the house of Somtus.*”

**Somtus** is the Greek rendition of the ancient Egyptian god /sm3 t3.wy/ *Sema Tawy*– “Uniter of the Two Lands” to whom the crypts were dedicated to. Somtus is the god of the Unity of the Two Lands, known from the Old Kingdom on but he didn’t play a great role until the late New Kingdom. Then he emerges as Harsomtus  /hr sm3 t3.wy/ *Har Sema Tawy*– “Heru, Uniter of the Two Lands” a personification of the sky, and as Resomtus /r sm3 t3.wy/ *Ra Sema Tawy*, the personification of the sun, especially the new, rising sun. This last form was preferred in Dendera, he is often shown as snake. The crypts are full of inscriptions explaining the objects with all details necessary to understand everything about these objects. What their purpose was, from which materials they were made, their size, how they were used, and how the procession was done. Neither the festivals of the temple nor the names of the statues have anything to do with lamps or electricity. So we have to look at what the Egyptians themselves wrote about these images.

## The Details



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It should be noted that the so-called “light bulb” image is found in several places on the walls in the crypts of the temple. Many people are under the impression that the “light bulb” is one. The crypt being discussed labeled SC in the above temple floor plan contains five reliefs that correspond to the five festivals spoken of in the corresponding cult room. Of these five reliefs, two of them have images of the so-called light bulb. The two pictures above are snap shots of a majority of south wall in crypt SC. We can see the double so-called “light bulbs” in the far left. As we can also see, there are many inscriptions that accompany the images. These inscriptions are ignored by those who use the “Look-Like” method. Let’s take a look at some of the details.



In this picture we can see Har Sema Tawy (Harsomtus) in the form of a falcon as well as the form of a serpent emerging from the lotus. We also see the solar barque with the bow of the boat made of a lotus flower. The inscription in the right of the three columns just above the serpent along with the inscription beside the serpent marked as (1) and (2) reads:



(<https://seshmedewnetcher.com>)

Transliteration: *dd mdw jn hr sm3 t3wy ntr 3 hr jb jwnt nbw šsp 4 bj3 m<sup>c</sup>ndt*

Translation: *Words spoken by Har, Uniter of the Two Lands, the great god who resides in central Dendera. Gold, height: 4 hands.*

Day Solar Barque made of gold, the lotus flower of gold

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The inscriptions in the remaining two columns left of that and directly above the falcon (3) thru (5) reads:

Transliteration: *dd mdw jn hr ntr 3 hr jb jwnt s3b šwt pt srh nbw mh 1*

Translation: *Words spoken by Har, Uniter of the Two Lands, the great God, who resides in central Dendera, the multicolored-feathered one who is on the Serekh. Gold. Height: 1 cubit.*

The inscriptions in the four columns to the left of the falcon which is above the standing figure (6) thru (10) reads:

Translation: *Words spoken by Ihi, the great, the son of the Het-Heru, Re in its form of the great God, who appears with the diadem as a king of Egypt and as a master of the Sed festival; You reign over Dendera millionfold from eternity to the completion of the Djed, eternity. Gold. Height: 1 cubit.*

There's no implication for the use of electric light bulbs. Everything within the inscriptions are standard ancient Egyptian symbolism embedded in the culture. The inscriptions speak about descriptions of the artifacts stored in the crypt chambers of the temple, what they were made of, what they represent, and for which festival they belong. Now to move toward the left on this south wall to the so-called "double light bulbs."





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This is the picture of the famous so-called “double light bulbs.” Its located at the end of the south wall. There are two sets of inscriptions above each of the “light-bulbs” that are only partially visible in this picture, but seen in full in the first picture at the top of this article. The inscription above the figure on the right reads:

*Words spoken by Har Sema Tawy, the great, who resides in Dendera, the living Ba in the Lotus flower of the day solar barque, whose perfection the two arms of the Djed pillar carry as its image, while the Ka's on its knees are with bent arms. Gold. All precious stones, height: 3 hands.*

And the inscription above the figure on the left reads:





Words spoken by Har Sema Tawy, the great, who resides in Dendera, who is in the arms of the princes in the night solar barque, whose statue is carried by Heh, whose Ka carries his perfection in holyness, because of whose Ba appearing in the sky, whose shape is admired by admirers, who comes as unique, enveloped by his serpents, with numerous names in the Land Of Atum, the father of the Gods, who created everything. Gold, metal, height: 4 hands.

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There are no implications for the use of electric light bulbs. All of the images and figures on the wall are standard ancient Egyptian symbols and iconography verified and corroborated throughout Egypt for millennia.


## The Mandjet and Mesektet: The Sacred Barques



As Egyptians traveled by Nile boat, so too did the gods. When a statue of a god departed from its "Holy of Holies", it was transported in a portable shrine, or naos, which sat on a small boat or barque. Carried on the shoulders of 20-30 priests, the icon was carried in a ceremonial procession to another temple, or around its own city, or even to another city. To travel in the Underworld Ra sails in the night boat

called  /msktt/ *mesektet*: he is in the form of a ram-headed god, "flesh of Ra," and encircled by Mehen (a serpent). His morning boat to sail across the sky in the day is called  /mʿndt/ *mandjet*. The concept of the sun requiring a boat for its celestial journeys goes back to the Old Kingdom where Ra is called "great reed-floater." These solar barques are often depicted with the Lotus Flower at its bow or stern and in actual boats used by Egyptians.

## Lotus

The Blue Egyptian Water Lilly  /sšn/ *Seshen*, commonly referred to as a Lotus Flower has been a sacred symbol of Egypt throughout its history. The flower is very frequently depicted in Egyptian "art." It has been depicted in numerous stone carvings and paintings, including the walls of the famous temple of Karnak. It is



(<https://seshmedewnetcher.com>)



frequently depicted in connection with **Menu** scenes", dancing or in significant spiritual/magical rites such as the rite of passage into the afterlife. The lotus is considered extremely significant in since it was said to rise/open and fall/close with the sun. Consequently, due to its behavior and colorings (blue with golden yellow interior), it was identified, as having been the original container, in a similar manner to an egg, of the solar deities. The opening symbolizes the

dawning of a new day, new year, or new cycle which is appropriately depicted in Het-Heru's temple associated with the New Year's Festivals. The coming forth into day. It is also the symbol of the Egyptian deity Nefertem.

## Heh



The deity of Eternity. The name **𐎃𐎟** /*hh*/ *Heh* means "millions, eternity, infinity, endlessness." He is a member of the eight primordial dieties known as the Ogdoad.

Like the other concepts in the Ogdoad, his male form was often depicted as a frog, or a frog-headed human, and his female form as a snake or snake-headed human. The other common representation depicts him crouching, holding a palm stem in each hand (or just one), sometimes with a palm stem in his hair,

as palm stems represented long life, the years being represented by notches on it. Depictions of this form also had a shen ring at the base of each palm stem, which represented infinity. Depictions of Heh were also used in hieroglyphs to represent one million, which was essentially considered equivalent to infinity in Egyptian mathematics. Thus this deity is also known as the "god of millions of years." As well as being a deity of infinity he was also associated with air and identified with the deity Shu. Like Shu, he is also depicted with his arms raised holding up the sky.

## The Djed Pillar

The **𐎃𐎟** /*dd*/ *Djed* is a pillar symbol that represents the concept of stability, endurance, and steadfastness. It is often associated with Osiris (Ausar), the underworld, and the dead. The djed pillar was an important part of the ceremony called 'raising the djed,' which was a part of the celebrations of Heb Sed, the



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Egyptian pharaoh's jubilee celebrations

act of raising the djed has been explained as

representing Osiris's triumph over Set.

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## Bubble



The appearance of a “bubble” surrounding the serpent represents the protective enclosure of the sky, the environment in which the sun is born. It is associated with the womb or placenta of Nut who swallows the sun each night and gives birth to the sun each morning.

There are numerous scenes depicting Nut with feet and arms bent over as the sun is near her mouth and near her

womb. The “bubble” surrounding the serpent also represents an actual hieroglyph used in the ancient Egyptian language. The mdw-nTr (hieroglyphic) word  */itr.ty/ iterty* “primordial sanctuaries, sacred place, sacred palace” is attested in abundance at Edfu, Karnak, and Dendera. It refers to the primordial birth sanctuary of the sun.

## Conclusion

The “Look-Like” method of discernment is unscientific and unreliable. Context must be considered. The ancient Egyptians did not have a concept of “Art” as we have today. What we call beautiful “decorations” had purpose, intent, and meaning that was wholistic/interconnected with the world view. When viewing an Egyptian temple wall that contains both inscriptions and these beautiful images, we must treat them as a whole. In most, if not all, cases of the far fetched explanations of Egyptian cultural phenomena, those that promote such ideas neglect to give a translation of the inscriptions that accompany the images. For instance, take the picture above of the “bubble.” With the “Look-Like” method, people can easily say that these objects are proof that there were an ancient race of Reptilians who used Hot Air Balloons for transportation. This couldn't be further from the truth however, something like that would indeed receive much attention and acceptance. One of



the reasons for such an acceptance is the psychological phenomena **pareidolia** which is based on the brain's natural inclination to seek and recognize familiar patterns – a natural face recognition program in the brain. This principle is the basis for the object face recognition software applications. People today are very familiar with the light bulb and how it looks and when looking at unknown objects the brain will try to identify with something familiar. The same principle is at work when faces are seen in the clouds. This is why context is so important.

(https://thehistoryoftheobject.com/)

Corroboration is also important especially in a society such as ancient Egypt where there was an overall wholistic and well interconnectedness throughout the land. The inscriptions accompanying the images provide the necessary context for proper interpretation of the images. They describe the images as representations of statues used for the various festivals associated with the Temple stored in the "crypts." They describe the materials and the dimensions of the statues. These festivals were well known and commonly observed by the ancient Egyptians throughout the land for millennia. The symbols are directly related to the cosmogony and cosmology of the people.

### **Resources:**

<sup>1</sup> Wikipedia Dendera Temple Complex

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dendera\_Temple\_complex#Description)

<sup>2</sup> Electric Lights in Egypt? (http://doernenburg.alien.de/alternativ/dendera/dend00.php) by Frank Dörnenburg also author of Pyramid Mysteries (http://doernenburg.alien.de/RDV/RDV03.php)

The Archetypal Symbolism of Animals By Barbara Hannah, 2006

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Reinhard Habeck (http://atlantisforschung.de/index.php?title=Reinhard\_Habeck)

Das Licht der Pharaonen. Hochtechnologie und elektrischer Strom im alten Ägypten (Light of the Pharaohs. High Technology and Electricity in Ancient Egypt) (http://atlantisforschung.de/index.php?title=Reinhard\_Habeck,\_Peter\_Krassa\_und\_das\_'Licht\_der\_Pharaonen')

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