

EDWARD F. WENTE

The newly published *Anchor Bible Dictionary* contains several articles written by **Edward Wente**, including the entries "Egyptian Religion," "Rameses (Place)," and "Ramesses II." A joint article with Dr. James E. Harris, "Royal Mummies of the Eighteenth Dynasty: A Biologic and Egyptological Approach," appeared in the volume *After Tut 'ankhamun: Research and Excavation in the Royal Necropolis at Thebes*, edited by C. N. Reeves.

Mr. Wente continues his work on the royal stelae of the Ramesside Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties. In this study, which will provide translations of the hieroglyphic texts, the issue of literacy in hieroglyphic writing will be addressed, for royal stelae were frequently proclamations in stone placed in areas to which the public had access. From the many contemporary documents written by scribes in the cursive hieratic script we possess considerable knowledge about the colloquial language of the period known as Late Egyptian, and the question arises to what extent people who were literate in the hieratic script could read stelae written in the formal hieroglyphic writing. In evaluating the communicative aspect of hieroglyphic stelae, Mr. Wente is examining the documents to determine the extent to which the vernacular language intruded into the composition of the texts. We are quite certain that student scribes learned hieratic Late Egyptian before proceeding to master the hieroglyphic "picture" writing (just the opposite of what we do in teaching students of Egyptology). Because many of these royal stelae were written in a phase of the language quite removed from colloquial Late Egyptian, a significant percentage of the official class may have been literate in both hieratic and hieroglyphs. It seems reasonable to suppose that those who were most successful in ascending the ladder of the bureaucratic hierarchy were individuals who possessed competency in both forms of script, each of which demanded special language ability to be understood.

Of special interest to Mr. Wente is the use of circumstantial clauses in direct speech and in captions accompanying scenes. He has been collecting data on this subject for some time and plans to present his conclusions in a future article. He is also preparing a short article on a hieratic ostrakon, inscribed with a communication that can be variously interpreted.
