

Gaëlle Chantrain & Jean Winand (eds.)

Time and Space in Ancient Egypt

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edited by

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Temps et espace en Égypte ancienne : une introduction

Gaëlle Chantrain & Jean Winand¹

En dépit de certaines critiques qui lui sont parfois adressées, l'hypothèse selon laquelle les relations temporelles sont des dérivées des relations spatiales nous paraît suffisamment étayée pour rendre compte des multiples interactions observables dans la culture de l'Égypte ancienne, considérée ici dans un sens très large. Les orientations cognitives et fonctionnelles de la linguistique, relayées par des expérimentations en psychologie et des observations sur le développement des jeunes enfants, ont mis en évidence l'importance de la découverte de certaines propriétés du corps dans la perception de l'espace (notion d'avant-arrière, haut-bas, gauche-droite, notion de mouvement), ainsi que de la prise en compte d'expériences simples appartenant à ce qu'on pourrait appeler la physique naïve, comme la relation contenant-contenu (principe d'inclusion), ou la relation de causalité (avant-après).

Dans ce chapitre introductif, nous nous sommes volontairement limités à certaines manifestations de cette complémentarité dans les moyens de dire le temps et l'espace. Dans un premier temps, nous nous sommes plus précisément attachés au langage, qui est au cœur de ce laboratoire où se forment les relations entre temps et espace (§ 1). Nous porterons sur le langage un triple regard : le lexique, certaines manifestations de la phraséologie et le système grammatical. Dans ces trois domaines, en partie liés, des moyens utilisés par l'égyptien ancien pour exprimer des relations spatiales ont été mobilisés, parfois tels quels, parfois de manière un peu détournée, pour être mis au service de l'expression du temps.

Dans une deuxième section (§ 2), nous abordons les conceptions générales que les Égyptiens avaient sur le temps, en utilisant une échelle qui varie du temps macroscopique, celui de l'univers, celui qui fut inauguré lors de la Première Fois (*zp tpj*) et qui boucle à l'infini (*r nhḥ hn^c d.t*), jusqu'au temps microscopique, celui de l'individu dans ses activités journalières, où la durée et la position relative des événements les uns par rapport aux autres, notamment dans les contrats et les actes administratifs, revêtent une importance capitale.

Enfin – mais de manière plus limitée –, nous avons tenu à élargir la réflexion à d'autres domaines de la civilisation égyptienne (§ 3). Notre but est ici de considérer certaines formes de représentation du monde, par exemple par le dessin ou par le récit, à la lumière des principes généraux qu'on peut mettre en évidence dans l'organisation du langage ou dans les conceptions générales du temps afin de déterminer dans quelle mesure ces pans de

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l'activité humaine sont conceptuellement solidaires (et, dans l'affirmative, avec quel degré de liberté), ou si, au contraire, il faut prendre acte du caractère hétérogène, non solidaire, de la civilisation égyptienne. Comme nous le verrons, il n'y a pas de réponse unique à cette question; en fonction des domaines culturels et des époques, des phénomènes de continuité ou de rupture se laissent deviner.

1 Espace et temps linguistiques

Dans cette section, nous traitons d'abord du lexique en rapport avec l'espace et le temps (§ 1.1), avant d'ouvrir l'horizon aux expressions temporelles bâties sur des métaphores spatiales (§ 1.2), et nous terminons par quelques considérations sur le temps grammatical (§ 1.3).

1.1 Le lexique

Le lexique à l'intersection de l'espace et du temps mériterait une enquête approfondie, qui excéderait de beaucoup les limites de cette présentation. Nous sommes volontairement restreints à deux catégories : d'abord les prépositions – et accessoirement les adverbes qui en sont dérivés – (§ 1.1.1), ensuite des lexèmes spécialisés dans l'expression du temps non borné² et se trouvant à l'intersection avec le domaine de l'espace (§ 1.1.2).

1.1.1 Les prépositions

L'égyptien ancien possède quelques prépositions susceptibles d'exprimer à la fois la localisation spatiale et temporelle. Les plus connues sont sans doute *m*, *r* et *hr*, qui forment un groupe particulier dans la mesure où elles ont aussi été intégrées dans la formation de certains temps grammaticaux (voir *infra*, § 1.3).

La préposition *m* exprime la relation fondamentale d'inclusion : *A m B* signifie « A est dans B ». Cette relation fondamentale peut rendre une localisation spatiale (*m pr:f* « chez lui »), une localisation temporelle (*m p3 hrw* « aujourd'hui »), mais aussi une situation sociale (*jw:f m sš* « il est scribe ») ou psychologique (*m knd* « en colère »).

La préposition *r* exprime la relation entre deux entités, induisant généralement une vectorialité : *A r B* signifie « A est relation avec B », de là « A est en situation d'aller vers B ». La préposition *r* apparaît ainsi comme le pendant dynamique de *m* (voir le contraste entre *jw:f m sš* « il est scribe » et *jw:f r sš* « il sera scribe »). Dans les relations spatiales, la préposition est généralement associée à des verbes de mouvement pour exprimer la direction. Dans l'expression du temps, en dehors des expressions phraséologiques fondées sur le mouvement (cf. *infra*, 1.2), la préposition *r* se rencontre dans quelques locutions (par exemple, *x hrw.w/3bd.w/rnp.wt r p3y/t3y* « x jours/mois/années jusqu'ici ») et elle entre dans la composition de plusieurs prépositions composées, comme premier ou second élément (*r-š3^c-m* « depuis », *r-š3^c-r* « jusqu'à », *nfrj.t-r* « jusqu'à »). On la trouve aussi

2 Ce concept rassemble des unités de temps n'ayant pas de durée intrinsèquement définie.

devant certaines formes verbales pour exprimer la limite droite d'un intervalle temporel (*r sdm.t.f* « jusqu'à ce qu'il ait entendu »).

Quant à la préposition *hr*, elle exprime fondamentalement une localisation verticale, « sur, au-dessus » ; avec les verbes de mouvement, elle est souvent associée à la notion de passage (*jw.f hr hd m-s3 jb.f hr h3s.t* « et il alla vers le nord suivant son désir à travers le désert », *Prédestiné* 5,2). Dans la sphère temporelle, on la trouve pour indiquer le moment où une situation s'actualise (*hr h3.w mtr.t* « au moment de midi », pBM 10053-II, v° 2,6-7), parfois en combinaison avec *m*, pour préciser un moment dans un espace plus vaste (*m hrw pn hr tr n rwh3* « en ce jour, au crépuscule », pCGC 52002, r° 7). La préposition *hr* peut encore exprimer le délai dans lequel une activité doit prendre place dans le futur (*hr 6 rnp.t* « dans un laps de 6 ans », pAnastasi V, 13,7).

Certaines prépositions expriment très clairement à l'origine une notion spatiale. C'est par exemple le cas de la préposition *dr*, dérivée de *drw* « limite » (que l'on retrouve dans l'expression *r-dr.f* « en totalité »), qui connaît des emplois comme préposition pour exprimer la limite gauche (« depuis » : *dr h3w hpr hr-h3.t* « depuis l'époque advenue précédemment », *Urk.* IV, 1448,8 ; *dr hsb.t x* « depuis l'an de règne x », *dr hr-h3.t* « depuis toujours ») et comme conjonction de subordination³.

Tout ceci est bien connu et ne demande pas de longs développements. On nous permettra cependant d'insister sur deux points qui n'ont guère suscité jusqu'ici l'attention.

1) Tout d'abord, les prépositions spatiales qui expriment une relation horizontale orientée en fonction de la frontalité (avant-arrière) sont largement préférées pour exprimer des relations temporelles. Les prépositions spatiales exprimant une relation verticale sont nettement moins fréquentes dans des acceptions temporelles. En dehors de *hr*, dont les emplois ont été rappelés ci-dessus, il faut mentionner *hr*, que l'on retrouve dans l'expression *hr hm n nj-swt bjtj* « sous la Majesté (lit. de la Personne) du roi de Haute et de Basse Égypte » figurant dans les datations officielles.

Les prépositions spatiales exprimant la latéralité (sur le côté de, à la gauche/droite de, etc.) ne semblent pas susceptibles d'acceptions relevant de la dimension temporelle. D'un point de vue typologique, l'égyptien ne se comporte pas de manière très différente de beaucoup de langues, même si on relève parfois quelques expressions marginales (par exemple, en français, « parallèlement à ces événements », pour indiquer une concomitance)⁴.

Les adverbes de temps sont fréquemment tirés de prépositions (*r-h3.t*, *hr-h3.t*, *hr-s3*, etc.). D'autres ont une origine différente, qui révèle parfois leur lien avec la spatialité. Un bon exemple à cet égard est fourni par l'adverbe *n* « de nouveau » (Winand 2008), formé sur le verbe *nn* « faire demi-tour », dont le classificateur (Λ) implique l'idée générale de mouvement.

2) La polyvalence de nombreuses prépositions ne doit pas être généralisée à l'ensemble de la classe. C'est ainsi que certaines prépositions de lieu ne sont pas attestées – si ce n'est

3 En néo-égyptien, la forme est plus fréquemment *m-dr* (e.g., pLeyde I 369, v° 3-4).

4 En égyptien, c'est sans doute la préposition *hft* « conformément, selon que » qui correspond le mieux à cet usage ; la relation est toutefois frontale, et non latérale (cf. la variante néo-égyptienne *hft-hr*).

exceptionnellement – dans le domaine du temps. C’est notamment le cas de *m-hnw* « à l’intérieur de »⁵, *n-hr* « devant », *r-ḥ3* « en face de », *r-ḥ3.t* « devant », *r-gs* « à côté de », *ḥ3* « derrière », *hr-jb* « au cœur de », *hr-tp* « au-dessus de », *hr-d3d3* « au-dessus de », *hr* « sous ». Pour certaines, l’explication réside sans doute dans le fait qu’elles constituent des expressions nouvelles, qui sont venues s’ajouter à des prépositions simples, lesquelles connaissaient déjà des emplois dans le domaine temporel; c’est le cas de *m-hnw* et de *hr-jb*, qui viennent en quelque sorte « doubler » la préposition *m*. Un constat similaire peut être fait pour *hr-tp*, *hr-d3d3*, qui tendent à se substituer à la préposition simple *hr* dans l’expression de la spatialité.

D’autres prépositions spatiales se rencontrent rarement avec un sens temporel; c’est le cas de *r-jwd* « entre », qui sert à exprimer un intervalle de temps séparant une activité du moment de référence (donc entre *x* et *t°*), avec parfois un effet de sens itératif :

ex. 1 : *j.jr.j ḥ3b n.k jw 20 n hrw r-jwd.f*
« je t’ai écrit il y a 20 jours » (pDeM 8, 9)

ex. 2 : *dj.f mn n.j wḥ mdḳ.t r-jwd hrw 5*
« il a fait établir pour moi une cruche tous les cinq jours » (pBM 10326, 11)⁶

Certaines prépositions spatiales, exclues de l’expression du temps, se retrouvent néanmoins sous d’autres formes, soit comme adverbe, soit comme adjectif nisbé, dans la sphère temporelle. Par exemple, *m-b3ḥ*, qui n’est attesté qu’avec un sens spatial, retrouve un sens temporel dans le nisbé *jmj.w-b3ḥ* « les prédécesseurs, les ancêtres », et comme adverbe :

ex. 3 : *wn.k ḥḥ.tw m-b3ḥ n3 sr.w m t3 ḥ3.t*
« tu étais précédemment en présence des magistrats » (pMayer A, 8, 3-4)

Inversement – encore que ce soit plus rare – certaines prépositions à valeur temporelle ne semblent pas pouvoir fonctionner avec une valeur spatiale. C’est notamment le cas de *dr* « depuis ». D’autres se sont progressivement spécialisées dans l’expression du temps, comme *m-ḥt*, dont le sens locatif, bien présent en égyptien de la première phase, s’est totalement estompé en néo-égyptien. Enfin, on assiste parfois à des spécialisations dans la répartition des rôles. C’est ainsi que, toujours en néo-égyptien, *m-s3* n’exprime qu’une relation spatiale, « après »⁷, tandis que *hr-s3* prend en charge l’expression de la postériorité temporelle (également comme adverbe « ensuite »)⁸.

5 Voir toutefois pChester Beatty IV, v° 6, 7 (*jw z nb {hr} jr.f ḥḥ.w.f m-hnw wnw.t* « chaque homme passe son temps de vie en l’espace d’une heure »).

6 L’expression *r-jwd 5 hrw* s’oppose à *m-mn.t* « chaque jour », qui complète la liste de ce que reçoit l’auteur de la lettre et qui confirme le sens distributionnel, itératif de la première expression.

7 Une exception toutefois dans la *Sagesse d’Ani* (pBoulaq 4, 22, 9 : *m-s3 wnw.t.f nḥ3.t* « après son heure calamiteuse »).

8 En revanche, il y a quelques exemples de *hr-s3* avec un sens spatial dans les textes en égyptien classique de la 18^e dynastie (e.g. *Urk.* IV, 1232,8).

1.1.2 Les mots du temps (et de l'espace)

Dans cette section sont présentés une série de lexèmes se trouvant à l'intersection entre temps et espace. Ils sont abordés à travers deux notions: celle de limite (dans le temps et l'espace) et celle d'espace et de temps personnels.

1.1.2.1 La notion de limite dans l'espace et le temps: *tš*, *dr:w* et *hnty*

La notion de limite, de frontière, peut être exprimée de plusieurs façons en égyptien. On ne s'étendra ici pas trop dans le détail, étant donné que ce thème est repris ailleurs dans ce volume⁹. Toutefois, cet article se voulant une introduction générale, il convient d'au moins les présenter.

Le premier terme est *tš*. Celui-ci a fait l'objet d'une étude détaillée par Galán¹⁰, qui en a conclu que la notion de frontière-*tš* s'applique essentiellement aux territoires sous influence égyptienne, que ce soit au sein du pays lui-même ou dans sa zone de contrôle. Une frontière-*tš* peut être transgressée, et elle peut s'appliquer à des entités délimitées de taille et d'importance différentes (une ville, un nôme, le pays). Le terme *tš* désigne une limite spatiale. Il ne semble pas pouvoir être employé dans le domaine temporel.

Les frontières-*dr:w* désignent une limite généralement extérieure à la zone d'influence égyptienne. C'est une limite qui peut être repoussée, lorsqu'on élargit cette zone d'influence, mais pas franchie. Par ailleurs, *dr:w* désigne la frontière en elle-même, mais aussi le territoire qu'elle délimite.

Le terme *dr:w* peut également s'appliquer au domaine temporel, le plus souvent dans un contexte cosmique. Dans ce cas, il ne désigne que la limite d'une étendue temporelle, et non l'étendue elle-même. *dr:w* peut alors être utilisé en parasymétrie avec le terme *hnty*, dont il constitue, dans certains contextes, un quasi-synonyme. C'est sur ce dernier lexème qu'on s'étendra davantage ici¹¹.

Originellement écrit *hn.t* ¹² ou *hnty*  ; ¹³, *hnty* est réinterprété et écrit comme un duel¹⁴, à partir de la 18^e dynastie avec un redoublement du même répétiteur phonétique () ou/et du même classificateur ().

Le lexème *hnty* est susceptible de prendre un sens spatial ou un sens temporel. C'est le sens spatial qui est attesté en premier, dès l'Ancien Empire. Ainsi, dans les *Textes des Pyramides*, *hnty* exprime l'idée d'une étendue linéaire, d'un parcours¹⁵.

9 Cf. Langer (ce volume).

10 Galán (1995 & 2000).

11 Pour une analyse détaillée de *hnty*, cf. Chantrain (à paraître).

12 Autobiographie d'Herkhouf, 6 = *Urk.* I, 125, 4.

13 Pépi I, *PT* 697, §2173 b-c et Pépi II, *PT* 697, §2173 b-c.

14 Si on retient l'option d'un duel apparent, cf. Malaise & Winand (1999 : §73).

15 Ce passage fait référence à la course immuable des étoiles dans le ciel.

ex. 4 : *wḏ ppy nfr-k3-r^c mdw n jhm.w-sk hn.t(w) ppy nfr-k3-r^c m hnty* 
 « et Pépi Néferkarê donnera des ordres aux impérissables, de sorte que Pépi Néferkarê soit emmené (en bateau) sur le parcours (du ciel) » (Pépi II, *PT* 697, §2173 b-c)¹⁶

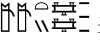
À la même époque, *hnty* peut aussi exceptionnellement désigner une période dont la durée est quantifiée¹⁷. Dans les deux cas, il s'agit donc une entité délimitée, dans l'espace ou dans le temps.

ex. 5 : *h3.n(j) m jrṯ m^chr trrs jrṯ m hn.t(y)*  *3bd.w 8*
 « Dans une période de 8 mois, je suis revenu par *jrṯ*, à savoir *m^chr*, *trrs* et *jrṯty* »
 (Autobiographie d'Herkhouf, 6 = *Urk*. I, 125, 4)

Au Moyen Empire, la signification de *hnty* s'étend à la notion de limite, aussi bien dans le domaine spatial que temporel. On peut alors le trouver en symétrie avec *drw* :

ex. 6 : *dj.sn n.k nhḥ nn drw.f d.t nn hnty.s* 
 « puissent-ils te donner le temps-*nhḥ* sans fin, l'éternité-*d.t* sans limite » (*Sinouhé* (B), pBerlin P 3022, 212)

Au Nouvel Empire, *hnty* se maintient principalement en égyptien de tradition. Le sens spatial semble disparaître après la 18^e dynastie. Le sens temporel demeure quant à lui et connaît un développement puisque sa signification s'étend de la limite d'une période à la période elle-même, qui est généralement conçue comme longue. Il est intéressant de constater que c'est toutefois le classificateur spatial  et non le classificateur temporel  qui demeure majoritaire.

ex. 7 : *km.n.k hnty*  *3w*
 « tu as achevé une longue période » (pBerlin P 3049, col. 15, 2)

Le concept de *hnty*, spatial puis temporel, implique donc au moins trois composantes : linéarité, finitude et complétude. Le point de contact entre les sens spatiaux et temporels se situe à la fois dans la notion de parcours, d'étendue délimitée (qu'elle soit spatiale ou temporelle) et de limite elle-même. Le concept spatio-temporel de *hnty* met bien en exergue le fait que la finitude du temps va de pair avec la finitude du monde physique.

1.1.2.2 L'expression du temps et de l'espace personnels : *h3w* et *rk*

On vient d'aborder le cas du lexème *hnty*, dont on a vu qu'il se trouvait à l'intersection des domaines du temps et de l'espace. Il n'est pas le seul dans ce cas. En effet, les champs sémantiques du temps et de l'espace étant contigus, certains recouvrements existent. Ceci induit des cas de colexicalisation incluant des significations relevant des deux domaines. On abordera ici les cas de deux autres lexèmes : *h3w* et *rk*.

16 Allen (2005: 299) : « Pepi Neferkare will govern the Imperishable Stars, so that Pepi Neferkare may be rowed in the limit (of the sky) ».

17 Un seul exemple, issu de la tombe de Herkhouf, cf. *supra*.

Les locutions ou expressions temporelles sont souvent basées sur des représentations spatiales, et le mouvement dans le temps (ou le temps en mouvement), exprimé par un mouvement dans l'espace¹⁸. Cette contiguïté se reflète également dans les classificateurs. En effet, comme on l'a vu avec *hnty*, il n'est pas rare de trouver des lexèmes temporels adoptant des classificateurs spatiaux. Ceux-ci servent généralement à appuyer un trait sémantique du lexème dans un ou plusieurs de ses sens (ex : délimitation, linéarité). On en verra des applications ci-après.

Le lexème *h3w* est polysémique¹⁹. Il colexicalise plusieurs significations organisées autour d'une même image, celle d'un cercle, d'une collection d'éléments autour d'un individu. Il est ainsi susceptible d'adopter quatre sens différents, issus de domaines sémantiques distincts :

- un sens temporel : « époque, temps de vie »
- un sens spatial : « voisinage, proximité »
- un sens animé : « famille, entourage »
- un sens matériel/abstrait : « biens, possessions » ou « affaires »

L'usage des classificateurs de *h3w* évolue en fonction de l'époque et du développement de sa polysémie. Dans les textes hiératiques, jusqu'à la 19^e dynastie, *h3w* dans les sens temporel, spatial et matériel est écrit avec le groupe . *h3w* dans le sens « famille, entourage » est quant à lui déjà souvent écrit avec le groupe . La première différence marquée par les classificateurs est donc, assez naturellement, animé vs. inanimé.

Le processus de réorganisation des classificateurs²⁰ débute dans le courant de la 19^e dynastie pour s'achever à la fin de la 20^e dynastie/début de la 21^e dynastie. On a désormais quatre (groupes de) classificateurs, pour quatre significations de *h3w* :

- *h3w*_{temps} « temps, époque » :  ; 
- *h3w*_{espace} « proximité, emplacement » : 
- *h3w*_{animé} « entourage » : 
- *h3w*_{matériel/abstrait} « biens, affaires, dépenses » : 

Au tournant des 21-22^e dynasties, le sens temporel de *h3w* évolue vers une nouvelle signification : « temps de vie ». Cette évolution se reflète dans les classificateurs utilisés : le disque solaire est désormais remplacé par le groupe , alliant un classificateur temporel à un classificateur spatial. Ce dernier est vraisemblablement employé afin d'exprimer visuellement l'implication de linéarité adoptée par *h3w*.

ex. 8 : *bn jw:j (r) dj.t 3h.w jm.f n zp-sn m h3w.f*   *nb <n> n h*
 « je ne permettrai absolument pas qu'ils aient à nouveau du pouvoir magique sur lui pendant tout son temps de vie » (pBM 10587, 97-98)

Comme mentionné précédemment, le dénominateur commun entre les différentes acceptions de *h3w* est l'idée d'un cercle, d'une collection d'éléments dont l'individu est

18 Cf. *infra*, 1.2.

19 Pour une analyse sémantique complète du lexème *h3w*, voir Chantrain (à paraître).

20 Cf. Chantrain (2014).

le centre. Ce cercle regroupe donc tout ce qui gravite autour de cet individu, aussi bien matériellement (au sens large : possessions, entourage) qu'abstraitement : le temps et l'espace dans lesquels vit l'individu considéré. Cet espace-temps peut se trouver dans le passé ou dans le présent, à la différence de *rk*²¹, qui est cantonné au passé dans la grande majorité des cas et désigne une époque révolue (ou dont on espère qu'elle sera révolue).

Le sens temporel de *h3w* semble attesté avant le sens spatial, lequel est essentiellement restreint aux textes royaux.

ex. 9 : *h3wty pr-^c hr prj.w nn h^c m h3w.f* 

« un combattant valeureux sur le champ de bataille, personne ne peut se tenir à sa proximité » (Stèle Boston MFA 23733 = *Urk.* IV, 1229, 18)

Le rapport de *h3w* à l'espace est particulièrement intéressant. En effet, sa polysémie est le résultat d'une représentation mentale basée sur la spatialisation des relations que l'individu entretient avec les différents éléments de sa réalité. Le sens spatial de *h3w* constitue quant à lui une appropriation physique de cet espace virtuel.

Attesté dès l'Ancien Empire, le lexème *rk* se maintient jusqu'en néo-égyptien ; il semble qu'on n'en trouve plus trace en démotique²² ni en copte. Il est en revanche bien présent en égyptien de tradition jusqu'à l'époque gréco-romaine.

Ainsi qu'on l'a déjà évoqué plus haut, *rk*, dans son acception temporelle, signifie « époque » et réfère à un temps révolu, du passé²³. Dans la grande majorité des cas, *rk* se rapporte à une personne de haut rang : un roi du passé, un dieu, ou encore un ancêtre²⁴. Dans de très rares cas, il peut référer à une situation, que l'on souhaite bientôt révolue.

ex. 10 : *dd.tw <n>.k h^{dj} rk n mn*

« puisses-tu être appelé 'celui qui détruit le temps de la souffrance' » (*Mérikarê*, pPetersburg 1116 A, v° 13,1 (E 142))

La polysémie de *rk* est plus réduite que celle de *h3w*, puisque ce lexème ne prend que deux acceptions : une temporelle et une spatiale. Deux critères principaux semblent régir l'emploi de *rk* : les degrés d'idéologie et de littérarité du texte. *rk* apparaît ainsi dans les textes où le niveau d'au moins un de ces deux critères est élevé (textes royaux, religieux, littéraires). Il n'y a donc pas d'attestation de *rk* dans les textes de la pratique (lettres, textes administratifs). Le lexème *rk* employé dans un sens spatial est caractéristique des textes royaux, ce qui, on l'a vu, est également le cas pour *h3w*.

Il exprime la proximité par rapport à un individu (le roi), un groupe d'individus (l'armée) ou un endroit (*ḥ-mri*). À la différence de *h3w*, *rk* semble toujours référer à un élément égyptien (ou sous influence égyptienne). L'idée de cercle entourant l'élément

21 Cf. *rk*, *infra*.

22 Absent du *Demotic Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of Chicago*.

23 À la différence de *h3w*, qui n'est pas marqué en termes de passé-présent-futur, et de *tr*, qui est majoritairement employé pour une période non révolue.

24 Cette situation apparaît de manière évidente lorsqu'on observe les relations génitiales dans lesquelles le lexème *rk* est impliqué.

de référence semble être présente dans le sens spatial de *rk*. En effet, *rk*_{espace} peut dans de nombreux cas se traduire par « autour de ».

ex. 11 : *sbtj n ds m rk t3-mrj*

« un rempart de pierre autour de l'Égypte » (Stèle Abou Simbel 1^{er} mariage hittite, 3 = KRI II, 235, 8)

rk prend le classificateur temporel $\odot$ dans la quasi-totalité des cas, pour les sens temporel aussi bien que spatial. On compte également une attestation du groupe $\odot \text{I} \text{II}^{\text{25}}$. La présence du classificateur II ne semble pas justifiée par un sens particulier de *rk* ; il s'agit de la signification temporelle habituelle (l'époque de X).

1.1.2.3 Lexique temporel et distribution par genres littéraires

La distribution des lexèmes temporels peut donc varier en fonction des genres littéraires. Ainsi, certains lexèmes ne sont attestés que dans les textes avec un haut degré d'idéologie (*rk*, *hnty*). Dans le cas des lexèmes polysémiques, il se peut aussi que certaines significations soient attestées majoritairement, voire exclusivement dans des genres particuliers. C'est notamment le cas de *h3w* pour lequel on peut faire deux observations : le sens spatial de *h3w* est essentiellement attesté dans les textes royaux et son sens matériel/abstrait est attesté majoritairement dans les textes de la pratique. Il est possible qu'une désolidarisation de *h3w* [matériel/abstrait] en un lexème distinct se fasse à un moment donné, sa distribution étant très différente de celle des autres acceptions du terme²⁶. On aurait alors affaire à un stade intermédiaire au Moyen Empire et dans quelques attestations du Nouvel Empire où *h3w* est traduit par « affaires » et où le lien avec les autres acceptions du lexème reste transparent.

ex. 12 : *swd3-jb pw n nb ʕ,w,s r-ntt h3w nb n nb ʕ,w,s ʕd wd3 m s.t.sn nb.t*

« c'est une communication pour le maître, VSF : toutes les affaires du maître
VSF sont saines et en bonne forme, à leurs places » (pUC 32199, 2)

Les dictionnaires différencient au moins *h3w*_{animé} des autres acceptions du lexème. Il est vrai que la différenciation est dans ce cas très tôt faite au niveau des classificateurs sémantiques, et que le clivage animé/non animé apparaît comme plus radical que les autres nuances sémantiques. Du point de vue pratique, le choix peut donc se comprendre, même s'il ne peut être entièrement motivé par l'analyse sémantique de *h3w*²⁷.

En observant la répartition d'un plus large échantillon du lexique temporel et en effectuant des enquêtes (même plus ponctuelles) dans d'autres domaines sémantiques, il apparaît que les textes littéraires fonctionnent comme un « ascenseur » entre les textes de l'idéologie et les textes de la pratique. Ils font le lien entre ces deux pôles et emploient un lexique composite (constitué d'éléments présents dans ces deux pôles) et aussi un certain

25 oGardiner 304, r° 7.

26 *h3w*_[matériel/abstrait] est attesté de très nombreuses fois au Nouvel Empire, dans les textes administratifs, d'où *h3w*_[temps] est absent.

27 Pour une analyse détaillée de *h3w*, voir Chantraine (à paraître).

nombre de traits caractéristiques, qui peuvent d'ailleurs être raffinés selon le genre précis du texte littéraire (fiction, sagesse, ...) et la datation du texte.

Par ailleurs, dans les textes littéraires toujours, aussi bien le temps que l'espace sont employés comme outils pour indiquer la linéarité d'un récit, la structure d'une intrigue et éventuellement son symbolisme²⁸.

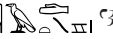
1.1.2.4 Classificateurs spatiaux et « compartimentage » du temps

Les classificateurs spatiaux peuvent être employés de manière régulière ou ponctuelle avec des lexèmes temporels. Ce phénomène est observable dans plusieurs lexèmes relevant du domaine du temps non borné. Les classificateurs spatiaux généralement attestés avec des lexèmes temporels sont $\asymp$ et $\asymp$. L'analyse des attestations des différents termes concernés montre que $\asymp$ véhicule une nuance de délimitation (spatiale et temporelle) et $\asymp$ une nuance de linéarité aussi bien spatiale (un déplacement, par exemple) que temporelle (l'appréhension d'une période dans sa longueur).

C'est notamment le cas du lexème $3.t$, pour lequel on voit apparaître quelques attestations du classificateur $\asymp$ au Nouvel Empire. Cette graphie est une caractéristique des textes hiératiques. Elle est employée seulement lorsque $3.t$ se trouve limité/quantifié par des éléments cotextuels : soit dans l'expression $km\ n\ 3.t$, soit accompagné des adjectifs $\textcircled{3}$ ou $\textcircled{sr}$, ou encore avec le verbe $\textcircled{sr}$ « élever ».

ex. 13 : $wn.jn\ p3\ wr\ n\ n.t-hr-rsy.t\ hr\ sgj\ m\ 3.t\ \textcircled{3}.t$ 
« alors, le prince du Sud fut surpris un long moment » (*Apophis et Seqenenrê*, 2, 6 = pSallier 1 (pBM EA 10185), r° 1-3)

ex. 14 : $hr-jr\ m-hr\ \{hr\ n\} \ 3.t$  $\textcircled{sr}.t$
« Après un bref instant » (*Deux frères*, pOrbiney, 18, 2 = LES, 28, 3)

ex. 15 : $hr-jr\ hr-s3\ 3.t$  $\textcircled{3}.t\ wn.jn\ h.t-hr\ nb(.t)\ nh3\ rsy\ hr\ jy$
 $jw.s\ hr\ \textcircled{h}^c\ m-b3h\ jt.s\ nb-r-dr$
« Après un long moment, Hathor, la maitresse du sycomore du sud vint et elle se tint devant son père, le maître universel » (*Horus et Seth*, pChester Beatty I, 4, 1 = LES 41, 7)

Même observation pour $\textcircled{h}^c w$ et $h3w$, avec lesquels l'emploi du classificateur $\asymp$ vient mettre en exergue le caractère linéaire du temps considéré. Dans le cas de $\textcircled{h}^c w$, il s'agit d'une graphie essentiellement attestée à la PPI, pour les sens « période » ou « temps de vie », pour lesquels l'implication sémantique de linéarité est effectivement présente. Dans le cas de $h3w$, l'emploi de ce classificateur reflète un développement plus récent dans sa polysémie : l'adoption du sens « temps de vie ».

ex. 16 : $bn\ jw.j\ (r)\ dj.t\ 3h.jm.f^c\ n\ zp-sn\ m\ h3w.f$  $\textcircled{h}^c\ nb\ <n>\ \textcircled{h}$
« je ne permettrai absolument pas qu'ils aient à nouveau du pouvoir magique sur lui pendant tout son temps de vie » (pBM 10587, 97-98)

28 Cf. Pehal (ce volume).

Comme mentionné précédemment, le lexème *rk* peut aussi exceptionnellement être écrit avec le classificateur $\mathfrak{x}$. L'idée de délimitation du temps se rapporte alors à l'attestation d'un fait ou d'une situation à l'époque (révélée) d'une personne importante ou d'un dieu.

Par ailleurs, le lexème *3.t* peut aussi adopter le classificateur $\mathfrak{x}$ afin d'exprimer l'idée d'une sélection ou d'un renforcement qualitatif. La même observation peut être faite pour h^{w} . En effet, les deux termes ont en commun de pouvoir faire appel à l'axe vertical pour exprimer un renforcement qualitatif du laps de temps considéré²⁹. On citera par exemple l'expression *tsj 3.t* « élever un moment », c'est-à-dire le rendre de qualité et le faire durer dans les mémoires, ou $\text{h}^{\text{w}} k3$ « une durée de vie élevée », quantitativement mais aussi qualitativement.

ex. 17 : *ts.sn 3.t.sn* $\mathfrak{x}$ $\mathfrak{x}$ *n nh m-ht dm.tw rn.sn*

« Ils (= les grands écrivains) élèvent leur moment de vie quand on prononce leur nom » (pChester Beatty IV, v° 6, 10)

ex. 18 : *r-nty twj hr dd n jmn-r nswt ntr:w*

jmy snb.k

jmy nh.k

jmy jry.k h^w k3 j3w.t 3.t

« Je dis à Amon-Rê, roi des dieux qu'il te maintienne en bonne santé, qu'il te maintienne en vie, qu'il t'accorde une durée de vie élevée et une longue vieillesse » (oMichaelides 79, 4-5 = KRI VI, 254, 8)

1.2 Dire le temps

En dehors des phénomènes de localisation du temps dans un moment, ce qui se fait notamment au moyen de prépositions en grande partie liées à l'expression de la spatialité (cf. § 1.1.1), on peut aussi s'intéresser au phénomène de la perception du temps évalué en fonction d'un point de repère, et plus spécialement au temps perçu comme mouvement³⁰.

D'un double point de vue anthropologique et typologique, de nombreuses cultures perçoivent le temps comme doublement orienté. Selon cette perception, les événements ou le point de repère – généralement le locuteur – peuvent être tour à tour conçus comme fixes ou en mouvement. Dans le premier cas, on parle, pour reprendre l'expression anglaise, de MOVING TIME (« Pâques approche »), dans le second cas, de MOVING EGO (« Nous approchons de Pâques »). Alors que les événements progressent du futur vers le passé, et sont donc orientés vers le passé, le locuteur peut, suivant les cas, être orienté vers le futur ou vers le passé. C'est ce que nous allons illustrer par quelques exemples. Nous distinguerons ici deux situations de base : la localisation d'un événement par rapport à un repère 1) dans une situation statique, 2) dans une situation dynamique.

29 De nombreux transferts métaphoriques sont utilisés dans la langue égyptienne. Celui associant l'idée de hauteur à une qualité positive est récurrent, cf. Lakoff & Johnson (2003).

30 Voir déjà les considérations générales dans Winand (2003).

1.2.1. Le temps statique

La figure ci-dessous schématise les relations possibles, sauf l'inclusion. Dans la première configuration, le point de repère, représenté par l'homme assis est tourné vers le futur.



Fig. 1. Le temps statique (orientation vers le futur)

Le futur apparaît donc comme quelque chose qui est devant, en face du locuteur, plus précisément qui fait face au locuteur. L'égyptien peut rendre cette situation en utilisant la préposition *hft-hr*, laquelle est susceptible d'un usage spatial (ex. 4) ou temporel (ex. 5) ; on notera déjà dans le second exemple la présence d'un verbe de mouvement (*jwj*) dans la seconde partie de l'expression :

ex. 19 : *hft-hr d3d3.t ʕ3.t*
« devant le grand conseil » (oBM 572, 7)

ex. 20 : *jw.j r dd ntj hft-hr.j, n sr:n.j ntt n jj*
« je dirai ce qui est devant moi, je ne peux annoncer ce qui n'est pas venu »
(Néfertî, 27)

ex. 21 : *hr-nb hr-ht.f nty m h.t*
« les êtres qui seront après lui et qui sont encore dans le giron » (statue Bologne KS 1813, trad. Marc Gabolde, *BIFAO*, 94, p. 266)

À en juger par le nombre des attestations, orienter le locuteur vers le futur ne semble pas la configuration privilégiée. En effet, la documentation indique à la fois une fréquence, mais aussi une diversification plus grande des moyens d'expression quand la situation est inversée, c'est-à-dire quand le locuteur est orienté vers le passé :



Fig. 2. Le temps statique (orientation vers le passé)

Les prépositions exprimant la frontalité pointent vers des événements du passé, tandis que celles qui expriment l'arrière renvoient aux événements à venir. On retrouve ainsi des paires sémantiques bien connues exprimant une localisation spatiale, comme *h3.t – phwj* (Polis & Winand 2015) :

ex. 22 : *mk jr:n.j hr-ḥ3.t tz.j n.k phwj*

« voilà, j'ai accompli le passé, je vais maintenant nouer pour toi le futur » (*Ens. d'Amenemhat III*, 9)³¹

ex. 23 : *nfr jr:t n m-ht*

« il est bon d'agir pour le futur » (*Mérikarê*, 39)³²

ex. 24 : *jb.j jwt zp hpr mjt.t dr-b3h*

« je pensais que jamais chose pareille ne s'était produite auparavant » (*Urk.* I, 138,16-17)³³

ex. 25 : *nn hpr ntr nb hr-ḥ3.t.f*

« aucun dieu n'est advenu avant lui » (*HO*, pl. 106)

L'exemple suivant, où l'on retrouve le verbe *sr* « annoncer », fait écho au passage de *Néfert* cité plus haut (ex. 20) :

ex. 26 : *ḥf.n dp.t tfjj.tj mj sr:t.n.f hntw*

« et alors ce bateau vint conformément à ce qu'il avait annoncé précédemment » (*Naufagé*, 155)³⁴

1.2.2 Le temps dynamique

Plusieurs textes laissent penser que le temps, notion pour laquelle l'égyptien n'a pas de terme générique, pouvait être conçu comme un flux en mouvement, comme quelque chose qui passe³⁵. Les verbes qui sont le plus souvent associés à cette idée sont *sw3*, *sbj* et *snj* :

ex. 27 : *hr m-ht hrw.w sw3 hr nn*

« et après que des jours eurent passé là-dessus » (*Qadech*, Poème, § 34)³⁶

ex. 28 : *dw3w jw, p3 hrw m snj.t*

« demain est venu ; aujourd'hui est en train de passer » (*Aménémopé* VII,1)³⁷

L'égyptien illustre le paradigme du MOVING TIME, c'est-à-dire d'un scénario où les événements sont conçus comme allant vers l'observateur, qui demeure fixe et fait face à l'événement de manière frontale (fig. 3).

31 Quelquefois *phwj* s'oppose à *tp*, notamment dans l'expression *tpj-ḥ* « les ancêtres », ce qui tend à montrer que *tp* ne doit pas être pris comme une métaphore verticale (e.g. *Khakheperréséneb* I,2-3 : *nn tz n sb.t r {hrw} dd.t.n tpj.w-ḥ*). Sur *tpj.w-ḥ* en liaison avec *sr* « annoncer », voir *Ipouer*, I, 10.

32 Sur l'opposition *m-ht* vs. *m-ḥ3.t*, voir *Khakheperréséneb* I,4 (*nn ḥbw md.t imy-ḥ3.t, gm is imy.w-ht*).

33 Cité par Vernus (1995: 56, n. 108) ; voir encore *Mérikarê*, 67, pBerlin 3029, I,5.

34 Voir encore *Ptahhotep* 179 : *hr rh.t.n.k jm.f hntw* « en fonction de ce que tu as appris sur lui précédemment ».

35 On peut utilement rappeler ici la formule du *Désabusé* 20-21 (*phr:t pw ḥnh* « la vie est un passage »).

36 Voir 3.t *hrw nb hr.k, zb.s htp.k* (Suti et Hor, 7).

37 On peut conserver la lecture du pBM 10474 (*m* + inf., voir Vernus, 1995 : 30), ou considérer, avec Quack (1994 : 203, note a), qu'il s'agit d'une forme de qualitatif (*m-snj*), ce que pourrait appuyer la leçon de la tablette de Moscou.



Fig. 3. Le temps dynamique.

Le verbe généralement utilisé est *jw* « venir », qui implique un mouvement centripète vers le centre déictique, c'est-à-dire par défaut le locuteur dans l'instance du discours (Winand 1991). Un événement qui doit arriver, parfois avec une implication négative, peut simplement être désigné par le participe *jj.t*³⁸ :

ex. 29 : *jj.t jh jw mjn3 hms.kwj*
 « je vais rester ainsi jusqu'à ce qu'arrive quoi ? » (*Prédestiné* 4,12)

Les événements se suivent à la queue-leu-leu sur la ligne du temps ; un événement postérieur vient donc après (*hr-s3*) :

ex. 30 : *sh3 n.f hrw jj hr-s3*
 « rappelle-lui le jour qui vient après » (*Ptahhotep* 260)³⁹

On notera ici l'absence de verbes exprimant l'origine (orientation centrifuge), que ce soit selon l'axe du MOVING TIME ou du MOVING EGO. Il ne semble pas y avoir en égyptien des expressions correspondant à « Pâques s'éloigne, s'en va, s'estompe, etc. » (MOVING TIME) ou bien « Nous quittons Pâques, nous laissons Pâques derrière nous, etc. » (MOVING EGO). On relèvera plus particulièrement l'absence du verbe *šm* « s'en aller » dans ce type d'expressions phraséologiques. En néo-égyptien, il faut signaler l'emploi de *sw3*, mais dans des tournures narratives figées, pour exprimer le passage des jours conduisant à un nouvel épisode du récit (cf. *supra*, ex. 12).

Plus rarement, des fractions de temps sont représentées comme des éléments rentrant dans une classe plus grande, comme les heures qui font partie de la journée :

ex. 31 : *jw.fhr* *ph*
jw 8 wnw.t ʕk m p3 hrw
 « il est arrivé alors que huit heures étaient déjà entrées dans la journée » (oČerný 17, r° 7)⁴⁰

Les heures peuvent aussi être vues comme des unités animées d'un mouvement cyclique à l'intérieur d'un cadre plus général :

38 Cf. en français des expressions comme « s'il (m') arrive quelque chose ». De manière neutre, voir p.ex. *n-p3 zp.f tm jw* « son moment n'a jamais manqué d'arriver » (*Ptahhotep* 479), *hmt jj.t* (stèle BM 581,9), et l'ex. de *Néfert* cité plus haut (ex. 20). Voir encore *n jw jj.t h3.j dr ms.(w)t=j* « aucun malheur ne m'a surpris depuis que je suis né » (*Amenemhat* 2,9), qui combine *jj.t* et le verbe *jw*. La présence de *h3* « derrière » dans ce dernier exemple n'est pas l'indice d'une vectorialité inversée ; l'égyptien combine ici deux métaphores : à celle du temps vient se superposer celle de l'attaque par surprise, qui vient nécessairement « par derrière ».

39 Les successeurs sont appelés *jj.w hr-s3* (*Mérikaré* 18) ; voir encore *Khakhéperréseneb* (I,8).

40 Sur cet exemple, voir Winand (à paraître, ex. 36).

ex. 32 : *jw wnw.t 4 phr m grh*

« quatre heures avaient déjà circulé dans la nuit » (*Conte de Neferkarê et Siséné*, 3, x+ 11)

Enfin, l'égyptien ne semble pas mobiliser des verbes exprimant des modalités particulières du mouvement comme on trouve, par exemple, en français (« les vacances approchent à grands pas, la crise va nous tomber dessus, etc.).

1.3 Le temps grammatical

Le temps grammatical (*grammatical tenses*) s'occupe essentiellement, en dehors de la modalité, des relations temporelles (*time*) et aspectuelles. Les langues varient – parfois fortement – dans la manière d'exprimer ces relations, dans les choix qu'elles opèrent aussi entre ces deux catégories⁴¹. Le système grammatical du français contemporain est largement fondé sur des oppositions temporelles ; les oppositions aspectuelles sont limitées au passé (imparfait vs. passé simple vs. temps du parfait), à quoi il faut ajouter la tournure « être en train de » (progressif), qui reste en dehors du système grammatical du français contrairement à la tournure anglaise (*be* + *V-ing*), qui y est complètement intégrée.

Il n'est pas rare que le système de référence temporel d'une langue ait varié dans le temps. C'est ce qu'on constate en égyptien ancien, qui est passé d'un système où les oppositions aspectuelles étaient dominantes – c'est la situation de l'égyptien classique – à un système où les oppositions de temps prennent plus d'importance.

Les deux systèmes, aspectuel et temporel, ont en commun de pouvoir s'analyser dans les termes qui définissent les relations spatiales. L'aspect grammatical peut être envisagé comme un intervalle opérant une sélection sur un procès, lequel se laisse décrire en termes topologiques (Desclés 1989). Un procès prototypique⁴² – ayant une certaine durée [+ DUR], supposant une activité dynamique [+ DYN] débouchant sur un résultat marquant un changement, ce qu'on appelle la télélicité [+ TÉL], peut se représenter graphiquement de la manière suivante (fig. 4)⁴³ :



Fig. 4. Représentation graphique d'un procès (accomplissement).

Le nombre de sélections opérée par l'aspect est nécessairement limité. La figure suivante (fig. 5) illustre le cas du progressif : l'intervalle isolé par l'aspect (marqué symboliquement par []) sélectionne un espace situé à l'intérieur du procès à l'exclusion des bornes de celui-ci :

41 Voir Winand (2006 : 31-34, 173-193). Pour une présentation succincte en anglais, voir Winand (2015).

42 Ce qu'on appelle un accomplissement dans la terminologie traditionnelle héritée de Vendler (Winand 2006 : ch. 2).

43 Dans ce graphique, les deux crochets < > signalent les limites du procès stricto sensu, le signe ~ représente conventionnellement une activité dynamique (par opposition à – qui marque un état statif), et le signe + indique la télélicité. Sur le symbolisme utilisé et sur l'actionnalité des procès en égyptien ancien, voir Winand (2006 & 2015).

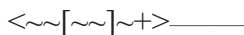


Fig. 5. Sélection du progressif dans un accomplissement.

Dans un second moment, les langues qui possèdent un système mixte, aspecto-temporel, peuvent relier cet intervalle à un point de repère, par exemple le moment d'énonciation⁴⁴.

En égyptien ancien, on constate que certains moyens mobilisés pour l'expression du temps ou de l'aspect dérivent directement des emplois locatifs. C'est notamment le cas des trois prépositions fondamentales *m*, *r* et *hr*, dont il a été question plus haut (cf. *supra*, 1.1.1).

La préposition *hr* « sur », dont on a vu qu'elle pouvait aussi exprimer le passage, apparaît à l'Ancien Empire dans une construction analytique pour rendre le progressif (sujet + *hr* + infinitif). La préposition signale ainsi au locuteur que le sujet est « sur » le procès, ou plutôt qu'il est engagé dans une phase transitionnelle du procès (« par, à travers »). D'un point de vue typologique, l'égyptien utilise des moyens que l'on retrouve dans d'autres langues⁴⁵.

La préposition *m* connaît des emplois similaires, mais sans doute du fait de l'utilisation de *hr*, qui lui est peut-être chronologiquement antérieure, elle s'est limitée à certains usages. C'est ainsi qu'en néo-égyptien, on ne la trouve plus qu'avec des verbes de mouvement pour exprimer le progressif. À nouveau, l'image topologique qui se dégage est celle d'un intervalle inclus (« dans ») le procès.

Enfin, la préposition *r*, dont on a souligné plus haut l'utilisation pour marquer le but ou la direction d'un mouvement, a fait l'objet d'une grammaticalisation dans la seconde moitié de l'Ancien Empire pour exprimer le futur indicatif (Vernus 1990). À nouveau, le mouvement vers un but à atteindre a servi à exprimer, sur le plan temporel cette fois, une activité à venir, sans que celle-ci ne soit forcément un mouvement (Grossman, Lescuyer & Polis 2014).

L'égyptien a encore utilisé des verbes de mouvement pour marquer des relations aspectuelles ou temporelles (Winand 2006 : 324-47). C'est le cas de *ph* (aspect résultatif) ou de *šm* (aspect inchoatif). Certains feront l'objet d'une grammaticalisation, comme *ḥḥ.n* « se mettre debout », qui apparaît dès l'Ancien Empire dans des constructions sérielles (Doret 1986, Winand 2006 : 215-18), et peut-être aussi de *jw*, si son origine remonte bien au verbe de mouvement *jwj*, comme on en a parfois émis l'hypothèse. Parfois, la documentation permet de saisir la naissance et le développement de nouvelles

44 En égyptien, à titre d'exemple, l'auxiliaire d'énonciation *jw* sert à mettre en relation l'intervalle sélectionné par le temps grammatical, c'est-à-dire le moment de référence, et le moment d'énonciation. Dans un second temps (au terme d'un processus complètement achevé en néo-égyptien), il évoluera comme marqueur circonstanciel, mettant en relation le moment de référence avec le moment de référence d'une autre proposition.

45 Cf. Winand (2006 : 311-12, n. 44). On notera plus particulièrement la formation du progressif en créole à l'aide de l'auxiliaire « *stay* », procédé qui rappelle l'utilisation des verbes de postures (*ḥḥ*, *hmsj* et *sdr*) en néo-égyptien, mais aussi dans de nombreuses langues africaines (Givón 1982 : 124). D'une manière générale, les langues africaines montrent une prédilection pour les constructions locatives dans la construction du progressif (Bybee, Perkins & Pagliuca 1994 : 129-131).

constructions, comme celle intégrant le verbe *nʿj* « aller », qui servira de noyau au futur I en copte (ⲛⲁ-ⲙⲟⲩⲙ, voir Grossman, Lescuyer & Polis 2014), ce qui rappelle sur le plan typologique des constructions comme *je vais faire telle chose* en français, ou *I gonna do something* en anglais.

Un autre croisement remarquable entre les moyens d’expression du temps et ceux de l’espace est offert par l’adverbe *dy* « ici », qui est fréquemment employé en néo-égyptien comme marqueur du présent immédiat (Winand 2006 : 313 et 400-402, Winand 2018). Dans l’exemple ci-dessous, on notera encore la présence d’un verbe de posture, *hmsj* « être assis », comme marque du progressif (Winand 2006 : 337-338) :

ex. 33 : *twtn dy hms.tj hr jr.t jh m-r-ʿ*

« qu’êtes-vous encore occupés à faire ? » (*Horus & Seth*, 8,3)

2 Les conceptions du temps

Cette section a pour but d’offrir un bref résumé des conceptions du temps en Égypte ancienne et leur lien avec le monde spatial, physique.

2.1 Quelques généralités sur le temps et l’espace en Égypte ancienne

Trois notions de retrouvent de manière centrale dans l’idéologie égyptienne : celles de totalité, de limite et de symétrie (ou parasymétrie). Ces trois notions fonctionnent de manière complémentaire : une entité considérée dans sa totalité a besoin de limites, et sa totalité est souvent exprimée à travers la symétrie. On en trouve des applications dans plusieurs domaines au sein de la culture égyptienne. Ainsi, la parasymétrie dans l’art égyptien est un phénomène bien connu⁴⁶.

C’est aussi le cas concernant le temps et l’espace. En effet, la totalité de l’espace à disposition est symbolisé par la combinaison du ciel et de la terre fonctionnant symétriquement tandis que la totalité du temps à disposition est exprimée par la combinaison des principes complémentaires *nhh* et *d.t*⁴⁷.

Le temps et l’espace sont également limités : ils font partie du monde physique créé, et n’existent pas en-dehors de celui-ci. Ainsi la destruction du monde physique implique-t-elle également la fin de l’espace-temps⁴⁸.

Enfin, l’idée de complétude est régulièrement évoquée lorsque les Égyptiens parlent du temps. Le verbe *km* « compléter » ou encore *jrj* « faire » sont alors employés. Cette conception va de pair avec le fait que les Égyptiens considéraient que le temps de vie de chaque personne lui était attribué par les dieux dès sa naissance, de même que son

46 On pensera notamment à la scène bien connue représentant deux travailleurs entourant un sac de céréales, où l’un est statique et l’autre en mouvement. Cette scène est attestée dans plusieurs tombes, dont celle de Nakht. Cf. notamment Laboury (2017).

47 Servajean (2007).

48 Cf. Hornung (1996).

destin⁴⁹. Les grandes lignes de l'existence individuelle sont donc écrites d'avance, ce qui n'empêche pas une certaine philosophie d'aller contre cette tendance. En effet, alors que certains textes sapientiaux mettent l'accent sur la pérennité des choses (*Ani*), dans d'autres on trouve des avertissements contre une vision trop fataliste de l'existence (*Aménémopé*). Si l'homme ne peut tout changer, ni aller contre la volonté divine, il peut tout de même agir avec sagesse et mettre à profit le temps qui lui est imparti pour accomplir une vie qualitativement riche. Cette idée de renforcement qualitatif de l'existence est exprimée, de manière récurrente et parfois lexicalisée à partir du Nouvel Empire, comme on l'a vu précédemment⁵⁰.

ex. 34 : *jst nswt km.n.f h'w.f m rnp.wt šš.wt nfr.wt*

« Alors que le roi a complété son temps de vie en de nombreuses belles années »
(*Imenemheb*, Urk IV, 895, 14)

ex. 35 : *whm.k sw m-mn.t n p3 ntr*

jw dw3w mj p3 hrw

« Puisses-tu le répéter à ton dieu quotidiennement, car demain est comme aujourd'hui » (*Ani*, pBoulaq 4, 21, 14-15)

ex. 36 : *m jrj dd*

p3 hrw mj dw3w

ph nn mj jh

« Ne dis pas 'aujourd'hui est comme demain'. Comment arriver à cela ? »
(*Aménémopé*, pBM 10474, 6, 18-19)

ex. 37 : *p3 z (hr) hm dw3w mi ih*

« L'homme ignore comment sera demain » (*Aménémopé*, pBM 10474, 19, 13)

2.2 Conceptions du temps

On distingue d'ordinaire deux conceptions⁵¹ du temps pour l'Égypte ancienne. La première est le temps de l'idéologie, et la seconde, le temps instrumental, de la vie quotidienne. Un troisième type de temps est également à considérer : celui des sagesse, de la littérature. On l'appellera ici le « temps philosophique »⁵².

2.2.1 Le temps de l'idéologie

La cosmologie égyptienne repose sur plusieurs concepts fondamentaux, et sur une série d'oppositions/complémentarités. La première est celle entre le *créé* et l'*incrée*. En

49 Cf. notamment le conte du *Prince Prédestiné*. Du temps supplémentaire peut toutefois être négocié. Un exemple bien connu se trouve dans le P. Vandier : le roi se voit accorder du temps de vie supplémentaire en échange de la vie du magicien *my-r*.

50 Cf. *supra*, 1.1.2.4.

51 De manière générale voir Vernus (1995) ; Winand (2003 & 2005) ; Assmann (1975b, 1983, 1991, 2011) ; Hornung (1981, 1996).

52 Il s'agit d'une notion introduite dans Chantrain (à paraître).

effet, le monde créé a un commencement (la « première fois », *zp-tpy*), et il contient l'espace et le temps. Ce monde organisé a été créé par le D miurge, hors du Noun, qui est l'indiff renci . Cette entit  est source   la fois de chaos et lieu de r g n rescence. Il doit donc  tre repouss  afin de garantir l'orde cosmique (la Ma t), mais constitue  galement le compl ment n cessaire au monde organis .

L'espace et le temps ont  galement une fin. Ainsi, l' ternit   gyptienne d signe une immense dur e de temps, dont la fin est inimaginable   l' chelle de la vie humaine, mais existe   l' chelle des dieux. La fin du monde physique signifiera en effet la fin des temps, et le retour   l'indiff renci , au chaos. Cette quantit  de temps   disposition est le tout form  par les concepts de *n h * et de *d.t*, qui expriment une autre compl mentarit , celle du *dynamique* (le temps-*n h *) et de l'*inerte* (l' ternit -*d.t*)⁵³.

Le temps de l'id ologie est bas  sur la r p tition de la course de la barque solaire   travers le ciel et la Douat, et du combat de R  contre les t n bres. Il est donc   la fois cyclique et orient .

Les cycles du temps cosmique vont de pair avec le concept de m moire culturelle⁵⁴. Celle-ci se b t  sur une s rie de rituels, de c l brations, et de ce qu'on nomme des *mythomoteurs*, c'est- -dire des mythes fondateurs qui donnent   un groupe ethnico-culturel une l gitimit ⁵⁵. Elle assure la survie   long terme du groupe et affirme son identit .

Cette vision cyclique se r percute dans plusieurs aspects de la culture  gyptienne. Ainsi,   son intronisation, chaque roi r actualise symboliquement la *zp-tpy*, de m me que lui incombe la t che de maintenir l'ordre universel (la Ma t) ainsi que la s curit  et l'int grit  des fronti res et du territoire de l' gypte. Le mod le id ologique a donc comme cadre de r f rence le pass  et la tradition, qui constituent les outils pour la compr hension du pr sent et l'appr hension du futur⁵⁶.

Une dialectique est   r soudre toutefois au sein de ce mod le : celle entre la p rennit  qu'il impose et la mise en avant de la singularit  du roi r gnant.

Les  gyptiens ont recours   deux moyens pour r concilier les termes de cette apparente opposition : le surpassement des devanciers et la causalit  divine⁵⁷. Le principe du premier est de conserver ce qui a  t  l gu  par les pr d cesseurs, tout en le surpassant. Ce surpassement peut  tre accompli de diff rentes mani res : une absence de pr c dent, un surpassement dans la conformit  au mod le (en  tant encore plus fid le   la tradition que ses devanciers), un surpassement quantitatif et/ou un surpassement qualitatif (faire un peu plus, ou un peu mieux). Ce d passement se situe toujours donc dans la forme, et non dans l'essence, qui elle doit rester inchang e.

53 Voir aussi Pehal (ce volume).

54 La m moire culturelle s'oppose   la m moire communicative, qui conditionne l'orientation dans la vie quotidienne.

55 Assmann (2010); Hornung (1966).

56 Vernus (1995). Il existe de rares exceptions toutefois, telle que l'exorde de Khakheperr -seneb, o  s'exprime le souhait d' crire quelque chose de tout   fait neuf, car le pr sent n'est plus pensable   travers la culture traditionnelle (Vernus 1995 : 23).

57 Vernus (1995), respectivement  10-25 et  26-36.

L'idée de causalité divine se développe au Nouvel Empire⁵⁸. Son action porte potentiellement sur trois domaines : la durée de vie, la destinée sociale et les événements de l'existence⁵⁹. La causalité divine peut influencer le destin d'un particulier, celui du roi ou celui de la collectivité, par le truchement d'une personnalité royale et/ou symbolique⁶⁰.

2.2.2 Le temps instrumental

Il s'agit du temps pratique de la vie quotidienne. Il est orienté, irréversible, et se rencontre dans des contextes pragmatiques, tels que des lettres, des transactions commerciales ou des actes juridiques. Il se divise en temps borné et en temps non-borné.

Le temps borné décrit et mesure le temps de façon absolue. Cette catégorie est donc de l'ordre du comput du temps et de la chronologie. Le temps non borné sert à exprimer le temps indépendamment d'une durée intrinsèque absolue et situe les événements les uns par rapport aux autres. Ce temps est décrit de façon relative, ou en fonction de sa qualité (long, court, bon, mauvais, etc.). Il s'agit du temps vécu, intuitif.

2.2.2.1 Comput du temps

Le calendrier égyptien est un calendrier solaire, prenant également en compte les phases de la lune. Un cycle lunaire⁶¹ correspond en effet à la durée d'un mois (*3bd/jbd*), écrit avec le signe représentant un croissant de lune et une étoile $\overline{\text{K}} \overline{\text{E}}$. Le disque solaire peut être ajouté comme classificateur, essentiellement à partir du Nouvel Empire, dans les textes hiératiques $\overline{\text{K}} \overline{\text{E}} \overline{\text{D}}$. Le calendrier égyptien a servi de base à l'élaboration du calendrier julien à la fin de la république romaine et constitue donc également l'ancêtre de notre calendrier actuel. L'année égyptienne compte 365 jours, répartis en douze mois, eux-mêmes répartis en trois saisons de quatre mois. Chaque mois compte trente jours, répartis en décades. Ceci fait donc un total de 360 jours, auxquels viennent s'ajouter cinq jours épagomènes⁶².

L'année en égyptien se dit *rnp.t* $\overline{\text{I}}$, « celle qui rajeunit ». Ce terme fait allusion aux cycles naturels permis par la crue du Nil dont le premier jour coïncide avec le début d'une nouvelle année⁶³. Le terme *hsb.t* ou *h3.t-zp* $\overline{\text{I}}$ désigne quant à lui l'année calendérique⁶⁴. Les trois saisons sont liées au cycle de la crue du Nil et à celui des récoltes. La saison de l'inondation (*3h.t*) inaugure l'année, suivie de celle de la germination (*pr.t*) puis de la

58 Cette idée est déjà présente, quoique plus discrètement, au Moyen Empire. On pensera à l'exemple de *Sinouhé* évoquant le dessin d'un dieu en son cœur (B 43).

59 Vernus 1995, 122.

60 La révélation par un songe est un cas fréquent, on pensera notamment au rêve de Redjedjet, future mère de rois, dans le pWestcar.

61 Par ailleurs, le calendrier était historiquement fondé sur un système lunaire. Voir notamment Depuydt (1997 & 2007) ; Krauss dans Hornung (2006 : 386-391) et Nolan (2003).

62 Ces jours supplémentaires sont appelés *hry.w rnp.t* en Égyptien, littéralement : « ceux qui sont sur l'année ».

63 Ce jour se situe vers la mi-juillet, habituellement le 17, et correspond traditionnellement au premier jour de crue observable à Memphis.

64 Il s'agit du terme figurant dans les dates. Les deux lectures sont attestées.

récolte (*šmw*). Cette dernière, comme son nom l'indique, correspond aussi aux mois des grandes chaleurs, et à la période d'été.

Le jour se dit *hrw*  (ou *sw(w)*, pour le jour calendaire)⁶⁵. Il est divisé en vingt-quatre heures, dont douze diurnes et douze nocturnes. Cette division en douze unités trouve son origine dans l'observation des étoiles et de leurs décans⁶⁶. Comme le nombre d'heures imparties au jour et à la nuit demeure fixe, leur longueur varie en fonction des saisons, les heures diurnes étant plus courtes en hiver qu'en été.

2.2.2.2 Chronologie

La chronologie relative de l'Égypte ancienne utilisée actuellement – et qui est toujours majoritairement citée en égyptologie de préférence à la chronologie absolue – est une reconstruction moderne qui se base en grande partie sur la liste de rois divisée en 31 dynasties compilée par le prêtre Manéthon, au III^e siècle av. J.-C. D'autres listes de rois, dont celle du temple de Séthi 1^{er} à Abydos, celle d'une tombe privée de Saqqarah, le Papyrus royal de Turin (Canon de Turin) ou encore la Pierre de Palerme viennent la compléter⁶⁷. Ces listes ne fournissent cependant généralement pas de données chiffrées⁶⁸ ni exhaustives⁶⁹.

Plusieurs problèmes se posent dès lors en se basant uniquement sur la chronologie fournie par les documents égyptiens : la séquence correcte des rois n'est pas toujours assurée et les dynasties parallèles ne sont pas prises en compte (on pensera en particulier aux Périodes Intermédiaires), la durée des règnes n'est pas toujours connue et les dates fournies omettent souvent de mentionner le roi régnant, étant donné que nul n'était censé l'ignorer à l'époque de l'émission du document.

2.2.3 Le temps « philosophique »

Une autre vision du temps, que l'on pourrait qualifier de « philosophique » se retrouve dans des textes littéraires – essentiellement sapientiaux – et certaines lettres de la fin de la période ramesside⁷⁰. Les thèmes récurrents sont la conscience de la fuite du temps, de son irréversibilité ou encore la préoccupation de disposer au mieux de son temps, de le rendre de qualité sans le gâcher dans des activités inutiles. La notion de destin, associé à la volonté divine, est aussi une caractéristique prédominante : l'homme ignore de quoi sera

65 Selon l'interprétation de Gardiner. Si elle est exacte, *sw* pourrait être dérivé du verbe *sw3* « passer », en référence au passage des jours, et du temps en général.

66 Ce fait trouve un écho dans les graphies usuelles de *wnw.t* comprenant le signe *.

67 Cf. von Beckerath (1984) ; Ryholt, dans Hornung & Warburton (2006 : 26-32).

68 À l'exception du Canon de Turin et de la Pierre de Palerme.

69 Cf. *infra*, 3.

70 Il s'agit là d'un concept délicat pour l'Égypte ancienne. Il désigne un temps intellectualisé, réfléchi, se distançant parfois du modèle idéologique pour insister sur un certain ancrage dans le présent. Cf. Chantraine (à paraître).

fait le lendemain. Le contrôle de l'avenir lui échappe⁷¹, d'où la tendance à la popularité grandissante au Nouvel Empire de vouloir profiter du temps présent sans se soucier à outrance de l'avenir. Cette idée est notoirement présente dans les « Chants du harpiste », et s'inscrit dans un large mouvement de pensée.

Les conceptions temporelles en Égypte ancienne peuvent dès lors être représentées sous forme d'une double symétrie⁷² : la première constituée d'un temps « intellectualisé » (idéologique et philosophique) et d'un temps instrumental ; la seconde des deux subdivisions du temps intellectualisé, lesquelles véhiculent des conceptions opposées.

3 Le temps dans l'histoire, dans le texte et dans l'image

En dehors du langage, la gestion et l'organisation du temps sont des paramètres essentiels dans de nombreux domaines. La perception des événements historiques, la succession des rois dans le temps, par exemple, a fait l'objet de plusieurs formes de représentations en Égypte. La plus connue en est la liste, dont on a préservé plusieurs exemples depuis les premiers temps⁷³. Elles adoptent généralement un ordre chronologique. C'est le cas de la plus célèbre d'entre elles, celle qui fut gravée sur un corridor dans le temple d'Abydos. Du point de vue de l'historien moderne, ces listes ne sont jamais complètes. Les oublis sont très importants pour les périodes anciennes, sans doute en raison de l'état des archives documentaires au moment de la rédaction des listes, mais il faut encore faire la part des traditions régionales, de la survivance de certains cultes funéraires liés à des rois particuliers, ce qui a pu les préserver de l'oubli, sans compter l'omission volontaire de certains souverains, jugés indignes, pour des raisons qui tiennent à la fois à la politique et à l'idéologie (*damnatio memoriae*). La disparition de la reine Hatchepsout et des rois liés à l'épisode amarnien dans les listes ramessides en sont des exemples célèbres. Si l'on excepte le Canon royal de Turin, qui répertorie de manière scrupuleuse la durée de règne de chaque pharaon⁷⁴, les listes dégagent une impression de nivellement historique. Par leur disposition matérielle – une succession de cartouches, de module identique –, le sentiment qui émerge est que c'est précisément la chaîne qui importe, et non les maillons qui la composent. Bien sûr, ces maillons sont individualisés grâce à leur nom, mais ils apparaissent comme des accidents dans un système qui ne varie pas en essence⁷⁵. Aucune indication de durée ne permet de faire une distinction entre un roi ayant bénéficié d'un long règne et celui qui ne resta sur le trône que quelques années.

Parmi ces listes, un document mérite une attention particulière. La Liste de Saqqarah bouleverse l'ordre séquentiel pour mettre en évidence les rois fondateurs d'une nouvelle ère. Alors que les rois énumérés au registre inférieur (1 à 29) suivent l'ordre chronologique, ceux du registre supérieur suivent l'ordre séquentiel jusqu'à la fin de l'Ancien Empire

71 On pense notamment à l'*Enseignement d'Aménémopé*, ou à certaines lettres de la fin de l'époque ramesside.

72 Idée développée dans Chantrain (à paraître).

73 Cf. Redford (1986).

74 Voir déjà la Pierre de Palerme.

75 Les cartouches laissés vides dans les temples romains en sont l'illustration ultime.

(30-36). Ils se répartissent ensuite en deux groupes disposés de manière antithétique : les rois du Moyen Empire (37-46) inversent l'ordre de lecture adopté jusqu'alors, tandis que ceux du Nouvel Empire (47-58) reprennent la lecture de gauche à droite. Cette « mise en page » originale permet ainsi d'adosser Mentouhotep II et Ahmosis, c'est-à-dire les deux rois fondateurs du Moyen et du Nouvel Empire⁷⁶. La gestion de l'espace, rompant avec la séquentialité ordinaire, est mise au service d'une rhétorique fondée sur le principe de frontalité largement développé dans les compositions visuelles de l'Égypte ancienne.

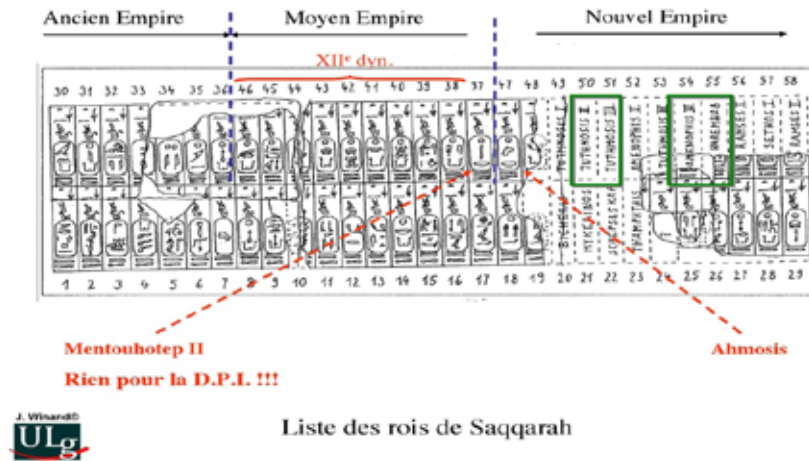


Fig. 6. Liste de Saqqarah

L'organisation du temps dans l'écrit connaît une modification majeure avec le néo-égyptien, c'est-à-dire avec le premier état de la seconde phase de l'égyptien (Winand 2018). Alors que précédemment, l'établissement correct d'une séquence temporelle ne reflétait pas nécessairement l'ordre linéaire des propositions (principe d'iconicité), ou ne faisait pas l'objet d'un marquage linguistique précis (au moyen de connecteurs spécifiques), le néo-égyptien non seulement développa un marqueur spécialisé de séquentialité dans le récit (*jw.f hr (tm) sdm*), mais encore recourut à des moyens spécifiques pour indiquer les ruptures de vectorialité (Winand 2006).

De même, l'expression de la causalité – une dérivée du temps (*post hoc, propter hoc*) – ne commence à faire l'objet d'un marquage précis qu'à partir du néo-égyptien (*p3-wn* « parce que »). Précédemment, les constructions susceptibles d'exprimer une relation temporelle pouvaient, si le contexte s'y prêtait, prendre une nuance causale.

L'égyptien de la première phase procède souvent par addition de propositions (parataxe), laissant le soin au lecteur de définir si le récit progresse, s'arrête le temps d'une parenthèse, voire fait marche arrière pour livrer quelques considérations utiles pour la compréhension

⁷⁶ On observera au passage que les rois de la Première et de la Deuxième Période intermédiaire ont été omis. Il en va de même pour Hatchepsout et les rois amarniens, qui devraient apparaître dans les encadrés verticaux. Voir Winand (2017 : 36-38).

de l'histoire⁷⁷. Cette juxtaposition n'est pas sans rappeler la manière dont s'organisent les représentations figurées sur les monuments de l'Ancien et du Moyen Empire. Ainsi que cela a été très tôt relevé (Schäfer 1919), le dessin d'un motif, la conception plus générale d'une scène ne s'articulent pas en fonction d'un principe référentiel unique, ce qui est le fondement de la perspective. La multiplication des points de vue domine de manière à présenter au spectateur sous l'angle qui est le plus lisible les éléments – tous les éléments – pertinents pour appréhender la réalité dans son essence, au-delà des apparences, parfois trompeuses, d'une observation visuelle statique.

Est-ce s'avancer trop loin que de vouloir reconnaître des affinités entre le système de représentations figurées tel que pratiqué à l'Ancien et au Moyen Empire, et le système prédicatif de l'égyptien de la première phase, fondé sur un jeu d'oppositions aspectuelles⁷⁸ ? Dans les deux cas, c'est une phase, un instant, une attitude, bref un aspect, jugé comme étant le plus saillant cognitivement, qui a été privilégié.

Là où plusieurs prédications verbales sont impliquées, ce qui est le cas dans les textes, là où plusieurs personnages ou entités entrent dans une composition, ce qui est le cas de bien des représentations figurées, il n'y a pas véritablement interaction, mais plutôt une cohabitation relativement indifférente au contexte⁷⁹. C'est ici que se situe le point de rupture avec un autre type d'organisation où les différents éléments interagissent de manière solidaire en fonction d'un point de vue unique qui sert de point de repère. Par opposition au point de vue aspectuel ou aspectif, on peut appeler ce mode d'organisation perspectuel ou perspectif. En langue, la concordance des temps illustre au plus haut point ce principe de solidarité. Mais le seul fait de se prononcer systématiquement sur la relation temporelle d'un procès avec un point de repère, qu'il soit absolu (le moment d'énonciation) ou relatif (une autre proposition) est déjà une manifestation claire d'un changement de paradigme. C'est ce qu'on peut observer en néo-égyptien par rapport au système de l'égyptien de la première phase (Winand 2014). Dans les représentations figurées monumentales du Nouvel Empire, telles que celles illustrant la bataille de Qadech ou les campagnes militaires de Ramsès III à Medinet Habou, on peut voir à l'œuvre un principe d'organisation intégratif des éléments de l'image comme il n'en existe pas avant le Nouvel Empire.

77 Bien sûr, la nature de la prédication (p.ex. verbale ou non verbale) peut aider à lever certaines ambiguïtés (Winand 2000).

78 Sans retomber dans certains excès de l'hypothèse Sapir-Whorf (Whorf 1956 : 57), prise dans un sens absolu, selon laquelle la langue conditionne la conception du monde chez ses locuteurs. Voir Duranti (1997 : 52-53). On peut rejoindre ici la position exprimée par Hagège (1998 : 46 « Les visions du monde, à commencer par celles des positions dans l'espace, qu'elles soient directement ou métaphoriquement exprimées, sont variables d'une culture à l'autre, et la diversité des modèles socioculturels que cela reflète est assez grande pour remettre en cause les homologues que pourrait suggérer une perspective exclusivement cognitive »). Dans le domaine linguistique, une place est parfois faite à l'anthropologie, par exemple dans l'école linguistique de Berkeley : « Languages differ in their verbalized orientation to experience » (Slobin & Bocaz 1989 : 17, cité par Michaelis 1998 : 1).

79 Sur la séquence des scènes agricoles dans les tombeaux de l'Ancien Empire, qui ne respecte pas nécessairement une succession chronologique, voir Angenot 1996

Dans cette contribution, notre premier souci était de montrer par des exemples et des points de vue diversifiés le profit qu'on peut escompter à interroger les relations croisées entre les manières dont l'espace et le temps sont construits dans la culture qui s'est développée dans la vallée du Nil. Les études qui sont publiées dans ce volume abordent des thèmes *a priori* très différents, mais qui contribuent tous à leur manière à la question qui fit l'objet du colloque international organisé à Louvain-la-Neuve en juin 2016 « Temps et espace en Égypte ancienne – Time and Space in Ancient Egypt ». Nous espérons que ce volume sera une incitation supplémentaire à explorer ces domaines fascinants dans une approche multidisciplinaire.

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Avant la langue

Le temps et l'espace comme construction sémiotique

Jean-Marie Klinkenberg¹

Abstract

L'objet du colloque dans les actes duquel paraît ce texte est la donnée du temps et l'espace telle qu'elle est signifiée — ou pour le dire mieux : traitée — par une langue, en l'occurrence l'égyptien ancien. Mon propos sera on ne peut plus décalé par rapport aux objectifs de cette rencontre. En effet, je voudrais explorer ici les phénomènes du temps et l'espace avant que les langages ne s'en emparent. Le temps et l'espace non pas comme phénomènes physiques, mais comme phénomènes sémiotiques.

Entre l'espace (et le temps) comme données physiques et l'espace (et le temps) tels qu'ils sont traités par les langues, il y a en effet une autre chose : le sens que le sujet donne à l'expérience spatiale, à l'expérience du temps. Ce sens est certes modelé par la langue au sens strict, comme le veut toute la tradition sur laquelle on a déposé un peu vite le label Sapir-Whorf ; et modelé, il l'est en l'occurrence grâce à des ressources qui sont propres au langage en général (comme la séquentialité de celui-ci), ressources que les langues particulières modulent de diverses manières, grâce à des outils spécifiques (comme les prépositions spatiales ou temporelles, certains affixes ou certaines flexions spécialisées, les temps verbaux et les aspects). Mais le sens donné à l'expérience spatio-temporelle est aussi modelé par notre capacité à informer les données du monde, et cela indépendamment de nos langages au sens strict, et donc antérieurement au travail de ceux-ci.

Pour être plus précis, je dirais qu'entre le temps et l'espace comme phénomènes physiques et le temps et l'espace des langues, il y a non pas *un* intermédiaire, mais *des* intermédiaires, ordonnés le long d'un continuum où opèrent une série de transductions. Pour schématiser ceci, qui vertèbrera mon exposé, je distinguerai : (1) le temps et l'espace

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L'essentiel de la teneur des propos tenus ici provient d'un travail collectif dû au Groupe μ , équipe interdisciplinaire qui, depuis les années 70 explore les avenues du sens. À mon nom comme signataire du présent article doit donc être associé celui de Francis Édeline, l'autre membre du collectif. On pourra prendre connaissance du dernier état de ce travail dans Groupe μ , 2015. Édeline (2013a) s'est récemment penché sur des questions précises relatives à l'espace vécu qui ne sont pas sans portée dans la problématique ici débattue. Enfin, le lecteur doit savoir que le présent texte applique les rectifications de l'orthographe de 1990, recommandées par toutes les instances francophones compétentes, en ce compris l'Académie française.

comme phénomènes physiques, (2) l'espace et le temps perceptifs, produits de la rencontre entre nos canaux sensoriels et le donné naturel ; (3) l'espace et le temps sémiotisés, dotés de sens et partageables au sein du corps social notamment par le truchement de la langue² ; et donc enfin (4) cet espace et ce temps dit par la langue, par une langue particulière.

Espace/temps langagiers



Espace/temps sémiotisés



Espace/temps perceptifs



Espace/temps physiques

Dans ce qui suit, je ne répéterai pas chaque fois les mots « temps et espace » (comme je l'ai fait jusqu'en ce point), mais me contenterai du seul mot : « espace ». Cette restriction n'est pas due au seul souci d'alléger ce texte ; nous allons en effet voir que les deux objets sont étroitement liés et que l'on peut fournir du concept d'espace une définition généralisée qui englobe le phénomène du temps.

Partons du monde physique. Nous n'avons aucun accès direct à celui-ci, et nous ne pouvons formuler à son sujet — et donc au sujet de l'espace physique (1) — que des hypothèses : ce que nous pouvons en connaître ne vient à nous qu'indirectement, grâce à nos sensorialités. Mais celles-ci ne nous donnent aucune garantie sur la fidélité de l'accès qu'elles nous donnent au réel.

Les résultats de l'interaction entre les stimuli attribuables au monde physique et les sensorialités procédant à cette attribution sont nombreux (il en est de thermiques ou encore de chromatiques). C'est parmi eux qu'on rangera l'espace perceptif (2), qui n'est pas un phénomène simple, puisqu'il est le produit de plusieurs sensorialités : la vue, le toucher, le sens haptique, la proprioception, l'odorat même.

L'espace sémiotisé (3) et l'espace perceptif (2) ne sont pas superposables. Autrement dit, si le premier dérive du second, il a ses caractères propres, liés à la culture. Une des caractéristiques de l'espace perceptif sémiotisé est la distinction du fond et de la figure (voir ci-après, § 1.2., c). Or des expériences ont démontré que la formation de cette distinction était culturellement stratifiée : les asiatiques sont plus sensible au fond qu'à la figure,

2 À propos de l'espace, Édeline (2013) distingue encore dans cette catégorie l'espace mental, que le sujet éprouve et qui font partie de sa sphère privée et l'espace conceptuel, produit de l'activité mentale, cette fois partageable au sein du corps social notamment par le truchement de la langue.

contrairement aux occidentaux (Chua *et al.*, 2005). Il en va de même pour la gestion des distances, les espaces que les psychologues désignant comme espace personnel et espace d'action varient en fonction des cultures, de l'apprentissage et des tâches à exécuter. On peut donc parler d'espace culturalisé.

1 Genèse du sens, genèse du temps et de l'espace

1.1 Pourquoi y a-t-il du sens plutôt que rien ?

En traitant de la première transduction — le produit de la rencontre entre nos canaux sensoriels et le donné naturel —, nous abordons en fait un problème qui l'est très peu souvent par les sciences du sens (et j'entends par là les sémantiques linguistiques autant que les sémiotiques, qui les encadrent) : le problème de la genèse du sens. Pour paraphraser la formule célèbre de Leibniz, nos disciplines ne se sont guère demandé « Pourquoi y a-t-il du sens plutôt que rien ? », laissant ce problème à la philosophie. En effet, les sciences du sens se fondent toutes, implicitement ou non, sur l'axiome de la conventionalité : elles postulent un accord préalable à tout échange et l'existence d'un système extérieur aux consciences individuelles, système qui s'imposerait à elles de manière impérative. C'est d'ailleurs cet axiome que Ferdinand de Saussure exploite avec le concept de « langue ».

Mais la théorie de la conventionalité laisse dans l'ombre ce qui git en deçà de la convention, ignorant délibérément une interface capitale : comment le sens émerge-t-il de l'expérience ? Problème hautement irritant, car il pose la question du lien à établir entre un sens qui semble ne pas avoir de fondement physique et les stimulations physiques provenant du monde extérieur, stimulations qui, comme telles, ne semblent pas avoir de sens.

La thèse que nous défendons — le nous n'étant pas ici majestatif, mais se référant au Groupe μ — rompt avec l'axiome de la conventionalité. Elle est que sémiotique et cognition sont étroitement liées, et plus particulièrement que la structure sémantique élémentaire reflète exactement notre activité de perception des données du monde. Ce que je résumerai dans cette formule à saveur de calembour : le sens procède DES sens. Le processus est nécessairement interactif : il peut en effet peut être décrit comme le traitement de ces stimuli par l'organisme — par le corps — à travers un enchaînement de modules. Et on va voir que le temps et l'espace jouent un rôle important dans le processus. Ce processus sémiogénétique peut être désigné du nom d'*anasémiose*, premier temps de la sémiose. Car l'anasémiose est nécessairement suivie d'un temps *catasémiotique* : l'action exercée sur le monde, grâce aux données du sens.

1.2 Exemple de la sensorialité visuelle

Succinctement, on peut exemplifier le processus anasémiotique en se servant de la perception visuelle des êtres évolués (parmi lesquels l'homme. Mais on va voir que nous devons très vite généraliser notre propos et sortir du champ strictement visuel, et même du domaine humain). Cet exemple est d'autant plus pertinent que cette sensorialité est une de celles qui produisent l'espace perceptif.

a) La qualité (translocale)

Soit un champ quelconque, sur lequel porte la perception visuelle. Dans son déroulement le plus simple, cette activité consiste à détecter une qualité dans le champ. Or nos organes spécialisés et le système nerveux qui centralise les informations fournies par eux sont équipés pour détecter les *invariants*. Dans ce cas précis, le tapis de neurones que constitue la rétine ne se limite pas à repérer de multiples points juxtaposés : si tous ces points ont la même luminance et la même couleur, ils sont perçus — grâce à une série de processus dont la description technique serait trop longue — comme constituant ensemble une tache unique.

La qualité perçue peut alors être dite translocale. Autrement dit, elle est la propriété commune extraite d'une série de sensations éparses et transcende le donné immédiat. Notons que l'on vient d'utiliser un mot — translocal — qui a une valeur spatiale. La notion doit aussi pouvoir être appliquée au temps et on pourrait alors parler de « transtemporalité ». Par exemple, le timbre d'un instrument de musique particulier est bien une qualité transtemporelle : il contribue au repérage des fragments temporel — qui font partie de la catégorie générale que l'on appellera ci-après « chronèmes » — que sont les interventions de l'instrument en question dans un concert, quelle que soit la pièce jouée.

L'extraction de la translocalité procède d'une double opération sur laquelle je vais revenir et qui est due à un double mécanisme dits d'inhibition latérale et d'excitation latérale : une différenciation du reste du champ, mais aussi, comme on va le voir, une égalisation des stimuli.

Il n'est pas malaisé de deviner la raison de cette extraction. Son avantage est une énorme économie : au lieu de traiter une masse d'informations distinctes, correspondant aux multiples stimulations lumineuses ou aux multiples occurrences d'un son, le système nerveux central n'a plus à traiter qu'une donnée globale unique.

b) Entité

Car détecter une qualité dans un champ permet d'acquérir un nouveau percept : *l'entité*. Je perçois une entité dotée de cette qualité en la discriminant par rapport à son environnement : sur ce papier blanc, on discerne une tache (entité) bleue (qualité). On peut en quelque sorte dire que l'entité est une qualité devenue chose grâce à notre activité perceptrice.

c) Différenciation et seuillage

Il est capital de noter que la qualité ne peut être identifiée que moyennant une manœuvre de différenciation : la forme perçue se détache d'un fond perceptuel ; elle constitue une figure, au sens gestaltiste du terme. Mais du fait même qu'elle est ségrégée, l'entité entre en relation avec d'autres entités, puisque ce que je viens d'appeler fond perceptuel présente une qualité translocale distincte de la première : la feuille sur laquelle s'étale une tache bleue est une entité qui a sa qualité. On voit donc que la notion même d'entité présuppose celle d'interaction : on ne peut en effet distinguer des entités que grâce à une relation de contraste entre des qualités.

L'aspect le plus important dans ce mécanisme de différenciation est le *seuillage*, obtenu grâce au double phénomène — auquel j'ai déjà fait allusion — d'excitation latérale et d'inhibition latérale. On veut dire par là que les variations du stimulus inférieures à une certaine intensité, dite seuil, ne sont pas prises en considération : elles sont toutes lissées, et les qualités qui eussent ainsi été discernables sont ramenées à une seule et même qualité translocale. Par contre, celles qui dépassent ce seuil d'intensité seront réputées constituer une autre qualité. Il faut souligner que ces seuils n'existent pas comme tels dans la nature, mais procèdent de la dialectique entre les stimuli et l'organisme récepteur.

Telle est l'origine perceptive du savoir. En effet, la conjonction de ces trois données — qualité et entité, caractérisées par une interaction — constitue bien un savoir élémentaire³. Nous allons voir (§ 3.2.) que cette connaissance élémentaire, fondée sur l'identification conjointe d'une qualité et d'une entité entretenant des relations avec son contexte correspond à un phénomène bien connu des linguistes.

1.3 Naissance du temps et de l'espace élémentaires

C'est ici qu'on peut situer l'origine de l'espace perçu. Le monde physique présente des disjonctions de tous ordres, engendrant de nombreux flux entrecroisés : flux de matière (le vent, les courants d'eau, la nourriture...), flux d'énergie (la chaleur solaire, la pesanteur...), flux de radiations diverses (la lumière...). Tous ces flux sont caractérisés par des variations ; en un mot par des gradients dans l'espace et dans le temps. Vivre n'est rien d'autre que se situer dans ces flux, détecter ces gradients, les mesurer, et y réagir de façon appropriée.

Or pour repérer un gradient, il faut non seulement être doté d'une sensorialité sensible au type de flux qui le caractérise, mais il faut aussi être capable de mesurer ce flux en deux points pour identifier la direction du changement ainsi que son intensité. Autrement dit, détecter un gradient consiste à opérer deux mesures, séparées dans l'espace ou dans le temps. C'est ce que nous appellerons le principe du *contraste élémentaire*, ou *dipôle*, le dipôle étant la perception différentielle d'une grandeur physique (par exemple l'intensité lumineuse). Ce principe, sans lequel il n'y aurait ni information ni sens, est général chez tous les êtres percevants. Ces êtres vivants se sont en effet dotés d'un appareillage permettant de saisir les dipôles les plus variés, autrement dit de comparer entre eux des stimuli voisins : concentration d'aliments, lumière, chaleur, pesanteur, etc. Autrement dit il ne suffit pas de percevoir le monde pour en tirer du sens : il faut le percevoir deux fois. L'appareillage en question doit obligatoirement comporter soit (a) deux senseurs disjoints dans l'espace, mais couplés par un dispositif analyseur permettant la comparaison des mesures, soit (b) un senseur unique mais couplé à une mémoire, ce qui permet d'interpréter des signaux disjoints dans le temps.

Illustrons le premier mécanisme (senseurs disjoints dans l'espace). Sans exploiter l'exemple facile des humains — qui ont deux yeux, deux narines, deux oreilles, fournissant des dipôles d'anasémiose, et qui ont deux bras, dipôles de catasémiose —, on peut citer

3 Je viens d'utiliser le mot « savoir », mais prenons garde à ne pas le réserver aux humains, dont mon exemple partait : ce mécanisme à trois termes est commun à tous les êtres vivants.

l'exemple de tel insecte capable de s'orienter dans le lit du vent grâce à des stries dorsales ou de tel autre sachant évaluer l'altitude à laquelle ils vole en se basant sur les modifications subies par les formes situées dans son champ de vision. Illustration du second mécanisme (un senseur unique percevant la grandeur à deux moments distincts) : la nage de certaine bactérie, un être pourtant unicellulaire. La bactérie étudiée dispose de capteurs spécialisés dans la reconnaissance d'une molécule déterminée dans l'environnement (soit un aliment recherché, soit au contraire une substance répulsive). Un comportement adéquat consiste pour elle à s'approcher des zones à forte concentration attractive, et à fuir les zones répulsives, ce qu'elle fait en mesurant à deux moments différents (grâce à une mémoire non pas neuronale mais chimique) la concentration des molécules en question et en agissant en conséquence sur ses flagelles motrices.

Le temps et l'espace apparaissent ainsi comme des catégories fondamentales, non pas à priori, comme le voulait Kant, mais construites au moment même où se construit le sens, grâce au mécanisme dipolaire. Celui-ci est la stratégie que le vivant a mis au point pour gérer son environnement. Et c'est d'ailleurs probablement le succès de cette stratégie qui a favorisé, au cours de l'évolution, l'apparition de dispositifs comme la symétrie des organismes, dont toutes les sémantiques linguistiques de l'espace exploitent les produits.

Chaque dipôle concerne une modalité sensorielle, dont l'action est comprise entre deux limites : le plus petit et le plus grand dipôle détectable. (Par exemple, l'œil humain est capable de détecter une certaine variation lumineuse mais il reste insensible à celles qui lui sont inférieure ; et d'un autre côté, un contraste trop élevé détruit le dispositif).

Édeline (2013a) propose d'appeler espace élémentaire le domaine de variation d'une catégorie de dipôles. Ces espaces élémentaires sont chaque fois liés à une sensorialité donnée (il peut y avoir des « espaces thermiques », ou des « espaces de clarté »). Mais, comme on va le voir ci-après, ces espaces élémentaires, produits de la perception confiée à une sensorialité donnée, peuvent se combiner entre eux. Ce que nous appelons l'espace, au sens commun du terme, est le produit de certaines de ces combinaisons.

2 Du l'espace et du temps perceptifs à l'espace et au temps sémiotisés

Au cours l'évolution, les mécanismes que nous avons observés ont connu trois types de complexification, qui culminent chez les être les plus évolués, qui nous intéressent ici. Trois complexifications : une stabilisation dans le temps, une stabilisation dans les objets, ou coordination, et une stabilisation dans l'échange social.

2.1 L'objet et l'espace

Première complexification : la connaissance élémentaire peut être stockée dans la mémoire. Ce stockage permet de comparer entre elles des qualités, et donc des entités, dans le temps, au-delà de l'expérience immédiate. On peut donc parler de dipôle différé. Méditons cette phrase saisissante de Kant : « Si je laissais pour toujours échapper de ma pensée les représentations précédentes, [...] et si je ne les reproduisais pas à mesure que j'arrive aux suivantes, aucune représentation entière, aucune des pensées susdites, pas

même les représentations fondamentales, les plus pures et toutes premières, de l'espace et du temps, ne pourraient jamais se produire ». Une conscience temporelle suppose donc une certaine continuité.

L'effet comparateur de la mémoire n'a toutefois d'intérêt que moyennant une seconde complexification : la coordination. L'expérience des qualités dans le temps peut faire apparaître des coordinations régulières, dans l'espace cette fois. Ainsi naît la notion d'*objet*. L'objet n'est en effet rien d'autre qu'un faisceau spatial organisé de qualités doté d'une certaine constance dans le temps. Par exemple, nous pouvons faire l'expérience répétée de qualités coordonnées — comme « rouge », « sphérique », « lisse », « juteux ». L'objet fait de ces qualités associées pourra être rangé dans la classe « tomate ».

Pour cela est intervenu un mécanisme neurologique bien documenté : le « traitement parallèle distribué ». Il explique qu'on peut reconnaître une tomate comme tomate même si elle est faiblement prototypique : si elle est verte, ou si elle a les dimensions d'un grain de raisin. En effet, grâce à la présence de « sphérique » + « lisse », ce mécanisme coordinateur assure la stimulation des circuits neuronaux correspondant à la perception de la qualité « rouge » même en l'absence du stimulus rouge. Ce traitement parallèle distribué autorise donc une certaine flexibilité du processus consistant à assigner un objet à une catégorie (cfr Klinkenberg 2004), et justifie l'élaboration d'une sémantique qui ne soit pas fondée sur le listage de conditions nécessaires et suffisantes⁴.

L'important pour nous est de constater que l'espace au sens habituel du terme, est le produit de cette combinaison d'espaces élémentaires différents ; autrement dit, du jumelage de gradients perceptuels différents : les percepts de forme et de dimension interfèrent pour produire l'inscription de l'objet dans l'espace.

On voit aussi que le temps est une composante de cet espace généralisé. En effet, la stabilisation dans la mémoire est un phénomène temporel. Le jumelage des gradients concerne donc autant le temps que l'espace. Et la manière dont nous organisons le monde de nos perceptions implique ces deux dimensions. Par exemple, selon le principe de proximité de Gogel (1978), bien connu, deux événements perceptifs ont d'autant plus de chances d'être liés (dans le monde réel) qu'ils sont proches ; mais ces événements peuvent être de nature spatiale aussi bien que temporelle, et il peut s'agir d'une proximité dans l'espace ou dans le temps.

En conclusion, le temps et l'espace apparaissent donc comme des catégories fondamentales, non pas à priori, comme le voulait Kant, mais construites au moment même où se construit le sens, grâce aux mécanismes dipolaires, catégories fondamentales et étroitement associées.

4 J'ai parlé de catégorie, car, peu à peu, nous nous sommes approchés de cette notion. C'est en effet la mise en évidence et le stockage de qualités coordonnées qui permet d'élaborer des catégories, et dès lors d'intégrer des entités à ces classes. Partis de la perception la plus élémentaire, nous sommes donc arrivés aux encyclopédies les plus complexes

2.2 Vers des espaces sémiotisés

La stabilisation des qualités dans le temps et leur coordination dans l'objet devient particulièrement opérante dès l'instant où les catégorisations auxquelles elles aboutissent sont partageables au sein de la communauté sociale où elles ont été élaborées. Une stabilité interindividuelle ou intersubjective de la catégorie vient ainsi s'ajouter aux deux autres stabilités déjà étudiées (stabilisation dans l'objet, ou coordination, et stabilisation dans le temps, ou remémoration). Et une troisième invariance — sociale cette fois — vient s'adjoindre aux invariances spatiale et temporelle. Ici jouent toujours des phénomènes de seuillage, plus complexes encore que dans les deux premiers cas.

Cette partageabilité n'est possible que moyennant deux conditions. La première est l'amodalisation, qui rend compte de l'irritante question, posée d'entrée de jeu, du lien à établir entre un sens apparemment sans fondement physique et des phénomènes physiques apparemment dénués de sens. L'amodalité du sens fait que ce dernier est débrayé par rapport à l'expérience immédiate (une catégorie comme « dangerosité » peut être mobilisée autant devant un tigre que devant une amanite phalloïde ou une prise électrique).

La seconde condition de la partageabilité est la mise au point d'artifices qui sont les signes, dont on a souvent fait l'objet même de la discipline sémiotique, et qui permettent le même débrayage : si je puis mobiliser la catégorie de la « dangerosité » devant l'amanite, l'expérience de cette dangerosité a été faite par d'autres que moi, et ne m'a été transmise que par des discours.

La fonction des signes — parmi lesquels ceux du langage — consiste à stocker des réserves de sens. Ce stockage est rendu possible par une mémoire de nature neuronale (et non plus seulement chimique), impliquant une conscience, même fruste. Le signe postule bien cette mémoire, puisqu'il se définit par des appariements plus ou moins réguliers et systématiques de formes du plan du contenu avec des formes du plan de l'expression. Or cette systématité est le produit de processus de stabilisation qui tendent à rendre ces appariements réguliers, sinon permanents.

Ayant ainsi accédé au niveau du sens partagé, nous sommes arrivés au niveau des espaces sémiotisés, qui peuvent être de natures très différentes. Chaque langue renvoie ainsi à un modèle d'espace sémiotisé, et ces espaces linguistiquement signifiés par les langues seront différents de ceux que créent les mathématiciens (pour qui, d'ailleurs, il n'y a pas non plus *un* seul modèle d'espace).

3 Perception, culture et langage

3.1 Variété culturelle des espaces et des temps

Variété du monde, variété des sensorialités : il doit donc fatalement y avoir une variété des espaces perceptif et sémiotisés. D'autant plus qu'il peut y avoir usage idiosyncrasique d'une sensorialité.

Les seuils de discrimination peuvent ainsi jouer de façon très différente chez les sujets, déterminant ce que l'on peut appeler des « styles de perception » différenciés. Certaines personnes sont par exemple incapables de percevoir les fameux stéréogrammes et d'autres

sont expertes dans cette perception impliquant la production d'un tridimensionnalité à partir des données d'un plan ; d'autres gèrent de manière particulière le principe de proximité et sont par exemple habiles ou inhabiles à organiser les points visibles dans le ciel de façon à y repérer les constellations ; d'autres encore, dans les cas de bistabilité (le fameux canard-lapin), optent pour une seule des deux solutions possibles sans pouvoir percevoir l'autre ; d'autres enfin sont plus ou moins trompés par le camouflage...

Mais surtout, ces styles de perception peuvent à leur tour être modulés selon divers paramètres sociologiques ou anthropologiques, comme le sexe ou — comme on l'a vu plus haut — l'appartenance à une culture donnée. En outre, les seuils de discrimination peuvent être gérés de manière volontaire : c'est le cas du peintre qui cligne des yeux et modifie ainsi de manière systématique sa perception visuelle de l'espace en filtrant certains paramètres.

Tout ceci a des répercussions considérables sur les espaces sémiotisés. En fixant un seuil de discrimination très bas, la vision d'un espace catégorisable comme paysage ne livrera que deux entités : le ciel et la terre. Mais l'intervention de seuils plus nombreux et plus différenciés donnera les habitations, les prés, les étangs, les nuages... soient des entités plus nombreuses et plus petites.

Que l'espace perceptif débouche finalement sur des espaces sémiotisés éminemment variables nous rapproche donc de l'univers culturel, dans lequel les langages jouent un rôle si important

De multiples interactions se produisent donc entre nos perceptions et nos modèles culturels. Par exemple, c'est évidemment de notre perception — par définition subjecto-centrée — que proviennent les modèles géographiques présentant le monde sous forme de cercle et les modèles cosmologiques présentant le ciel sous les espèces d'une voûte. Ces analogies se fossilisent elles-mêmes dans des expressions langagières. Cette variabilité a aussi pour corolaire qu'il est possible de situer une expérience dans plusieurs espaces à la fois, comme c'est le cas avec le théâtre ou le cinéma.

3.2 La perception et les langages

Établir que les sémiotiques reflètent le processus par lequel nous acquérons une connaissance élémentaire par la voie des sens permet de dépasser les réticences exprimées par Benveniste — et, avec lui, par une part importante de la linguistique du dernier demi-siècle — au sujet de « l'accord entre l'esprit et le monde », surtout lorsque cet accord est présenté sous une forme ausso péremptoire que celle que lui donne Höfding (1902) lorsqu'il postule une « analogie absolue [...] entre le rapport du sujet au prédicat et le rapport des choses aux qualités sensibles ». Une sémiotique cognitive permet toutefois d'échapper à de telles approximations.

Pour le démontrer, reprenons une des descriptions aujourd'hui classiques du sens, élaborée en terrain purement linguistique. Selon Greimas, les syntagmes font nécessairement apparaître un certain nombre de dichotomies classématiques, dont l'une est l'opposition discret/intégré. Pour lui, un sémème discret apparaît posé comme objet unitaire et substantiel : ce sera un actant. De même un sémème intégré est un en-

semble de déterminations sémiques, qu'il appelle prédicat. Un énoncé élémentaire est ainsi par définition constitué d'un actant combiné à un prédicat.

On s'avise aisément que cette réflexion, inspirée par le désir de dégager une structure syntaxique de base, converge remarquablement avec notre modélisation : la structure linguistique élémentaire correspond bien, mutatis mutandis, à l'association perceptive entre une entité ségrégeable et une qualité distinctive⁵. On l'a vu (§ 1.2), la connaissance élémentaire est en effet constituée par une entité et une qualité définissant l'une l'autre dans l'acte de perception. D'un côté, le soleil est identifié comme un corps céleste qui brille, de l'autre, l'éclat lumineux est une qualité saillante du soleil, qui permet d'identifier celui-ci. L'entité est ainsi extraite du champ de perception et stabilisée selon les modalités décrites au § 2, et son correspondant sémiotique (ici le signifié du syntagme nominal) est articulé à ses voisins par une relation qui sera décrite ci-après (§ 4.3. a) comme « de type Π » mais que je puis déjà définir comme le type de relation qui unit la partie et le tout. La qualité, qui subit le même traitement, entre quant à elle en relation avec les autres qualités dans une arborescence organisée cette fois sur le « mode Σ » (c'est le type de relation qui unit le genre et l'espèce). L'articulation de cette entité et de cette qualité est équivalente à la connaissance en question, et une de ses expressions linguistiques possibles est la prédication⁶. On dira donc que l'expression sémiotique de la connaissance élémentaire est une structure syntagmatique élémentaire (ou minimale) binomiale⁷.

Bien évidemment, la forme que prend cette structure varie selon les sémiotiques considérées. Si l'on reste sur le plan linguistique, les caractéristiques du binôme varieront selon les catégories privilégiées par les langues. Telle langue peut privilégier la catégorie du verbe pour désigner des invariants processuels ou aspectuels (« l'eau coule »), telle autre recourir à d'autres mécanismes comme les adjectifs (« la fleur est jaune »), ou des particules spécialisées dans les langues agglutinantes, etc. Mais ces formulations ne rappellent pas que le mouvement de l'eau n'est perçu que par contraste avec l'immobilité des berges, ni que le rouge du pavot est ce qui le distingue du souci ou de la pervenche. Incomplètes, elles mènent à privilégier des énoncés qui ne font pas justice au caractère contrastif de la perception, lequel exige deux entités à comparer. Pour nous, le binôme syntagmatique

5 Ce que Edeline établissait déjà en 1972.

6 Je dis bien « une de ses expressions ». Car la proposition de Greimas formalise la conception prédicative du langage — clairement exposée par Pradines, 1948 —, conception qui était précisément celle de Höffding, dont on sait aujourd'hui qu'elle était trop étroitement liée à la grammaire classique élaborée pour rendre compte des langues indoeuropéennes ; sans doute est-il plus prudent d'élargir la perspective, et d'utiliser la terminologie thème-rhème. Il n'empêche que parmi les universaux linguistiques les moins contestables, on trouve l'opposition catégorielle entre le syntagme verbal et le syntagme nominal, quelle que soit la description que l'on donne de leur relation (et qui constitue d'ailleurs la base de la grammaire générative). La forme linguistique de l'entité est donc le syntagme nominal, qui sera l'actant de Greimas (homme, soleil, feu...), la manifestation linguistique de la qualité, correspondant au prédicat, étant le syntagme verbal.

7 Le rapport entre connaissance et structure syntagmatique (l'« analogie absolue » de Höffding) peut être décrit de manière rigoureuse, en évitant le piège du nominalisme, grâce à la technique dite du graphe dual, dont l'exposé technique serait trop long. Cf. Edeline (2008) et Groupe μ (2015, chap. II).

élémentaire doit prendre la forme d'une fonction propositionnelle à deux variables. Cette fonction, malgré son aspect positif, est en fait la marque d'une différence ou d'une altérité, ce qui est conforme, notons-le, à la définition classique — établie par Saussure, et reprise par Hjelmslev et Greimas — de la valeur comme négativité. Les analyses que présupposent ces formulations font aussi l'impasse sur la simple relation de co-présence entre la rivière et la berge, entre la fleur et la tige. Or ces interactions cognitives sont fondamentales, puisque ce sont elles qui produisent les articulations, dont le correspondant sémiotique sera la syntaxe.

Ma tâche dans la présente contribution n'est pas d'aller plus loin dans la comparaison des structures cognitives élémentaires et des structures linguistiques de même statut. Il est de proposer une sémiotique des temps et des espaces vécus, sur lesquelles les langues prennent appui.

4 Une sémiotique des espaces vécus

4.1 La détermination subjecto-sensorielle

Tout ce qui précède pointe en effet une tâche qui incombe à la sémiotique, tâche dont la réalisation peut en corolaire servir les objectifs des linguistes : élaborer une grammaire de l'espace.

Non point une grammaire « naturelle » de l'espace : on a vu qu'elle était impossible, l'espace physique étant hors d'atteinte ; non point une grammaire « géométrique » de l'espace : même si les techniques descriptives de la sémantique de l'espace dans les langues s'inspirent parfois de modèles géométriques ou logiques — comme dans les travaux de Clarck (1973), Hawkins (1985) Miller et Johnson-Laird (1976) —, ces modèles sont inappropriés car ils ne rendent compte que de certains types très sophistiqués d'espace sémiotisé fort éloignés de ceux qu'élaborent les usagers des langues.

Contre une grammaire « naturelle » de l'espace et une grammaire « géométrique » de l'espace, il faut donc penser à une grammaire des espaces sémiotisés, tenant compte des transductions agissant entre le temps et l'espace comme phénomènes physiques et le temps et l'espace des langues. Les travaux de Langacker (1982) ou de Herkovits (1986) pour l'espace en anglais, de Vandeloise (1986) pour l'espace en français, vont en ce sens et sont plus proches de la perspective cognitive qui est la notre, mais restent confinés dans le langage et n'envisageant pas de transpositions à d'autres sémiotiques.

Il y a toutefois une base commune entre les perspectives géométrico-logiques et cognitives. Même si ce fondement reste implicite, surtout chez les tenants de la première perspective. Ladite base a un double aspect..

Le premier est l'origine même du système de référence. Cette origine, c'est évidemment le sujet, avec ses déterminations morphologiques et physiques. Or le sujet humain — mais des déterminations équivalentes existent dans d'autres espèces — ordonne ses démarches anasémiotiques et catasémiotiques selon une série d'axes. Il présente ainsi, on l'a vu, une certaine forme de symétrie gauche-droite, dont la genèse réside dans la contrainte d'une structure dipolaire (c'est l'axe de la latéralité) ; il présente une face avant et une face

arrière, asymétriques selon l'axe de la longitudinalité (la longitudinalité est donc orientée : frontalité et dorsalité), et il est sensible à la pesanteur, d'où l'axe de la verticalité, lui aussi asymétrique. La tridimensionnalité de l'espace cartésien n'a évidemment pas d'autre origine.

Le deuxième aspect commun est un corolaire du premier : si sujet il y a, c'est qu'il y a nécessairement eu sensorialité. Si la verticalité peut être dite le produit de la pesanteur, elle ne l'est que parce qu'il y a eu, selon notre modèle, interaction entre la donnée physique et l'organisme percevant, sensible proprioceptivement à l'attraction des masses.

Cet apport du sujet et de ses sensorialités — ce que j'appellerais détermination subjecto-sensorielle — est capital pour l'établissement d'une grammaire des espaces sémiotisés, puisqu'elle détermine une logique anthropocentrée qu'expriment d'ailleurs la plupart des langues. Ainsi, « être proches dans l'espace ou dans le temps » — c'est, on s'en souviendra la base du principe de proximité de Gogel — n'a de sens que si on précise l'échelle de référence, et on devine que dans la visée relativiste qui est la notre, il ne peut y avoir d'échelle absolue⁸.

La détermination subjecto-sensorielle permet de dégager une série d'unités de bases constitutives d'une grammaire des espaces vécus qui sont autant de structures de l'expérience spatio-temporelle.

Cette grammaire étant encore à écrire, je me limiterai à en fournir quelques éléments. Et à partir d'ici, je reviendrai à la distinction classique temps-espace pour identifier, de manière cursive, ce que l'on pourrait nommer des « chorèmes », unités de la sémiotique de l'espace⁹, et des « chronèmes », unités de la sémiotique du temps.

4.2 Chorèmes

Les chorèmes de bases sont liés aux sensorialités qui permettent la perception de l'espace, essentiellement la vision, le toucher et la proprioception. Ce sont :

- ceux qui s'ordonnent autour de la forme, avec leurs sous-unités que sont la position, l'orientation, la dimension¹⁰ ;

8 L'univers des sciences tend quant à lui à s'arracher aux déterminations sensorielles. Par exemple, pour Euler et longtemps encore après lui, la continuité était définie via une transposition motrice : une courbe est dite continue quand on peut « la tracer sans lever le crayon ». Weierstrass et Cauchy ont amélioré cette définition en éliminant la notion de mouvement et en la remplaçant par la notion de limite, précisant qu'on peut être « aussi près qu'on veut » d'un point. Cette définition est un pas de plus en direction de la désensorialisation, qu'elle n'élimine cependant pas totalement

9 Je donne à ce mot un sens plus général que celui qu'il a en géographie, où on a proposé une « chorématique », qui réduit le territoire à une série d'éléments schématiques (Oudart, 1993).

10 Ils sont susceptibles de faire l'objet d'une description sémiotique rigoureuse. Ainsi, « haut » et « bas » sont disjoints en tant qu'ils occupent les deux pôles de l'axe sémantique de la verticalité, mais ils sont conjoints car c'est leur opposition même qui constitue cet axe. On a donc une hiérarchie d'axes sémantiques, dans laquelle un axe, conjoignant deux unités, devient le pôle disjoint d'un nouvel axe et ainsi de suite. De la sorte, le « haut » prend toute sa signification par rapport au « bas », mais tous deux sont conjoints sur un axe sémantique commun, celui de la « verticalité ». Celui-ci s'oppose à son tour à l'axe de « l'horizontalité », sur lequel s'organisent à leur tour ceux

- ceux qui s'ordonnent autour de la couleur, avec leurs chromèmes que sont la dominante chromatique, la saturation, la luminance ;
- ceux qui s'ordonnent autour de la texture, avec leurs texturèmes, que sont la nature des éléments répétés, la loi de répétition de ces éléments).
- ceux qui s'ordonnent autour de la césie (classe de phénomènes liés aux traitements de la lumière par les matériaux, comme l'opacité, la transparence, la specularité ; cfr Groupe μ , 2018), avec leurs césèmes que sont sa diffusivité, la perméabilité et l'absorptivité. On notera que les langues prennent ces chorèmes en charge grâce à des techniques différentes (par exemple prépositions et morphèmes verbaux pour les chorèmes de forme et adjectifs pour les chorèmes chromatiques).

Même si l'on a déjà ici des phénomènes d'une grande complexité (cf. Groupe μ , 1992 et 2015), on peut adresser trois critiques à un « alphabet » de chorèmes qui serait limité à ces unités. D'une part l'énumération que je viens de donner se réduit à des traits monosémiques. Or ces unités ont pour vocation de se combiner entre elles (par exemple une orientation et une position, une couleur et une texture, une dimension et une césie). En outre, la description qu'elle donne des phénomènes spatiaux est statique, alors que ces phénomènes peuvent connaître des variations dans le temps. Enfin, elle ignore les valeurs pragmatiques et cognitives provenant de leur appréhension par un sujet. Il faut donc compléter l'inventaire en convoquant des chorèmes complexes. Ce seront :

a) Les chorèmes dynamiques.

Dynamiques, il faut donc intervenir le temps : ce sont tous ceux qui se réfèrent aux mouvements dans l'espace, que ce soit le mouvement du corps du sujet, celui de son regard ou celui des objets perçus. Ces chorèmes dynamiques sont des ensembles complexes, puisque les mouvements ont eux-mêmes des déterminations aussi diverses que

- les trajectoires, lesquelles connaissent des orientations potentiellement variées (centripète/centrifuge, droit/courbe, sénestrogyre/dextrogyre...);
- les vitesses (avec les variations de vitesse : accélération/ralentissement);
- les répétitions, débouchant, lorsqu'elles obéissent au principe de Gogel, sur des rythmes, rythmes dont on connaît la variété typologique (cf. Groupe μ , 1877).

b) les chorèmes pragmatico-cognitif.

Parmi ceux-ci :

- La structure connue des objets (étant entendu que par « objet », on peut entendre des êtres animés ; « objet » est ici simplement la contrepartie de « sujet »). Certains objets ont ainsi une *orientation intrinsèque*, indépendante des usages momentanés qu'on en fait, mais dépendant des usages socialement admis pour eux : l'armoire a ainsi un devant et un arrière, comme le vélo, mais non le pot de confiture ; la table a un dessus et un dessous, etc. D'autres objets ont des structures cognitives comme

de la « latéralité » (avec l'opposition « gauche » vs « droite ») et de la « longitudinalité » (avec l'opposition « devant » vs « derrière »).

la relation contenant/contenu : ainsi, en français, on peut être « dans une armoire », mais pas « *dans une table » (cfr Vandeloise, 1986). Ces structures dépendent évidemment de données culturelles (dans certaines culture, l'arbre peut avoir des orientations intrinsèques horizontales, alors que dans les cultures européennes, il ne connaît que la verticalité). Mais, quand les objets sont des fabricats, l'évolution des techniques peut affecter ses structures (par exemple, avec un écran d'ordinateur, on peut utiliser les prépositions françaises « devant », « sur » et « derrière », mais non « *sous »).

- La résistance des objets. Et par là j'entend la résistance aux différentes sensorialités — vue, toucher, sens haptique... — comme aux actions auxquelles ces objets sont soumis — percer, traverser... — et aux mouvements qu'on leur imprime. Ces résistances déterminent le paramètre important de *l'accès à la perception*. Vandeloise (1986) observe ainsi que la préposition française « derrière » vaut pour deux configurations qui n'ont rien à voir entre elles du point de vue géométrique, mais qui ont en commun d'empêcher l'accès direct : être situé dans le dos du sujet ou devant lui mais de l'autre côté d'une cloison.

4.3 Chronèmes

Du côté des chronèmes, il conviendra de distinguer ceux qui concernent les objets temporalisables et ceux qui concernent les différents types d'appréhension du temps.

a) Les objets temporalisés

Du côté des chronèmes que sont les types d'objets temporalisés, on distinguera le temps du contenu et le temps de l'expression, distinction classique en linguistique et en sémiotique. Par exemple le temps de l'histoire du monde est celui du contenu, celui qui est mis à raconter cette histoire étant la temporalité de l'expression.

La temporalité du contenu énoncé dans les discours et dans les langages qui les rendent possibles est basée sur des compartimentage (strict ou flou). Ces compartiments ou fragments, qui sont autant de chronèmes, se présentent sous la forme de séquences ordonnées selon des logiques syntaxiques qui peuvent varier. Les anthropologues et les historiens des religions distinguent ainsi des temps progressifs irréversibles, des temps neutralisés et réversibles, où des termes identiques se répètent de manière quasi-mécanique, des temps ondulatoires, cycliques et réversibles...

Ces logiques syntaxiques comportent elles-mêmes des règles qui sont autant de chronèmes. Les langues, comme maintes autres sémiotiques (telle le récit), expriment ainsi souvent un type de chronème-contenu que l'on peut appeler vecteur temporel. C'est lui que les grammaires traitent fréquemment sous le nom — dont nous savons maintenant combien il est réducteur et ambigu — de « temps ». Ces sémiotiques ordonnent en effet les séquences de compartiments selon les trois perspectives temporelles « avant », « après » et « pendant », que cet ordonnancement se fasse *in præsentia* ou *in absentia*. Car des compartiments peuvent être ordonnés sans pour autant être présents. Par exemple, le

récit est souvent une relation entre deux contenus dont l'un n'est pas manifesté mais est postulé¹¹.

Quand la question devient le lien entre le compartiment signifié et le reste du processus — lequel peut impliquer une énonciation —, la vectorialité se mue en aspectualité.

Les chronèmes que sont les compartiments peuvent connaître des phénomènes d'articulation. Autrement dit, ils peuvent tantôt être subdivisés en unités d'un rang inférieur, tantôt se combiner pour constituer des unités d'un rang supérieur. Autrement dit, ils peuvent être structurés selon les deux modes de relation sémantique que décrit la sémiotique : ou le mode $\sum$ (dont relèvent par exemple les relations du genre et de l'espèce, de la catégorie et de son représentant) ou le mode $\prod$ (comme la relation de la partie au tout, ou de l'antécédent au conséquent, qui ne sont jamais que deux parties d'un même processus)¹². Un même domaine conceptuel peut être structuré sur l'un et l'autre mode.

11 Sur la base de ce principe, même les images fixes isolées peuvent se voir organisées sur un vecteur. On a ainsi des images postulant une temporalité antérieure (le référent de l'icône est le *résultat* du processus. Exemple : un vase brisé par terre, conséquence sa chute ; on injecte ici une continuité rétrospective), des images postulant une temporalité postérieure (le référent de l'icône est l'*amorce* du processus. Exemple : l'élan, « postsupposant » le plongeon qui va avoir lieu ; on peut ici parler de continuité projective) et des images postulant deux temporalités, l'une antérieure, l'autre postérieure (le référent de l'icône est alors un *instant intermédiaire* du processus. Exemples : le vol, présupposant l'envol et postsupposant l'atterrissage; Icare les jambes hors de l'eau, présupposant la chute et postsupposant l'immersion. C'est la continuité pure et simple). On notera qu'assez souvent, dans l'image unique — mais ceci vaudra aussi pour les séquences —, c'est la dernière technique qui prévaut : le moment qui est représenté est fréquemment ce que les critiques d'art ont appelé le *punctum temporis*, ou le « pregnant moment ». C'est-à-dire le moment d'un processus à partir duquel on peut, grâce à l'encyclopédie, reconstruire deux continuités distinctes, l'une projective, l'autre rétrospective. Exemple : le retour du fils prodigue, où se manifeste dans le même temps le geste d'accueil du père et la colère dans laquelle il a vécu jusque là. Le *punctum* est une rupture de la continuité, au sens propre une catastrophe.

12 La sémiotique cognitive réhabilite en effet les relations méréologiques — de partie à tout et de tout à partie — que la sémantique traditionnelle, comme aussi la sémantique linguistique structurale moderne et la sémiotique qui en est issue voulaient ignorer. Or, on a pu montrer (Groupe μ , 1970a et 1970b, Édeline, 1972) qu'il était qu'il est impossible d'élaborer une théorie sémantique complète sans distinguer des relations entre unités que nous avons appelées « de type $\sum$ » — celles du genre et de l'espèce —, et des relations méréologiques « de type $\prod$ ». Pourquoi « mode $\sum$ » et « mode $\prod$ » ? Parce que, dans la première décomposition, les sous-classes obtenues forment une disjonction au sein de la classe qui les surplombe : il y a équivalence entre la proposition « x est un arbre » et l'ensemble des propositions « x est un chêne », « x est un peuplier », etc. Ces propositions sont mutuellement exclusives (on ne peut être à la fois chêne et peuplier). Or des propositions mutuellement exclusives sont dans un rapport de somme logique, et le signe conventionnel de la somme est $\sum$. Dans la langue courante, ce rapport sera exprimé par la conjonction « ou » (un « ou » exclusif) : si « x est un arbre », alors « x est un chêne » ou « un peuplier », ou « un hêtre », etc. Dans la seconde organisation, il n'est plus question de ranger le référent dans des classes emboîtées selon un critère de généralité, mais de procéder à une décomposition du tout en ses parties (ou encore, de l'associer à d'autres entités pour constituer, par regroupement, une nouvelle entité d'un rang supérieur). Or les parties sont entre elles en rapport de produit logique, et le signe conventionnel du produit est $\prod$. Dans la langue courante, ce rapport est exprimé par la conjonction « et » : il y a

Ainsi, à partir d'une même donnée expérientielle de base, on peut aboutir à deux modes de décomposition, et donc de catégorisation, fort différents.

De même que dans les chorèmes, il fallait ménager une place à la structure connue des objets, dans le cadre du temps du contenu, il faut en ménager une au chronème qu'est la temporalité connue des objets. Autrement dit aux propriétés attribuées aux objets indépendamment de toute narration : le plongeur, le ballon l'arbalète, sont des objets qui impliquent une potentialité de mouvement (le plongeon, la chute, le roulement, la portée), qui est lui-même constitutif d'une temporalité (Groupe μ , 1997 et 2018, chap. XIII).

Quant à l'expression, elle a évidemment sa temporalité propre, dont la structure a bien été mise en évidence par les spécialistes du récit. C'est dans le cadre de cette temporalité de l'expression qu'il faut situer celle du processus de l'énonciation, à quoi répond la temporalité de l'appropriation des énoncés¹³.

b) les appréhensions du temps

La notion de temps est indissolublement liée à celle de durée, ou longueur de temps, et à celle de vitesse d'écoulement du temps.

Indépendants en droit, ces deux chronèmes sont en fait liés. En principe, la vitesse est un rapport entre la temporalité de l'objet et celle de son appréhension, par exemple dans le cadre d'une énonciation (c'est le cas de l'accélééré au cinéma, ou dans le roman, comme dans la célèbre phrase de *L'éducation sentimentale*). Elle dépend donc partiellement de la temporalité du référent, c'est à dire de sa durée.

Ces deux temporalités peuvent être incommensurables. Celle de l'énonciation est en effet un artefact humain, donc soumise aux contraintes du temps humain. Un référent peut parfaitement être doté d'une temporalité incommensurable avec cette temporalité humaine. Une image fixe est en effet « la représentation visuelle d'un objet dont la mobilité est ou bien plus faible que celle de l'observateur (comme c'est le cas de la forme d'un objet durablement immobile : caillou, table, coquillage...) ou bien plus grande (flamme, météorite, cascade...), obligeant l'homme à user d'un artifice (une machine construite par lui) pour le regarder à sa propre échelle de temps ». Et l'auteur de cette remarque de conclure : [l'image] n'est jamais sans mouvement, jamais intrinsèquement statique » (Luciani, 1996 : 63). Dans le cas d'un objet dont le processus de transformation excède le temps humain, son temps à lui est décrété inexistant, et on dit qu'il est immobile.

équivalence entre la proposition « x est un arbre » et le produit logique des propositions « x a des feuilles » et « des racines » et « un tronc », etc.

13 À ce double temps de l'énonciation doit sans doute aussi être associé celui qui affecte la manifestation matérielle du plan de l'énoncé, postérieurement au processus de l'énonciation (c'est l'exemple de la photo qui jaunit, du papier qui se craquèle). Mais ce temps-là se signifie par des indices (la comparaison entre deux états de texture, ou deux états de couleur) : il n'est pas narré. Sur le problème général de l'évolution des subjectiles et de sa signification, cf. Édeline (2013b & 2018).

5 Conclusion

L'espace et le temps sont donc les produits complexes de mécanismes perceptifs fondés sur des contrastes, débouchant sur l'attribution d'un sens à l'expérience. Ce sens est éminemment variable, accueillant la diversité du monde éprouvé. Et les sémiotiques le rendent partageable et communicable. Pour cela, ces langages s'appuient sur les structures élémentaires de la perception sémiotisante (contraste, entité, qualité, relation), en reflétant eux-mêmes dans leurs propres structures.

La variété éprouvée trouve à se décliner dans les langages, qui la manifestent à leur tour. Depuis Lessing, l'esthétique a coutume de distinguer les arts du temps et les arts de l'espace. Cette distinction, formulée intuitivement, repose en fait sur les propriétés de certaines sensorialités, qui ont pour effet de traiter de manière spécifique les produits de la perception. Mais l'image, fixe autant que mobile, et nos arts comme la peinture, le théâtre ou le cinéma, renvoient tous à cette expérience de la variété. Au premier rang des instruments les plus sophistiqués servant ainsi à structurer l'expérience se trouvent bien sûr les langues, au sens strict du terme, les langues humaines. L'épaisseur de leur temporalité historique fait qu'en elles se sédimentent le produit des expériences faites par les cultures au cours des siècles¹⁴. À chaque linguiste de montrer comment la langue particulière qui est l'objet de ses soins décline cette expérience fondamentale où se marient l'espace et le temps.

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14 On peut poser que les espaces situationnels et évènementiels sémiotisés par les cultures dans le passé ont été le support épistémique de leurs langages. Les espaces et les temps fabriqués aujourd'hui — par le théâtre, le cinéma, l'urbanisme, la réalité virtuelle, etc. — sont évidemment les expressions d'un nouvel imaginaire temporel et spatial qui ne manquera pas, à la longue, de se traduire dans les langues. Mais la résilience de celles-ci empêche évidemment de prévoir ces évolutions.

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The Concept of ‘Frontier’ in New Kingdom Egypt

A Comparative Approach to the Spatiality of Ideology

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Abstract

The expansion of New Kingdom Egypt beyond its territory within a period of 50 years was accompanied by an ideological narrative that conceptualized the Egyptian state against foreign communities. Drawing on border and frontier studies, this paper discusses the idea attached to the frontier as a demarcating space between ‘civilization’ and ‘barbarism’. A comparison of Egyptian ideas on different spaces with (Early) Modern European, Roman and Chinese political thought suggests that the basic properties of a frontier concept were already present in ancient Egyptian political thought during the New Kingdom in the shape of the Ma’at-Izfet dichotomy.

1 Introduction

The relationship between *Ma’at* and *Izfet*—order and chaos—in Egyptian thought has been an oft-enunciated concept. However, whereas its implications for religious matters have been well understood, the same cannot be said about its relationship with politics. The Egyptian New Kingdom, marked by Egypt’s greatest expansion into foreign territory, could serve as a suitable case study to shed light on the role of the idea of Ma’at and Izfet as legitimizing factors. A comparative approach to the spatiality of ideology could reveal whether an Egyptian concept of ‘frontier’ is concealed in Egyptian political thought and designated by the antagonism of Ma’at and Izfet – something usually associated with European political thought. Rather than viewing a frontier as a line on a map or real-life division between communities or individuals, this paper discusses the idea attached to the frontier. The main focus is the ideological dimension to frontier concepts. Initially, it is necessary to discuss the usage of terminology in this contribution.

1.1 Border and Frontier Terminologies

Although the terms border and frontier have been used simultaneously, also in recent scholarship, there is a difference between frontiers and borders.

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As Theodore Ropp remarked, “[t]he American definition of frontier is very different from that of the German definition of *Grenze*. The frontier is not the established line between two powers of roughly the same cultural development, but a line between civilization and barbarism”.²

Walter Mignolo has similarly built on a difference between frontiers and borders. He regards frontiers as an issue of territorial epistemology:

[B]orders (they called them ‘frontiers’ in the advance of civilization) were traced by actors inhabiting the territory and guarding it from ‘foreign’ forces. The problem is that modern Western epistemology is territorial, and territorial epistemology presupposes ‘the frontier’ rather than the border. On the other side of the frontier exists the void, namely space to be conquered or civilized.³

According to Mignolo, frontiers are both conceptualizations of knowledge and space “where civilization was supposed to end and barbarism begins: a space to be conquered”.⁴

Stephen Quirke also differentiated between frontier and borders as different forms of boundaries in his terminology – albeit with a focus on the Middle Kingdom and the north-eastern Delta. Building up on the work of Anthony Giddens, who argued that ‘traditional states’ had frontiers rather than borders, Quirke proposed that a frontier was “a loose boundary, that is an indefinite zone where the polity comes to an end. In contrast a border is a fixed line.”⁵ He went on to argue that a border as a fixed line was agreed upon by both parties that would be spatially separated by that border.⁶ Connecting this with Mignolo’s argument, it is fair to say that borders are bilaterally agreed upon while a frontier is unilaterally conceived.⁷ By contrast, Ellen Morris used the terms ‘frontier (zone)’ and border in her study on New Kingdom military bases, yet she neither defined either term nor discussed their connotations. Hence these terms remain obscure. Her use of the vocabulary, though, suggests that the two do not have the same meaning for her and that she rather made a similar distinction between borders and frontiers, just without clarifying that.⁸ The English translation of Jan Assmann’s work *Ägypten: Eine Sinngeschichte* introduces a subchapter on ‘The Idea of Frontier’,⁹ yet the title in the German original is ‘Die Vorstellung von Grenze’.¹⁰ ‘Frontier’ and ‘border’ are both used in the English version, which suggests different connotations. However, the context makes clear that both are used interchangeably to mark a political as well as a cultural boundary. For example, both ‘expanding the frontier’ and ‘expanding the borders’ do occur. The German original uses ‘Grenze’ in these instances. This means, that an idea or concept of frontier the way it

2 Ropp (1980: 245) (emphasis original).

3 Mignolo (2017: 13–14); see also Mignolo (2012: 298–299).

4 Mignolo (2012: 299).

5 Quirke (1989: 261).

6 Quirke (1989: 261–262).

7 See also § 5.1.

8 Morris (2005: *passim*).

9 Assmann (2002: 150–151).

10 Assmann (1996: 171–173).

is proposed in this contribution is not present in Assmann’s work either, although the English translation—by inappropriate wording—implies the contrary. Similarly, the French ‘frontière’ is just as inclusive as the German ‘Grenze’.

To summarize the key properties of ‘frontier’: Frontiers are not only constructions of boundaries in space but also of boundaries between human beings;¹¹ they are not only territorial but also epistemological boundaries—i.e. demarcating spaces between different ideologies and modes of knowledge production; the side conceiving the frontier usually perceives itself to be superior to the Other; the frontier is unilaterally conceived (usually by the supposedly superior side); the concept propagates the spread of the dominant epistemology in a ‘civilizing mission’; and ultimately, the term ‘frontier’ denotes an unequal relationship between societies. The idea of ‘frontier’ both constitutes and legitimizes this unequal relationship.

2 Historical Background

After defeating the Hyksos and re-establishing centralized authority throughout Egypt from the First Cataract in the South to the Mediterranean Coast in the North, the attention of the Egyptian elite turned south, beyond the First Cataract. Here, with the state of Kerma, a powerful Nubian entity posed a threat to the interest of the Egyptian elite in the South. In fact, Kerma had invaded Upper Egypt, possibly in an attempt to capture it, and later on allied with the Hyksos to counter Egypt’s aspirations to independence from their Hyksos overlords. During the course of the Eighteenth Dynasty, the Egyptians managed to conquer and occupy the bigger part of Nubia in a series of military campaigns and establish a system of colonial rule – effectively annihilating the Kerman state. After the colonization of Nubia, the Egyptian administration shifted its focus to the Levant in the North. The Megiddo campaign in the 1450s BCE led to the vassalization of the Levantine states from the border with Egypt to Ugarit in the North. Only the fertile Jezreel plain with Megiddo as the administrative centre and military garrison was directly controlled by Egyptians as the occupying force. The Levant would serve as the battleground and buffer zone for the regional great powers of Egypt, the Hittites, and Mitanni for the next two hundred years.

Within half a century, between the reigns of Thutmose I and Thutmose III (ca. 1500–1450 BCE), Egypt had managed to exert its dominance beyond the territory called *Kemet*, which was considered Egypt proper. Taking the Theban wars against the Hyksos into account, Egypt, as derived from the Theban state of the Second Intermediate Period, had expanded from the greater Theban area into the Levant and Nubia in just over a century. As a result, Egypt entertained formal control in Nubia and informal control in the Levant – save for Megiddo and its immediate surroundings. As is usual with expansion and conquest, the Egyptian appropriation of foreign lands was accompanied and legitimized by an according ideological narrative. That narrative is explored in the following section.

¹¹ Mignolo (1995: xi).

3 Ideological Framework

Egyptian ideology is characterized by dualism, or as seeing the world in black and white. The basic assumption is that the world is governed by two fundamentally opposing concepts, *Ma'at* and *Izfet*. *Ma'at* has different connotations but is best described as ‘order’—in the way that it represents everything that is true and good in the world according to the will of the Egyptian deities; actually, one would be better off by saying that *Ma'at* corresponds to the ideal world as envisioned by the Egyptian elite. Opposed to *Ma'at* is *Izfet*, which is best described as ‘disorder, chaos’—again as imagined by the Egyptian elite.

According to ideology the Egyptian territory was governed by *Ma'at* – order. Outside the realm of *Ma'at* there was *Izfet* – disorder and chaos. The most important and basically only task of the Egyptian king was to ensure this order continued to exist.¹² This task was given to him by the deities whose representative on Earth he was imagined to be. His duty also included defending the country from *Izfet* that was about to befall the order and security of Egypt. That already points to *Ma'at*'s importance to policy making. Just to mention this, Jan Assmann in his book on the concept of *Ma'at* focused heavily on the aspects of social justice and the implications of *Ma'at* for the afterlife; however, the Rolf Gundlach, on the other hand, brought to attention the political aspects of Egyptian ideology.¹³ It is this political relevance that is of interest in this contribution.

Coming back to policy making, just as Egypt was governed by *Ma'at*, the non-Egyptian lands were governed by *Izfet*. The disorder of the latter constantly posed a threat to the order of the former. As *Izfet* was not supposed to exist as it could threaten *Ma'at*, the task of the Egyptian king was also to replace *Izfet* with *Ma'at* – in other words he was supposed to spread *Ma'at* throughout the world as to ensure the dominion of divine order. One could also say that he was supposed to make the world Egypt. Of course, this was reflected in the way the foreign lands and their inhabitants were imagined in official Egyptian documents. In purely rhetorical, ideological texts, the foreign lands were conceived as subjugated by Egypt, their inhabitants subject to Egyptian supremacy. In effect, the inhabitants had been staunchly constructed as an ‘Other’ to Egypt.

As was already stressed by Antonio Loprieno, the foreigner embodied ‘*Unkultur*’ – unculture – in topical literature.¹⁴ Assmann explained that foreigners were regarded as “absolute aliens with whom any relations would be unthinkable”.¹⁵ This also included lands and peoples which were never governed by Egyptians. Official accounts of campaigns to foreign countries had the same tone. However, here the foreigner, i.e. the Other, served as the reason for war; they presented the Egyptian leadership with a *casus belli*. A famous example is the Megiddo campaign of Thutmose III which saw a Canaanite coalition about to mount an attack on Egypt when the Egyptian military started a pre-emptive strike. At least that is how it is described in the Egyptian sources and it might indeed be founded in

12 This describes what Assmann called ‘political *Ma'at*’ (see Assmann 1990:166–167).

13 Assmann (1990); Gundlach (1998).

14 Loprieno (1988: 23); see also Moers (2001: 210).

15 Assmann (1996: 150).

reality.¹⁶ However, one can observe that all of the New Kingdom wars were a response to aggression or rebellion on account of the Other. The best examples are acts of resistance against Egyptian dominance in the subjugated territories of Nubia and the Levant. Resistance in foreign lands would have been perceived as proof that chaos, that *Izfet*, is rife as Egyptian ideology had claimed all along. As a result, the Egyptian king would eventually have to crush the resistance against his divine and just rule in order to restore *Ma’at* to these lands since the Egyptian realm was the realm of *Ma’at*.

4 Egyptian Concepts and Terminologies

Logically, the realms of *Ma’at* – Egypt – and the realm of *Izfet* – foreign lands – were not the same and as such must have possessed a common borderland – both ideologically and in real life. In real life, the borderland between two societies serves as contact zone where all sorts of intermingling are going on,¹⁷ creating a kind of ‘grey’ zone. Borders are not a black and white concept as the name or rather the imagination of a border may imply. This exemplifies that borders are not real, but only perceived as real by means of social construction as people are expected to behave as if any given border truly existed. However, we must not assume that this is also the case with the ideological borderland between *Izfet* and *Ma’at*. This is a clear-cut black and white concept. In Egyptian ideology, there is no ‘grey’ space between the two. Once something is no longer *Ma’at* it is already *Izfet*. *Ma’at* is an absolute notion. *Ma’at* is possibly best characterized by totality. In real life, borders are neither total nor fixed. They can change their extent and course or be dismantled as a whole.

The Egyptians were already aware of the changing nature of their borders. José Galán has demonstrated that fact with his research into ancient Egyptian border terminology.¹⁸ He came up with two terms that designated borders in the ancient Egyptian language. One word is *tšš*; the other is *ḏr.w*. Both are usually translated as ‘border;’ however, they are not synonymous and have different connotations. They do not designate the same type of border or rather do not incorporate the same kind of territory.

According to Galán, *tšš* designated the territory that was directly or indirectly controlled by Egypt and can also be seen as Egypt’s sphere of influence.¹⁹ This would comprise both Egypt proper as well as its holdings in Nubia and the Levant. *ḏr.w*, on the other hand, designated the lands beyond the control of Egypt, beyond its sphere of influence.²⁰ In effect, *tšš* included both the Egyptian core region and its foreign possessions, i.e. annexed, colonized, occupied territories. Galán also established that *tšš.w* could be extended or reduced, that they were not fixed but had a changeable nature. The phrase *jrj tšš* or

16 Redford (1995: 155–156); Langer (2013: 60–61).

17 On the lived experience of borderlands as contact zones, see e.g. Anzaldúa (1987: 3).

18 Galán (1995). See also Chantraine & Winand in this volume.

19 See also Kootz (2013: 36–37). Earlier, Wolfgang Helck had equated *tšš* with ‘*Grenze*’ in the sense of a border, delineating it against *ḏr.w* as ‘*Endbereich*’ in the sense of an outer limit (Helck (1977: 896–897)).

20 See also Galán (2000: 25); Török (2009: 8).



Fig. 1 A possible visualization of the Ma'at-Izfet dichotomy during the early New Kingdom
© author

Izfet was constantly negotiated by the Egyptian regime and both its dependencies and the bordering realms. The ideological link of Egypt with order and foreign lands with disorder is the key to legitimize Egyptian aggression and the appropriation of foreign lands and people. As such, this link appears similar to the European concept of 'frontier' and other dichotomies that pit 'civilization' against 'barbarism.' Furthermore, as was already noted earlier by Quirke,²² *tš* was unilaterally conceived by the Egyptians; it was the king who commanded to establish or extend the border to another place. Its establishment was not a result of bilateral or multilateral negotiations, which also holds true for New Kingdom contexts. With respect to Egypt, the heart of its self-conception is perhaps best referred to as *Ma'at-Izfet dichotomy* (fig. 1).

s.wšh tš.w—to make or rather establish the border and extend the borders—demonstrates this changeable nature as they frequently featured in campaign reports of the New Kingdom. Borders were established or extended into Nubian or 'Asiatic' territory for example. The phrase *s.wšh tš.w* is also considered the ancient Egyptian equivalent to the modern term 'imperialism'.²¹ *ḏr.w*, on the other hand, was also not fixed. As the Egyptian sphere of influence encroached upon the foreign lands, the *ḏr.w* of foreign rulers gave way to the Egyptian *tš* and Egyptian dominance. As *tš* was extended into the foreign lands, *ḏr.w* was reduced and replaced with a system of Egyptian dominion. One can argue that *ḏr.w* was removed from the realm of Izfet and given into the realm of Ma'at by extending the *tš.w* and appropriating the former's territory. As a result, the worldly border between Ma'at and

²¹ Galán (1995); Langer (2013).

²² Quirke (1989: 262–263).

5 A Comparative Approach to Frontiers as Demarcating Spaces of Civilization versus *Barbarism*

A comprehensive study of all ideologies that pit 'civilization' and 'barbarism' against each other and how ancient Egyptian thought fits into such narratives may be a work on its own. Nonetheless, I would like to discuss a few cases to highlight the function of Egypt's Ma'at-Izfet dichotomy. A comparative approach can relinquish new results and even help develop further research questions. Three case studies are introduced in this chapter: the (Early) Modern European concept of frontier, the Roman concept of civilization versus barbarism, and the Sino-Barbarian dichotomy.

The European concept was selected for two reasons. On the one hand, it is the most well-known concept among western researchers and has become part of western thought, especially via United States pop culture. On the other hand, modern usage of the term goes back to precisely that idea of frontier. Additionally, the existence of Egyptology as an academic discipline may well be the result of developments that were fuelled by that very frontier narrative,²³ by a civilizing mission on part of European powers during the (Early) Modern Period.

Ancient Rome was chosen for several reasons. For once, it can be considered the archetype of an empire, considering that the very term goes back to the Latin language and the reign of Augustus, who formulated the basic principles he envisioned for the Roman Empire. Another reason is the chronological and spatial proximity with pharaonic Egypt.

The third example is the Sino-Barbarian dichotomy of pre-imperial and early imperial China. This case presents an othering narrative outside European contexts and is well researched. While it may not be spatially close to Egypt, much of ancient China's history is contemporary with Classical antiquity.

5.1 The (Early) Modern European Concept

The European concept of 'Frontier' is a product of Early Modern European imperialism. As the Iberian powers of Portugal and Spain, and later France and England or rather Great Britain, appropriated Amerindian lands in the Americas, they employed a frontier narrative that served them as ideological legitimation for their policies. Since the late Middle Ages, the Iberian Peninsula was regarded by Catholic Christianity as the frontier between Christianity and the Infidels, in this case Muslim or Moorish states. As Spanish states reclaimed territory from Muslim states during the *Reconquista*, the frontier moved south until 1492, when the final Muslim enclave had fallen into Spanish hands.²⁴

Spain, already constructed as the vanguard of Christianity, subsequently brought this concept to the Americas. In the so-called 'New World' the frontier would be between Christianity and Amerindian pagans. Noteworthy is the fact that the impression of the *Reconquista* was so vibrant in the memory of the early Spanish colonialists – for instance, under Hernan Cortez – that they saw the conquest of Mexico as the extension of the cam-

²³ Langer (2017: 182–185).

²⁴ Tyerman (2006: 650–673).

paigns in the Iberian Peninsula: The Moors served as the measure and means of comparison of the Aztecs.²⁵ In the subsequent appropriation of Amerindian lands by Europeans, the colonial powers would be constructed as ‘civilized’ while those not yet belonging to the European sphere of influence would be regarded as ‘uncivilized’ or ‘barbarian’.²⁶ ‘Civilization’ became synonymous with western Christianity, i.e. Catholic and Protestant Christianity.²⁷

During the sixteenth century, the world was also divided into a civilized ‘West’ and an uncivilized ‘East’²⁸ by the Iberian powers in collaboration with the Papacy in Rome. Wherever European colonizers went beyond the confines of western-style Christian Europe, they encountered the ‘uncivilized’ Other who needed to be brought within the realm of ‘civilization’. As a result, the frontier between ‘civilization’ and ‘barbarism’ would move with the European colonizers. In this way, European powers and their offspring have constructed multiple frontier zones on a global scale in the past five centuries. But the term ‘frontier’ has literally become synonymous with the North American Frontier between the sixteenth and late nineteenth centuries.

The first permanent European settlers of English and French origin arrived on the north-east coast in the early sixteenth century. Until the mid-seventeenth century, they had established colonies extending from the Hudson Bay and St. Lawrence River in the North to North Carolina in the South, and from the Atlantic Coast in the east to the Appalachian mountain range in the west. The western fringes of the European territory were considered the ‘frontier’. This was the area where the colonizers encountered Amerindian peoples and settlements were rural as opposed to the urban areas of Boston or Montreal. In short, ‘civilization’ encountered ‘barbarism’ at the frontier. Being civilized was equated with being productive as the Amerindians were said not to put their lands to good use. Until US-American independence in 1776 the frontier was fairly stable (fig. 2, top). After that, it successively moved westward until the era of the ‘Frontier’ was officially announced to be over by the US government in 1890, when there were no ‘uncivilized’ areas left to ‘civilize’ – save some Amerindian reservations. Forts were constructed along the frontier both to provide protection for the European colonizers and to serve as a base of repression against Amerindians; in the early stages, also against fellow Europeans.²⁹

Early in the nineteenth century, the American experience or rather myth of the frontier³⁰ was developed into the ideology of ‘Manifest Destiny’. The United States of America were constructed as the vanguard of civilization destined to spread its accomplishments—technological progress, prosperity, democracy, liberty – across the whole continent from

25 Thomas (1993: 293).

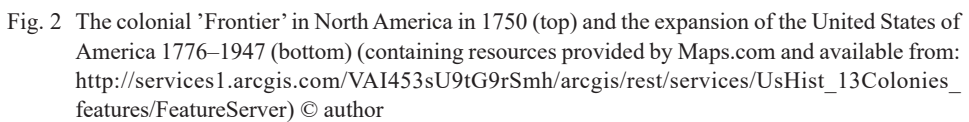
26 See Mignolo (2012: 298–299). The concept of barbarism itself was an ancient Greek invention *vis-à-vis* the Persian empire (Kim 2009: 11–29).

27 Mignolo (1995: 326).

28 Marramao (2012: 60–64).

29 A popular and rather romanticizing account of life on the frontier is e.g. James Fennimore Cooper’s historical novel *The Last of the Mohicans: A Narrative of 1757* (1826), as are his other novels set in the mid-eighteenth century.

30 On the frontier myth, see Slotkin (1973).



east to west in a civilizing mission.³¹ In the mid-nineteenth century, the frontier also moved south towards Mexico.³² After 1890, ‘Manifest Destiny’ was extended to include all the Americas. The European colonization of the Americas resulted in the destruction of Amerindian material and immaterial heritage, the displacement and enslavement of both Amerindian and African people, and a loss of tens of millions of lives. It also resulted in the creation of the ‘Modern’ world.³³ Complementing the US expansion in the Pacific following the Spanish-American War of 1898, the Pacific and East Asia were also regarded as a frontier (fig. 2, bottom).³⁴ The frontier concept served to legitimize these acts. Ropp pointed to “a linkage of three critical ideas: ideas of the savages on our frontier, barbarism, and economic backwardness”.³⁵ In this context, it is important to point out that the European concept was racially loaded as non-White people were deemed inferior. Considering the transition from the frontier myth to the idea of Manifest Destiny it is very much possible that this very ideology may still be continuing to exist in yet another guise, such as a frontier between western-style democracy and countries not considered democratic in the western sense. The key properties of frontier as elaborated in the introductory part of this contribution have been derived from this case study.

5.2 The Roman Concept

The city-state of Rome managed to expand from the centre of the Italian peninsula to encompass the whole of the Mediterranean world and its adjacent territories over the course of three centuries,³⁶ to eventually create a state that would become known as the *Imperium Romanum*. The question is in what way the idea of a frontier between assumed Roman cultural superiority and non-Roman inferiority or barbarism played a role in political thought accompanying Roman expansion at that time. Barring a Latin word for ‘frontier’,³⁷ looking at the Roman concepts of *humanitas* and *imperium* may be instructive.

The world according to Roman thought could be discerned into Romans as insiders and non-Romans/barbarians as outsiders. *Humanitas* constituted those abiding to Roman cultural norms and laws, i.e. educated and civilized people. Roman civilization was by default the only *humanitas*. The barbarians, although by definition uncivilized, could become civilized and thus part of *humanitas* by adopting the Roman way of life.³⁸ In determining how Roman *humanitas* and non-Roman barbarism spatially interacted one may turn to the idea of *imperium* or empire.

31 On Manifest Destiny, see the volume edited by Haynes & Morris (1997).

32 Mignolo (2012: 20, 73, 135); Chambers (2015: 97).

33 Mignolo (2012).

34 Flint (1980). In that sense, the Pacific could be seen as an extension of the (western) American frontier, especially since Chinese were considered to be “somewhat more numerous Indians” (Ropp 1980: 245).

35 Ropp (1980: 245).

36 See Burbank & Cooper (2010: 30).

37 See Campbell (2002: 18).

38 See Burbank & Cooper (2010: 37, 59).

Between the final stages of the Roman Republic (ca. 60–27 BCE) and the reign of Augustus at the beginning of the Roman Empire (27 BCE–14 CE), the connotation of the term *imperium* underwent a profound change.³⁹ During Republican times, it had several different connotations. The focus of attention here shall be on *imperium* in the sense of the abstract and universal power Roman people had over the world, as for example prominently expressed in works by Cicero.⁴⁰ At that time, *imperium* did not have a territorial connotation but “often stands for the essence of the Roman state itself, or of the power the Roman people, that is the Roman state, exercised over others (including their territories)”⁴¹. Cicero also suggests a boundary between non-Romans as outsiders (*exterae nationes*, *exterae gentes*, and *peregrinus*) and Romans as insiders. However, the exact conceptualization of this boundary is unclear. Whereas non-Romans of all three categories were associated with spaces outside *provinciae* and thus Roman jurisdiction, they could also dwell within *provinciae*. Yet, only *peregrini* are also mentioned as inhabiting Italy proper. Both *exterae nationes* and *exterae gentes* appear to be the objects of Roman foreign policy, however, as do the client states of the Roman Republic (*socii* and *amici*) that were not incorporated as provinces. In any case, Cicero referred to a power-based relationship between insiders and outsiders.⁴² As was noted earlier by Sarolta Takács regarding Cicero’s thought,

What can be called the discourse of empire held up the traditional socio-political and economic structure. At the core of retaining and maintaining empire was aggression toward “barbarians,” or the out-group, and self-sacrifice for the in-group, or one’s native country. Cultural output in various media kept the fabric of empire intact by describing, explaining, and thus justifying and perpetuating imperial rule.⁴³

Provinciae originally seem to have designated territories under Roman authority that were outside the Italian core regions of Roman rule. The first *provinciae* to be created were Sicily, Sardinia, and Corsica after Rome had captured them from Carthage.⁴⁴ By exporting Roman culture to the fringes of Roman authority Rome managed to push its boundaries ever further, e.g. by enticing Romans to settle on the frontiers.⁴⁵ One could argue that the export of Roman culture, often by military means, was the basis for the expansion of Roman rule. A narrative of cultural superiority, supported by Roman prosperity and the prospect of eventually becoming Roman citizens and thus acquiring economic privileges and power, could have sparked outsiders to accommodate Roman authority to ultimately become insiders.⁴⁶

³⁹ For a general study, see Richardson (2008).

⁴⁰ Richardson (2008: 72–74). The term also possessed the connotation of an order of the senate, or the power of a Roman administrator/general.

⁴¹ Richardson (2008: 79, 106).

⁴² Richardson (2008: 88–89).

⁴³ Takács (2009: 32).

⁴⁴ See Richardson (2008: 11).

⁴⁵ Burbank & Cooper (2010: 29).

⁴⁶ Burbank & Cooper (2010: 24–35).

By the end of Augustan times, the connotation of *imperium* shifted from denoting an abstract power to that of an empire in the geographical sense.⁴⁷ Augustan historiography also connected value to territory: the best part of the world was said to be under Roman authority, divided by Augustus into *provinciae* – *provinciae* being the key feature that made up the Roman Empire.⁴⁸

Despite the changing connotations of *provinciae*, one might want to look there to identify a Roman concept of ‘frontier’ – here one could probably also include client states that were more prominently entertained by Rome during the republic than during the empire and were not formally considered *provinciae*. While they delineated the realm of Roman authority from space beyond Roman control, they also served in delineating the space of Romans from those of non-Romans within the empire – contrasting the Roman core in central Italia with the provinces that were originally the domain of other non-Roman societies (fig. 3). Thus, the provinces should have also served not only as an epistemological boundary between supposedly superior Roman civilization and inferior non-Roman barbarism but also as the space, the medium through which the barbarian could enter the realm of Roman civilization. As the terminology conveys *humanitas*, *imperium*, and *provincia* were unilateral Roman conceptions. The idea that Roman power extended across the whole world suggests a civilizing mission on part of the Romans to grace the *orbis terrarum* with their superior culture. The inequality within the Roman Empire and between the empire and the territories outside of it suggest an unequal relationship between Roman and non-Roman societies. Hence, the key properties of a frontier concept seem to be present in Roman thought, although it was not expressed by a single specific term but rather by the combination of different ideas pertaining to the relationship between the Roman state and non-Roman people. Speaking with Takács as presented above, the very dichotomy between Roman civilization and non-Roman barbarism was the ideological heart of Roman expansionism and legitimized the unequal relationship between the two groups. Considering the connotational shift during the reign of Augustus, the conceptualization of *imperium* as a territorial entity could indeed point to the abandonment of the notion that Romans had universal rule over the entire world. In any case, the provinces here appear as the civilizing medium, the medium by which Rome’s cultural superiority acquired a spatial dimension and by which Rome could exert political and economic power. It is the provinces that appear as the ‘Roman Frontier’ rather than the border fortifications – beyond which Roman authority in the sense of empire ended – which in scholarship is usually equated with the Roman Frontier.

5.3 The Sino-Barbarian Dichotomy

The closest that Chinese societies have come to a concept of frontier is the Sino-Barbarian dichotomy or Huá-Yí distinction. That concept emerged during pre-imperial times in the

⁴⁷ Richardson (2008: 117–145).

⁴⁸ See Richardson (2008: 138–139, 143–144).

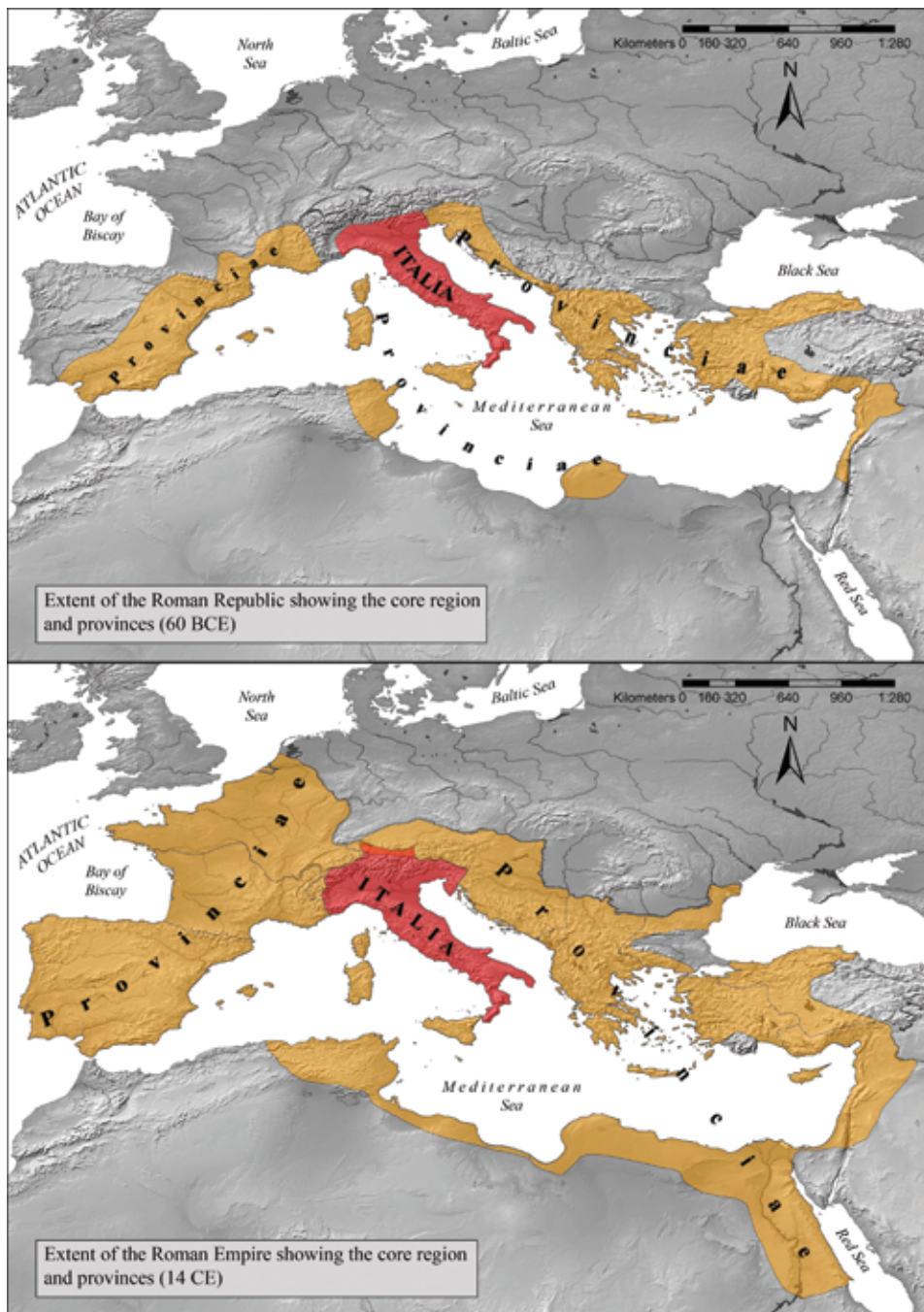


Fig. 3 The extent of the Roman Republic in 60 BCE (top) and the Roman Empire in 14 CE (bottom) (containing modified shapefiles: Ancient World Mapping Center. "roman_empire_bc_60_extent" and "roman_empire_ad_14_extent". <<http://awmc.unc.edu/wordpress/map-files/>> [Accessed: October 1, 2017]) © author

late Zhōu dynasty before 221 BCE.⁴⁹ According to this ideology, the *Huáxià* (华夏)⁵⁰ inhabited the *Zhōngguó* (中国) around the Yellow River, i.e. the Countries of the Middle, and were surrounded by the ‘Four Barbarians’,⁵¹ who were subsumed under the term *yí* (夷) (fig. 4).⁵² In the context of this contribution, it is noteworthy to point out that *yí*, however, originally had the function of delineating Chinese from non-Chinese people, rather than possessing the connotation of barbarianism as known from Classical antiquity or later Western history.⁵³ Hence, *Zhōngguó* in extension was rather a geographical term describing the position of the land of the *Huáxià* in spatial relation to those of non-*Huáxià* people.⁵⁴ That particular thought may be an early iteration of core-periphery models: with the centre radiating virtue and civilization, the further away a people the less influenced by the centre it is – the people to the North and West were perceived as most resistant to the civilization the centre represents.⁵⁵ The designation *Yídí* (夷狄) was reserved for people or groups who were perceived far removed from civilization and in its general sense may possess a connotation closest to ‘barbarian’ – the term could also apply to states considered part of the *Zhōngguó* if they violated generally accepted norms.⁵⁶ Nicola Di Cosmo argued that the dichotomy originally referred to “political events, understood as, and dominated by, ethical norms” rather than cultural differences, and Chinese commentators did not profess a polarized perspective of ‘us versus them’ in the late Zhōu dynasty.⁵⁷ Nonetheless, there seems to have been some kind of hierarchy between people on the inside and those on the outside, the exact connotation of which varied over time and between different dynasties. With China (or *Zhōngguó*) on the inside and at the top of the hierarchy in

49 Holcombe (2011: 6). The time in Chinese history before the creation of the empire under the Qín dynasty (221–206 BCE) is considered pre-imperial. The so-called Warring States period in the late Zhōu dynasty, marked by the competition of different Chinese states until they were unified under the rule of the state of Qín, immediately precedes the creation of the empire and was integral in its genesis.

50 The term denotes the self-description of Chinese people at the time. The culturally homogenizing notions of ‘China’ and ‘Chinese’ did not exist up to the nineteenth century and were introduced from the outside.

51 See e.g. Poo (2005: 45–48).

52 *Yí* (夷) originally referred to a people east of the *Huáxià*. The other three people were the *Xīróng* (西戎) in the West, the *Nánmán* (南蠻) in the South, and *Běidí* (北狄) in the North.

53 For a discussion of different opinions and an argument for the presence of the classical connotation, see Kim (2009: 29–31, 59–64). Haiyan Lee explains how the British banned the use of *yí* (夷) in Qīng China following the Second Opium War (1856–1860). The British projected the connotation of ‘barbarian’ and felt offended by being referred to in this way. However, during the Qīng dynasty (1644–1911), *yí* simply meant ‘foreigner’ in the sense of a person that was born outside of *Zhōngguó* (Lee 2014: 246–247).

54 See Holcombe (2011: 7–8). An alternative was *fān* (番) (see Lee 2014: 247–248).

55 See Di Cosmo (2002: 94–96).

56 “[T]hose people who inhabited the reverse side of virtue and morality” (Di Cosmo 2002: 100). See also Poo (2005: 36).

57 Di Cosmo (2002: 104). Contra Poo Mu-Chou, who argued that the dichotomy came down to cultural differences due to different lifestyles of agricultural subsistence versus nomadism (Poo 2005: 150), and Gideon Shelach (2014: 147–150).

the Chinese world view, anyone outside could have been regarded as inferior,⁵⁸ as was possibly signified by the characters used to write the names of non-Huáxià peoples that often contained animal radicals.⁵⁹



Fig. 4 A visualization of the Huá-Yí Distinction during the Warring States period of the late Zhōu dynasty in ca. 350 BCE. The Huáxià are represented by the lands they inhabit, Zhōngguó, whereas the non-Huáxià people are summarily represented by the generic term yí (political boundaries based on Qixiang 1982a: 33–34, 43–44) © author

With the Zhōu dynasty, the concept of the *Tiānmìng* (天命), i.e. the ‘Mandate of Heaven’, also emerged.⁶⁰ After the house of Zhōu had taken power from the Shāng dynasty following

58 See also Poo (2005: 36, 113).

59 Lee (2014: 247). In Chinese discourses on moral conduct, those outside culture were frequently associated with bestiality resulting from a lack of adherence to rituals as practised in the Chinese lands (Pines 2005: 65–68).

60 Feng (2013: 142–146).

social unrest and instability, they introduced the Mandate of Heaven to legitimize their own rule.⁶¹ The Mandate of Heaven stipulated that the ruler would be just and upholding ethical standards. If a ruler was perceived as unjust or believed to have lost the mandate for other reasons, then it was considered legitimate to rebel against the illegitimate ruler.⁶² Heaven, in this context, does not refer to any supernatural, metaphysical power but to the will of the people. The ruler enacted the Mandate of Heaven by obeying the will of the people.⁶³

According to the Confucian school of thought, foreign ‘barbarians’ could culturally transform by adopting ethical norms, i.e. emulating Chinese behaviour.⁶⁴ That means that the Sino-Barbarian dichotomy was not marked by totality – it was changeable. Someone associated with a beast could become human.⁶⁵ Yuri Pines argued that political thought in the late Zhōu dynasty centred on cultural unity within the Zhōngguó, not to unify against a common enemy on the outside but to quell hostilities between Chinese states as the primary cause of instability.⁶⁶ From that point, the Zhōngguó could work as a beacon of light to eventually encompass the whole known world, the *Tiānxià* (天下), i.e. All under Heaven.⁶⁷ The construction of the Great Wall during the Qín dynasty to protect against barbarian groups to the North of China could well mark the renunciation of a universalistic and inclusivistic agenda,⁶⁸ probably a result of expanding into formerly barbarian territory with the possibility of serving as a bulwark for future expansion northward.⁶⁹

While the Mandate of Heaven in combination with the Sino-Barbarian dichotomy seems suitable to legitimize expansionism in ancient China, the precise relation between these concepts and expansion appears to be unclear at the moment. The Chinese states certainly perceived themselves as superior to non-Chinese nations. On the other hand, the expansion of Chinese states northward during the Warring States period and the Qín conquest seems to be marked by the supplanting of northern peoples rather than their incorporation into the Chinese societies. The construction of walls would have then rather served to consolidate recently claimed territories against northern retaliation. The notion to encompass all the known world could be taken as a civilizing mission, yet the actual drive to spread the Chinese way of life does not appear to have existed in pre-imperial and early imperial China. The Great Wall of China seems to have been a bilaterally acknowledged border by the mid-second century BCE, both by the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) and the northern nomadic confederate state of Xiōngnú (匈奴) that had formed by that time and controlled a territory stretching from Manchuria in the East to

61 Rieber (2014: 148–149).

62 Loewe (1986: 708–713); Slingerland (2009: 111–113).

63 Cheng (1985: 136–138).

64 Pines (2005: 72–75). Opposed was the school of Mozi, who rejected any difference between Chinese and non-Chinese peoples and saw them as equal (Pines 2005: 75–77).

65 Pines (2005: 75). In this sense, Chinese thought may be similar to the Roman concept of *humanitas* (Burbank & Cooper 2010: 50).

66 Pines (2005: 82).

67 Pines (2005: 83).

68 Pines (2005: 91).

69 Di Cosmo (2002: 138–158).



Fig. 5 A visualization of the extent of the Qin dynasty vis-à-vis the northern barbarians of Xiōngnú (political boundaries based on Qixiang 1982b: 3–4) © author

Kazakhstan in the West (fig. 5).⁷⁰ Rather than pushing for cultural uniformity on its fringes and thus successively expanding its borders similar to the Romans imperial China settled for bilateral relations with non-Chinese states and accepted that the others had their own social order. All the while China promoted cultural exchange, although without granting foreigners the same right as Chinese people.⁷¹ In this light, a civilizing mission seems not present in actual relations with non-Chinese peoples during the early Han dynasty.⁷² In what way foreign policy under the Qin dynasty was driven by the idea of spreading

⁷⁰ Burbank & Cooper (2010: 53).

⁷¹ See Burbank & Cooper (2010: 53, 59).

⁷² For a contrary assessment, see Kim (2009: 68, 93–94, 134–135). Hyun Jin Kim argued that the discourse of the Confucian tradition promoted the active transformation of the non-Huáxià people by the Chinese, thus legitimizing the export of Chinese culture and expansion.

Chinese culture remains unclear at this point. Research on this issue either does not yet exist or is at least unavailable via English-language publications. In any event, this subject appears to offer an opening for further inquiries. At this point, however, either due to a lack of information or the information not being available, yet pre-imperial and imperial China does not seem to have possessed a concept of frontier. Rather, China seems to have relied on the capacity of its society to attract others, i.e. soft power rather than hard power – a capacity China currently lacks but seeks to (re)gain.⁷³

6 Synthesis and Conclusions

After distinguishing between frontiers as unilateral cultural boundaries and borders as bilaterally conceived political boundaries, it can be concluded that the basic properties of a frontier concept as outlined in the beginning of this contribution were already present in ancient Egyptian political thought during the New Kingdom.

6.1 The Ma'at-Izfet Dichotomy as Egyptian Frontier Concept

The border between Ma'at and Izfet not only served as a boundary in space but also as one between human beings – Egypt and foreign lands, and Egyptians and non-Egyptians respectively. Egyptians encountered different ideologies and modes of knowledge production in foreign countries. In the case of Nubia, the precise nature of its ideology and knowledge production still needs to be understood. In short, different epistemologies encountered each other. Egyptians imagined themselves to be on the side of Ma'at, so it is fair to assume they considered themselves to be superior or 'better' than the adherents of Izfet – much in the same way Romans, Chinese, or European imperialists would later perceive themselves as civilized and opposed to barbarism or 'backward' societies. Here we simply have to think of the construction of Nubia as 'wretched Kush'.⁷⁴ The ideological frontier between Ma'at and Izfet was furthermore conceived by Egyptians only. There is no reason to assume that it was conceived as a result of bilateral consultations with the Nubians, Levantines, Libyans, or nomadic peoples like the Shasu. Egyptian control of Nubia, for example, was unilaterally imposed onto the Nubian population by the Egyptian administration. Negotiations with foreigners would not have been advisable anyway as that may have been taken as losing face before Izfet. Since Ma'at had to be secured we can also speak of a 'civilizing mission' on part of Egyptian kingship or the Egyptian state. In effect, the relationship between the Egyptian administration and the dominated societies was not equal. For instance, the established colonial structures in Nubia demonstrate great inequality in favour of the Egyptian colonizer. The construction of frontier fortresses on a large scale in order to exert control over both people and resources resulted in the

⁷³ Nye (2004: 5–18) introduced the concept of soft power, which involves the co-optation of others rather than coercion. On China's current lack of soft power and attempts to gain it internationally by cultural means, see Shambaugh (2013: 207–268).

⁷⁴ cf. Török (2009: 20).

creation of a vast frontier zone or borderland that led to an intense exchange of material and epistemologies, also referred to as 'entanglement'.⁷⁵

6.2 Ma'at and Its Civilizing Mission

The Roman and Chinese case studies revealed narratives of civilization versus barbarism that were inclusive and adaptable to new political situations to a certain extent. Non-Romans and non-Chinese could transform into 'civilized' beings by adhering to Roman or Chinese ethical norms. That observation raises the questions whether the Egyptian Ma'at-Izfet dichotomy allowed for such a possibility. As noted in section 4, that dichotomy was marked by totality and did not allow for the existence of a hybrid state – a human being was either an adherent of Ma'at or an adherent of Izfet, but could not be anything in between.

A survey of Egyptian 'wisdom' texts did not convey any possibility that foreigners could be transformed into Egyptians and thus adherents of Ma'at. Admittedly, Egyptian reflexions on the applicability of Ma'at to non-Egyptians or discourses on ethical conduct referring to foreigners in the style known from Roman or Chinese thought are not visible in the written record – that does not necessarily mean that these did not exist. For the argument, however, I will develop my further thoughts on the basis of what is in the 'wisdom' texts or 'teachings'. There, foreigners are usually mentioned as something that has to be defeated or kept at a distance. Recalling that foreigners were part of Izfet by default it appears highly unlikely that they could be transformed into quasi-Egyptians. Their foreign roots would have prevented that they could become adherents of Ma'at or civilized.

In that sense, contrary to the Roman frontier concept, foreigners could not be 'civilized' or 'saved' from Izfet by extending the Egyptian *ḥꜥ.w* and, in effect, the realm of Ma'at into foreign *ḏr.w* territory. Hence, it seems that the extension of Ma'at related most importantly to territory, but not the people inhabiting the formerly Izfet-bound areas. It appears that what was civilized was not foreign people but land. Accordingly, Egyptians would not have set out to civilize their foreign neighbours as that attempt would have failed anyway due to the foreigners' inherent antagonistic character.

What I propose here is that by civilizing foreign territory the foreign, Izfet-ridden population would have entered the realm of Ma'at to be able to serve the Egyptian state and the maintenance of divine order. It would have been the purpose of the foreigner to be controlled and exploited by Ma'at so cosmic order would prevail over chaos and Izeft could be kept at bay. That means that the essence of Egypt's civilizing mission also revolved around people, but only in the sense that they could be defeated continually as embodiment of Izfet by way of serving the interests of the Egyptian state. Making the foreigner serve Ma'at could have ensured Ma'at's control over the foreigner and, thus, Izfet. This could mean that Egyptian thought was not interested in a foreigner it could guide to Ma'at at all. Ma'at needed Izfet in the way that the *raison d'être* of cosmic order

⁷⁵ See also Smith (2003: 53–55, 201–206).

was so it could triumph over chaos. By civilizing the foreigner by instilling Ma'at into them Ma'at would have lost its ultimate foe and thus its very *raison d'être*. The Ma'at-Izfet dichotomy was the ideological foundation of Egyptian kingship and Egyptian state – they needed it to function.⁷⁶

In reality, of course, individual foreigners could well integrate into New Kingdom society, although it has to remain unclear to what extent foreigners could overall blend in with Egyptians or what the 'success rate' of integration was. Yet, in this contribution the focus is on the ideology that assisted New Kingdom expansion.

6.3 Ideology and Spatiality

Already touched upon in the preceding subsection, what the comparative approach has also revealed is how dichotomies between civilization and barbarism or order and chaos inform or assist the spatial management of states. States or groups seeking domination over others can categorize space according to their ideology and attach a value to them. That process in itself can generate legitimacy for a given policy that is based on that categorization. Hence, if Egypt categorizes Nubia as a space of Izfet, its invasion of that space appears automatically justified.

That exemplifies that there is also a spatial dimension to ideology. Ideologies do not exist outside time and space but relate to either of them. Ideologies need a space where they are supposed to be enacted or take their effects. In the main case study presented here – the Egyptian New Kingdom – that space was the foreign lands of Nubia and the Levant. By contrasting these areas as the realm of Izfet, Egypt was able to identify itself with Ma'at. As mentioned earlier, that dichotomy legitimized Egyptian policies toward these lands as representatives of Izfet for the benefit of the realm of Ma'at. A similar mechanism enabled European colonizers to appropriate non-European lands in the Americas. The US later employed the same mechanism to push their frontier westward to expand across the continent and beyond the Pacific toward East Asia – considering contemporary US policies surrounding its 'Pivot to Asia' under Barack Obama or the 'Indo-Pacific' strategy under Donald Trump,⁷⁷ both of which are an effort to contain China, that process might still be ongoing after nearly two and a half centuries. Accordingly, Roman and Chinese ideologies categorized spaces along the lines of insiders and outsiders. In at least one case that meant that the outsiders were something to be conquered or dominated, in the other case possibly something to be wary of.

In short, ideology can employ space to designate people as insiders and outsiders; something to be conquered and civilized and/or something to be kept at a distance. Such a spatial ideology legitimized Egyptian expansion over the course of half a century. It has also served as the *raison d'être* of the US and the ideological foundation of its expansion since 1776. These two case studies exemplify how the spatiality of ideology can take

⁷⁶ That observation also raises the question to what extent, for instance, the US requires an Other to civilize or modernize in order to function, how US policies are driven by the desire to push the 'frontier' ever further.

⁷⁷ On the 'Indo-Pacific' strategy, see POTUS (2017: 45–47).

its effect over time. For the US that raises the question whether it can still hold up to its *raison d'être* in case it cannot get full access to China (in terms of resources) and what repercussions that may have for both the self-conception and the stability of the US Empire eventually.

6.4 Overall Implications

Generally speaking, in seeking for frontier concepts one should rather not look for specific wordings or vocabulary, such as a specific term that entails the idea of frontier—such an attempt is likely to end with the conclusion that only European states and actors of the (Early) Modern Period had such a concept. What appears more promising is to rather look for a combination of ideas that together result in a frontier concept and produced comparable outcomes. It seems likely that frontier concepts rather derived in different guises. The findings could pose interesting future research questions surrounding universal features in human political thought and also point to differences subject to specific regional and/or historical circumstances. A comparative approach can indeed assist in bringing such strings of thought to light across time and space.

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Action and Private Space in Ancient Egyptian Narrative

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Abstract

Ancient Egyptian literary narratives seldom indulged in long, static descriptions of physical landscapes; instead they focused more on moving along the plot through direct or embedded storytelling of their characters' actions. Although, however, spatial contexts of such action were rarely described in any detail, the Egyptian narrators made use of ethical norms dictating what constituted good and bad behavior in a public or a private space. Accordingly, in this paper I will identify narrated actions taking place in private spaces and discuss how relevant ethical norms, verbalized mainly in works of wisdom literature and visualized in funerary iconography, were activated by the storytellers, in an attempt to *moralize* their narratives, influencing characterization and storytelling techniques, as well as plot progress. The purpose of this discussion is to show that however minimalist Egyptian storytelling was it organically incorporated native ideologies and perceptions. This process resulted in replacing descriptions of physical space with references to a dynamic cultural context and identity, thus defining Space and Time in cultural rather than physical terms.

To begin, one is invited to picture an Egyptian priest, whom the audience does not know how he looks like, and who insists in staying anchored in the harbor of Byblos, which the audience does now know how it looks like, although for twenty-nine days the authorities of that city, which the audience does not know how it looks like, order him to go away. Now, on the thirtieth day, while he is about to board a freighter, which the audience does not know how it looks like, heading back to Egypt, the harbor master, whom the audience does not know how he looks like, orders him to stay one more day in Byblos. This surprising change in the orders comes from the local prince himself, whom (as one has already guessed) the audience does not know how he looks like, after he witnessed a supernatural possession of a boy, whom the audience does not know how he looks like, and obeyed the divine command carried by that boy in trance: Do not send away the Egyptian priest!

My irritatingly repetitive, interpolated comment has probably hammered the point home: the author of the *Report of Wenamun* did not bother with descriptive details about either his characters or the settings where these characters interacted. This striking absence of descriptions was one of the most common characteristics of Egyptian storytelling style. Instead, Egyptian authors put an emphasis on where characters were, mapping their

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movements and activities, as the storytellers unfolded their plots. Bearing this in mind, I examine in this essay private story-space as setting for character action (and essentially story plot).

Defining and identifying private space

Story-space is a mimetic construct that operates on multiple levels, among other things, alluding to real or fictional geographic parameters, or hosting real or fictional social practices and ethical values.² Although in Egyptian literary narratives topographic distinctions were usually marked by clear boundaries with the intention to generate meaningful oppositions, such as between familiar and exotic, civilized and uncivilized, or even real and fictional, as noted in Antonio Loprieno's and Gerald Moers's work on narrated travel,³ the distinction between physical public and physical private spaces was not as clear or fixed. After all, current sociological theories argue that, "rather than existing in a binary opposition, public and private spaces operate at a variety of scales that overlap and intersect, creating a mosaic of spaces and degrees of access. Rarely is a space either public or private, but is instead multi-layered and often disputed physically and politically."⁴ Mapping, thus, the narrated movements of a character in an Egyptian text's physical space becomes a challenge. Yet such a task is a very important one, because moving from one sphere of social interaction to another always entails major adjustments in one's demeanor as well as in that demeanor's assessment by one's fellow coactors and interlocutors, which in the case of Egyptian literary narratives would mean both the other interacting characters and the audience. Thus, I attempt in this essay to identify references to physical private space (as opposed to a person's non-physical aura of privacy) in these literary narratives and to examine this type of space as an active narrative element that not only framed but also meaningfully participated in the reflection of contemporary cultural norms, as well as the communication and moralization of the narratives' character action. After all, the type of private space described in such works was a hybrid publicized version of it, exposed directly, within the context of Egyptian public storytelling, to the shared cultural values of its contemporary ancient audiences.⁵

This is not an easy task, however, since, as noted above, one is immediately confronted with a popular stylistic choice of ancient Egyptian storytellers to avoid or minimize de-

2 For a definition of verbal *story-space* (versus cinematic *story-space*), see Chatman (1978: 101–107).

In general, very little has been written about private space in Egyptian culture; most of the few available works relevant to this topic are discussing private space in the context of cultic performances and personal piety: e.g. Dunand (2015).

Compare also the treatment of private space and activities in early modern literatures, as discussed in Cooley 2010; and Trull 2013.

3 See Loprieno (1988); and Moers (1999).

4 Kingwell (2008).

5 Compare the hybridization of private space in ancient Greek drama, as discussed, for instance, by M. Lloyd in his article on Euripidean drama (2012: 344–345).

tailed descriptions of physical space in their narratives. As a result, private space can be inferred only through cues for, and subtle references to, what one would consider a physical private space's essential characteristics. In the case of Egyptian literary narratives, such characteristics seemed to have entailed specific types of furniture or architectural features which functioned as believable and quickly recognizable private space props,⁶ as well as intimate activities and speeches among members of a closed-knitted social unit with privileged access to private space, such as family members, or during a person's solitary moments.

One may consider two examples from the corpus of New Kingdom narratives illustrating the use of cues (in bold here) to signal action taking place in publicized private spaces:

Now after some days [had elapsed] from this, the youth **set about making holiday in his house** (*wn.jn p3 šrj hr hms hr jr hrw nfr m p3y=f pr*). And after **the end of the evening breeze** the youth lay down upon **his bed and sleep** took possession of his body (*hr jr m-ht nfryt t3w grh wn.jn p3 šrj hr sdr hr p3y=f ht^c jw t3 qd hr shm m h^cw=f*). Then **his wife** (*t3y=f hmt*) filled one [bowl with wine] and another bowl with beer. Presently a [snake] emerged [from its] hole to bite the youth but **his wife was sitting beside him without falling asleep** (*jst t3y=f hmt hms.tj r gs=f nn nm^c=s*)...[Then he] made an offering to P[re], praising him and extolling his power daily.
(*Doomed Prince* 7,13–8,6⁷)

Now many days after this, his younger brother was in the Valley of the Cedar **and no one was with him** (*jw nn w^c hn^c=f*) while he spent all day hunting desert game. He returned **in the evening to sleep under the cedar tree on top of whose blossom his heart was** (*jw=f r sdr hr p3^c ntj h3t=f hr d3d3 hr t3y=f rwrw m rwh3*).
(*Two Brothers* 8,8–9)

The cues for publicized private space here comprised: (a) intimate activities usually taking place in a private location (making holiday, sleeping, sitting beside one's spouse); (b) time of the day usually reserved for such intimate activities (evening); (c) stage props and spatial references usually associated with private space (bed, house); and (d) presence or absence of characters with privileged access to one's private space (spouse, loneliness). Interestingly, some of these cues extended their influence over other activities which did not take place in the marked physical private spaces, transforming thus such activities, too, into recognizable ingredients of a character's portable private sphere (offering to Pre, hunting desert game).

Also, in the example from the *Two Brothers*, one may observe that physical private space did not always have to involve a man-made building or shelter: during the early days of Bata's self-exile a spot under a cedar tree was turned into his private space, where

6 The primary available sources for private furniture and accessories were the provisions and daily life scenes in Egyptian private tombs, although note that in those cases, too, the reproduced private settings were actually hybrid publicized, similar to those in Egyptian literature: see e.g. Guidotti (2008); or Podvin (2002).

7 Note that if not otherwise stated, the quoted passages are translated by the author.

he could sleep in safety. This was justifiable for a character like Bata with, as the narrative revealed later, divine powers, but sleeping in the open, without being guarded, was certainly not a reasonable choice for public figures such as a Pharaoh. Thus, in an example that comes from one of the apparently many circulating Hellenistic and Roman stories about Pharaoh Amasis, this little detail contributed to the Pharaoh's caricaturistic portrayal as a foolish, comical character:

The Pharaoh drank an extremely large quantity of wine, because of his (earlier) craving for a vat of Egyptian wine. The Pharaoh lay down on the sand that same night. He slept beneath a grapevine facing the north wind (*sḏr:n pr-ꜥꜥ ḥr pꜣ šꜥ n pꜣ grḥ rn=f jr=f jnqt ḥr wꜥt b (n) 3llj ḥr pr-mḥt*). Morning came and Pharaoh could not raise himself because of the hangover he had!

(*Pap. 215 B.N.P.*, 5–7)

Bata's earlier type of mobile private space was, on the other hand, befitting a nomadic lifestyle. In a 1959 monograph on early Bedouin social norms, Francesco Gabrieli and Walter Dostal discussed private space in 7th-century Bedouin societies, which consisted of two main zones: the tribal camp (*mukhayam el-ashaier* or *el-bedu*) and the family tent (*bayt*). Such terms were often associated with private space in ancient Egyptian narratives, too, as illustrated in the following two examples from the *Contendings of Horus and Seth* and *Sinuhe*:

Pre-Harakhty took offense at the insult which was just said to him (by Bebon) and lay down on his back extremely saddened (*jw=f nmꜥ=f ḥr psd=f jw jb=f r ḏw ꜥꜥ wr*). And so the great Ennead went out and uttered a loud cry before the face of Bebon the god... Then they departed to their tents. And so the great god spent a day lying on his back in his pavilion extremely saddened and completely alone (*jw=sn šm r nꜣy=sn jmꜣw ꜥꜥ n pꜣ ntr ꜥꜥ ḥr jr wꜥ hrw jw=f nmꜥ ḥr psd=f m pꜣy=f zh jw jb=f r ḏw ꜥꜥ wr jw=f wꜥ wrt=f*).

(*Horus and Seth* 3,10–4,1)

The coming of a strong man of Retjenu to challenge me at my tent (*jwꜥ nḥt n rṯnw mtꜣ=f wj m jmꜣ=j*)... That chief consulted with me and I said, “I do not know him. I am not his ally that I could walk freely in his camp. Has it ever happened that I entered his back rooms, or that I climbed his fence? (*n jnk tr smꜣ=f wstn=j m ꜥꜥj=f jn nt-pw wn.n=j sꜣ-pr=f sb.n=j jnbwt=f*)”.

(*Sinuhe* B110–117)

In the first example Pre-Harakhty plays a similar role with a Pharaoh, a public figure who was rarely depicted in his private space and when so, as implied above in the case of Amasis, a public space was “privatized” through direct association with explicit private space-related elements. Thus, in this episode from the *Contendings of Horus and Seth*, while the other gods returned to their own private tents, the narrator had to transform the otherwise public council chamber into Pre-Harakhty's private space by associating it with loneliness and explicit emotional tension, two strong literary signposts of physical private

space.⁸ After a while, Hathor, Pre-Harakhty's daughter, entered this private scene and was able to make Pre-Harakhty happy again by undertaking another private space activity: a semi-sexual show of her private parts!⁹

In the example from Sinuhe the invasion of the protagonist's private tent became a reason for serious tribal conflict, given that it was unprovoked: Sinuhe claimed he had invaded neither of the challenger's two zones of private space, that is neither the grounds of his *mukhayam* nor his *bayt*.

Moralizing private space

Such publicized private space-related activities were often moralized in wisdom texts (i.e. *Instructions* and *Discourses*), a genre of Egyptian literature which was mostly concerned with public life and the individual's potential roles and status in it (thus the saying "It is the front of a house which creates respect for the back" in *Instruction of Khety* 47). The few private space-related themes discussed in such texts revolved mainly around personal safety, family relations, and the management of privileged access to one's private sphere and information. Here are some indicative examples from this genre:

1) Personal safety

Truly, it is good when beds are prepared,
When the headrests of the nobles are well protected,
When all men's needs are met by a couch in the shade,
And a door is shut (to secure) him who used to sleep in the bushes
(*Admonitions of Ipuwer* 14,2–3)

Behold, the king is a possessor of happiness,
You can slumber and sleep securely because of your power.
You may follow your heart as a result of my accomplishments,
For there is no foe within your borders
(*Instruction of Khety* 80–1).

2) Family relations

If you are well-off and establish your household,
Love your wife in accordance with what is fair.
Feed her well, put clothes on her back;
Ointment is the balm for her body.
(*Instruction of Ptahhotep* 10,8–9)

There was a commoner who asked for something to eat.

8 Compare negative connotations of private space in Herodotus's and Appian's historiographical works, as discussed in Rood (2012: 123–124); and Pitcher (2012: 220–221), respectively.

9 For a discussion of such scenes, see Volokhine (2012).

His wife said to him, “It will (soon) be supper”.
 So he went outside to sulk(?)
 Until the moment he came back to his house,
 And he was like a different man.
 His wife pleaded with him but he would not listen to her.
 He was moody(?) and incapable of communication.
 (*Dispute between a Man and his Ba* 80–85)

3) Access to private space and information

...the moderate man is praised, the tent is open to the silent man, and the place of the
 contended man is wide open
 (*Instruction of Kagemni* 1,1–2).

Do not listen to an official’s proposition indoors,
 And then repeat it to another man outside.
 Do not allow your discussions to be brought outside,
 Lest your heart be grieved...
 A man who stands on the side of an official
 Should not have his name known (in the street)
 (*Instruction of Amenemope* 24,1–8).

Interestingly, some wisdom texts, like the *Instruction of Khety* and the *Instruction of Amenemhat*, made a few references to the private space of a Pharaoh, too. Most of these references involved Pharaoh’s bedroom (e.g. *Instruction of Khety* 80 above), which probably was one of the very few rooms in the palace in which Pharaoh’s public figure could find some privacy. The bedroom, in this case, was closely linked to tension and threats to His Majesty’s personal safety, as stressed in the famous passage from the *Instruction of Amenemhat* which described Amenemhat’s murder in his bedroom by his own courtiers (lines 1,8–2,4). As illustrated in the earlier example from the story about Amasis, this royal sleep-tension-personal safety connections were brought up in several literary narratives. Here is another dramatic example of these connections which comes from the second demotic story about Setna Khamwase, the fourth son of Ramses II:

The sorceries of the Cushite (shaman) flew up to Egypt. They became masters of the night; they became masters of Pharaoh Menkheperre Si-Amun. They took him to the land of Nubia, to the place where their chief was. They beat him with 500 blows of the whip in public (*n t3 mtyt*), before the chief. They returned him back to Egypt before six hours had elapsed...He lay down in the resting place of the palace of Horus (*t3 qnht n pr-hr*) with his buttocks badly beaten...[He then complained to the councilors about this and they said,] “What is the meaning of the words you just said, O Pharaoh, our great lord? It is in the resting place of [the palace of] Horus that you sleep; the gods protect you!”
 (*Setna* II 4/19–28)

What made the abduction and beating of the Pharaoh (namely, Tuthmosis III) a humiliating event was not only the fact that they symbolized Egyptian defeat in the hands of Nubians but also that his very private space, where he could sleep in safety while protected by the Egyptian gods themselves, was invaded by foreign sorceries.

Another interesting point is the fact that wisdom texts paid much attention to rules pertaining the sharing of private information in public spaces. This moralized theme was also exploited in the case of narrative writing, as often tension would arise after a character had overheard and then shared with others some other character's private information. Here is one example from the long narrative frame story of the *Instruction of Khasheshonqy*:

Now regarding every word which Harsiese son of Ramose was saying to Khasheshonqy son of Tchainefer and those which Khasheshonqy son of Tchainefer said to him in return, it happened that there was a man of the household atop a place from where he was able to listen to the two men's voices (*wn w^c rmt na-h-pr hr-tbn w^c m^{3c} jw=f s^dm n hrww n p³ s 2*), and his name was Wahibre-mekhy, son of Ptahertais. That very man, it was (his) turn to spend the night at the vestibule of the bedroom in which Pharaoh was (*s^drt n t³ hyt³ (n) t³ knh³t nt jw pr-^c3 n-jm=s*)...So when the eighth night hour occurred, Pharaoh woke up. He uncovered his face and called out, "Who is outside?"...Now he related before Pharaoh every word that he had heard... (Lines 2/16–3/6)

In this case the transference of secret private information from one private space (that is, where Harsiese and Khasheshonqy were talking in secrecy) to another (that is, Pharaoh's bedroom) was a powerful plot twist that created a crisis and eventually led to Harsiese's execution and Khasheshonqy's imprisonment.

Emotionalizing/Sexualizing private space

Another genre of Egyptian literary writing which included references to physical private space is the Love Songs. In this case private space was sexualized or emotionalized as the actual context of, or symbol for, intimate feelings and activities. Here is an example from this genre:

The villa of my beloved:
The entrance to her (room) is at the heart of the house,
Her double doors are open,
Their bolt is unlatched,
And my beloved is angry!
If only I could be appointed as the doorkeeper.
I would make her irate at me,
And so I would hear her voice when she is riled,
And I would pretend to be a child in the face of her anger.¹⁰
(Pap. Harris 500, Poem 7)

¹⁰ Translated in Simpson (2003: 311).

A very similar sexualization of physical private space has been observed in the first demotic narrative about Setna Khamwase: there in a dream, Setna encountered Tabubu, the daughter of the prophet of Bastet, who invited him over to her house in the estate of Bastet.

He found a house that was extremely tall, with a wall surrounding it, a garden on its north side, and a bench before its gate....Setna went up upon the staircase of the house with Tabubu. He found the upper story of the house cleaned, decorated, with its floor adorned with lapis lazuli and real turquoise, with many beds in its spread with sheer royal linen, and with many gold cups on the dining table (*rjr=f gm t3 rjt hrjt n p3 ʿwj jw=s šhr jw=s ndh jw p3y=s šhre ndhe n hstb n m3ʿt [n] mfkē n m3ʿt jw wn glg ʿš3y hn=s jw=w nmʿe n šs n nswt jw hynw jpt n nb jw=w ʿš3 hr t3 wʿbt*)...Incense was placed upon the brazier. Unguents of the royal quality were brought before him and Setna made holiday with Tabubu!

(Setna I, 5/11–18)

As suggested by Steven Vinson, Setna’s gradual penetration into Tabubu’s physical private space was probably meant to symbolize and anticipate the impending, and much desired by Setna, sexual encounter.¹¹ After all, the emphasis on the private space’s expensive decoration here was mirrored to the earlier physical description of Tabubu, which, among other things, mentioned that she was wearing a great amount of jewelry (line 4/39).¹²

Another interesting parallel between the treatment of private space in Love Songs and in literary narratives is that authors of both genres used references to liminal spots that marked the boundaries between public and private spaces to develop emotional or sexual tension among their characters. Thus, one may compare the references to doors marking the entrance to a beloved’s room in the aforementioned Love Song to this passage from the fragmentary New Kingdom story of *Truth and Falsehood*:

The boy said to his mother, “What’s my father’s name so that I may tell it to my (school) mates? For when they say to me, ‘Where is your father?’, they say it to mock me.” His mother then said to him, “Do you see that blind man who is sitting next to the door? He is your father,” so she answered him. Then he said to her, “May the members of your family be gathered together and summon a crocodile (for you)!” Then the boy brought his father in and had him sit down on a chair supporting him, placing a footstool under his feet (*jw p3 ʿqd šrj hr jn n p3y=f jt jw=f hr djt wħm=f jw=f hr djt ħms=f wʿ qnj hr=f jw=f hr djt wa hdmw rdwj hr rdwj=f*). Lines 5,4–6,4

The fair reacceptance of the father into the family’s physical private space was emphasized in this passage by describing in detail the process through which the boy made his father sit comfortably in the house; a description that “materialized” the idea of private family space by mentioning pieces of furniture associated with a father’s elevated status within his family. The boy’s angry, and surprisingly offensive response, towards his mother can

¹¹ Vinson (2015).

¹² Cf. Lazaridis (2013: 134).

be partially justified by the provocative fact that the father was sitting all this time right at the entrance of their private space, without being welcomed to come in.

Concluding remarks

Overall, the narrative examples I have brought up in this essay illustrate three important, and often inter-connected, literary uses of physical private space: (a) as anticipatory signpost for tension and conflict; (b) as occasion for intense emotions; and (c) as literal and symbolic setting for erotic desire and activities. These contributed to Egyptian narrative writing in several ways: for example, (a) they generated or resolved mini-crises that pushed forward the plot in a meaningful and efficient way; (b) they cast character action and speech into a particularly moralized type of context which was associated with different etiquette and cultural values, thus contributing to characterization and conveying specific moral messages; or (c) they managed the audience's emotional responses by invoking empathy or antipathy towards specific characters on the basis of how they behaved in private spaces. Certainly, physical private space felt as if it was out of place in these narratives of dominantly public activities and events. Though infrequent, the few references to private space did grant the Egyptian authors, as Richard Parkinson, among other scholars, has argued about the whole narrative genre,¹³ unique opportunities to voice individual private concerns within a context of strict State sponsorship and regulation of public behavior.

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¹³ See e.g. Parkinson (1996: 145–150).

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Of Eternity, Everlastingness & Stars:

Notions of Time, Space, Duration & the Firmament in the Pyramid & Coffin Texts

Alicia Maravelia¹



CT, IV, 335¹, §§ 200d–e, 201d–e & 202a–b, 203a–b [BH1B2, Sq1Sq]

*As for the Cosmos, it is (dynamic) and (static) eternity;
as for the former, it is day (and) as for the latter it is night.*

Henceforth space by itself, and time by itself, are doomed to fade away into mere shadows, and only a kind of union of the two will preserve an independent reality.

Herman MINKOWSKI: *Space & Time*, Cologne 1908

Since there exists in this four dimensional structure [space–time] no longer any sections which represent «now» objectively, the concepts of happening and becoming are indeed not completely suspended, but yet complicated. It appears therefore more natural to think of physical reality as a four dimensional existence, instead of, as hitherto, the evolution of a three dimensional existence.

Albert EINSTEIN: *Relativity: The Special & the General Theory*, London 1954.

Abstract

The notions of *eternity* (*dt*) and *everlastingness* (*nḥḥ*) were deeply rooted in the ancient Egyptian *forma mentis*, as well as the notion of *duration* (*h3w*) and *time* (*rk*). The time, be it cyclical (connected to *dynamic eternity* and to the concepts of life, resurrection, light, tomorrow, Rē^c) or linear (connected to *static eternity*, death, darkness, yesterday, Osiris), was playing an important part in the ancient Egyptian conception of the Cosmos. The firmament and its periodicities, its celestial epiphanies, on the other hand, were providing the virtual space or *space–time continuum* (just to borrow a brilliant term from the Special Theory of Relativity of the great nobelist Albert Einstein), for the deceased to develop and evolve in all their *post mortem* *ḥprw*, that were closely connected to heavenly phenomena in general and stars in particular. In our paper, hinting to the ideas of Dr James Allen concerning eternity and everlastingness, we develop them further, including cosmographic and astronomical notions, particularly related to the stars in both *corpora* of the *Pyramid Texts* (PT) and the *Coffin Texts* (CT). In the former the notion of *eternity* is met 79 times, that of *everlastingness* 6 times, that of the *hours/hourly stars*

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(*wnwt*) 2 times, that of *time* 1 time, & c.; in the latter the notion of *eternity* is met 106 times, that of *everlastingness* 90 times, that of the *hours/hourly stars* (*wnwt*) 25 times, that of *time* 2 times, & c. Other notions expressing time, connected to the hourly, daily, seasonally and yearly phenomena do exist and are abundant in both *corpora*, as we have shown elsewhere; however, in this paper we shall focus on the previous specific notions, the virtual space of which is the sky itself [just the word *sky* (*pt*) is met 504 times in the *PT* and 665 times in the *CT*, not to include the extremely abundant word for Nūt (*Nwt*), the sky-goddess and other related words]. We are going to show that the allegoric and deeply metaphysical way in which the Egyptians were expressing their composite cosmovision was not only related to the various examined concepts of the *dual eternity*, *space* and *time*, but it was also inherently applied to their funerary texts through pre-scientific astronomical observations, in order to express the salvation and resurrection of the deceased and his/her incorporation into the firmament and particularly his/her virtual union with the stellar luminaries of the sky, using as a basis similar or different skylscapes in various eras.

KEY WORDS: Astronomical Concepts, *Coffin Texts*, Cosmographic Allegories, Duration, Egyptian Astronomy, Eternity, Everlastingness, Firmament, Nūt, *Pyramid Texts*, Sky, Space, Special Theory of Relativity, Stars (Decanal & Hourly), Time.

1 Introduction

In this paper we shall endeavour to give an insight of the role of eternity, everlastingness and time² in the context of the funerary texts of ancient Egyptians, namely in the *Pyramid Texts* (henceforth *PT*)³ and in the *Coffin Texts* (henceforth *CT*)⁴, where not only religious and social notions, but also astronomical and cosmographic elements abound. Our purpose is to show that —through their deeply-rooted metaphysical observances, interwoven with their belief that life after death continues in the celestial realm, and due to their keen observations of the sky with its periodical epiphanies—, the ancient Egyptians were able to describe certain interesting skylscapes using cosmographic allegories, which abound in their funerary texts and may correspond to different celestial phenomena observed in the sky during several periods of their history. Hence, a certain virtually astronomical text in the *PT*, *CT* or *BD*, may deal with one or more celestial configurations that intrigued the religious awe and metaphysical certainty of the Egyptians.

2 On time and its measurement (in modern Cosmology and in ancient Egypt), eternity and everlastingness, see e.g.: Brandon (1951); Minkowski (1952: 73–91); Einstein (1954); Wald (1991); Borchardt (1920); Bakir (1953: 110–11); Bakir (1974: 252–54); Assmann (1991); Assmann (1975); Westendorf (1974: 136–41); Wallenwein (1995); Assmann (1984); Zivie-Coche (1991: 52–79); Troy (1994: 3–51); (Guilhou 2001: 131–36); Guilhou (1984: 87–93); Goebs (2003: 238–53); Hornung (1978: 269–307); Dörner (1985: 27–37); Winand (2003: 17–35); Winand (2005: 311–25); Maravelia (2003: 55–72); Maravelia (2006: 278, 295 & n. 348, 370–74, 401 & n. 131, 405, *passim*); Maravelia (2007: 1243–50).

3 Sethe (1908–10); Sethe (1935–62); Faulkner (1998).

4 de Buck (1935–61); Faulkner (1973–78).

As Albert Einstein noticed, the concept of *happening* and *becoming* [$\sim hpr$, in ancient Egyptian, as is opposed to *existing/being*, (wnn , in ancient Egyptian)] are complicated, interwoven in the four dimensional *space–time continuum*. These very principles are directly related and corresponding to the notions of *eternity* (dt) and *everlastingness* (nhh), as Allen stated, in his brief description of the properties of *dynamic* and *static eternity*, as we prefer to call them⁵. Far from the modern concepts of Physics and Cosmology, where the always increasing entropy and the merciless arrow of time define a context of physical evolution and development of the physical systems, of the stars and the galaxies, of the Universe itself, and where the relativity of space and time is subject to the «quasi–divine» constant of the speed of light c , the ancient Egyptians were more prone to allegories and metaphors, using myths and their cosmovisional and religious *forma mentis*, in order to describe and comment on the celestial epiphanies of heavenly bodies and the irreversible passing of time, which would virtually lead their transfigured spirits ($3hw$) into eternity (dt) and everlastingness (nhh), into the starry body of Nut, identifying their souls ($b3iw$) to stars of the firmament ($h3\ 3h.s$, $h3\ b3.s$). According to them and their pre–scientific (although observationally keen) cosmovision, stars were the gods of the firmament ($ntrw\ imyw\ pt$), the always living distant divine captains of the heavenly boats (ϵnhw), the hourly decans ($wnwt$) and the $\mu\omicron\iota\pi\acute{\iota}\delta\iota\omicron\iota$ (as the Orphics would have noted⁶) who would control their lives and afterlives. Consequently, time (rk , tr), eternity (nhh/dt) and duration ($h3w$) were not only viewed as semi–astronomical and semi–religious parametres at a time for the priests–astronomers ($imyw\ wnw\ \acute{\omega}\rho\omicron\lambda\acute{\omicron}\gamma\omicron\iota$), but also as fundamental factors for the incorporation of the deceased into the sky and its periodical phenomena, which metaphorically would hint to the resurrection of the life–repeaters ($w\acute{h}mw\ \epsilon nh$) in the afterlife together with the Sun, the Moon and the stars, as those last would set/die and rise/resurrect again, without pause, that is eternally. The fact that time was deeply rooted and connected to the astronomical phenomena and to the heavenly bodies themselves becomes clear if we observe the characteristic use of certain taxograms, mainly that of the Sun ($r\epsilon/N5$) and that of a star ($sb3/N14$), in order to express words related to time and duration. The texts from the *PT* and the *CT* studied below can unequivocally testify for this, as well as the related archaeoastronomical diagrams.

2 Eternity, Everlastingness, Space and Stars in the *PT*

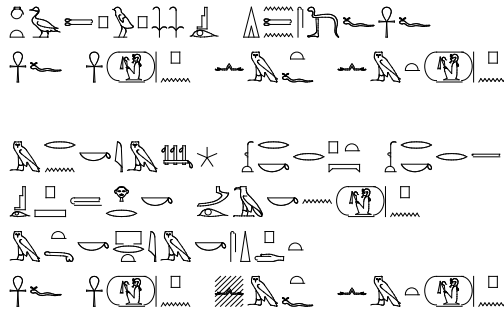
We have picked and chosen some characteristic texts from the *PT*, as appropriate paradigms of the preoccupation of the ancient Egyptians with time, eternity, the celestial afterlife and various interrelated cosmographic allegories.

The first text is the following⁷:

5 Allen (1988: 24–27); Assmann (1975). For a new insight on the question of being, cf. Winand (2007: 295–304).

6 Maravelia (2006: 330–31 & n. 98).

7 *PT* 219, §§ 171a–171b, 244–45 & §§ 186a–187a, 260 [W]: «*Nwt! Z3.t pw pnn Wsir; di.n.t n sdb.f; \epsilon nh.f. \epsilon nh.f. \epsilon nh N pn; n m(w)t.f; n m(w)t N pn! [...] M rn.k im(y)-S3h, tr:k r pt, tr:k r t3; Wsir! P{\S}*»



(O) Nūt! This one here is thy son Osiris, whom you have caused to be restored (that) he (may) live!

If he lives, this King will live; if he does not die, this King will not die!

[...]

In thy name of Dweller in Orion, with a season in the sky and a season on the Earth.

(O) Osiris, turn thy face and look on this King!

(For) thy seed which issued from thee is effective.

If he lives, this King will live; if he does not die, this King will not die!

Starting from the mythology of the Heliopolitan Ennead, Osiris —as the son of Nūt and heir of Geb— is identified to the deceased king, but also to the important decanal asterism *S3h*/Orion. Hence, the osirified king becomes also identical to his celestial counterpart, appearing, disappearing and reappearing like *S3h*/Orion. Both *Spdt*/Sirius and *S3h*/Orion were the prototypes for all decans, whose behaviour of disappearing for 70 days and their nocturnal invisibility lead to consider them as dead and being purified under the horizon (*3ht*), in order to rise again alive during their heliacal rising. Hence, the pharaoh as dwelling in *S3h*/Orion passes a season on the Earth, that is below the horizon, being dead; and a season in the sky, after his reappearance. Osiris is invoked again to look upon the deceased king, who now is identified to the offspring of Osiris, Horus the divinity of royalty *par excellence*. It is indirectly, though clearly, meant that the pharaoh is a bodily offspring of Osiris and of his effective seed (*mtwt spdt*). Here perhaps there is a paronomasia between *spdt* (effective) and *Spdt* (Sōthis), evoking the eternal annual and periodical return of the queen of decans always after the re-appearance of *S3h*/Orion. The duality of this decanal asterism is reminiscent of the ancient Egyptian belief that the body belongs to the Earth, but the soul to the sky⁸.

Based on the previous text we have prepared the following three archaeoastronomical simulations [FIG. I, II, III], all of which examine the position of *S3h*/Orion on the sky, relatively to the local horizon of Gizah [$\lambda = 31^\circ 19' 47''$ E, $\varphi = 29^\circ 56' 31''$ N], since the *PT* were a product of the OK, during which the northern cities of Memphis (capital) and

hr hr.k, m33.k n N pn! Mtwk, prt im.k spdt; ʿnh.f, ʿnh N pn; n m(w)t.f, n m(w)t N pn!». Also very briefly and partly examined in Wallin (2002: 116–17).

8 Frequently explicitly expressed during the Ptolemaic Era (cf. e.g.: *Edfou* I, 1892, 219: 14–15). On the decans, see *EAT* 1960–69; Depuydt (1998: 6–44); Cockcroft & Symons (2013: 1–10).

Heliopolis (religious metropolis) were prevailing, Gizah being the most famous royal necropolis. However, these simulations, performed by the professional and highly accurate archaeoastronomical software REDSHIFT 5.1⁹, after the local horizon was meticulously checked¹⁰, will be presented each one in one of the following examined texts, because they are clearly related not only to the previous text but also to the two following. The next simulation shows *S3h*/Orion under the horizon and refers to its invisibility period [FIG. I]. We consider the middle and brightest star ($m_v = + 1.69$) of the ancient decanal asterism *S3h*, namely the star ϵ -Orionis (= *Alnilam*) as the most characteristic. This rises at LT 06:04' at an azimuth of $A = 106^\circ 11' 01''$, while it sets at LT 17:00' at an azimuth of $A = 253^\circ 48' 59''$. The visibility curve of this star shows that during this specific date (as well as a few days before and a few days after it) this star will rise and set during the full day, that is well after the morning twilight ends and well before the evening twilight begins. Thus Orion is at its invisibility period of about 70 days, virtually belonging to the earth, not to the sky. The whole cosmographic metaphor is very reminiscent of the eternal periodical appearance, disappearance and re-appearance of *S3h*/Orion, thus hinting to the eternal (~continuous) unceasing return of life and resurrection.

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- 9 This algorithm follows the criteria DE102 of JPL (NASA), taking into account precession, nutation and all other motions with perfect precision; it also follows the analytic theory of planetary motions VSOP87, developed by the *Bureau des Longitudes* in Paris (Bretagnon & Francou 1988: 309–15). Once more thanks are due to Dr Chris Lawton of Maris Multimedia and to Dr Themis G. Dallas of the University of Thessaly (*personal communication*), for their valuable information concerning the excellent precision of RedShift 5.1 and its superiority to Stellarium 0.14.2.
- 10 We reconstructed and checked the local horizon profile in Gizah, using the professional software Horizon (Smith 2014), in relation to GoogleEarth. From W to NNE (counterclockwise) there are hills at the local horizon of Gizah, the highest being $\sim 8^\circ$ looking SSW and $\sim 8^\circ$ SSE. From W to E (clockwise) the low hills ($0^\circ \leq h_{\max} \leq 1^\circ.5$) do not particularly obstruct astronomical phenomena very close to the local horizon. For our simulation in Fig. I, the studied phenomena happen below the local horizon. For the simulation in Fig II, the important star ϵ -Orionis ($m_v = + 1.69$) actually is at a height $h = 02^\circ 35' 17''$, which is slightly lower than the height of the EES horizon ($\sim 3^\circ.5$ at the star's azimuth $A = 108^\circ 06' 02''$), so it will become visible a few moments later; everything else is not obstructed. For the simulation in Fig. III nothing is obstructed, since all the described phenomena occur in an altitude of more than 10° , i.e.: higher than the highest hills. We note, however, that we can always find another neighbouring and related local horizon (e.g.: close to the pyramid of Wenis, or in Heliopolis, or near Memphis) where there are lower (or insignificantly high) hills, so that the observation close to the horizon will become even easier.

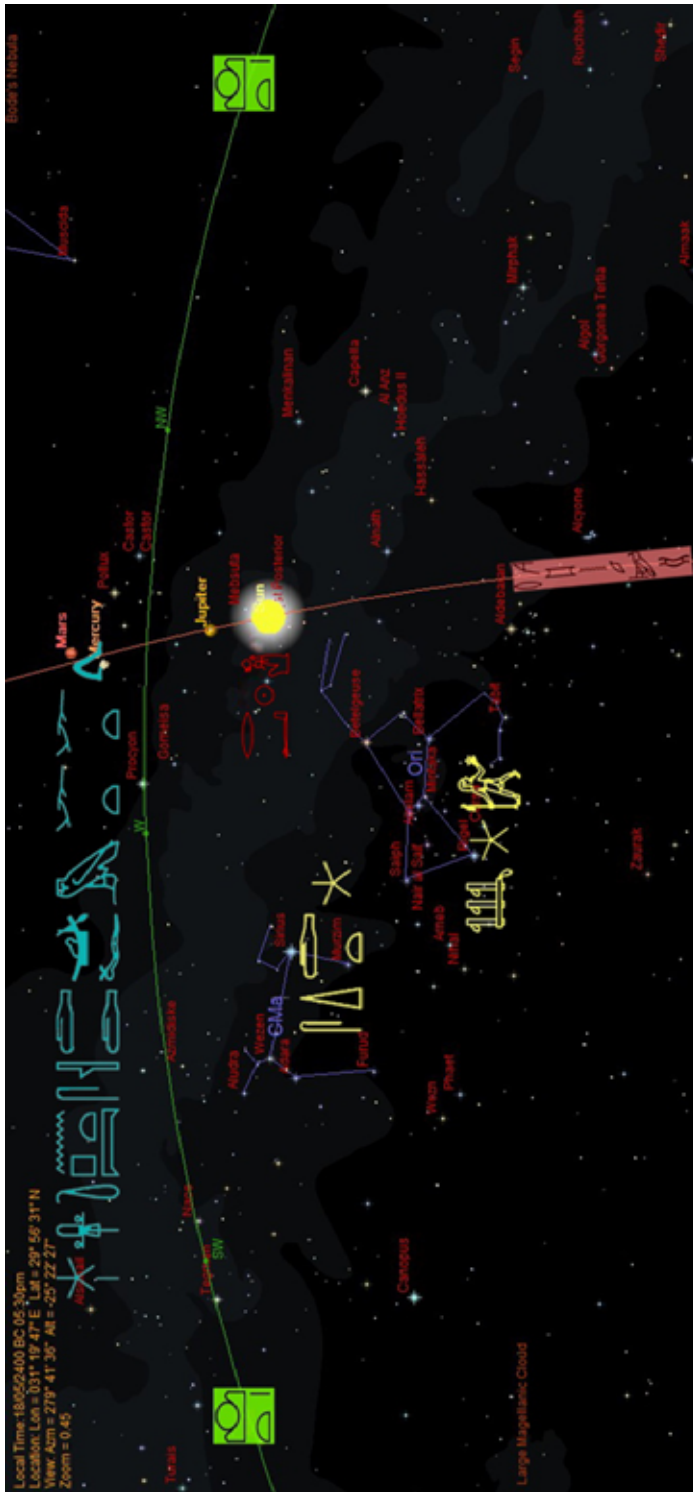
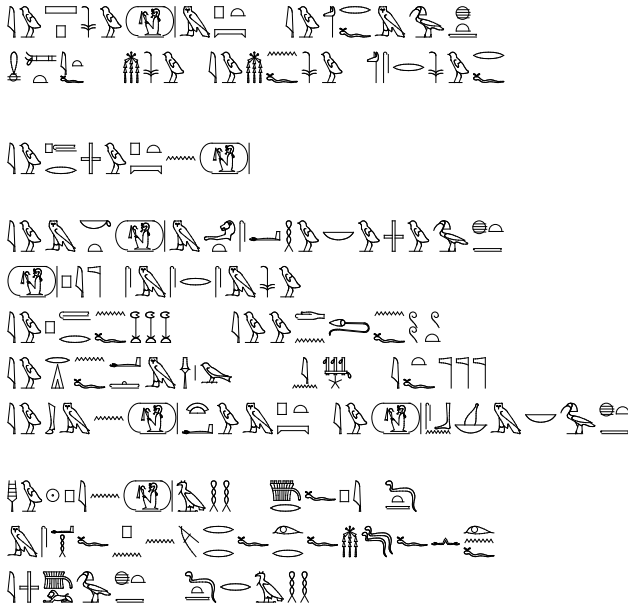


Figure 1 | Gizah, 18th May (= II β ht, sw 4) 2400 BC, 17:30' UT (= LT 19:30').

We follow *PT* 219. We have on purpose shown the aspect under the horizon (β ht), where both Orion/ $S\beta$ h and Sirius/ $S\beta$ tl are projected on the celestial sphere relatively close to the Sun (R^c), both being in their invisibility periods of 70 days. It is evident that both of them were over the horizon during daytime, thus after their setting (that happens before twilight begins) both of them are invisible during the whole night, unable to «serve their duties as decans», thus virtually «resting and being ennobled» under the horizon, in the $Dw\beta$ t, in order to rise again when the appropriate time comes with their heliacal risings, starting again to «work» as decans. Various planets [e.g.: Jupiter, Mars ($Sb\beta$ β hty n pt skdd, fm β ht) and Mercury] follow the Sun on the Ecliptic (Mf - n - β) setting and rising eternally. The size of the Sun on this simulation has been exaggerated for reasons of emphasis.

The second text is a part of the so-called *Cannibal Hymn* of the *PT* and goes as follows¹¹:



The glory of the King is in the sky; his power is in the horizon!

Like his father Atūm, who begot him; he begot the King (and) the King is mightier than him!

[...]

Those who are in the sky serve the King.

[...]

The King's place is at the head of all the august-ones who are in the horizon!

(For) this King is a god, older than the oldest.

Thousands serve him (and) hundreds offer to him!

There is given to him a decree of great power by Orion, father of the gods!

The King has appeared again in the sky, he is crowned as Lord of the horizon!

[...]

The King's lifetime is everlastingness, his limit is eternity!

In this his dignity of «(if) he wishes, he does; if he detests, he does not»!

(Even) he who is at the limits of the horizon, for ever (and) ever!

11 *PT* 273–74, §§ 395a–395b, 501–02 & § 406a, 513–14 & §§ 407d–409a, 515–17 & §§ 412a–412c, 520–21 [W]: «*Iw špsw N m pt, iw wsr:f m 3ht! Mi Tm(w), it.f, ms sw; iw ms.n.f sw; wsr sw r:f! [...]* *Iw phrw imyw-pt n N. [...]* *Iw mkt N m-ḥ3t s'ḥw nbw, imyw-3ht! N pi ntr, sms r smsw. Iw phr n.f ḥ3w, iw wdn n.f. štw! Tw rdi(t).n.f ' m šhm wr in S3ḥ, it-ntrw! Tw whm.n N ḥ'w m pt, iw:f sbn m nb-3ht!* [...] *ḥ3w pi n N nhḥ, dr:f pi dt, m s'ḥ.f pn n "mrr:f, ir(r):f; msdd.f, n ir:n.f"*! *Imy-drw 3ht dt r nhḥ!*». The §§ 408a–408c are also briefly mentioned in Wallin 2002: 45; *contra* Wallin (*op. cit.*: 46), we prove that the whole text of the *Cannibal Hymn* hints explicitly and directly to the heliacal rising.

That this passage is equivalent to the previous one and that the main thematology is *S3h*/Orion, and the osirified pharaoh as his heir, is evident from the content of this text. Here the context is highly reminiscent of the glorious re-appearance of the resurrected king, thus it actually describes allegorically a heliacal rising of *S3h*/Orion. The text notes that although the king is glorified in the sky, his actual power is found at the horizon, hinting to the re-appearance/rebirth of the monarch, following the pattern of the decanal asterisms: the horizon is the separator of the phase of life from the phase of death; and again it is the passage from death to resurrection. Whatever is over the horizon is living in the sky, whatever sets under it virtually dies, in order to be reborn again and reappear. That is why the power lies on the horizon: there the deceased pharaoh will rise heliacally like his father Osiris/*S3h* and as his father Atūm he will be mightier than the solar god. Who are those celestial beings that serve the king? Possibly the stars (*sb3w*) as celestial deities, a fact corroborated by the previous verses of the *Cannibal Hymn*, stating explicitly that the king has virtually consumed his forefathers/gods and foremothers/goddesses, in order to live again, become immortal and be divinized in a panoramic and intriguing cosmic drama, where all the celestial expanses and the earth participate to glorify the ascension of the monarch¹². Who are the august-ones (*s'hw*) of the horizon? The heliacally re-appearing decanal stars, the living gods of the sky, who have been purified under the horizon, in the Netherworld (*Dw3t*) during their absence. The context and the *signifiants* of this text are highly stellar! All the heavenly stellar hosts in hundreds and in thousands serve him and offer to him, even the great *S3h*/Orion/Osiris —by virtue of him being the father of the gods— issues a powerful decree that makes the pharaoh to live again in the sky (*iw whm.n N h'w m pt*) and appear on the horizon to be crowned as his lord (*iwf sbn m nb-3ht*). This «again», the repetitive periodicity and eternality of the verb *whm*, hints to repetition, periodical harmony, eternal return¹³, the cyclical flow of time itself: eternity and everlastingness. It is explicitly stated that the lifetime of the monarch is everlastingness (*nḥh*), while his limit is eternity (*dt*), and that he will remain at the limits of the horizon (i.e.: he will be always re-appearing and reborn for ever to the limits of the horizon), that is always and everywhere. Based on the previous texts we have prepared the following archaeoastronomical simulation [FIG. II] for the same year and for the geographical coordinates of Gizah. The *arcus visionis* of *Alnilam* is more than 10° and its visibility diagram shows that it rises before the end of the morning twilight, hence *S3h* can be considered as a precursor heralding the sunrise, so we actually have a heliacal rising of Orion. This star rises at LT 03:54' at an azimuth of $A = 106^{\circ}10'52''$, while the Sun rises at LT 04:46' at an azimuth of $A = 64^{\circ}02'31''$, hence in principle the star ϵ -Ori could become visible. On the same skyscape the Moon was approaching the dark phase (*psdntyw*) and was illuminated only by 13%. Here, we must point out that: (i) The oldest known *Pyramid*

12 PT 273–74, §§ 393a–394b, 496–500 [W]: «gp pt, ihy sb3w; nm pdwt, sd3 ksw 3kr; gr:sn gnmw, m3.n.sn Wnis h' b3 m ntr; nḥ m itwf, wšb m mwwt.f». On the *Cannibal Hymn*, see also the study Eyre (2002).

13 See the significant philosophical work of Mircea Eliade [e.g.: Eliade (1959)]; cf. also Hornung (1978: 269–307).

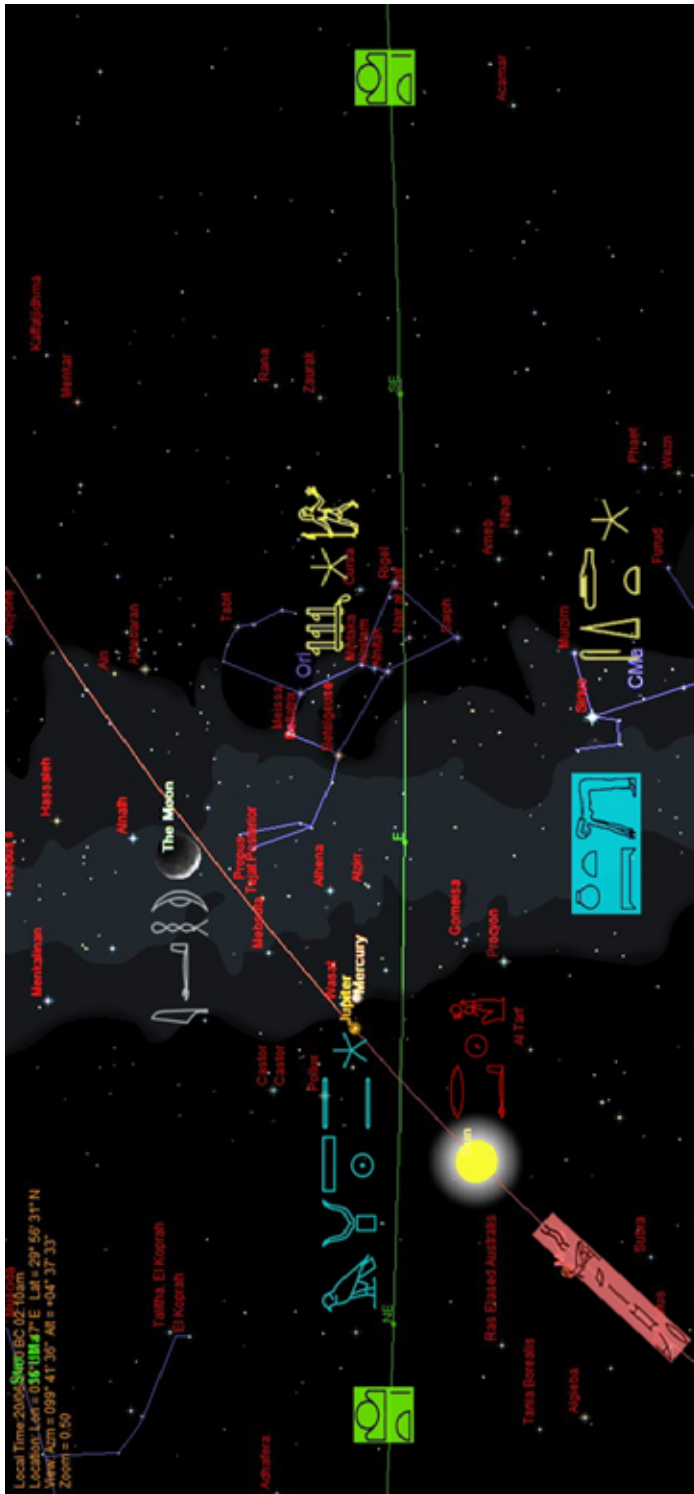
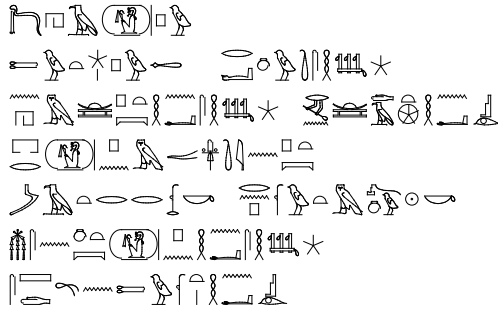


Figure II | Gizah, 20th June (= III *3ht*, sw 7) 2400 BC, 02:10' UT (= LT 04:10').

We follow *PT* 273–74. Orion/*S3h*/Osiris, in his identification to the deceased but resurrected pharaoh, re–appears victoriously after 70 days with his heliacal rising at the eastern horizon, as a precursor of the Sun (*R*), followed by Sirius/*Spd*/Isis, who will also rise heliacally, albeit later than Orion. On the Ecliptic (*Mr-n-h3*) not only the Moon (*7rh*) is visible close to the end of that lunar month, but also some of the planets, like Mercury and Jupiter (*Hr wpš-3wy*). Orion (*S3h*) is projected close to the body of the celestial and starry goddess Nūt/*Nwt* personified by the Milky Way. The sizes of the Sun and of the Moon on this simulation have been exaggerated and are shown bigger than normal for reasons of emphasis.

Texts come from the pyramid of King Wenis (*Wnis*, Hellen.: Ὠβνος, 2356–2323 BC), thus our simulation date of 2420 BC is very well chosen because it is certain that even though the *PT* were firstly recorded at his reign their (astronomical) ideas are definitely older, probably dating since c. 3000 BC; (ii) The landscape and the hills' configuration at Gizah do not influence the observed celestial phenomena significantly (see n. 9, *supra*).

The third text is another interesting instance where again *S3h*/Orion is dealt with¹⁴:



Recitation: O this King!

Thou art this great star, the companion of Orion,

Who traverseth the sky with Orion, who navigateth the Netherworld with Osiris!

Thou ascendest from the eastern side of the sky,

Being renewed at thy due season and rejuvenated at thy due time!

Nūt has borne thee together with Orion,

The year has put a fillet on thee together with Osiris!

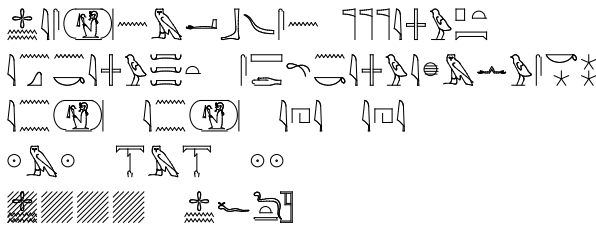
Here the resurrected king is identified to the *great star*/*sb3* ʕ3, the companion of Orion/*rmnwty S3h*, which crosses the sky with *S3h*/Orion and the Netherworld with *S3h*/Osiris, a theme already dealt with in the first examined text (see *supra*). Consequently, it speaks of the periodical disappearance (~*Dw3t*) and appearance (~*pt*) of this decanal asterism and it is interrelated to both previous texts examined above. Here another aspect of the deceased king is prominent: his identification to the *great star* (*sb3* ʕ3)¹⁵, which was most possibly

14 *PT* 466, §§ 882a–883d, 162 [P]: «*Dd-mdw: H3 N pw! Twt sb3 pw ʕ3, rmnwty S3h, nhm pt hnʕ S3h, hn Dw3t hnʕ Wsir! Pr N pn m gs i3bty n pt, m3wy.t(w) r tr.k, rnp.tw m nw.k! Ms.n Nwt N pn hnʕ S3h, ssd.n tw rnpt hnʕ Wsir!b*». Also discussed in Wallin (2002: 47–48), who correctly reviews Krauss' arguments on the *great star*.

15 Krauss (1997: 197–206); cf. Maravelia (2006: 295, n. 349; 449, Tab. 4, # 4). The *great star* cannot be neither α-Ori (Betelgeuse) nor α-CMa (Sirius); cf. e.g.: Wainwright 1936: 45–46; according to Krauss it is rather α-Tau (*Aldebaran*), see *op. cit.*: 204. It cannot be either the Moon (*contra* Hannig 2009: 740), since the Egyptians were using the word *sbA* for stars and planets but probably not for the Moon. Besides, the *great star* by virtue of its proximity to Orion is called *rmnwty* %AH, showing its continuous closeness to that asterism, on the contrary the Moon can become a virtual companion of Orion only few times per year, when it happens to pass through Taurus on the Ecliptic [Fig. II]. On the completely different conception of the *great star* (*MUL.GAL*) in Mesopotamia, as a meteorite or bolide, cf. Bjorkman (1973: 99–101).

α -Tau (*Aldebaran*). It is explicitly stated that the king/great star is ascending from the eastern side of the sky, being repetitively rejuvenated and re-born by Nūt together with Orion. If we take into account that Nūt was also identified to the Milky Way and the projection of Orion on the celestial sphere very close to it, the cosmographic metaphor becomes very vivid indeed. The last verse of the text proves unequivocally that the great star cannot be the Moon, for the solar year (defined by its beginning, corresponding to the heliacal rising of Sirius/*Spdt* which follows that of *S3h*/Orion) was related to the decans and not to the Moon; thus, the year crowns the king and Osiris/Orion with a virtual diadem upon his re-appearance, which marks and foretells the re-appearance of Sōthis. Based on the previous texts we have prepared the following archaeoastronomical simulation [FIG. III] for the same year and for the geographical coordinates of Gizah. Betelgeuse (α -Ori, $m_v = +0.77$) rises at LT 15:42' at an azimuth of $A = 94^\circ 57' 10''$, while *Aldebaran*/*sb3* ϵ^3 (α -Tau, $m_v = +1.16$) rises at LT 12:10' at an azimuth of $A = 91^\circ 37' 12''$, and both of them set after midnight on the next day, the former approximately one and a half hour after and the latter just after midnight. However, we consider the middle and brightest star ($m_v = +1.69$) of the ancient decanal asterism *S3h*, namely the star ϵ -Orionis (*Alnilam*) as the most characteristic. This rises at LT 15:59' at an azimuth of $A = 106^\circ 10' 44''$, while it sets at LT 02:55' (of the next day) at an azimuth of $A = 253^\circ 49' 16''$. The visibility curve of this star shows that during this specific date (as well as a few days before and especially a few days after it) this star will rise towards the end of the day, although just before the evening twilight begins, and will set during the full night, that is before the evening twilight begins. Thus Orion is at its visibility period, virtually belonging to the sky, not to the earth. Additionally the close connection of α -Tau to Orion is clearly visible. It is interesting to see that all three previous archaeoastronomical simulations [FIG. I, II, III] can be assigned to each and every one of the three texts examined above. All of them show different phases of the behaviour of the decanal asterism *S3h*/Orion, while the 2nd text (explicitly) and the 3rd text (implicitly) describe the heliacal rising of this constellation. All of them show the periodical cycle of life and death as projected onto the sky and its stellar epiphanies. All of them hint to the eternal return of life and amalgamate the cosmic space of the skylscapes over Egypt with the immeasurable time of eternity and everlastingness.

There are many instances where the terms *eternity* (*dt*) and *everlastingness* (*nhh*) are met in the *PT*. We shall examine a few more characteristic cases, like the following text¹⁶:



The King will be indeed in their company, (namely) the gods who are in the sky!

16 *PT* 574, §§ 1490a–1491c, 684–85 [P]: «*Wnn is N [p]n m-^cb.sn ntrw imyw-pt! Inḳ n.k imy-pḏwt. Sšd n.k imyw-ihmw-sk. Inn N, inn N, ihi, ihi! Hrḳ m hrw, grḥ m grḥ; hrw hrw! Wnn [...] wnn.f dt!*».

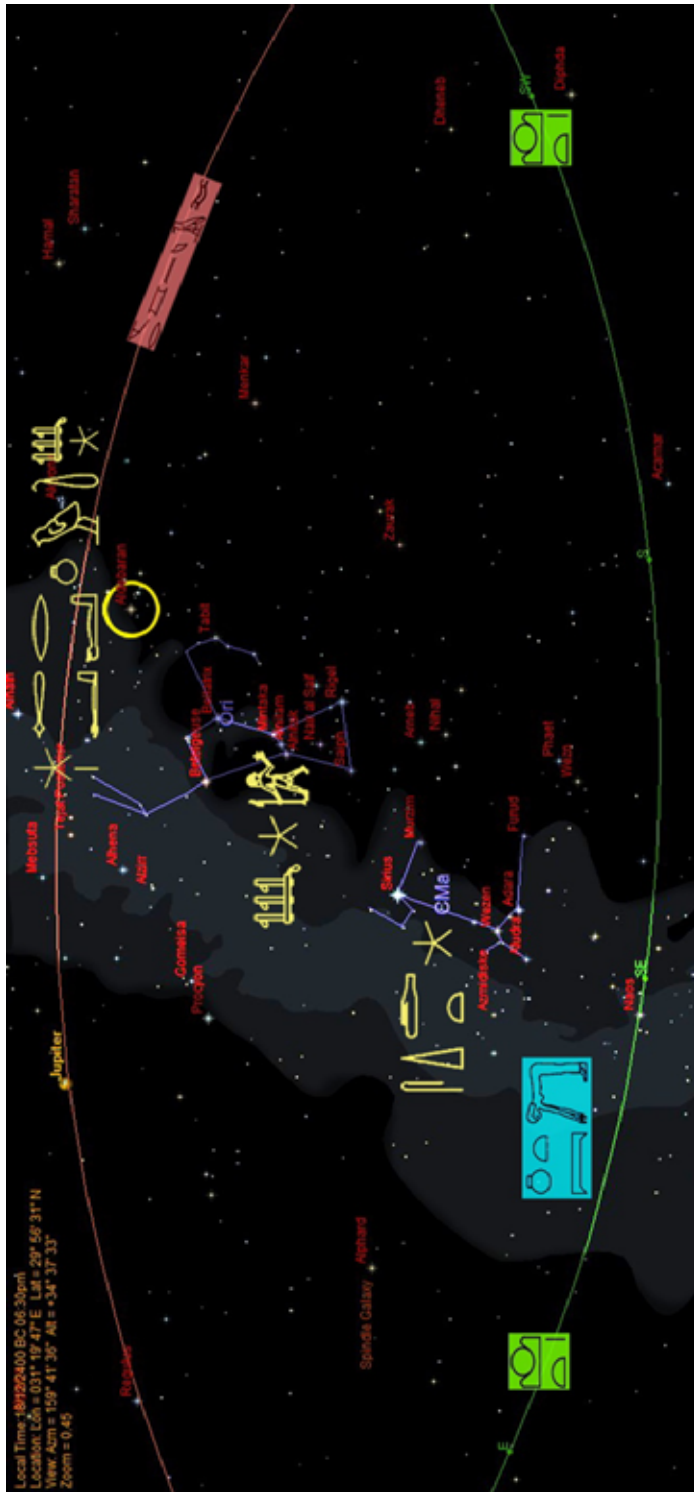


Figure III | Gizah, 18th December (= I Šmw, sw 8) 2400 BC, 18:30' UT (= LT 20:30').

We follow *PT* 466. Both the prototype decanal asterisms Orion/*S3h* and Sirius/*Spdt* are in their visibility period, so they are visible during the longest part of the night, usable as decans to measure the nightly hours. The *great star/sb3 c3* is α -Tau (Aldebaran), which in his apparent proximity to Orion re-appears earlier than the latter. Also in its closeness to the Milky Way/*Nwt* it is allegorized as being borne by Orion/*S3h* and by her at its due time of re-appearance.

Those who are in the celestial expanses assemble for thee. The imperishable stars flash for thee.

Turn about, (o) King! Turn about, (o) King! Shout! Shout!

Day by day (and) night by night; day after day,

(So long as) [...] exists [...] he shall exist for (all) eternity!

This passage claims that the king will be granted the company of the celestial divinities, that is the stars, thus it shows once more the relation of time and of eternity to the stars and to their periodical epiphanies. All these stellar deities assemble for the king, even the imperishable stars (*ihmw-sk*) are flashing for him in elation, asking him to turn about and shout in joy, day by day and night by night, continuously, for ever: that is for all eternity. Thus the pharaoh will gain immortality and will exist as long as the heaven exists, that is eternally! Could we virtually compare the previous passage and mostly its final verses to *Psalm* XVIII/XIX? In that instance, the King–Prophet David proclaims the glory of the eternal God through the celestial works of His hands (i.e.: the stars, the Sun and the Moon), so that every day can corroborate this and every night can show His wisdom¹⁷. Finally, only a short reference to *PT* 690 will be given¹⁸. In this passage the periodicities of the inundation, the seasons, the starry sky and the decans (Orion), that of the months and of the monthly lunar festivals are evoking the passage of time, the eternal return and monthly time (*3bd*) as a unit of eternity and everlastingness. Symbolic and archetypal undertones hint to the death/burial as is allegorized by the seed–planting and resurrection /life as is allegorized by the flowering of the green–osirian nature (Osiris ~ Nepri)¹⁹. Thus, Osiris/*S3h*/Orion becomes a prominent celestial archetype and prototype decan, the joint decan to Isis/*Spdt*/Sōthis, whose decanal behaviour of disappearing with an acronychal setting and reappearing after 70 days with a heliacal rising is directly projected onto the *post mortem* continuation of life of the pharaoh, with a strong undertone of hope to gain everlasting life and eternity itself. Finally, his *k3* will enjoy eternal sustenance during the monthly lunar festivals. The Moon also hints to eternity and everlastingness through its monthly periodical appearance, disappearance and re–appearance, evoking the eternal passage of time in both its dynamical (*nḥḥ*) and static (*dt*) hypostases. Even the hours signify the passing of time, as the minimal micro–expression of eternity, the same way the centuries allegorize the passing of time, as the maximal mega–expression of everlastingness. In a certain passage the hours (*wnwt*) are invoked, in order to open the ways for the resurrected king, these being the hourly decanal stars that precede the

17 *Ψαλμοί/Psalmi* XVIII/XIX, 2–3: «Οἱ οὐρανοὶ διηγοῦνται δόξαν Θεοῦ, ποίησιν δὲ χειρῶν αὐτοῦ ἀναγγέλλει τὸ στερέωμα. Ἡμέρα τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐρεῦγεται ῥῆμα, καὶ νύξ νυκτὶ ἀναγγέλλει γινῶσιν.» / «Caeli enarrant gloriam Dei, et opera manuum eius annuntiat firmamentum. Dies diei eructat verbum, et nox nocti indicat scientiam». In the original Hebrew text: « יְבִיעַ אָמַר ; וְלַיְלָה לַלַּיְלָה , יַחְיֶה-דָּעַת . יוֹם לַיּוֹם , הַשָּׁמַיִם , מְסַפְּרִים - אֵל ; כְּבֹד וּמַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵיו , מִגִּיד הַרְקִיעַ . יוֹם לַיּוֹם , יוֹם לַיּוֹם , יוֹם לַיּוֹם . ».

18 See *PT* 690, §§ 2111–2119, 995–1000 [N].

19 Cf. *Ιωάνν./Ioan.* 12, 24: «ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ἔάν μὴ ὁ κόκκος τοῦ σίτου πεσὼν εἰς τὴν γῆν ἀποθάνῃ, αὐτὸς μόνος μένει· ἔάν δὲ ἀποθάνῃ, πολλὸν καρπὸν φέρει»/«amen, amen dico vobis: Nisi granum frumenti cadens in terram mortuum fuerit, ipsum solum manet; si autem mortuum fuerit, multum fructum affert».

solar god and rise before him during the night, measuring time and heralding his morning rising²⁰:



O you who are over the hourly-stars, who are before Rē^c, prepare a way for the King!

It is evident that eternity is virtually included in the passage of time (*rk*) itself, in every time unit, from the single moment (*3t*) up to the hours (*wnwt*), days (*hrw*), months (*3bdw*), seasons (*trw*), years (*rnpwt*), any time period (*h3w*) from the lifetime of a person (*ʿhʿw*) to the millions of years (*hḥ n rnpwt*) of the divine celestial beings. The sky (*pt*) itself constitutes the cosmic theatre for the evolution of the human beings in their *developments/hprw* to attain *nḥḥ* and the static existence of the gods as *beings/wwnnyw* embedded in their eternal *dt*. Everlastingness and eternity are both the extreme manifestations of time itself, flowing and evolving together with space, in a virtual space–time continuum, where the periodical phenomena of the firmament play an important part in their virtual use as cosmic metaphors for the recycling of death to life and of darkness to light²¹.

3 Eternity, Everlastingness, Space and Stars in the *CT*

We have picked and chosen some characteristic texts from the *CT*, as appropriate examples of the sophisticated preoccupation of the Egyptians of Antiquity with time, eternity, the celestial afterlife and various interrelated cosmographic allegories. Based on the following texts we have prepared two archaeoastronomical simulations [FIG. IV, V], which were performed relatively to the local horizon of Lycopolis [Assyūt/Z3wt : $\lambda = 31^{\circ}09'56''$ E, $\varphi = 2711^{\circ}37''$ N], since the *CT* were a product of the MK, during which the cities of Middle Egypt (where these texts were initially conceived and written) were prevailing. These simulations were again performed by the professional and highly accurate archaeoastronomical software REDSHIFT 5.1²², after the local horizon was meticulously checked²³.

The first text is the following²⁴:

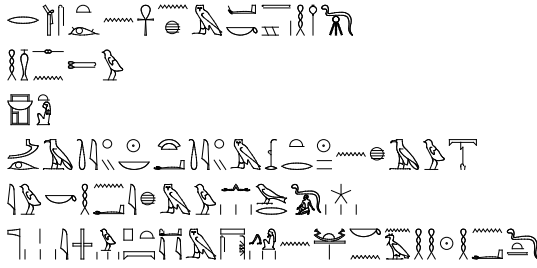
20 PT251, § 269a, 399: *“i hryw-wnwt, tpyw-^r r!” Try w3t n N!*». Also very briefly discussed in Wallin 2002: 115, with a short review on the hourly stars. Let it be noted that *wnwt* is derived from *wni*, meaning *to pass, to run* (thanks are due to Prof. Dr J. Winand for this remark).

21 Cf. also Guilhou (2011: 47): «[...] la négation même de la mort».

22 See n. 8, *supra*.

23 We reconstructed and checked the local horizon profile in Lykopolis (Assyūt), using the professional software Horizon (Smith 2014), in relation to GoogleEarth. The highest local horizon (both towards NE and SSW) is not more than 2° high, thus the phenomena examined here are in principle easily visible.

24 CT I, 53, §§ 240d–241b [B10C^b, B10C^c, B12C^b, B13C, B16C]: «*Rst n ʕnh! Mk t3 hq! Hsy.n tw Nbt-Hwt! M3.ti rʕ-nb, hʕ.ti m tr n h3w, iw.k hnʕ iħmw-wrd, ntrw imyw-pt, dy m šmsw n wi3.k, n nħħ hnʕ dt!*». Also very briefly discussed in Wallin (2002: 115).



Awake to life! Behold, the Earth is bright!
 Has favoured thee
 Nephthys!
 Thou being renewed daily and appearing in the night time,
 Being with the Unwearying Stars,
 The gods who are in the sky, who are placed as followers of thy boat for everlastingness
 and eternity!

It is evident that this text describes the expected resurrection (reawakening) of the deceased together with the Sun in the morning, after the glorious night of his union to the unwearying stars (*ihmw-wrḏ*), the stars southern of the Ecliptic that (like the decans) were reappearing after their invisibility period, rising heliacally and heralding the solar god. The deceased is being favoured by Nephthys (sister and wife of Osiris, who is united with the Sun during the sixth hour of the night) and the forthcoming dawn (*ḥḏ t3*) is a crucial element for the spiritual joy of the expected sunrise. The periodicity of the celestial vault which symbolizes the rejuvenation of the deceased, who appears in the night time with the unwearying stars that are visible during the night and/or those who will rise heliacally afresh, is explicitly mentioned.

What this text describes is shown in the following simulation [FIG. IV]. In another paper we had reproduced almost the same skyscape, concerning the *wḥ*—«star», that is Venus²⁵. We can now see that since the same celestial configuration could trigger different interpretations and varied descriptions through cosmographic and semi-religious metaphors, the same skyscape could produce different textual renderings, some of them however would describe one particular astronomical phenomenon at a time. On the other hand, possibly similar skiesapes observed in different eras would trigger different textual renderings, a fact that could also explain the previous observations. As we clearly see, there are unwearying stars over and close to the horizon: the former were «in labour» during the whole night; the latter are rising heliacally. The fact that this text presents the expected sunrise is also proven by the statement that these star-gods are the followers of the boat of the deceased, like these same stars were believed to be the followers of Rē^c (*šmsw-R^c*). Finally, the evocation of both everlastingness (*nḥḥ*) and eternity (*ḏt*) is characteristic. The cosmic drama for the incorporation of the deceased into the periodicities of the firmament does not happen only in space but also in time; this time is an amplified timescale, where

25 Maravelia (2018, *in press*).

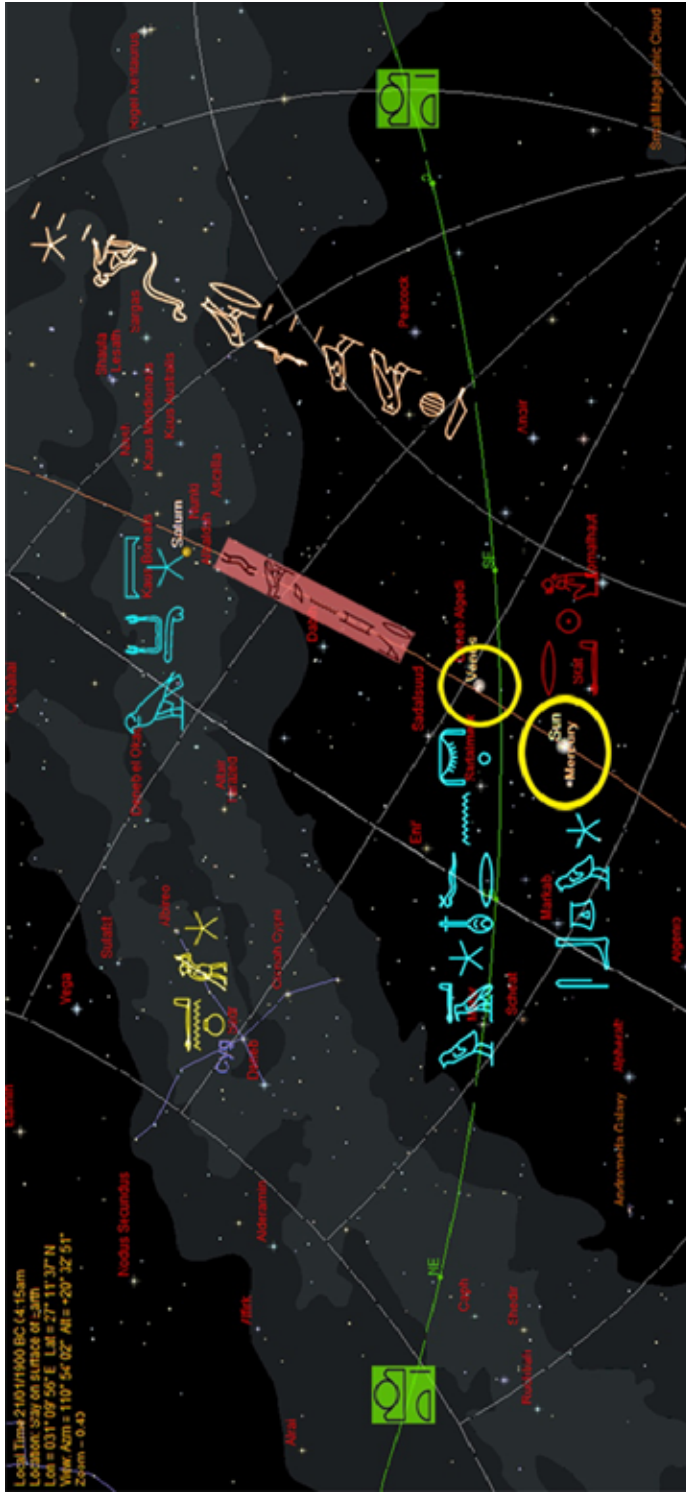


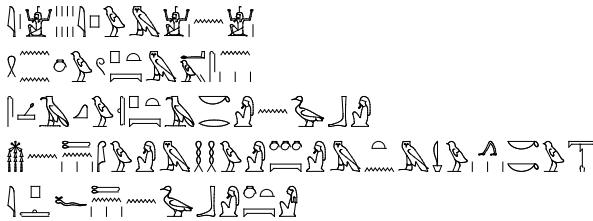
Figure IV | Assyūt, 21st January (= II 3ht, sw 12) 1900 BC, 04:15' UT (LT 06:15').

We follow *CT I*: 53; VI: 473; and VI: 722. The Sun is $\sim 10^\circ$ under the horizon and Mercury (*Shgw*) is projected on the celestial sphere very close to him. Below and to the south of the ecliptic (red line, *Mr-n-b*) the zone of the unwearying stars (*lmmw-wrd*) is shown (see e.g.: WALLIN 2002: 120–21, in agreement with KRAUSS 1997: 120–25, 144–45). At that time Saturn (*Hr k2-pt*) had raised, but not yet Mercury (*Shgw*) and the Sun (*R*), while the northern asterism *Dwn-nwv*/*wnw* can be seen over the eastern horizon. The beautiful and golden w^2 -star is Venus (♀), scintillating lonely and brilliantly near the horizon. The *arcus visionis* between Venus and the Sun is $> 12^\circ$, hence we have a heliacal rising of Venus, virtually heralding the sunrise and the Sun. The unwearying stars, close and to the south of Venus, are also rising heliacally. The green line is the local horizon (3ht).

everlastingness and eternity are coeval, collateral, coexistent and cohabitating the same shell of existence. This shell is a meta-physical virtual *space-time continuum*, where night (*grh* ~ *dt*) brings day (*hrw* ~ *nhh*) and Osiris gives his place to Rē^c in an unceasing mixture of constant existence (*wnn* ~ *στάσις*) and dynamic transformation (*hpr* ~ *κίνησις*), so that *life/nh* and *order/mʕt* (against the *disorder/hnnw* of death) always prevail and the resurrectional integration of the deceased into the cosmic cycles will be complete in space and in time; albeit this time is simply eternity.

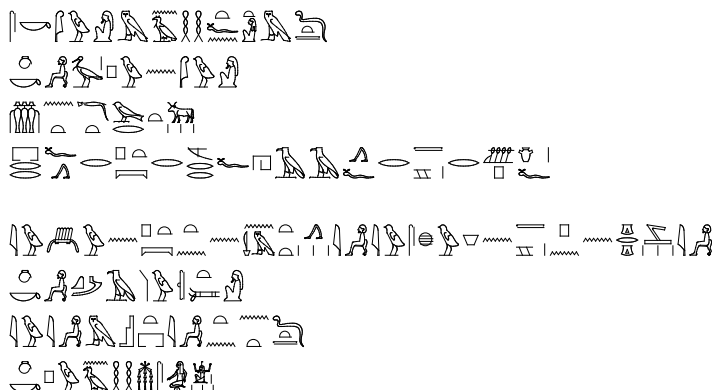
As we have seen in the previous example, the deceased is renewed in the course of the day (being *ennobled/sʕh* under the horizon) and is appearing by night, identified to an unwearying star, following eternally the course of the yearly astral cycles of those stars and the decans (disappearing for 70 days and being visible at night for about 295 days), so that he will start to reappear heliacally at dawn before the sunrise. During most of the time of the disappearance period, the deceased will traverse the sky during the day, following his father Rē^c, and will need sustenance for his daily celestial trips. In Spell 22, it is said that power is given to the deceased to go forth into the day (which reminds us the original title of the *BD*: *pṛt m hrw*), strength is given to him especially in his legs, to proceed during morning and evening and accordingly at each time of the day, at all hours and seasons²⁶, indirectly evoking eternity and everlastingness in the periodical cycles of the heavenly phenomena as are observed from the Earth.

Another interesting text with highly cosmological undertones is the following²⁷:



26 CT I, 22, §§ 66d–68a [B3B0, B1P, B6C, B4C, T9C, T1L, BH5C, T1C].

27 CT II, 80, §§ 27d–29b & §§ 31a–31d [B1C, B2L, B1P, B7C, B1B0, G1T, A1C]: «*I Hh̄w hm̄nw, ipw m Hh̄w n Hh̄w, šnnw pt m ʕwy.sn, sk̄šw pt, 3kr n Gb, ms.n tn Šw m h̄h̄w, (m) nww, (m) tnmw, m kkw, ip.f tn n Gb, ip.f tn n Nwt! ʾst Šw m nh̄h, Tfnt m dt! ʾnk b3 pw n Šw, hnt Mhyt-Wrt, prr:f r pt r mrr:f, h33:f r t3 r šzp ib.f! [...]* Tw 3w n pt tn n nmwt.i; iw sh̄w n B pn n grgw.i. ʾnk km3 Tm(w), iw.i m st.i tn nt dt. ʾnk pw nh̄h, ms Hh̄w [...]». In § 28b we kept the correct taxogram N2 from coffin B1B0, instead of the relatively similar in shape but actually erroneous F27 as found on all the other coffins (with the exception of B1C, where it is written partially correctly) with the same Spell; this shows the correct meaning of darkness. On the locality- and temporality-notions of this passage, see the discussion in Allen 1988: 24; on the notions of *nh̄h* (~ *κίνησις*) and *dt* (~ *στάσις*), see Allen 1988: 24–27. The whole Spell is thoroughly examined by Prof. Dr James Allen, however he does not discuss any celestial analogue but puts emphasis in the terrestrial examples. A similar reference to *nh̄h* and *dt* is to be found in CT II, 78, §§ 22a–22b & §§ 23a–23c: «*ink nh̄h, it n h̄h̄w, snt.i pw Tfnt, z3t Tmw, mst Psdt [...]* ink ms h̄h̄w wh̄m n Tmw, dt pw snt.i pw Tfnt» [B1C, B2L, B1P, B7C, B1B0, G1T, A1C], also discussed in Allen (1988: 21).



O you Eight Chaos–Gods, being veritable Chaos–Gods,
 Who encircle the sky with their two arms,
 Who lifted together sky and earth (lit.: Aker) for Geb,
 Shū fashioned you in chaos, in the Abyss, in darkness and in gloom,
 (And) he allots you to Geb (and) Nūt!
 Behold, Shū is Everlastingness and Tefnūt is eternity!
 I am this soul of Shū,
 Foremost of the Celestial Cow (*Mhyt-Wrt*),
 Who ascends to heaven at his desire (and) descends to earth at his wish!
 [...]
 The length of this sky belongs to my strides; the width of this earth belongs to my
 settlements.
 I am he whom Atūm created,
 (And) I am bound for this my place of eternity.
 I am (indeed) Everlastingness, who fashioned the Chaos–gods.
 [...]

This text is cosmological without explicit astronomical notions, however it is characterized by several cosmographic and cosmovisional elements. It was briefly discussed by Bickel²⁸ and we are going to comment on it adding new comparative thoughts. The creational kernel of the primeval chaos– or infinity–deities interestingly echoes the modern cosmological concepts of the four fundamental forces that were unified at the beginning of the Universe, according to the theory of Big Bang. It also echoes the Quantum Mechanical and Particle Theories of the quark pairs of particles, especially if we consider that those deities were eight or four pairs²⁹. We note the identification of Shū to everlastingness (*nḥḥ*) and of Tefnūt to eternity (*dt*). We observe the transcendence and the sequential transformations (allegorically describing the birth of the Universe) from the four preliminary pairs to a duality or a single final pair containing both genders, male and female, the former corresponding to dynamic eternity, life and evolution, the latter hinting to static eternity,

28 Bickel (1994: 134–35).

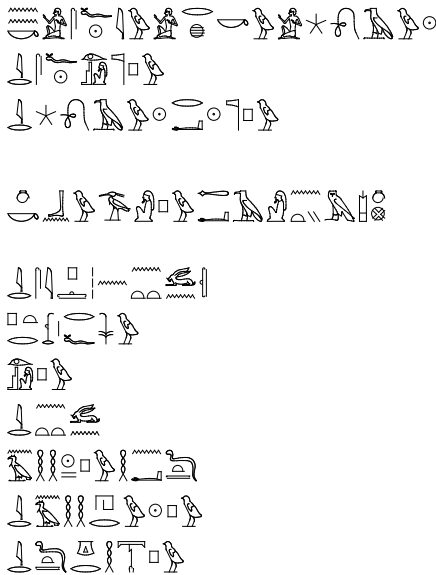
29 Maravelia (2012–14: 81 & n. 134); Tatomir (2009: 503–21).

order and existence. Actually, everlastingness and eternity become creators and define a spatial-temporal continuum, an extra-temporal and extra-spatial meta-physical sphere of existence, where the fashioning of the infinity gods signifies the beginning of order and the settling of physical laws in the Cosmos. The initial inert and bi-gendered solar god Atūm is highly interacting with the initial Abyss of Nūn:

Atūm (Tmw) ↔ Flood/H₂O (*nww/mww*) + Chaos (*hnnw*) + Darkness (*kkw*) + Hidden Secrecy (*imnt*)

This interaction takes place both out of space and time, in the divine meta-physical level of existence; and in space and time, after the Cosmos has been put in order and life started. Eternal recurrence and eternal sameness (as Allen correctly put it), that is dynamic (*nḥh*) and static eternity (*dt*), are developing and sustaining the whole world, the entire Universe through a *heracleitian fight/ῥσμίvη* of opposed however basically conjoint and interwoven principles or pairs of opposites. Life and death, order and disorder, light and darkness, time and space, male and female: everything is balanced and coexistent, harmonized and coeval to eternity and everlastingness that define a new aspect for the flow of time.

Another cosmovisional text, where the definitions *par excellence* of static (*dt*) and dynamic eternity (*nḥh*) are dealt with, and their relation to other meta-physical notions, hinting to the possible correctness of our approach, is the following³⁰:



Yesterday is mine, I have known tomorrow,
As for yesterday, it is Osiris.

30 CT IV, 335¹, §§ 193a–193c & § 198a & §§ 201a–202b [M8C, M7C, M54C, M1C, L1N4, T1Be, L3Li, T2Be, T3Be, T3L, M57C, M1N4, BH1B2, T1C^a, BqC^b, B3C, Sq4Sq, T1C^b, B1P, B5C, BqC^a, Sq1C, M4C, & c.]: «*Nnk.i sf, iw.i rh.kwi dw3w. Ir sf, Wsir pw, ir dw3w, R^c pw. Ink bnw pw ʿ3, nty m Twmw. Ptr-rf sw? Wsir pw. Ir sip Ntt-Wn, ptr-rf sw? Wsir pw. Ir Ntt-Wn, nḥh pw ḥn^c dt. Ir nḥh, hrw pw; ir dt, grh pw*». This short passage is partly mentioned and very briefly discussed by Dr James Allen (1988: 27), without any astronomic, cosmographic or cosmovisional hint.

As for tomorrow it is Rē^c.

[...]

I am that great Phœnix who is in Heliopolis.

[...]

As for the supervisor of the Universe (lit.: What Exists/*Ntt-Wn*),

Who is he?

He is Osiris.

As for the Universe (lit.: What Exists)

It is eternity and everlastingness.

As for everlastingness, it is day;

As for eternity it is night.

It seems that this specific passage is one of the most interesting and refined species of the ancient Egyptian meta-physical and religious philosophy. It was not only ancient Hellenes that developed philosophical thought; the ancient Egyptians, long before, attained highly sophisticated idea(l)s, perhaps covered with meta-physical metaphors, though not only explaining the Cosmos (saving the phenomena), but also providing a religious approach to proto-science. The previous passage summarizes creational and meta-physical doctrines in a simple «philosophical equation»:

$$\text{COSMOS } (Ntt-Wn) = \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} (ntrw + rmt + ht nbt)_n = \text{GOD/TOTALITY} = 1 = \infty = \\ \text{Eternity } (dt) + \text{Everlastingness } (nhh)$$

A virtual comparison to the modern notions of the *space-time continuum* and matter-energy inter-relations would be interesting. *Ntt-Wn* is the *Cosmos/Kόσμος*, the totality of what exists in space and time, both eternities express time (*nhh*) and space categories (*dt*): static eternity is directly linked to the night and darkness, to death and Osiris; dynamic eternity is directly linked to day and light, resurrection and Rē^c. The diptych of these two gods becomes one, a single unity or totality, during the night and from this peaceful union (*Wsir pw htp m R^c*) a new life starts and a new creation is summarized every next day, every morning, every dawn, in order to last for ever in a dynamic (although in principle static) pattern of repetitions. The sacred phœnix of Heliopolis, the *bnw*—bird of Osiris is frequently depicted in the solar bark of Rē^c being a symbol of resurrection, light and also of the planet Venus³¹. Yesterday belongs to darkness and death, while tomorrow belongs to light and life; thus the former corresponds to Osiris and the latter to the solar god. Let us not forget the eschatological union of these deities in an extra-temporal and extra-spatial divine serpent, according to the *BD*, a fact that will review creation for the final time and finish the cosmos³². Space and time, *στάσις* and *κίνησις*, are joint together, as are

31 Maravelia (2006: 2) & Figure 1, 128 & Tab. III.2, 223 & Tab. III.4; see e.g.: its intriguing painting from the tomb of Son-nedjem (TT 1) at Deir 'el-Medinah (Dynasty XIX).

32 *BD* 175 (papyrus *BM EA10470*; cf. Faulkner & Goelet (1998, Tab. 29, col. 16–19): «*Iw.k r hh n hh <n> h^cw n hh! [...] iw.i grt r h*d*(i) irt n.i nbt; iw t3 pn r iy m Nwn, m h{w}hw, mi tp.f^c; ink zp hn^c Wsir! Ir.n.i hprw.i m [...] hf3w, nn rh.zn rmt, nn m33.zn ntrw!*».

equally night and day, static and dynamic eternity, for ever and ever (*r nhh hn̄ dt*), in a meta-physical amalgam that reminds us of the Special Theory of Relativity, where there are *events* happening in a *space-time continuum*. Of course the Egyptians of Antiquity did not know anything about modern Physics and their science was inchoate, but they managed to express and describe physical phenomena using cosmovisional metaphors and understood the significance of the whole Cosmos (and of the stars and heavens in particular) for Humankind.

Another interesting passage is the following³³:



I (shall) ascend to the sky among the gods.
 I (shall) bring (and) purify the words of the gods.
 (Such) is my magic,
 (That) you have offered to me, the Winding Waterway
 For my eternity, under the god (and) his (celestial) inundation.

This passage describes the virtual ascension of the deceased to the sky, among the stellar deities, during which the former brings and repeats their divine words of power: we can imagine the ascending spirit to recite piously the hieroglyphic words of the *Coffin Texts*, bestowing on him/her their magic and a might such that he/she can receive the Winding Waterway (*Š-n-h3*) as a gift, for ever. Eternity is granted to the deceased and he/she will always be under the god and his protection. The previously performed simulation [FIG. IV] is also characteristic for this passage. The deceased, according to Spell 53 is identified to the unwearying stars, in order to become part of the Cosmos. These stars are found to the south of the Ecliptic, that is the analogue of the Winding Waterway (*Mr/Š-n-h3*). On this heavenly and virtually inundated channel, the Sun, the Moon and the bright planets are moving, to the north of it (in the Polar Area *Wrt* of the sky) the imperishable stars (*ihmw-sk*) are dwelling, to its south the unwearying stars (*ihmw-wrd*) are situated. So too in another passage³⁴, where the deceased by virtue of his crossing of the sky, most probably the northern polar area of the imperishable stars, close to the constellation *Hps/Mshtyw*, is granted eternity (*nhh*), endlessness and life eternal. Another text (Spell 623)³⁵, where again the periodicities of the firmament and the celestial epiphanies, reflected on the earth as seasonal variations and calendrical observances, attest to the immanence of the ancient

33 CT VI, 473, §§ 15d–15h [BqC, B1Y, B1C]: «*Pr.i r pt m-m ntrw; in {t}.i, whm.i mdw-ntr: Hk3w pw, rdit.n.tn n.i, Š-n-h3 n nhh.i, hr ntr wtnw:f*».

34 CT V, 357, §§ 9a–9j [B1L, B1C, L1Li].

35 CT VI, 623, §§ 239a–239n [T1C^a, T1C^b].

Egyptian Universe and to the amalgamation of eternity and time, could be compared not only to Spell 473, but also to the above mentioned passage from *PT* 690: §§ 2111–2119.

Another text (cf. also the very next), based almost on the same grounds as the last, is this³⁶:

May N live!

When he speaks of the morrow, speak to N,

(For) he has seized everlastingness and he has completed eternity;

N shall not die (again) among the dead!

In this the morrow to come symbolizes eternal life and the rising of the Sun: the deceased is capturing both everlastingness and eternity by his incorporation into the celestial cycles, thus he/she gains immortality and avoids the second death. After his/her nocturnal voyage among the nightly constellations (we can presume especially the northern imperishables) and his/her virtual blessing by Osiris (*ḥkꜣ dt*), he/she will be resurrected. Finally, the last important text of this paper, which will be archaeoastronomically simulated together with the previous one, goes as follows³⁷:

[illegible]

Recitation: (Let) the vision of N (be) opened, so that he (can) see the Lord of the Horizon,

(When) he crosses over the firmament!

(Let) him cause him to appear as the great god, Lord of Eternity, (as) an imperishable star,

(And) to (be) worshipped in the starry firmament (*h3 b3.s*)!

$$[\dots]$$

36 CT VI, 767, §§ 399d–399g [T1L]: «*n_h N pn!* *Dd.f bk3*, *dd n N pn*, *it.n.f nh_h*, *ht<s>.n.f dt*; *n m(w)t N pn m-m <m> wwt {whm}!*».

37 *CT VII*, 788, §§ 1r–1u [L2Li, Da1C, Da2C, Da3C, Da4C]: «*Dd-mdw: wn hr n N, m33.f nb-3ht, d3.f hr(y)t! Di.f h^c N m ntr^c, nb-dt, <m> ihm-sk, dw3(t).f m-b h3 b3.s!*». With clearly visible *star/sbA* taxogram (N14) in both L2Li and Da3C. Better to discard Faulkner’s translation [III: p. 1], because the sense can be better attained by the Osirian imperishable stars of the night, related to the Lord of Everlastingness, Osiris himself. So too on *Stele BM 101* of Nebipu–Sesōstris (British Museum): «*wnn.tn m ihm-sk, m sb3 imy h3 3h.s*». In Da3C (belonging to a woman) the variant *nb-pt*, instead of *nb-dt*, was used; to be noted that on funerary stelae and false doors chthonic and afterlife deities (Osiris, Anubis) are often called *lords of the sky* too.

The spiritual vision of the deceased will be broadened, so that he/she may be able to stare at the lord of the horizon, when he crosses over the skies: this refers to the daily passage of the Sun during the day, for the Sun should be the lord of the horizon, the lord of appearances (*nb ḥꜣw*). Then the solar god himself, by virtue of his potential to unite with Osiris every night (according to the Litany of the Sun), will virtually transform the deceased to Osiris, the nocturnal god who presides over the imperishable stars, being also the lord of eternity (*nb dt*). The scope of the deceased, the pious desire of all Egyptians of Antiquity, that is to join the firmamental stars (*sbꜣw nw ḥꜣ bꜣ.s*), especially the followers of Osiris (*šmsw-Wsir*), the imperishable luminaries, will then be absolutely fulfilled. A snapshot of the skyscape over Lycopolis for the 21st of June 1900 BC is given in the following simulation [FIG. V], where the northern asterisms, the imperishables *Mshtyw/Hpš* and *Mnity* are shown.

Another text would complement our discussion. In Spell 805 there is another passage³⁸. Interestingly here Osiris is doubly characterized in similar passages as both Lord of Eternity (*nb dt*) and as Lord of Everlastingness (*nb nḥḥ*), in combination with his lunar hypostasis. Thus, the deceased, incorporated into the monthly periodicities and celestial epiphanies, would not only gain immortality and life eternal, but also rich offerings during the monthly lunar feasts. The presence of the Moon over the local horizon is noted in the last simulation [FIG. V], as well as previously [FIG. II]. Finally, in some other similar texts³⁹ the universal harmony, the goddess *Mꜣꜣt*, is described as the Mistress of Eternity (*nbt nḥḥ*) and the Mistress of the Sky–Limits (*nbt drw-pt*), which reminds us of the exaltation of the Celestial Lady (*Nbt-Pt*) in the Tale of Sinuhe⁴⁰. Here we can see the immanent interconnection of everything in both the intra– and extra–temporal Universe with *Mꜣꜣt*, as the supreme goddess of Harmony, Truth and Justice, the ancient Egyptian analogue of the Hellenic goddess *Ἀνάγκη/Ἀδράστυα*, under whom even the gods themselves were subject and bound⁴¹.

4 Conclusions

«Time present and time past are both perhaps present in time future», as the famous English poet Thomas S. Elliott has written. At this point of present– (that already became past–time) we approach the end of this paper, which could be also a new beginning, resuming creatively another paper to come in the future. Eternity and everlastingness, space and time, death and life: we have examined all these notions interwoven in the highly meta–physical excerpts of the funerary texts of the Egyptians that we studied, with common context and cosmovisional background the stars and their *milieu*, that is the sky–

38 CT VII, 805, §§ 10i–10l [L1Li].

39 See e.g.: CT VII, 956, § 171u [pGardiner III]; CT VII, 957, § 175b [pGardiner III, pGardiner IV].

40 See pBerlin 3022: ll. 269–71: «ꜣwy.k(y) r nfrt nsw wꜣḥ, ḥkryt nt Nbt-Pt! Di Nbꜣw ꜣnḥ r fnd.k! Hnm tw Nbt-Sbꜣw» (= May thy two hands be directed towards the Beautiful–One, o eternal King, towards the ornament of the Lady–of–the–Sky! May the Golden–One offer life to thy nose! Mayst thou be united to the Lady–of–the–Stars!), analyzed in Maravelia (2017: 106).

41 Maravelia (2007: 1246–49).

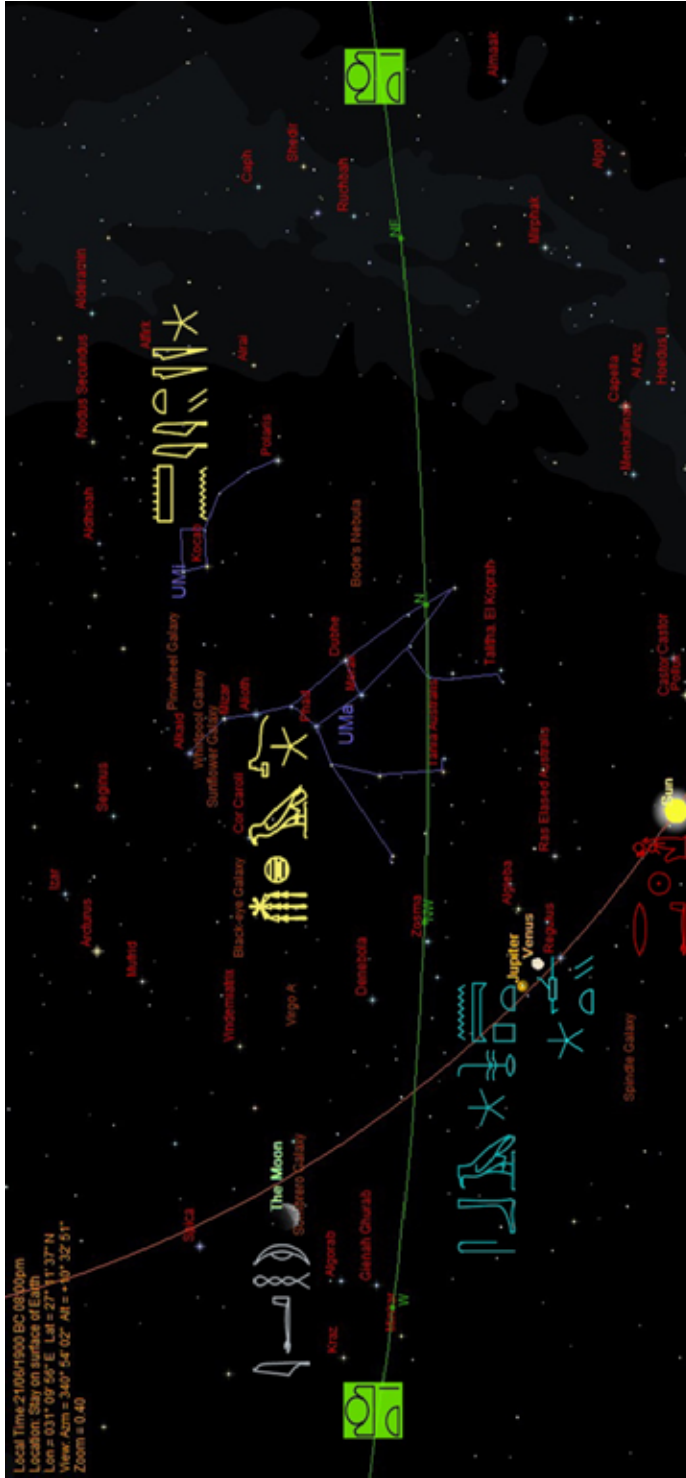


Figure V | Assyūt, 21st June (= III *Prrt*, sw 13) 1900 BC, 20:00' UT (LT 22:00').

We follow *CT VI*: 767; and VII: 788. The northern imperishable asterism *Mshlyw/Hpš* (~ UMa) was prominently visible almost 10° over the northern horizon (for β-Uma the altitude at that moment was more than 9°), though never setting. The Moon (*Ṭṛḥ*, at waning phase, 33% illuminated, before the First Quarter) was going to set at LT 22:56, while the Sun (virtual lord of the horizon) had already set at LT 18:38'. Planets Jupiter (*sbš rsy n pt*) and Venus (*sbš wṛṇy*) were following the Sun/*Rḥ* to his nocturnal journey through the West into the hours of the night, in order to illumine the depths of the *Dwṣt*, rising again victorious and being eternal. Finally, the northern imperishable asterism *Mnity* (~ UMi) was also rather prominently visible over the northern local horizon (*ḫrt*).

space with its periodical skyscapes and the Universe itself. The following Table [TAB. I] summarizes the properties and philosophical semantics of both types of eternity.

Table I | Comparative notions corresponding to both eternities *dt* and *nḥḥ* and their inter-relations.

ETERNITY	ETERNITY (<i>Dt</i>)	EVERLASTINGNESS (<i>Nḥḥ</i>)
VARIOUS NOTIONS: $Nit-Wn \equiv \sum [Nḥḥ + Dt]$	<i>Static Eternity</i> or <i>Eternal Sameness</i>	<i>Dynamic Eternity</i> or <i>Eternal Recurrence</i>
	Linear & Static Flow of Time —	Circular & Repetitive Flow of Time b
	Spatial (<i>bw, st, t3</i>)	Temporal (<i>rk, h3w, ḥ3w, tr, zp, nw</i>)
	Female Categories & Deities: <i>Tfnt</i>	Male Categories & Deities: <i>Šw</i>
	Embodiment (<i>hnw</i>) & Introversion	Action (<i>irt-ḥt</i>) & Extroversion
	Darkness (<i>kkw, kkw zm3w, iḥḥw</i>)	Light (<i>i3ḥw, zšp, nwt, z3šw</i>)
	Death (<i>mwt</i>) & Limits (<i>drw, t3š</i>)	Life (<i>ḥḥ</i>) & Resurrection (<i>ts</i>)
	(Stable) Yesterday (<i>sf</i>)	(Durational) Tomorrow (<i>dw3w</i>)
	Night (<i>grḥ, tr n h3w</i>)	Day (<i>hrw, rḥ</i>)
	Osiris (<i>Wsir</i>) & Stars (<i>sb3w</i>)	Rē ^c (<i>Rḥ</i>) & Sun (<i>rḥ</i>)
	Constant Existence (<i>wnn</i>)	Continuous Evolution (<i>ḥpr</i>)
	Stability & Order (<i>grg, mn, m3ḥt</i>)	Instability & Chaos (<i>ḥnnw, ḥb3, isft</i>)
	<i>Εἶναι</i> & <i>Υπάσχειν</i>	<i>Γίνεσθαι</i> & <i>Συμβαίνειν</i>
	<i>Στάσις</i> & <i>Εὐστάθεια</i> (<i>Ἀνάγκη</i>)	<i>Κίνησις</i> & <i>Δύναμις</i> (<i>Υσμήνη</i>)

We must point out that in *eternity/dt* a locative taxogram (*t3*, sign N16) classifies the word-meaning, while in *everlastingness/nḥḥ* a temporal taxogram (*rḥ*, sign N5) determines the word's semantics, showing indirectly that the first is evoking Osiris, while the second refers to the sun-god Rē^c. Hence, each type of eternity is related to one of the corresponding principal components of ancient Egyptian religion: the astral and the solar. Also the stable fluidity of the former evokes femininity, while the dynamic evolution of the latter is related to masculinity. Let us not forget the later and Ptolemaic way of writing these notions. For *dt* (Copt.: ?) sign  (I32 with variants I32A–I32B and I33); and for *nḥḥ* (Copt.: *ENE2, ENH2E, ANH2E*, & c.) signs  (N92),  (A358; cf. N88, N115 & N76) and the combined symbol  (N5 and N26)⁴². The last, as well as N92, denote the periodical appearance, disappearance and re-appearance of the Sun, rising, setting and re-rising from the horizon, or between the two mountains of the East and of the West, while sign A358 shows a person (divinity?) holding two standards with the *dw*-sign⁴³. Sign I32 shows a

42 We should like to thank Prof. Dr Christian Cannuyer for permitting us to refer to his talk and develop new ideas based on some of his points.

43 Cf. the characteristic text «*ḥk.k, pr.k m Imnt; wstn.k ḥr sb3 n Dw3t; dw3.k Rḥ, wbn.f m dw; zns.k sw, ḥtp.f m 3ḥt.*», from the tomb of Amünemhāt (TT 82); e.g.: *Th.T.Series* I, 1915: 27, or *EG*: 70. Here the eternal recurrence of the re-appearance of the day-luminary from horizon to horizon and from

half-coiled *d*-serpent (sign I10) encompassing a mummy (sign A54). We think that this has undertones of femininity, since a woman embraces, receives in her, and her womb encompasses the embryo until the baby is born; furthermore it hints to the eternal womb and the descent to the mother-earth, who for the Egyptians was corresponding actually to the celestial goddess Nūt, engulfing and incorporating the heavenly bodies and the Sun and then giving them birth again. This serpent engulfs a dead person, actually his ennobled body (*sʿh*) for ever, symbolizing its eternal union to the surrounding cosmos, which is also part of the divine, according to the ancient Egyptian beliefs. A representation of *nḥh* as a male deity and of *dt* as a female divinity is found in the 1st Chapel of Tutʿankhamūn⁴⁴, where it is explicitly stated that it is a pair of great gods, who are depicted with the garments of their gender: «*i.w.i rh.kwi rn n ntrwy ʿwy: dt pw, nḥh pw*». We partly agree with Cannuyer’s rendering of *dt* as *aiōn* and of *nḥh* conjecturally as **χρόνος* in Coptic texts (see present volume), since the first of course is met for the former but for the latter too; however for the latter we don’t have any clue other than the fact that it is used to render the Hellenic *aiōn*ίως or *εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων* (Copt.: **ϣΑΝΙΑΝΗΖΕ ΝΑΝΗΖΕ**), where the ancient Egyptian term corresponding to *everlastingness*/**ΑΝΗΖΕ** is used and not another corresponding to *time*/*χρόνος* (Copt.: **ΝΟΥ**); similarly for verse 8 of *Psalm* LXXXIX from the *Coptic Psalter*, where the word *aiōn* in the Saʿidic version is translated as *time* (Copt.: **ϣΟΥΘΕΙΩ**, from anc. Eg. **𓄚𓄚 wrš**)⁴⁵, while in the Bohairic version it is rendered as *everlastingness*/**ΒΕΝΕΖ**; (however in verse 2 of the same *Psalm*, the word *aiōn* in the Saʿidic version is rendered as **ΕΝΕΖ**); so too in the concluding verse after the *Prayer of Jesus/Pater Noster* (Copt.: **ΧΕ ΤΩΚ ΤΕ ΤΩΜ ΜΗ ΠΕΘΟΥ ΨΑ ΝΙΕΝΕΖ, ΖΑΜΗΝ**). On the Flaminian Obelisk⁴⁶ a phrase «*rdi.tw n.f ntr-w ʿnh, mi Rʿ dt*» is translated rather freely as «*ὅ οἱ θεοὶ ζωῆς χρόνον ἐδωρήσαντο*», whereas *dt* is used in the hieroglyphic text as *eternity*, but was rendered as *χρόνος*. Thus both renderings are met for both words. Finally, following Gardiner⁴⁷, during the MK (Dyn. XI–XII), sign N23 (*par excellence* locative) was used as a time-taxogram in words such as *time*, *tomorrow* and *yesterday* (see e.g.: *CT* I: 53; *CT* IV: 335¹; *CT* VI: 767, *supra*), as a corruption from another word written with resembling signs, which shows that at least for one of them (*nḥh*) both spatial and temporal taxograms were actually used. It is very significant that in principle only a temporal taxogram is used for *nḥh* and only a spatial for *dt*. This fact possibly hints to the archetypal idea of the Egyptians, that based on the stability of the earth (*t3*, evoking *dt*), they could look to

hill to hill is perfectly intermingled with the eternal sameness of the constant way this phenomenon happens, underlining the importance of eternity in the ancient Egyptian religion.

44 Piankoff²1977: 142, fig. 47; thanks are due to Prof. Dr Christian Cannuyer for letting us know this picture.

45 Hannig 2009: 221; *EG*: 562. The only word for *eternity* in Coptic is *enex* (Crum 1939: 57). For this verse of *Ψαλμοί/Psalms* LXXXIX, 8: «*ἔθου τὰς ἀνομίας ἡμῶν ἐναντίον σου· αἰὼν ἡμῶν εἰς φωτισμὸν τοῦ προσώπου σου*»/«*Posuisti iniquitates nostras in conspectu tuo; saeculum nostrum in illuminatione vultus tui*», see Cannuyer (*personal communication*). The Coptic text in Saʿidic is: «**ΑΚΚΑ ΝΕΝΑΝΟΜΙΑ ἩΠΕΚῆΤΟ ΕΒΟΛ· ΑΥΩ ΠΕΝΟΥΘΕΙΩ ἩΠΕΜΤΟ ΕΒΟΛ ἩΠΕΚΖΟ**».

46 Lambrecht 2001: 51–95; Μαραβελία 2004: 228–30.

47 *EG*: 488.

the evolving periodicities of the sky (r^c , evoking $n\hbar\hbar$), so they could watch and be metaphysically inspired by the astronomical phenomena of the sky, as they happened, happen, and shall always happen in cosmic time, virtually out of human time, thus actually for the whole eternity: $r\ n\hbar\hbar\ \hbar n^c\ \underline{dt}$.

We have also shown, by using several characteristic texts, framed by their corresponding archaeoastronomical simulations, that special skylscapes have enraptured the meta-physical imagination of the ancient Nile-dwellers and intrigued them to describe these celestial epiphanies in terms of cosmographic metaphors, referring continuously to both kinds of eternity: *dt* and *nḥh*. This is crucial, because it shows that mentioning eternities, both solar and stellar, the Egyptians were both: **1.** Denoting that these phenomena happen periodically in the firmament, thus time (*rk*, *tr*, *nw*) as both a constant manifestation of physical existence and as a periodical variable of continuous evolution was important to them; **2.** Expecting these to re-appear and never stop manifesting themselves in the sky, desiring piously to be part of them *post mortem* in their eternal life of meta-physical timelessness. The texts studied here cover several centuries of social history and political developments for Egypt, during which the Egyptians have been endlessly observing the skies, watching similar or quasi-similar phenomena in different eras and under different perspectives (e.g.: in Figures I–III Orion was observed by different priests–astronomers in various eras and various seasons of the year; in Fig. IV a similar celestial configuration could be observed with or without Venus as *nṯr dw3y = w3 nṯr n nbw*). Thus, a certain skyscape may correspond to one or more textual allegoric interpretations or descriptions, and this is easily proven by the various texts studied here which describe in a different way aspects of several different or similar celestial phenomena. Thus, apparently different Utterances from the *PT* and Spells from the *CT* may have been inspired from a plethora of similar or varied celestial epiphanies, where time and eternity prevail. Why they prevail? Most possibly because they were rooted in their hearts and minds as conjoint with the Universe itself and the cycles of the stars, the Sun and other celestial bodies. What the hereby studied texts, together with their archaeoastronomical simulations and analysis, show is that eternity and everlastingness were imprinted into the skies, in the firmament itself, amplifying the astronomical time for ever in the hearts of the pious Egyptians, hence making of it pure and divine eternity. Eternity (in both its hypostases: dynamic–*nḥh* and static–*dt*) was the seal and the apex of all astronomical phenomena and of all celestial epiphanies that were irresistibly described by unique texts of wisdom through a pleiade of concomitant cosmographic allegories.

This paper is dedicated to the Memory of the unforgettable Prof. Dr Gaballa ʿAli GABALLA, a true and serious Scholar, a respected Egyptologist, a very nice person and the last great Secretary General of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, whose soul (*b3i*) and spirit (*k3*) hopefully rest in peace in the hereafter among the imperishable stars (*ihmw-sk*) in the Field of Offerings (*Sht-Htpw*), after being unified to form his luminous and transfigured spirit (*3h*): 

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Techniques for the Simultaneous Increase and Reduction of Time and Space in Egyptian Art

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Abstract

The point of departure for discussing time and space in art is in defining these phenomena physically as inseparably linked and interdependent dimensions. Any living creature or object cannot but exist in time and space. This article examines how this fact was technically translated, by ancient Egyptian artists, into their statues, reliefs and paintings. It is demonstrated that, in Egyptian art, time and space are quantifiable; there can be much or little of it in a work of art, but there is always as much time as space, and vice versa. However, the quantum varies from one work to the next. Anything that is not time and space, in a work of art, is plane. Artists invented techniques for increasing and reducing time and space and for regulating their quanta in their works.

1 Introduction: some general remarks on the handling of space and time in Egyptian art

Egyptian artists had their own way of dealing with space and time in their work, which remained valid for three millennia and ever characteristically different from any other culture.² To the modern mind, time and space are categories of physics and philosophy. For an ancient artist, dealing with space and time in an image was a technical problem. We may assume that he would not have verbalized it, but found solutions intuitively while drawing his figures with lines on a two-dimensional surface, or sculpting them three-dimensionally in stone or wood. Any work of art contains a specific amount of space and time, in combination with a specific amount of two-dimensionality, or plane. Egyptian artists invented various artistic means for creating or increasing, and avoiding or diminishing, space and time in a picture. According to modern physics, a body or thing can appear in space and time only; space and time condition each other, there is no space without time and no time without space (to put it in a simplified way according to Einstein). This means, that, when observing an Egyptian work of art, we always get as much space as time, or as much time as space. Interestingly, in Egyptian pictures, larger or smaller quanta or intensities of space and time can be found, depending on which artistic means (techniques) have been brought

1 Basel ([maya.u.mueller\[at\]bluewin.ch](mailto:maya.u.mueller[at]bluewin.ch)).

2 Müller (1988: I-17–19, II-20–23, II-36–39, II-47–49, II-77–82, II-92–98, II-100–108).

into play. The techniques for creating or avoiding time and space can be used separately, or entwined, in one and the same picture. Still more remarkably, the techniques for increasing or reducing time and space can be used simultaneously, in one and the same picture.

In ancient Egyptian written sources, text passages dealing with works of art are rare. When an author chose to mention pictorial representations, it was not done in a theoretical but in a technical way. This is in marked contrast to Classical Antiquity where philosophical (critical) commenting accompanied the progress of fine arts at least from the 5th century BCE onwards. Beginning with the New Kingdom, there can be found (indirect) statements about time and space in a picture which are, however, hidden in the directions for the use of a magical spell. The Book of the Dead papyrus of Aja of the 18th Dynasty (Leiden T 6)³ provides us with a fine example, citing spell 130 with a postscript and a vignette. The spell puts into words that the sky and the earth are open for the Day-bark and the Night-bark, for the passage of the bark of Re who is joined by the deceased. The postscript instructs a magician how a picture representing the process described in the spell is to be made, and the vignette is the model for the picture which corresponds exactly to the instructions. The text of the postscript reads as follows:

“To be said over a bark of Re drawn in ochre on a clean place. When you have placed a likeness of this spirit [i.e. the deceased] in front of it, you shall draw a Night-bark on its right side and a Day-bark on its left side. There shall be offered to them in their presence bread and beer and all good things on the birthday of Osiris. If this is done for him [i.e. the deceased], his soul will live for ever and he will not die again.”⁴

The illustration shows the owner of the papyrus standing in the centre, flanked by two identical solar barks containing only the disk and a plant stalk with a falcon on it. The two boats stand each on a separate band of water, their prows facing the figure of Aja. This is a mirror symmetrical composition in the form of a tripartite antithetical group. The central piece (i.e. the figure of Aja) representing the axis of symmetry stops any movement of the solar barks from right to left or vice versa.

The postscript describes the making of a picture to serve a specific purpose. The mirror symmetrical constellation avoids a (chrono)logical process (in time and space) as well as an answer to the question whether Re in the bark is One, Two or Three. Making the picture is a ritual which must be executed on the birthday of Osiris. It fulfills its purpose while being carried out. Thus, it must be repeated regularly. But we do not know when Osiris is reborn – every day, or once a year? The writing down of the prescription on Aja’s papyrus was possibly meant to initiate an automatic repetition of the ritual, i.e. a continuous process of re-materializing itself in space and time.

Authors from Classical Antiquity left many texts dealing with fine arts. Discussions on spatiality, naturalism, even verismo in painting are extant from the Roman Imperial Period. Pliny the Elder who lived in the 1st century CE is perhaps the most enthusiastic on the realistic achievements of Hellenistic painting. In his *Naturalis Historia* (Plin. Nat.

3 Leiden, Rijksmuseum van Oudheden T 6. Hornung (1979: 250–254, Abb. 65).

4 Faulkner (1990: 120).

35.36), he marvels at the genius of Zeuxis, who lived about 450 years before his time. The classical and early Hellenistic technique of perspective painting was handed down in the workshops and flourished in early Imperial Period Italy, and is known to us chiefly from the mural paintings of Pompeii.

“The contemporaries and rivals of Zeuxis were Timanthes, Androcydes, Eupompus, and Parrhasius. This last, it is said, entered into a pictorial contest with Zeuxis, who represented some grapes, painted so naturally that the birds flew towards the spot where the picture was exhibited. Parrhasius, on the other hand, exhibited a curtain, drawn with such singular truthfulness, that Zeuxis (...) haughtily demanded that the curtain should be drawn aside to let the picture be seen. Upon finding his mistake, with a great degree of ingenuous candour he admitted that he had been surpassed (...).”

“There is a story, too, that at a later period, Zeuxis having painted a child carrying grapes, the birds came to peck at them.”⁵

The art-loving Roman elite was delighted to recognize, on a picture, what went on between figures in real time on a real space venue. Full perspective rendering of space was a triumph of artistic technique.

The two literary statements on space and time in a picture, one dating from the New Kingdom, the other from the Roman Imperial Period, were created at a large distance in time, thus prohibiting an immediate comparison. The Roman notion is perhaps more easily understood by the modern beholder. We cite it in order to illustrate the fundamental contrast with the ancient Egyptian conception.

In ancient Egyptian art, elaborate techniques for increasing and reducing time and space made their appearance at least in the Early Dynastic Period. I think I can define four of them.

- First, there is the linear perspective, or better, one of its foremost means, foreshortening. This technique is of relatively little importance in Egyptian art; it was but sporadically used from the early New Kingdom onwards. Notwithstanding, it is to be mentioned in the first place because of its importance for the visual training of the modern beholder. Our perception of pictures is shaped by linear perspective; it suffices to cite the keyword ‘photography’.
- Second, the realistic contour and surface modelling of the human body have to be mentioned. These are the essential means of creating space for a figure, not only in relief and painting, but also in sculpture in the round. As a rule, the contour and surface modelling of a figure do not entirely describe its realistic form; rather, they deviate from it at several points to a greater or lesser extent, thus preventing the continuous development of space and time at the same time.
- The third technique is the use of symmetry, more exactly of symmetric compositional schemes. We are speaking of several kinds of symmetry, mirror symmetry and

5 Plinius major, *Naturalis historia* 35, 36. Bostock & Riley (1857: Vol. 6, 219). (Online: Perseus Tufts Digital Library Pliny the Elder).

translational symmetry being the foremost ones. The original function of symmetry is creating geometrical patterns. For this reason, symmetry is the chief means of reducing space and time, i.e. allowing figures to remain in the two-dimensional plane.

- The fourth technique can be called diagonal dynamics, which means suggesting movement by using virtual diagonals as a system of reference for arranging figures in relief and painting. This is an effective manner of increasing space and time, since the human eye is inclined to understand crossing diagonals, in a picture, as ascending or descending.

The four techniques may be implemented simultaneously and in variously mixed ratios, in one and the same picture. It takes at least two or three of them to create a picture, one only is not sufficient. In the following, works of art exhibiting a clear preference for one or other of the four techniques will be presented as examples.

2 The four techniques of creating and avoiding time and space in art

2.1 The first technique: foreshortening

Linear perspective is the first technique to be discussed, here. Ancient Egyptian artists made but a very selectively use of perspective means, restricting themselves to foreshortening. Foreshortening is normally a technique for creating space and time. It basically means adjusting specific parts of a body or a building (etc.) to virtual oblique lines which converge and meet in a virtual central point. Egyptian artists obviously had a notion of foreshortening as a device for drawing human figures in movement, although they used it very rarely from the 18th Dynasty onwards. Instead, Egyptian figures are basically two-dimensional, with an admixture of three-dimensionality in ever varying degrees. Figures are bound to the horizontal and vertical axes; movement is only possible from left to right or right to left, i.e. strictly parallel to the plane of the picture which is the wall (or stela, or another medium with a flat surface).

Among the ostraca found in recent years in the Valley of the Kings, there is a delicate sketch of two naked children, a boy and his little sister, carrying a duck and a plant in their hands (Dorn no. 35)⁶ (fig. 1). The essential parts of the two children's bodies, the soles of their feet, refer to horizontal lines; thus, they are essentially bound to the plane. The shoulder line is slightly inclined to the right, and the lower part of the torso with the top of the legs is given in a three-quarter view. This is also the case of the naked boy who is represented on an ostrakon in the Moscow State Pushkin Museum.⁷ In this case, the upper thighs and hips are clearly drawn in a three-quarter view, and he seems to wear a faintly drawn triangular apron whose oblique girdle line and lower seam converge.

⁶ Dorn (2011: 231–232, pl. 40 (no. 35)).

⁷ Moscow, State Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, I.I.a.5590 (no provenance). Hodge & Berlev (1982: 152–153 (no. 95)).



Figure 1

A small block from an unidentified late 18th Dynasty tomb at Saqqara⁸, brought to the British Museum in the mid-19th century, is distinguished by an astoundingly high degree of foreshortening. The block, cut from a tomb wall, represents a complete subscene which was once part of a complex of funerary rites. At the head, there are four men carrying a chest, followed by six men and six women performing a slow mourning dance. The figures form an airy row slightly intersecting each other, developing their guarded movements and gestures with unsurpassed elegance and relaxed agility. When looking closely, we become aware that many parts of the figures' contour lines depart from referring to the vertical and horizontal axis of the

picture, and there is a slight, almost continuous modelling covering the entire bodies. Not only the seams of the aprons, but also the slanting shoulders and the soles of the feet of the dancing men lie on converging lines, and some feet are above the ground line. The chest of the third man (from the right) is shown in an almost perfect three-quarter view. The most conspicuous contradictory element is, on this particular figure, the overlength of the right leg reaching far backward. The artist did not abandon the usual horizontal fixation and flattening of the hip region, thus forbidding any torsional movement which would have been a precondition for a more spatial rendering.

In the Memphite tombs of the late 18th Dynasty, the small subscenes of large state acts and rituals are the characteristic place for artistic experiments, such as, in the present case, the ample use of foreshortening.

Artists sometimes used an entirely different means of rendering perspective on New Kingdom reliefs or paintings. They arranged large figures in the foreground of the picture, overlapping smaller architectural or framing elements which ostensibly are meant to be in the background. A vignette on the Book of the Dead papyrus of Ani⁹, created in the 19th Dynasty, is a representative example, illustrating the end of chapter 125: Ani's arriving, after the judgment, at the abode of Osiris. The essential part of the picture shows Osiris sitting in his richly decorated canopy with Isis and Nephthys standing behind him, extending their arms on his shoulders in a protective gesture. The deities are in a double canopy erected on a double base. The outer canopy in the shape of an open canopic chest stands on the upper (inner) base. The inner canopy has its two papyrus columns on the lower (outer)

8 British Museum EA 326, h. 33cm, l. 88,5cm. Montet (1970: 2 figs. on pp. 258–259); Martin (1987: 28, no. 66, pl. 22). (Online: britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/search.aspx).

9 British Museum EA 10470, 4 (1888,0515.1.4). Rossiter (1984: 30–31, fig. 5). (Online: britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/search.aspx).

pedestal, thus suggesting being inside and outside of the outer canopy simultaneously. The three deities largely overlap the architrave of the inner canopy, and Osiris sits on the upper base, while the two goddesses who are thought to stand behind his throne have their feet on the lower pedestal. The overlappings contradict any spatial logic: the three deities are clearly in the foreground, outside the canopy, while staying simultaneously inside.

This is a paradoxical use of ‘perspective without perspective’, of creating and negating space and time simultaneously. The collision of the two tendencies confers a feeling of tension on the otherwise absolutely static image, and of enhanced presence on the deities, who can be localised, on the one hand, in normal three-dimensional space, and, on the other hand, belong to another dimension.

Another variant can be seen on the east wall of the outer hall of Queen Nefertari’s Theban tomb, created in the mid-13th century BCE.¹⁰ On the right half of the wall, there are two deities, Harakhti and Hathor, sitting and occupying the entire height of the wall, even overlapping the sky. The oversize and the deep colouring of the figures confers on them an intense corporeal presence in the midst of the white nothingness of the wall. It lets them step out of the earthen world (if I may say so), while simultaneously staying on the two-dimensional white wall.

In a much later period, when Hellenistic techniques of perspective painting had already made their way to the Nile, Egyptian and Sudanese vase painters still dealt with the problem of perspective in a manner comparable to that of the New Kingdom. This is demonstrated, for example, by a Coptic vase of the 6th or 7th century CE at the Brooklyn Museum (43.54).¹¹ A single band of four large metopes separated by a kind of richly ornamented pilaster runs around the body of the globular vessel. The main figure of the frieze, a trotting horse, is drawn with simple contour lines suggesting, at first glance, a flat side view, were it not for some curved hatching on the neck and the hind part creating an idea of roundness. The horse largely overlaps the ground line with all four legs, each of which is positioned at another height. As the lower frame of the metope is indicated by a number of closely parallel lines, the hooves seem to be distributed in space. The horse’s head is, moreover, drawn in a three-quarter view, and the ears overlap the upper frame, to the effect that the animal steps out of the frame towards the beholder.

An important Meroitic vessel in Berlin¹² found at Faras and dating roughly from the 1st to 3rd century CE, is distinguished by a singular pictorial composition. The surface of the vessel’s globular body is divided into two zones by means of an equatorial line, each zone being filled with a continuous frieze. The lower zone is adorned with curved tendrils in a Hellenistic style, the upper zone with human and animal figures executed in a purely geometrical style. The feet of the largest figures in the upper zone, a herdsman with a stick and an enormous ibis, hang down into the lower zone, crossing the horizontal partition

10 QV 66, outer hall, east wall. Leblanc & Siliotti (1998: 130).

11 Brooklyn Museum 43.54, provenance unknown, h. 24.5cm, 6th/7th century CE. (Exhibition Catalogue) Pagan and Christian Egypt (1941/1969: 41, no. 125). (Online: brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/search/advanced).

12 Berlin, Ägyptisches Museum 20890, from Faras, h. 23.5cm, Meroitic, ca 1st – 3rd century CE. Wildung (1996: 342–343, no. 399).

line. In contrast to the Coptic horse on the Brooklyn vessel, the figures on the Meroitic vase move exactly parallel to the surface. Nonetheless, I think the fact of their extending across their ground line may evoke an idea of space for moving, even if this is in perfect contradiction to the absolutely two-dimensional construction of the picture.

2.2 The second technique: the realistic contour and surface modelling of the body

Our second technique of dealing with space and time can be called the (relatively) realistic contour and surface modelling of the human body. This is the most common means of creating space and time in Egyptian art. Coming up in the Early Dynastic Period, it is intimately linked with the discovery of the vertical and horizontal axis, i.e. the orthogonal structure of the world, which was also a precondition of awareness of the natural proportions of the human body.

When comparing a Naqada I vase to an Old Kingdom relief, we become aware of a fundamental difference in the handling of space and time, in the two pictures. An outstanding masterpiece of figurative vase painting has been found in tomb U-239 at Umm el-Qaab, the early royal necropolis of Abydos¹³. The painter arranged a sequence of four tall Egyptian chiefs looking to the right, each holding or driving two small captives, all around the body of the cylindrical vessel. The figures are drawn with an absolute minimum of almost straight lines betraying almost no anatomical information. Nevertheless, a kind of perspective effect can be observed: the advanced left foot of the tall figures is placed at a slightly higher level than the right one, and the small figures of captives appear at a markedly higher level than the chiefs, the first captive being placed somewhat higher than the second one. The graduation of the tallness and levels of the figures is a device for letting the smaller figures seem to be farther back in space. This may not have been a conscious intent of the painter, but he must have been aware of the dynamic effect of the figures' feet running endlessly around the vase staggering up and down.

As a contrasting example, we chose a block from Sahure's pyramid temple (Berlin 21784)¹⁴ exhibiting a fine collection of almost naked fecundity figures on its lower register (fig. 2). The figures aim at considerable realism by means of a contour line convincingly rendering the proportions and the slightly sinuous up and down of the muscles in two cases of a slim body, and in four cases of a somewhat obese one. Moreover, the masculine figures show a naturalistic modelling of the musculature on the entire surface of their legs, arms and face. This organic aspect is reduced through the fact that large parts of the figures' surfaces are perfectly flat, and that the deities carrying the symbol of sustainment on their hands have only one shoulder and arm. As the right shoulder is invisible, the figures seem to be rendered, at first glance, in a true side view. However, the left shoulder and arm looks as if they had been cut away and then re-attached to the body at a wrong

13 Cairo, Egyptian Museum (U239/1), Naqada I. Dreyer (1998: 84, 111–114, fig. 12–13, pl. 6(d–f)); Graff (2009: 245, no. 155).

14 Berlin, Ägyptisches Museum ÄM 21784, block from the Pyramid Temple of Sahure, side entrance, 5th Dynasty. Arnold, Do. (1999: 84–85, fig. 74). (Online: smb-digital.de/).



Figure 2

angle. The overall impression is that of a fairly organic shape, while the beholder is, here and there, abruptly reminded that time and space are not continuously but intermittently represented.

The same principle of working with a relatively realistic contour and organic modelling of the body can be observed on sculpture in the round. The best object of study is a well-preserved royal statue wearing a short apron and a high crown leaving the shoulders and most parts of the body bare. A test case of superior artistic quality is the almost lifesize greywacke statue of Thutmose III in Cairo (CG 42053).¹⁵ When seen in full frontal view, this well-proportioned portrait of the young king attains a high degree of realistic modelling. At a second glance, we realize that the space-creating tendency is contradicted by the stone fillings appearing between the arms and the torso, and between the legs, making the body look as if it were frozen in a block of black ice. A close look also reveals that the lower torso is blocked in a strictly mirror-symmetrical position, unable to react and to take part in the movement of the legs. In reality, the striding forward of the left leg causes a torsional movement in the lower torso and a slightly higher position of the right hip. The

¹⁵ Cairo CG 42053, statue of Thutmose III, h. 200cm, basalt, from the Karnak cachette. Vandersleyen (1975: no. 175). (Online: IFAO/CSA Base Cachette de Karnak).



Figure 3

Egyptian artist solved the problem by making the left leg longer than the right one, thus, paradoxically, admitting and denying the organic three-dimensional structure of the human body.

The nature or function of the stone fillings surrounding the members of a statue can best be investigated by considering the side views exposing much more of this extraordinary phenomenon than the front view. In Egyptological publications, views of the left side of a striding statue with an advancing left leg are very rarely reproduced for an obvious reason: the slanted left leg only can be seen, the right one being hidden by the stone filling, thus presenting a disconcerting sight. A statuette of Amenophis III is published on the British Museum's collection database providing views from all four sides (EA 2275) (fig. 3).¹⁶ The left side view shows the oblique leg and body leaning back – against nothing. Although there is a back plinth, the figure does not reach it, the body is suspended in the air, without a shore preventing its tumbling over. The stone fillings and massive back pillars of statues are

sometimes interpreted, in Egyptological literature, as being an indispensable element for stabilizing the statue which otherwise would have been in danger of breaking. This is, however, a modern rationalisation of a seemingly senseless artistic device. If the filling elements had a rationally founded function, their purpose would have been represented in a different way, and conceivably in a way that would be readable for us. These elements do not have a technical function, but an aesthetic one. The left side view of the striding statues demonstrates that the stone filling does not represent anything, or, to put it otherwise, it is condensed nothingness. This is a bold concept of the ancient artists letting the space created by the realistic modelling of the body be abruptly suspended at the contour line of the figure.

¹⁶ British Museum EA 2275, serpentinite, h. 14cm, provenance unknown. (Online: britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/search.aspx). Compare the statuette attributable to Amenophis III Berlin Ägyptisches Museum ÄM 17020 (Schäfer 1934: 7–8, pl. III).

The idea of making a relatively realistic head only, while hiding the body or transforming it into a stereometrical object, first came up in the 3rd Dynasty, as far as can be said today. A well dated and fairly well-preserved example of such a composition was found in the pyramid complex of Djoser: two joined heads of foreign captives with thick shoulder-length hair forming together an almost rectangular block.¹⁷ There is no body below the neck, but the back parts of the heads transition into a long cubical block of stone. A similar object with three heads has been found at Hermopolis Micra, and another one with four heads at Tanis, both without context.¹⁸ One cannot but think of the rows of captives' heads appearing on temple façades of the New Kingdom. Hans Evers suggested the Old Kingdom blocks may have been inserted into mud-brick buildings.¹⁹ In any case, the beholder is confronted with the surprisingly realistic faces of the captives ending abruptly in nowhere.

Two terracotta heads from the officials' cemeteries at Lisht North represent another outstanding variant of combining highly realistic with stereometric parts. The first head is a canopic jar cover thought to date from the Second Intermediate Period (MMA 15.3.176).²⁰ The face and shoulder-length hair are energetically modelled with a few uneven, almost coarse strokes; the hair is striated with rough incised lines, the irregular proportions are accentuated by the high-placed ears situated at the temples. The eyes are narrow slits. They are seemingly closed and overshadowed by the thick horizontal eyebrows immediately above the upper lids; the mouth is half open. The face looks as if the man were sleeping, even dead. The work betrays a bold spontaneity and individuality as can rarely be seen in Egyptian art. The jar, now lost, possibly followed the slightly conical type of the Middle Kingdom, as represented, for example, by a complete wooden piece of the 12th or 13th Dynasty found in tomb 5102 at Lisht South.²¹

The second terracotta head from Lisht North shows the pinched face of a dwarf-like elderly man (MMA 15.3.1572).²² The face is broader than it is long. It has a short stub nose, two deep furrows run from the inner canthi to the forehead, meeting the naturally shaped bulges of the eyebrows which are conspicuously asymmetrical. The eyes also are irregular, their lid borders being deeply incised by means of a thin rod. The lower half of the face is occupied by a large mouth with a deep-cut horizontal slit between thick but almost shapeless lips. The head, which may have been created in the 12th or 13th Dynasty, is closed on its underside in the manner of a jar stopper. The jar is lost and its shape unknown. The somewhat grotesque type of the face reminds me of the Bes pots coming

17 Cairo JE 49613, block with two heads of Asiatic captives from the Pyramid Complex of Djoser, 3rd Dynasty. Bothmer (1982: 30, fig. 7).

18 Two blocks with three / four heads of foreign captives each, from Tanis (Cairo) and Damanhur (Cairo CG 396). Evers (1929: II, 91–93, §§ 617–627, fig. 47, 48, 50).

19 Evers (1929: II, 93).

20 New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art 15.3.176, h. 10, 5 cm, MMA excavations 1913–1914, tomb of Nakht (493), outside the NE corner, pit 468 (Online: metmuseum.org/).

21 New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art 14.3.30a,b, from Lisht South, tomb of Imhotep (5102) (Online: metmuseum.org/).

22 New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art 15.3.1572, Lisht North, cemetery, MMA excavations 1906–1907 (Online: metmuseum.org/).

up in the 18th Dynasty; perhaps the head and its lost body can be understood as a precursor of the Bes pot.

The most interesting feature of the two heads is their emotional appeal which is extremely rare in Egyptian art and which is the cause of their intense presence. The transitory character of emotions moreover, effectively evokes time and space, thus forming a marked contrast with the anorganic, stereometric shape of the jar.

2.3 The third technique: translational and mirror symmetry

The third technique to be discussed here is symmetry, more exactly translational symmetry, mirror symmetry and their combined forms. Symmetry is a geometric or planimetric, two-dimensional principle of order, guaranteeing, in figurative art, a regular composition of pictorial elements. Mirror symmetry means arranging two or more identical motifs on either side of a vertical axis at an equal distance. Mirror symmetry did not exist in prehistory, having been invented at the beginning of the Early Dynastic period only. It presupposes the introduction of a vertical and a horizontal axis (i.e. the right angle), in order to orient figures and things on a plane surface. Translational symmetry also presupposes a horizontal or a vertical axis on which a motif can be shifted laterally at an equal distance.

Symmetry is the very technique for reducing or avoiding space. It is normally paired, in any individual picture, with space-increasing techniques, since the pictorial elements that are arranged symmetrically can contain, in themselves, any degree of spatiality.

2.3.1 Rigid translational symmetry prevailing

From the Old Kingdom onward, files of soldiers or priests marching in procession were preferably arranged, on reliefs or mural paintings, to form sophisticated patterns by means of letting the figures overlap each other *en echelon*. The ensuing effect of regularity, harmony, and liveliness is due to successfully applying more or less veiled forms of symmetry.

A block found reused at Lisht North but thought to come from the pyramid complex of Userkaf (MMA 15.3.1163)²³ is covered with reliefs which can be regarded as the very paradigm of translational symmetry. The left ends of two registers are extant on the fragment, each containing parts of a military escort accompanying a royal ship which was represented on the top register, now lost. We perceive, on both ground lines, a group of ten soldiers running to the left with legs wide apart, carrying sticks, bundled staves, bows, and other objects. Behind the groups, there is an isolated runner who just fills the gap between the preceding group and a following one which may have been composed the same way but which is almost entirely lost. The soldiers are arranged in a horizontally overlapping row, each one at an equal distance from the next, the legs and arms only intersecting each other, not the bodies. Every figure moves with straight legs that are positioned at the same

23 New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art 15.3.1163, found at Lisht, Pyramid of Amenemhet I, possibly from the pyramid complex of Userkaf. Goedicke (1971: 68–74, no. 4). (Online: metmuseum.org/).

angle of inclination (as are also the staves), thus forming a perfect equilateral triangle which is, in itself, a mirror symmetrical element. At first glance, the upper and the lower group seem to be identical, although, in fact, there are some minimal changes in respect of what the men carry in their hands.

On the Userkaf block, the diagonally spread legs of the running men form a wonderful geometric pattern of intersecting triangles which is perfectly regular. While translational symmetry normally develops on a horizontal axis, the repetition of pictorial elements can also take place on a vertical axis. This is the case here since the upper group of ten soldiers is an exact copy of the lower one.

2.3.2 Rhythmic translational symmetry prevailing

Our next example is a detail of Tutankhamun's Opet festival frieze in the Luxor temple²⁴, created almost twelve centuries later than the block from Userkaf's pyramid complex. The general subject is the same as on the Old Kingdom relief: a troop of soldiers escorting a procession of barks represented above the escort in the upper register. In the case of Tutankhamun, it is the transport of the processional barks of the Theban Triad. In the middle part of the east wall of the Opet hall, the ships containing the sacred barks are towed from Luxor to Karnak, while the military escort follows on foot on the bank of the Nile. The last part of the escort, divided into seven small groups of five, four or three overlapping figures carrying musical instruments, standards, or spears and shields, is sufficiently well preserved to give the beholder an idea of the ingenious technique of composition. Indeed, the New Kingdom artist found a much more relaxed variant of translational symmetry: the distances from one figure to the next are not equal, but slightly increasing or diminishing. This is equally true for the distances between the groups, and for the angles of inclination of the torsos and legs, slightly changing from one group to the next. The zone of the legs and feet displays an incredibly manifold play of parallel and crossed lines. Moreover, the faces and legs betray, in a number of better preserved cases, a fairly realistic modelling – a feature counting among the space increasing techniques (see above 2.2). The general effect is a rhythmic sequence of figures suggesting an impression of pulsating movement. This variant of translational symmetry is indeed augmenting and diminishing space and time simultaneously and in a well-integrated way.

2.3.3 Mirror symmetry mixing with translational symmetry

Examples of reliefs combining translational and mirror symmetry are frequent in the New Kingdom. The bark procession scenes appearing on the Chapelle rouge of Queen Hatshepsut at Karnak²⁵ follow all the same compositional scheme. The sacred bark of Amun with its central shrine flanked by two small fan-bearers is a – slightly irregular – mirror symmetrical object. Three men are marching at the stern side, and three at the prow side, at an

²⁴ Reliefs and Inscriptions at Luxor Temple I (1994: pl. 91–92). (Online: Oriental Institute Publications OIP 112). Otto (1966, 96, pl. 35).

²⁵ Lacau & Chevrier (1979: II, pl. 7 (40, 169, 170, 305, 226, 26); façades sud et nord: assise 3, pl. 9 (303, 126, 66, 176); façades sud et nord: assise 5).

equal distance one from the other, but minimally overlapping. Two overlapping officials stand on the vertical axis of symmetry, below the shrine on the boat. A third official fills the gap between them and the rear group of carriers, thus making the symmetry appear less rigid. There is only one carrying bar, although, in reality, it is not possible to carry a large object on less than two bars, and, consequently, the carriers cannot appear in unequal numbers. The apparent inconsistency is, however, resolved since the figures have (almost) no more depth than a geometrical pattern, and all pictorial elements stay exactly parallel to the wall. The carriers are arranged according to translational symmetry, while the scene as a whole is a tripartite mirror symmetrical composition – although in a free variant due to the fact that all the figures are marching in the same direction.

The classical simplicity of Hatshepsut's solution involving nine figures only was changed into a sumptuous mass scene under Amenophis III in his Luxor temple. On the east wall of room VIII, the processional barks of the Theban Triad are carried, on the middle register, into the temple (fig. 4). The image of the bark of Amun²⁶ which is at the head of the procession is composed according to exactly the same scheme as the bark scenes of Hatshepsut – with the difference that it takes thirty men to move the bark. The three men at the prow and stern ends of the bar are multiplied to form narrow echelons of four men each, thus corresponding to translational symmetry; additionally, the two lateral echelons intersect the middle one, thus creating two free mirror symmetrical sub-scenes constituting two subsidiary axes of symmetry on both sides of the central axis. In addition, the bark is flanked by two large figures of the King facing the prow and the stern, respectively. Thus, the designer of the picture created a subtle play of translational and mirror symmetrical configurations entwined in one another.

On the throne of Horemheb's Turin group statue²⁷ with Queen Mutnedjemet, a surprisingly free and abbreviated version of the mirror symmetrical unification symbol can be seen, using bound captives instead of the usual fecundity figures. The two Asiatic and two black African captives standing back to back are bound with ropes in the shape of lily and papyrus stalks, the plants symbolising Upper and Lower Egypt. The stalks seem to come out of the men's necks, forming sinuous coils above their heads. The four figures are characterized by strongly curvilinear contours. The picture is unfinished. The mirror symmetrical composition lacks its central piece, the hieroglyphic symbol of joining the Two Lands. Moreover, parts of the block border, the ground line, the hands of the second Asiatic, and the feet and lower legs of three figures are absent for unknown reasons. Even if the vertical axis (the unification symbol) and the horizontal axis (the ground line) are missing, the figures sufficiently allude to translational and mirror symmetry for avoiding space. The design owes much of its dynamic effect to the fact that it is unfinished. The statues of the King and Queen and the other side of the throne are finished – the question arises whether the scene of the bound captives was left unfinished on purpose. To modern

26 Müller (1988: fig. 33 (University of Chicago Oriental Institute photos no. 38319&38318)).

27 Turin Museo Egizio Inv. Cat. 1379, group statue of Horemheb and Mutnedjemet, incised picture on the left side of the throne. Donadoni Roveri (1989 :159–160, fig. 238).



Figure 4

eyes, the extraordinary freedom of the design must be the result of a deliberate act, as can be seen, sometimes, on artists' ostraca. However, this may be a modern projection.

In any case, an innovative mind must have instigated the designs of the scenes appearing on the lateral surfaces of the throne: the enemies integrated into the unification symbol on the King's side, and a winged female sphinx lying upon a papyrus thicket on the Queen's side. The positioning of these motifs on the sides of a large stone statue is a rare, possibly unique, case, as far as we can see today. The normal position of defeated enemies is the pedestal of statues, below the king's feet. The variant combining the emblem of the joining of the two lands with two foreign captives bound to the stem first appears in the tomb of Kheruef (TT 192) at Thebes, created in the last years of Amenophis III's reign. The motif appears on a relief representation of a wooden armchair throne of Queen Tiy which is decorated with this otherwise exclusively royal emblem.²⁸ Some decades later, the motif recurs on the golden chariots from Tutankhamun's tomb.

2.3.4 Combined forms of free translational and mirror symmetry

In extremely sophisticated reliefs of the late 18th Dynasty, symmetrical constructions can be mixed and loosened to a degree that they are almost imperceptible to the beholder, although staying subconsciously effective.

An example of exceptional perfection was created in the late 14th century BCE in Horemheb's tomb at Saqqara. I refer to the large panorama scene on the south wall of the second pillared courtyard, executed in sunken relief. The left half of the scene depicts a long defile of Asiatic prisoners, pointing to the great military effectiveness of the tomb owner (Leiden RMO H.III.OOOO) (fig. 5). Egyptian officers are leading the captives to Horemheb who receives the gold of honour from Tutankhamun. The young King was sitting in a canopy at the right end of the scene which is only partially preserved.²⁹ The famous march of the Asiatic captives looks, at first glance, like a disordered crowd. The figures are arranged in two vertical layers one behind the other. The first layer is entirely visible, while the second one is overlapped, even hidden to a great extent, by the first one. The second layer thus seems to stay in the background although all the feet stand on the same ground line.

In fact, there is a strict order. The arrangement of the figures consists of two Egyptians leading two Asiatics, two Egyptians leading two Asiatics, and so on, the slightly unequal distances between the figures producing a marked rhythm. Thus, the entire sequence is divided into a number of sub-groups dominated by translational symmetry. The sequence can also be read as a free variant of mirror symmetrical groups merging into one another, when considering each Egyptian as a central piece between two Asiatics. The spatiality of the figures is increased by the curvilinear contours and the deep-cut relief (see above 2.2). The two techniques do not compete, but are well integrated into one another, in this case,

²⁸ Bayer (2014: 270–272, Dok. 55.6.1, pl. 63).

²⁹ The left part of the scene is extant on two blocks at the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden at Leiden H.III.OOOO. (Online: rmo.nl/collectie/zoeken). Lange & Hirmer (1967: pl. 206). The right half is in situ, a small part of the royal canopy is preserved.



Figure 5



Figure 6

by using a relatively free, rhythmical form of symmetry in harmony with the rhythmical curvilinearity of the figures' contours.

Interestingly, a modern mural painting in the Neues Rathaus of Hannover, created by Ferdinand Hodler in 1913³⁰ (fig. 6), is composed according to almost the same scheme as Horemheb's rows of captives in his Saqqara tomb. The subject of the scene is an historical event of 1533. A troop of stout men representing the citizens of Hannover is swearing with upraised right hand to adopt the Reformation in their city, and is lead by an orator who stands on a pedestal erected in the centre of the picture. The orator is shown in full frontal view, thus parting the tight mass of figures into two equal halves. As in Horemheb's tomb, we perceive a structured crowd extending strictly parallel to the upper and lower edges of the picture. The entire composition is highly symmetrical. Translational symmetry prevails in the upper zone filled with a range of vertically upraised arms. The front range of figures is divided into four subgroups of three men each. Their arrangement participates simultaneously in free variants of translational and mirror symmetry, while also being part of the mirror symmetrical scheme of the entire scene. However, the figures are drawn in perspective, their feet are placed on different levels, their bodies appear in three-dimensional corporeality. Hodler creates a narrow stage with a white wall at the back, while the mass of voluminous figures on the stage develop in parallel to the ramp.

Comparing the modern and the ancient picture may help to explain the construction of the latter. In Hodler's painting, the time and space creating component is reinforced by drawing the figures in perspective, while the symmetry as a compositional means to diminish time and space is intensified as well. The ancient artist confers, on the one hand, a noticeable amount of spatiality to his double range of figures, and on the other hand, he withdraws it by letting the figures strictly adhere to the ground line and the surface of the wall.

2.4 The fourth technique: the principle of diagonal dynamics

The principle of diagonal dynamics is the fourth and last one to be explained in this article. What I call diagonal dynamics is a compositional technique suggesting movement, to the eye of the beholder, by setting the extremities (and other parts of the body) of a figure on virtual diagonals, or on oblique and wavy lines in general. A number of crossing diagonals are felt to move up and down, no matter if running parallel to each other, or adopting ever changing angles of inclination. (In contrast to this, the principle of perspective drawing lets converging diagonals meet in a virtual central point). More exactly, the human eye normally understands a diagonal running from the upper left to the lower right to be descending, while a diagonal running from the lower left to the upper right is felt to be ascending. This rule is also valid for peoples who usually write from right to left, as did the ancient Egyptians. It has to do with the facts that dexterity by far prevails in all civilisations regardless of the preferred direction of writing, and that the two halves of the brain do not function exactly the same way.

³⁰ The title of the painting is „Einmütigkeit“ (Online: Wikipedia, s.v. Dietrich Amsborg). A replica in Hodler's own hand is in the Kunsthau Zürich. Schneider (2013: 167–199).

Any kind of movement is *per se* a sign of space and time. However, the principle of diagonal dynamics allows for moving only from left to right or from right to left, i.e. strictly parallel to the surface of the wall, the diagonals forming a purely two-dimensional network. Thus, we can state at the outset that the use of diagonal dynamics is a technique increasing time and space as much as diminishing it, simultaneously.

The first (extant) composition developing the figures entirely on diagonals was created in the 1st Dynasty, at the beginning of the third millennium BCE, on a small ivory label from King Den's tomb at Abydos.³¹ The engraved picture shows the King with an upraised mace, about to strike an Asiatic foe who kneels at his feet. Both figures bend forward towards each other at about the same inclination angle; they stand or kneel with legs spread apart, their arms reaching out or raised above their heads. All parts of their bodies are systematically arranged on virtual diagonals running parallel to each other. The result is a kind of X-pattern which is, however, not strictly followed by the limbs but in a relaxed and dancing way. The masterly design of the Den label became the model for the icon of the king smiting enemies which remained valid for millennia.

Egyptian temple reliefs normally avoided representing large objects in a tilted, i.e. apparently ascending or falling, position. The scene of erecting the djed-pillar in Sethos I's Osiris temple at Abydos is an exception to this rule.³² In the ritual scene located in the First Osiris Hall, the golden djed-pillar, extending from the right lower corner to the left upper corner of the picture, lies on a descending diagonal crossing the central point. The pillar moves to the right: this is made clear by the small kneeling figure of the king supporting the pillar on its left side with his outstretched arms. The kneeling figure develops on an ascending diagonal at about the same angle of inclination as the pillar. The inclined pillar is flanked by two standing figures. At the right side, King Sethos is pulling it with both hands toward his bent torso, while Isis, standing upright at the left, is pushing the pillar.

A glance at the dancing girls on a fragmentary pot from Deir el-Medineh shows the principle of diagonal dynamics at its best (fig.7).³³ The painted vase, found in one of the small private chapels situated inside and around the enclosure wall of the Hathor temple at the border of the village, may have had a ritual function. The fragment represents two groups of – seemingly naked – dancing girls on two registers. The design is characterised by a peculiar mix of two- and three-dimensionality. The bodies are almost reduced to straight or slightly curved lines, while their proportions are still those of normal reality. On the other hand, the almost perfectly spaceless figures suggest, by their stepping-out gestures which develop more or less on zigzag lines, an extremely dynamic movement joyfully expanding to the right and to the left.

The era of Akhenaten is characterised by an important new method of implementing the principle of diagonal dynamics. A troop of running soldiers depicted in the tomb of

31 British Museum EA 55586, Abydos, Umm el Qaab, tomb of Den, 1st Dynasty, ivory label for sandals, h. 4.5cm (online: britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/search.aspx).

32 Abydos, Temple of Sethos I, First Osiris Hall, West Wall, Lower Register, Scene 8: raising the djed-pillar. David (1981: fig. on p. 134 lower left).

33 Bruyère (1934: 71, fig. 5).



Figure 7



Figure 8

Ahmes at Amarna is a perfect example (fig. 8).³⁴ They are part of the large panorama scene on the west wall of the hall representing a royal visit to the Temple of the Aten, forming the military escort which precedes the king and queen on their chariot. The 43 soldiers equally distributed on four small sub-registers are running in long-drawn-out rows with largely striding legs, their feet scarcely overlapping, their torsos strongly bent forward. They all carry standards or fans on long poles, and long spears or bows slanting as much backwards as their torsos forwards. Thus, all parts of the bodies and all attributes of the figures (poles, weapons) are aligned on virtual diagonals running parallel to each other in both directions at an angle of inclination of around 90 degrees. The diagonals form an X-pattern which is, however, not rigidly regular. The distances between one figure and the next are slightly variable, they augment and diminish in order to create a rhythm. The figures on the second register from the top are not arranged exactly beneath the upper figures, but are shifted somewhat to the left. This clever device makes the diagonals of the top row continue into the lower row. The systematic use of diagonals creates a continuous net which is able

to tie two or more registers together. The result is a great gain in dynamics.

The relief in the tomb of Ahmes combines the technique of diagonal dynamics with that of realistic contours of the human figure (2.2) and of translational symmetry of the composition (2.3). Thus, the dancing girls on the pot sherd found at Deir el-Medineh as well as the running soldiers at Amarna are fine examples of playing space increasing means off against space diminishing means.

³⁴ Amarna, tomb no. 3, longitudinal room, west wall, upper register. Davies (1905: III, 27–29, pl. XXXI, XXXIX).

3 Conclusions

The concept of spreading all parts of a human figure on the plane, and positioning it on a ground line in order to adapt the three-dimensional body to the two-dimensional surface of a picture (a wall, a stela, etc.), was invented at the beginning of the Dynastic era and was never abandoned until its end. However, changing methods of handling time and space in the composition of a single figure, a group of figures or an entire picture can be observed ever again all along Pharaonic Egyptian history. More exactly, we are speaking of methods for controlling the quanta of time and space available in a picture. In this article, four of those methods or techniques were identified and described.

(2.1) Foreshortening as the central means of linear perspective is the most effective technique of creating space and time in art. It enables figures and things to expand in an illusionistic manner into the depth. It must have been felt, by the Egyptian artists, to be too effective, or more effective, in creating time and space than they were willing to accept. Thus, they made only sporadic use of it. A full introduction of perspective would have devaluated the traditional system of pictorial representation as the two principles are incompatible.

(2.2) Our second technique: the realistic contour and surface modelling of the body, is by far the most important means of creating time and space in an image. By this means, the human body gains (a specific amount of) its natural volume and proportions. This technique is of equal importance for designing reliefs and sculpture in the round.

(2.3) The use of symmetry, i.e. its major variants: translational and mirror symmetry and their combinations, is the most important technique for avoiding or reducing time and space. In almost every case, symmetry conjoins with (2.2), the realistic contour and surface modelling of the body. Mirror symmetry is equally important for constructing a statue or a single figure in relief or painting, since the principle is derived from the structure of the human body seen in frontal view. All forms of symmetry create a regularly ordered (non-spatial but planimetric) relationship among figures of a group, including a rhythmic one.

(2.4) The principle of diagonal dynamics means to align systematically the human body and its attributes on virtual diagonals running in both directions, i.e. forming an X-pattern which can be more or less regular and eventually rhythmical. On the reliefs of the Amarna Period, the virtual diagonals continue through two or more registers, thus forming a net as an invisible system of reference for all pictorial elements. This device is able to tie large parts of a picture together. Through the fact that the human eye understands a series of crossing diagonals as going up and down, the X-pattern or net has a much higher dynamic and integrative potential than all forms of symmetry based on the vertical and horizontal axes. Notwithstanding, figures can only move parallel to the surface of the picture. Paradoxically, a (virtual) system of crossing diagonals is able to increase and diminish space and time simultaneously.

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ḥw.t ḥnt(j) skr wr: La Demeure de –Celui qui préside à l’offrande / au sacrifice du vénérable–

L’enceinte funéraire de la vallée à Abydos ou l’intemporalité de l’espace sacré dans le rituel funéraire royal thinite

Jean-Pierre Pätznick¹

Abstract

As part of the royal funerary tradition at Abydos, the enclosures of the valley built the low part of the royal complex since *Horus Aha* at the very beginning of the 1st dynasty.

Even new investigations have revealed more and more details of their architecture, the practice of human sacrifice around these precincts or of their short-living purpose having been destroyed after their using, their function remain largely unknown.

The study of two labels dating from the time of *Horus Djer* at the beginning of the 1st dynasty may shed some light for a better understanding of the nature of the celebrations in these enclosures, which may have been indeed at the origin of the *Heb Sed*: the feast of the renewal strength of the king in Old Egypt.

On les connaît entre autres sous le vocable de *Talbezirke*, *Funerary Enclosures*, *Funerary Cult Enclosures*, *Enceintes funéraires* ou *Enceintes de la Vallée*. Sis en bordure de la plaine alluviale, il s’agit en fait d’espaces rectangulaires ceints de murs de briques crues à redans qui sont implantés à l’ouest du téménos du temple d’Osiris, au Kom es-Sultan, à Abydos, en Haute Égypte.²

Les plus célèbres d’entre eux, parce qu’aussi les plus visibles, aujourd’hui encore, sont les structures que firent ériger le *Nebouti Peribsen* –l’Ombite Peribsen–, le *Middle Fort* et surtout l’*Horus Khâsekhemoui* vers la fin de la IIe dynastie avec la plus imposante d’entre elles, plus connue sous le vocable de Schounet es-Zebib (« magasin aux raisins secs »).³

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2 Fig. a et fig. b.

3 Mariette (1880: 46). Cette structure de 133,50 m x 77,70 m est la plus imposante de toutes les enceintes funéraires. Orientée aux quatre points cardinaux, c’est une enceinte de briques crues de 5 m d’épaisseur et de près de 11 m de hauteur qui enserré une aire de plus d’un ha. Une fois construite, après les cérémonies, toutes les entrées en dehors de la principale au SE furent murées. Offrandes répétées devant l’édifice interne situé au SE près de la porte principale. Voir aussi Bestock (2011: 143–144); Adams and O’Connor (2010: 1–8).



Figure a

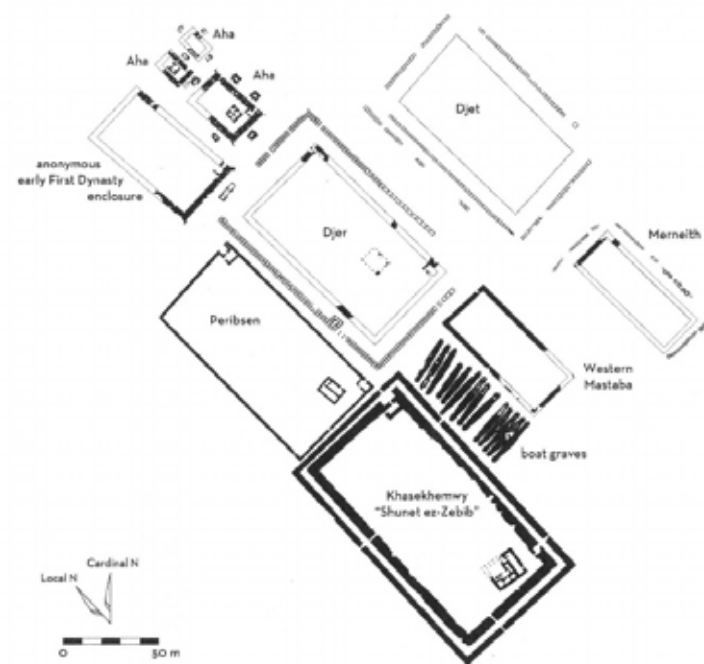


Figure b

Découvertes à la fin du XIXe siècle par Mariette⁴, les fouilles d'Ayrton⁵, de Peet⁶, de Petrie⁷ ou plus récemment d'O'Connor⁸ et d'Adams⁹ permirent de redécouvrir ou de mettre au jour de nouvelles enceintes funéraires, plus anciennes encore, puisque remontant au début de la Ire dynastie¹⁰.

Toutes montrent, à quelques particularités près, les mêmes caractéristiques architectoniques : un espace rectangulaire ceint d'un mur en briques crues ; les structures les plus évoluées ayant été aménagées en redans avec niches, voire en niches composites-. Ces enceintes étaient percées de deux entrées, une au nord-est et l'autre, la principale, au sud-est près de laquelle se trouvait une chapelle comme l'attestent les restes d'offrandes et de céramiques qui y furent trouvés. Parfois, des trous de poteaux suggèrent des constructions légères ou des traces d'enseignes plantées dans ce sol sacré. Toutes ces enceintes de la Ire dynastie étaient entourées de tombes subsidiaires comme l'étaient aussi les complexes funéraires royaux à Oum el-Qâab, dans le désert, à Abydos.¹¹

Si de nombreuses questions sur leur fonction restent posées, une certitude demeure : il n'est pas un souverain de la Ire dynastie, de l'*Horus Áha* à la reine, régente et reine-

4 Mariette (1880 : 46–49).

5 Ayrton (1904 : 2–5), pl. VI–VIII et IX–X avec une attestation à l'Horus Sekhem-ib peri-n-maât (IX-3) et les premières références à la succession Nebouti Peribsen (IX-1-2)-Horus Sekhem-ib peri-n-maât (IX-3) – Horus Khâsekhemoui (9) pour la 2e moitié de la IIe dynastie.

6 Peet (1914 : 31–34 et 30, fig. 8), ainsi que la pl. VII.

7 Petrie (1925 : 1–9 et pl. I–XXI).

8 O'Connor (1989 : 51–86).

9 Adams (2007) : <https://www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/fineart/academics/abydos/abydos-early-monuments.htm>. Voir également Adams and O'Connor (2008) : http://www.britishmuseum.org/pdf/Egypt_colloq_abstracts_7_08.pdf.

10 Bestock (2009) et (2011 : 137–140). Les campagnes de fouilles des années 2001–2003 / 2004–2005 du projet Expedition to Abydos des University of Pennsylvania Museum–Yale University-Institute of Fine Arts New York University dirigées par D. O'Connor et M. Adams ont mis à jour les plus anciennes structures de ce type à Abydos : trois enceintes funéraires datées du règne de l'*Horus Áha* du début de la Ire dynastie et dénommées Aha I, II et III. Tandis que Aha I pourrait avoir appartenu au roi lui-même, Aha II et III pourraient être attribuées à deux femmes chères au cœur du souverain ce que suggérerait aussi le choix exclusif du personnel féminin des tombes subsidiaires attenantes. Il pourrait être ainsi reproduit la même situation que dans le haut complexe funéraire royal à Oum el-Qâab entre la partie tripartite royale et les deux tombes adjacentes B13 et B15 plus grandes que les tombeaux subsidiaires (B 36).

– On notera également la découverte d'une quatrième enceinte juste au-dessus des trois précédentes, mais nettement plus grande. La céramique la fait dater du tout début de la Ire dynastie. Elle pourrait donc aussi avoir appartenu à l'*Horus Áha* à moins qu'elle n'ait été celle de son père, *Abou Hor* (anc. lu *Horus Nâr-mer*). L'*Horus Áha* serait ainsi à l'origine de la tradition des enceintes funéraires à Abydos comme il l'est aussi pour les tombes subsidiaires et le sacrifice de personnes lors des funérailles royales.

11 Par analogie avec les deux parties du complexe funéraire royal à l'Ancien Empire –Temple haut=Temple funéraire et Temple bas=Temple de la Vallée–, l'enceinte dans la vallée et l'ensemble funéraire dans le désert à Oum el-Qâab peuvent être considérées comme les parties basse et haute d'une même conception idéologique et architectonique du complexe funéraire royal thinite à Abydos. Une tradition, dont l'origine pourrait donc remonter au moins au tout début de la Ire dynastie.



Figure c | Ägyptisches Museum Berlin: Inv. Nr. 18026.

pharaon *Meret-Neith* qui n'en ait possédé une¹², voire même trois comme l'*Horus Áhâ*. Cet espace emmuré dans la vallée faisait partie intégrante de la conception du complexe et du rituel funéraire royal thinite à Abydos et constituait donc un espace royal sacré.

Déjà observées par Peet¹³ lors de la mise à jour de l'enceinte funéraire de *Meret-Neith* qui notait des personnes enterrées au même moment et remarquait que chaque tombe subsidiaire correspondait exactement à l'espace laissé entre deux niches de l'enceinte funé-

raire, Petrie¹⁴ ne manquait pas de faire

remarquer que les personnes inhumées dans les tombes subsidiaires avaient eu les talons serrés, liés vers les hanches pour empêcher tout mouvement, et qu'un homme s'était même efforcé d'élever sa tête au-dessus du sol de la tombe pendant qu'on la remplissait de sable. Tous deux notaient également la rapidité avec laquelle on avait procédé presque en même temps à de nombreuses inhumations dans des tombes à compartiments préparées à cet effet ce qui ne pouvait qu'induire que ces personnes avaient été intentionnellement tuées au cours de cérémonies royales.¹⁵

Les nouvelles fouilles américaines conduites par Adams et O' Connor à Abydos ont apporté de nouvelles preuves de sacrifices humains autour de ces enceintes¹⁶, mais ont permis également de constater que ces enceintes funéraires avaient été détruites délibérément, dans un rituel, probablement en rapport avec le décès de l'ancien roi et le « massacre » des sacrifiés, au cours duquel l'enceinte était solennellement sacrifiée et enterrée.¹⁷

Donc, si l'archéologie apporte de plus en plus d'indices et de preuves sur l'unique et brève utilisation de ces enceintes funéraires et des sacrifices humains qui y furent pratiqués, qu'en est-il au juste des traces écrites contemporaines ? Est-on en mesure de pouvoir en identifier attestant de cette pratique et d'une cérémonie particulière ? Deux étiquettes sont à

12 Seules celles d'*Oudou-in-Hor* (anc. lu *Horus Den*, *Dewen* ou *Udimu*), de l'*Horus Seme(he)rkhet* et de l'*Horus Qaâ* n'ont pas été encore identifiées. Pour la lecture *Oudou-in-Hor*, voir Pätznick (2013 : 55–63).

13 Peet (1914 : 32).

14 Petrie (1925 : 8).

15 Peet (1914 : 31 et pl. VII, fig. 1); Petrie (1925 : pl. I, fig. 4). Pour un état de la recherche sur les tombes subsidiaires et du sacrifice humain, voir entre autres Campbell (2012); Vaudou (2008 : 149–165); van Dick (2007 : 135–155).

16 Adams (2007): <https://www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/fineart/academics/abydos/abydos-early-monuments.htm>.

17 Voir aussi Bestock (2011 : 140–141).



Figure d | Musée Égyptien, Le Caire: JdE 44355.

ce titre déterminantes : Inv. Nr. 18026 (Ägyptisches Museum Berlin)¹⁸ et JdE 44355 (Musée Égyptien, Le Caire)¹⁹.

Provenant l'une d'Abydos (Haute Égypte) de la partie haute du complexe funéraire royal de l'*Horus Djer* à Oum el-Qâab et l'autre de Saqqâra (Basse Égypte), d'une tombe de la grande nécropole contemporaine de la Ire dynastie, datée également de l'*Horus Djer*, leur intérêt est fondamental pour notre étude. Car elles sont un véritable duplicata l'une de l'autre, ce qui est absolument unique.

Toutes deux nous content en effet sur quatre registres la même histoire, avec de petites différences graphiques qui ont toute leur importance. Bien que ne mentionnant aucune année, ces deux étiquettes nous parlent du même événement d'importance que nous allons maintenant tenter de décrypter ensemble.

Étiquette de l'*Horus Djer*, Abydos

I^{er} registre:

La scène est divisée en trois parties qui s'organisent autour d'un vaste rectangle qui prend toute la place centrale de ce premier registre augurant déjà de son importance pour la suite de l'interprétation de l'étiquette.

L'annonce de la visite royale de l'*Horus Djer* se trouve placée à gauche et est indiquée par le trilitère lu ḥ^c –rendre visite, se tenir debout– qui précède le souverain représenté par son nom d'Horus dans le *serekh*, le signe héraldique par excellence de la royauté égyptienne. Derrière le roi sont gravés deux unilitères, le hibou *m* et la ligne d'eau *n* qui ont servi à la transcription du nom  *Mn* de la personne accompagnant le souverain lors de ce déplacement sur laquelle nous reviendrons plus avant en fin de texte.

Le milieu du registre montre clairement la destination de cette royale visite. Le roi se trouve dans un lieu nommé apparemment *d njwt* qui est précisé comme étant –la frange désertique de la Ville–. Cette *njwt* –ville– désigne très probablement Abydos comme nouvelle résidence royale et grand centre religieux depuis au moins le début de la Ire

18 **Fig. c.** Ägyptisches Museum Berlin: Inv. Nr. 18026, Coll. E. Amélineau (1904 : pl. XV, fig. 19) et Piquette (2007 : 613, ID 242).

19 **Fig. d.** Musée Égyptien, Le Caire: JdE 44355: Quibell (1923 : pl. XI, fig. 2–3) et Piquette (2007 : 613, ID 243) ainsi que Jimenez Serrano (2002 : 63–64).

dynastie, sous le règne de l'*Horus Áha*.²⁰ Le but de cette royale visite, à localiser en dehors de la ville d'Abydos, va nous être particulièrement précisé.

Faisant face à l'énoncé de cette visite se trouve en effet un vaste rectangle que le dessin du coin gauche en bas permet sans le moindre doute de lire *ḥw.t* –demeure, complexe–.

Au-dessus de cette structure, le signe de la bouche $\ominus$ suivi d'un oiseau peuvent être lus ensemble *r3 wr* –entrée du Grand / du Vénérable– ou peut être plus simplement *rjj wr* –Celui de la grande entrée –²¹ faisant peut être aussi allusion à un des tout premiers souverains d'Abydos lu *jry ḥrw* –Iry Hor– qui serait de fait peut être plutôt à l'être *rjj ḥrw*²².

À l'intérieur de ce rectangle se trouve une inscription composée de trois éléments. Le premier d'entre eux pourrait être confondu avec celui composant le nom d'*Horus Djer*, mais les parallèles graphiques connus montrent qu'il s'agit en fait du signe trilitère *hnt(j)* –celui qui préside à / celui qui est au devant–. Les deux autres signes sont à identifier à un oiseau et au signe trilitère *sqr* –frapper, sacrifier–. Tous deux font corps formant une sorte de signe synchrétique où l'oiseau figure en place du manche du couteau d'offrande *sqr*. Ce signe *sqr* ne laisse d'ailleurs aucun doute sur la nature de l'activité au sein de cette place *ḥw.t*²³ où une personne au moins y sera frappée, c'est-à-dire sacrifiée.

À la droite de ce rectangle, formant ainsi la troisième partie de ce premier registre, la représentation de sépultures au milieu d'un paysage de palmiers traversé par un canal ne laisse aucun doute sur la sémantique de l'ensemble puisqu'il s'agit de la plus ancienne attestation de la dite Palmeraie de Bouto / Saïs–, qui pourrait bien être une représentation générique de la nécropole royale proprement dite ou d'une partie d'elle-même. Le but de la visite royale était donc, au sortir de la Ville, un lieu dénommé –La Grande Entrée– dans une partie de la nécropole d'Abydos. La majeure partie de l'inscription du premier registre pourrait donc être lue:

ḥc ḥrw dr Mn cḏ njwt r3 wr ḥw.t hnt(j) sqr wr –visite de l'*Horus Djer* et du *Men* à la frange désertique de la Ville, à la grande entrée, au complexe de Celui qui préside à l'offrande / au sacrifice du vénérable.

20 Petrie (1901): pl. IIIA, fig. 5 avec la mention de *ḥ3.t niw.t* –le meilleur de la Ville (Abydos)– en bas de l'étiquette.

21 Les Textes des Pyramides (*TP*) font mention du *rjj wr* –celui de la Grande Entrée– avec une mise en garde du défunt royal contre cette dangereuse entité. Voir *TP* 280, §421b et Allen (2005): 53 W186 et Nt 266. Au Nouvel Empire, on mentionne parmi les divinités à vénérer à Abydos un Horus de la Grande Entrée. Voir Mariette (1880): pl. 44 et 45 ; Gauthier (1926): 144 avec une mention du *Livre des Morts* Chap. 64 et Leitz (2002 : 607). On consultera également Borghouts (1973 : 141 n. 6).

22 On notera avec intérêt la mention d'un titre en association avec ce nom de roi *jry r3 ḥrw* –Préposé ou Gardien de la –Bouche de l'Horus–, Petrie (1901): pl. XIII, fig. 96. Si tentant soit-il, il ne peut être question d'un complément phonétique final *r* à la fin de la dynastie 0.

23 On peut d'ailleurs se demander à ce propos, si l'origine du mot *ḥw.t* ne viendrait pas du verbe *ḥwj* –(a)battre, frapper– désignant un lieu où une personne choisie était au moins frappée, abattue. Voir à ce sujet Piquette (2007 : 638 ID 348) où l'étiquette annalistique de l'*Horus Seme(he)rkhet* montre une structure *ḥw.t* où le signe *ḥwj* est représenté par un trait au-dessus d'une personne assise et l'unilittère *h* l'accompagnant derrière celle-ci. À moins qu'elle ne fasse aussi allusion à la destinée des ces structures devant être abattues une fois les festivités célébrées.

II^e registre:

Cette partie de l'étiquette peut être considérée comme un gros plan sur ce qui se passe réellement dans cet espace royal consacré. La *hw.t* est maintenant représentée comme un grand rectangle plus allongé ceint d'un mur à redans comme l'indiquent les nombreuses dentelures verticales sur son pourtour. La scène qui s'y développe peut-être lue de droite à gauche comme l'indique l'orientation générale des signes hiéroglyphiques.

Trois harpons en os, à considérer comme la marque du pluriel d'un mot pour lequel le choix se propose entre *qs.w* –os– ou *qrs* –enterrer– ou de *qrs.t* –enterrement, funéraille, sépulture, tombe– permettent de préciser le cadre de cette cérémonie dans le contexte funéraire.²⁴ Précédant ces trois harpons, se trouve un signe que l'on peut lire *mnj* avec les sens de mourir²⁵ ou de être enterré, inhumé²⁶ comme on peut aussi y reconnaître le lexème *qd* avec le sens de bâtir²⁷. Liés au mot *qrs.wt* –funérailles, sépultures, tombes– le contexte funéraire ne s'en trouve que plus clairement renforcé.

En dessous du groupe des trois harpons est figuré un pavois sur lequel se trouve un canidé qui est associé à une massue à tête piriforme *hd*. Une association qui rappelle celle du chacal *Oupouaout*, mais aussi le dieu canidé *Sed*.

Deux signes unilitères, celui de la main très stylisée *d* et d'une courte ligne d'eau *n* sont tournés vers une personne agenouillée, enveloppée d'un long manteau qui ne laisse paraître ni mains, ni bras, ni pieds. Seule la tête en est visible. De sa partie frontale gicle un jet de sang qui ne peut être assimilé à cette longue mèche de cheveux portée en signe de deuil par la reine et la princesse héritière²⁸.

Le groupe *d + n* fait face à cette victime et semble donc être en relation avec elle comme pour en préciser sa nature. En l'absence de déterminatif, plusieurs possibilités de lecture s'offrent de fait à nous parmi lesquelles *n(j) dr.t* –celui qui appartient à la main–, sous entendu de l'exécuteur, *n(j) wdy* –celui qui appartient à être traité comme un ennemi²⁹ mais surtout *dn(y)* –celui qui est tué / le tué³⁰ ou *n(j) (w)d(n)* –celui qui appartient à l'offrande / Celui qui est offert³¹ ou plus simplement *(w)dn(.t)* –l'offrande³² qui présentent toutes de sérieuses alternatives de lecture dans ce contexte particulier d'offrande et de sacrifice humain.

Qu'elle soit nommée entre autres –celui qui est offert– ou encore plus simplement le –tué–, la personne agenouillée du second registre est belle et bien la victime humaine sacrificielle expiatoire du rituel funéraire royal abydnien. Une destination funeste qui est rappelée par le flot de sang giclant de la face frontale de la tête de cette personne.

24 *WB V*, 63–64.

25 *WB II*, 73–22 et 74.

26 Meeks (1977 : 159 77.1716) et Meeks (1978 : 161 78.1718) avec la notion de «faire accoster» (veiller au passage de la vie à la mort).

27 Meeks (1978 : 392 78.4325).

28 Emery (1938 : 35–39, pl. 17–18 A).

29 *WB I*, 386–11–12.

30 *WB V*, 463–9–11 et 13.

31 *WB I*, 391 – B IV – 16 – on notera la graphie AR *wd* pour *wdn*).

32 *WB I*, 392, 7–8.

Au-dessus de celle-ci, le signe bilitère *ms* rappelle que ce sacrifice eut lieu au cours d'une festivité liée à la re-naissance du roi³³ tandis qu'une tête d'oiseau tranchée augure de la funeste destinée de la victime, ne laissant, une fois encore, aucun doute sur la nature de la cérémonie perpétuée au cœur de cet espace sacré.

Tous les indices concordent donc à montrer qu'il y eut sacrifice humain au sein d'un espace emmuré convergeant vers l'idée qu'une personne était tuée en place du roi rappelant en ça le lointain souvenir d'un roi qui avait été à l'origine lui-même sacrifié rituellement.³⁴ Une coutume pour laquelle maintenant un substitut de choix devait prendre la place royale et passer à trépas pour le souverain comme il l'est aussi indiqué sur quelques étiquettes annalistiques d'*Oudou-in-Hor* (anc. lu *Horus Den/Dewen* ou *Udimu*).³⁵

Derrière le personnage agenouillé, on reconnaît à l'extrême gauche de la scène un trône et le signe trilitère *ḥ^c* posé sur la première des trois marches. La lecture de l'ensemble n'est pas aisée.

Mais on peut proposer de considérer le premier signe comme un trône avec une lecture *ḥndw*³⁶ ou *rwd*³⁷ avec les sens d'escalier, siège, trône et le second qui se tient sur la première marche *ḥ^c*. L'ensemble serait à lire *rwd ḥ^c*, voire *ḥ^c(w) ḥr rwd* –celui qui se tient sur le trône– rappelant en cela le titre de *tpj rwd.w* –Celui qui est sur les escaliers– attesté lors de la célébration du *Heb Sed* du roi Niouserrê (Milieu de la Ve dynastie).³⁸ Le sacrifice de la personne pourrait donc avoir eu lieu en présence de l'héritier du roi défunt.

Plus difficiles d'interprétation sont les signes qui se trouvent entre la victime humaine et le trône. Une rapide observation pourrait conduire à y reconnaître une tête surdimen-

33 On notera à ce propos la vénération d'un Osiris de la naissance ou de la re-naissance dans l'enceinte funéraire de la Schounet es-Zebib de l'*Horus Khâsekhemoui* aux époques ultérieures. Voir Mariette (1880 : 48–49).

34 Voir Pätznick (2003 : 287–301).

35 Assise dans un long manteau sur un trône fruste, sans insignes régaliens aucuns, les mains liées dans le dos (!) avec pour seul nom celui de *Khasety*, l'un des noms d'*Oudou-in-Hor*, il n'est pas le moindre doute à avoir sur sa destinée funeste que l'inscription placée au-dessus de la victime précise comme: *j3(w) (j)r(j) nm.t* –Le Loué, le préposé au billot / Loué soit celui qui est préposé (destiné) au billot–. Voir Pätznick (2003 : 287–301) et Dreyer (1998 : 164, Taf. 12 g (Ab K 2515(T–W)), 12 h (Ab K 2541) et 12 i (Ab K 2546)) et Dreyer (2000 : 112–113, Taf. 10 h (Ab K 2560)). Pour un exemplaire de cette même catégorie d'objets voir Dreyer (1990 : Taf. 26 b (Ab K 380)). Il est par ailleurs également tentant de vouloir identifier la mention *wp(w) s.t* –celui qui prend la place- ou –celui de la place du jugement– retrouvée justement sur quelques fragments de vaisselle de pierre dans le complexe funéraire de l'*Horus Djer* à Abydos avec la personne destinée à être sacrifiée en place du roi. Voir Petrie (1901: pl. VA, fig. 6, 22 et 23 ainsi que pl. XXV, fig. 2). On y ajoutera également Petrie (1900 : pl. IV, fig. 5).

36 Meeks (1977 : 283 77.3138).

37 Voir E.3631 (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford) avec une représentation de ce type de trône-estrade sur la massue piriforme cérémonielle d'*Abou Hor* (anc. lu *Horus Nârmer*). Pour cette nouvelle lecture, voir Pätznick (2009 : 307–324) et Pätznick (2015 : 287–292).

38 Bissing von und Kees (1928 : 36). Voir également Leitz (2002a : 188) et surtout 189–191 et 195 avec de nombreuses attestations de la relation privilégiée du lexème *ḥ^c* au trône.

sionnée –un visage hr– au-dessus d’un repose tête wrš auquel cas on pourrait penser à la tête du sacrifié égorgé qui aurait été ainsi conservée.³⁹

Pourtant à y regarder de plus près, surtout en comparaison du second registre de l’étiquette trouvée à Saqqâra, cette « tête » se décompose, de haut en bas, d’un signe à cinq branches et d’un socle dans lequel sont plantés ou posés deux longs couteaux. Tandis que l’étoile peut être utilisée pour transcrire les mots dwj(w) –le Matin– / dwj –louer– / dwj(.t) –louange–⁴⁰, les deux couteaux associés au billot sont à même de suggérer un faux duel nm.ty pour transcrire la nisbe nm.tj –le bourreau– construite sur le lexème nm.t –billot–. L’ensemble pourrait être lu –Louange au bourreau / Loué soit le bourreau–.

À la droite de la hw.t, on observe deux constructions très particulières et l’indication d’un site urbain. La première est une structure en forme de tente zh ou wrm.t abritant un groupe de hiéroglyphes que l’on pourrait interpréter à première vue comme le bilitère nb suivi de la terminaison féminine t induisant les lectures nb.t –la Maîtresse– ou nb.ty –les Deux Maîtresses–. Mais à y regarder de plus près, il s’agit en fait d’un couteau en silex planté ou posé sur un billot mal gravé qui pourrait être facilement pris pour une terminaison féminine -t. On serait ainsi en fait en présence de la –Tente au couteau d’offrande, de la Tente du Billot–.⁴¹

Lui faisant face à droite, une construction particulière enferme une couronne rouge qui rappelle un type d’édifice attesté dans les Textes des Pyramides où il est nommé hw.t šnj.t –Le Complexe de l’Enclos– et mis en rapport avec la déesse Nout, déesse du ciel, à Héliopolis.⁴² La couronne rouge pouvant être lue entre autres dšr.t –la Rouge– pourrait aussi suggérer un –Enclos Rouge–, c’est-à-dire celui des victimes destinées au sacrifice inhumées sur le pourtour de l’enceinte funéraire, dont on voit sur quelques étiquettes commémoratives qu’elles étaient marquées, scarifiées⁴³.

Entre ces constructions, on observe le signe de la ville qui pourrait à lui seul représenter la Ville, c’est-à-dire Abydos, mais son association avec les deux unilitères p et d qui se trouvent au-dessus de la Tente du Couteau d’offrande invite à y reconnaître un toponyme qui n’est pas celui de la ville de Bouto dans le Delta.⁴⁴ Dans ce contexte sacrificiel, on

39 On ne manquera pas de noter au passage que de tous ses membres dispersés c’est la tête d’Osiris qui était conservée et vénérée à Abydos.

40 Le choix du verbe dwj au lieu du verbe jš(w) pour transcrire le sens de –louer, honorer– n’étant probablement pas anodin dans ce contexte sacrificiel et sacré, il n’est pas impossible que l’astre stellaire nous indique en même temps l’heure matinale du sacrifice dans l’enceinte, avant le lever du soleil.

41 Needler (1956 : 41–44) et pl. III avec la mention pr ntr hrw dr –Maison du dieu (sanctuaire, chapelle) de l’Horus Djer– gravée sur le manche feuilleté d’or d’un long couteau d’offrande.

42 PT 7, § 5a. Voir aussi Allen (2005 : 67 T4), PT 601 : P 582, M 226 et N 360.

43 Petrie (1901 : pl. III, fig. 6) et Emery (1938 : 35–39, pl. 17–18 A). Prises pour des attestations de sacrifices humains, elles sont en fait probablement des références au marquage des victimes humaines destinées à être sacrifiées. Torse nu bombé, mains liées dans le dos, l’officiant leur incise d’une main une marque dans la chair tandis que de l’autre, il tient un récipient pour recueillir le sang afin qu’il ne souille pas le sol sacré.

44 La ville de Pé fondée par l’Horus Djer qui y installa une résidence palatiale est représentée à ces époques anciennes uniquement par l’unilitère p suivi du déterminatif du centre urbain et non par le

connaît le lexème *pd* / *pd* avec le sens –affûter un couteau–⁴⁵ qui pourrait de fait indiquer un lieu en rapport avec les préparatifs du sacrifice de la victime expiatoire et des sacrifices humains l’accompagnant.

L’inscription de ce IIe registre pourrait donc être partiellement lue:

pd njw.t šnj.t dšr.t zh nm.t mnj qrs.w(t) sd (w)dn(.t) ms dw³ nm.tj ḥ^c(w) hr rwd / hndw
 Le lieu de l’affûtage: l’enclos rouge et la tente du couteau de l’offrande. Faire passer de vie à trépas ceux des tombes. Le dieu chien *Sed*. –Fête de Celui qui est offert / de l’offrande–. Loué soit le bourreau, celui qui se tient sur l’escalier / sur le trône.

III^e registre:

Sa lecture se fait de droite à gauche. Une structure ovale pourvue d’excroissances arrondies sur son pourtour indique une place fortifiée dont le nom inscrit à l’intérieur est transcrit par un oiseau échassier au long bec dont les nombreuses possibilités de lecture ne peuvent déterminer sûrement ce toponyme.

À la suite de ce lieu fortifié, se trouve une structure monumentale naviforme qui est figurée sur une voie d’eau, un canal. Sans mât, ni voile, ni rames, cette structure en forme d’Arche de Noé montre à l’intérieur un aménagement de constructions telles qu’un imposant édicule en forme de chapelle et d’un autre plus modeste jouxtant ce bâtiment religieux ce qui en fait une curiosité. Mieux encore, on y observe à l’avant le signe de la houe comme on peut aussi le voir sur de semblables structures naviformes sur des étiquettes en ivoire de l’*Horus Áha*, du père de l’*Horus Djer*⁴⁶. Une lecture *mr(w)* ou *mr(.t)* pourrait ainsi être suggérée pour ces grosses embarcations.

Le rapport entre lieu fortifié et structure naviforme dans ce troisième registre ne peut être fortuit et anime à penser que l’un et l’autre pourraient avoir désigné la place forte d’où fut envoyé le navire chargé de l’équipement et de l’approvisionnement funéraire. Ce qui est confirmé par la suite de l’inscription qui peut être lue – *jt šm^cj mḥw dj(.t) nb.(wt) rhjt* – du blé de Haute et de Basse Égypte et tout ce qui est à donner au *Rekhit*–.

Après le trépas de la victime sacrificielle en place du roi, la maison royale avait à organiser ses funérailles et l’approvisionnement de sa tombe avec les meilleurs produits de toute l’Égypte et un mobilier funéraire des plus riches.

Une grande partie de l’inscription de ce IIIe registre pourrait donc être lue:

...mr(w) / mr.t jt šm^cj mḥw dj(.t) nb.(wt) rhjt

De...un navire Merou/Meret (chargé) du blé de Haute et de Basse Égypte et (de) tout ce qui est à donner au *Rekhit*

groupe *p* et *dp* qui n’apparaît que bien plus tard à l’Ancien Empire. Pour les premières attestations de *dp* au milieu de la IIe dynastie, voir Kaplony (1992 : 23–30) où cette dénomination se retrouve aussi dans l’onomastique locale consignée sur les scellés trouvés dans le complexe palatial à Tell el-Faraïn (Bouto) dans le Delta.

45 WB I, 568 14–15.

46 Petrie (1901: pl. IIIA, fig. 5).

IV^e registre:

L'inscription est orientée de la droite vers la gauche et débute classiquement par le protome du lion. Lu ḥ3.t –le meilleur de–, il introduit une qualité exclusive de produits.

Les signes du lasso *t*, d'un faucon *ḥrw* et d'un trône *s.t*. qui le suivent pourraient avoir représenté un anagramme en relation avec la titulature de l'héritier royal. En effet, l'ensemble pourrait être lu *-jt(w) s.t ḥrw* –Celui qui saisit le trône d'Horus– et donc désigner le successeur au trône. S'ensuit une succession de produits de qualité tels que la plante *snw* accompagnée de l'unilèbre *s* comme complément phonétique initial. Une partie de l'inscription de ce IV^e registre pourrait être lue:

Ḥ3.t jt(w) s.t ḥrw snw šmꜥj mḥw nw Ḥrw Jnw I

Le meilleur de Celui qui saisit le trône d'Horus: plante *senou*, ce qui appartient de Haute et de Basse Égypte à l'Horus et un pot de produit sucré *Inou*⁴⁷.

Étiquette de l'*Horus Djer*, Saqqâra.

Une autre étiquette en ivoire recueillie dans une tombe de la Ire dynastie (Mastaba S 2171) datée de l'*Horus Djer* à Saqqâra permet de mieux encore préciser certains éléments contenus dans l'étiquette d'Abydos.

De facture moins soignée que la précédente, l'étiquette de Saqqâra n'en demeure pas moins un véritable duplicata de celle d'Abydos, affichant la même contemporanéité, le même nombre de registres et traitant de la même sémantique.

Le premier registre de l'étiquette de Saqqâra est en tout point comparable à celui de l'étiquette d'Abydos. Il montre d'une part le *serekh* de l'*Horus Djer* suivi du nom d'une personne *Mn* l'accompagnant et de l'autre, lui faisant face, une indication précise sur la localisation d'une structure de type enceinte suivie de la représentation d'un toponyme particulier au contexte funéraire royal thinite, celui de la dite palmeraie de Bouto avec l'érection de monuments type mastabas ḥ3.t⁴⁸ implantés de part et d'autre d'un canal traversant un paysage arboré qui pourrait bien être une graphie caractéristique générique de la nécropole royale. Quant à la translittération de ce premier registre, elle reste inchangée:

ḥꜥ ḥrw dr Mn ʕd njwt r3 wr ḥw.t ḥnt(j) sqr wr

Visite de l'*Horus Djer* et du *Men* à la frange désertique de la Ville, à la Grande Entrée, au complexe de Celui qui préside à l'offrande du vénérable

Le second registre apporte des précisions graphiques importantes. Dans le sens de lecture de droite à gauche, on observe les deux mêmes structures, l'une en forme de tente et l'autre montrant une Couronne Rouge enfermée dans un *šnj.t* –enclos–. Seule l'inscription à l'intérieur de la tente diffère de celle du second registre de l'étiquette d'Abydos.

47 Pour ce produit, voir *WB I*, 94 si la lecture *jnw* sous forme de poisson s'avérait être pertinente.

48 *TP* § 572 e et §2009a – voir aussi Cervello Autuori (2006: 1–20). Pour la palmeraie de Bouto, voir Settgast (1963 : 69) et F. Servajean (1999 : 228, fig. 1 et 231).

En effet, au lieu du couteau posé ou planté sur ou dans le billot *nm.t* les deux signes hiéroglyphiques montrent sur le modèle de Saqqâra un signe mal gravé qui pourrait suggérer à première vue l'unilittère *p* suivi de la terminaison féminine *t*. Mais à y regarder de plus près, le signe *p* se révèle être en fait un petit rectangle vertical traversé par un signe indéterminé mais que les parallèles permettent d'identifier avec un couteau. En d'autres termes, cette tente pourrait s'être nommée –Tente de l'Abattoir, du Billot–, voire –Tente du Bourreau–, la terminaison *t* pouvant tout à fait souligner un féminin *nm.t* ou une nisbe *nm.tj* –Celui du billot– formée sur ce féminin, montrant ainsi la même sémantique que dans l'étiquette d'Abydos.

Face à ces deux structures, le même grand rectangle se dresse, ceint d'un mur d'enceinte à redans comme l'indiquent les petits traits verticaux sur son pourtour. Sous les trois signes du harpon à deux barbelures indiquant le pluriel *qrs.wt* –funérailles, sépultures, tombes–, c'est-à-dire peut être une forme substantivée –Ceux destinés aux tombes–, l'on peut assez sûrement identifier un billot avec un couteau planté ou posé à la surface qui laisse augurer du sort réservé aux personnes ainsi nommées. Lu *nm.t* –billot, abattoir–, ce dernier n'était pas présent sur l'étiquette d'Abydos.

À la suite, le hiéroglyphe *ms* –fête– transcrit une festivité qui peut être mise en relation avec la représentation d'un canidé dont le nom est complété par le hiéroglyphe de la main *d* placé au-dessus. Une complémentarité phonétique qui permet d'identifier le dieu canin *Sed*. Il s'agirait alors d'une cérémonie funéraire ayant un rapport avec le dieu chien ou chacal *Sed* dont l'épithète de *hntj wsh.t* –Celui qui préside à la Grande Cour– à l'Ancien Empire rappelle on ne peut mieux sa présence sur nos deux étiquettes dans cette grande enceinte.⁴⁹

Comme dans l'étiquette d'Abydos, l'objet de cette cérémonie y est amplement précisé. Il s'agit d'une forme humaine dont le corps est enveloppé dans un long manteau. Bras, mains et pieds ne sont pas visibles. Agenouillée, la tête, une barbichette au menton, est découverte. Aucun nom n'accompagne cette personne. Dans cette posture que seuls les prisonniers en attente de leur trépas prennent en général, une gerbe de sang gicle de sa partie frontale.

Au-dessus une tête de capridé que les parallèles connus permettent de lire *mʹ* –oryx⁵⁰ et le signe bilitère *dʹ* avec les sens de –mauvais, méchant⁵¹ ou de *dʹj.w* avec celui de –révolté, adversaire⁵² qualifient, invectivent la victime de ce sacrifice expiatoire.⁵³

Quant au reste des éléments représentés dans cette enceinte de la vallée, puisque c'est bien de ce type de complexe funéraire qu'il doit s'agir, il correspond en tout point avec

49 Voir à ce sujet Browarski (1984 : col. 779–780); Mariette (1889 : D19) et Begelsbacher-Fischer (1981: 236). – Notons aussi sa présence dans l'anthroponymie contemporaine dans le nom d'un chien: Nr. d'Inv. : E 21702, Louvre, Amélineau (1899 : pl. XXXVII) et Desroches Noblecourt et Vercoutter (1981 : 10, fig. 5).

50 Faulkner (1962 : 1000) et *TP* 437, § 806 c et Allen (2005: 106).

51 *WB V*, 518.

52 *WB V*, 517, 10–11 et 519, 1.

53 Dans ce cadre sacrificiel, on notera avec intérêt une forme *dʹd* + tête de bovidé avec la notion d'égorgier la bête d'offrande–, *WB V*, 527, 10.

ceux de l'étiquette d'Abydos: une grosse étoile à cinq branches placée au-dessus d'un bloc planté de deux long couteaux. Comme sur l'étiquette d'Abydos, le trône à trois escaliers est associé à un signe lu ^ch^c. Le deuxième registre pourrait donc se lire:

pd/pd njw.t šnj.t dšr.t zh/wrm.t nm.t nm.t qrs.wt ms sd m³ d³/d³d dw³ nm.tj ^ch^c hr rwdw
Lieu de l'Affûtage: l'Enclos rouge et la tente au billot / de celui du billot. L'abattoir de
ceux des tombes. La fête du dieu chacal Sed. L'oryx-la victime, le méchant/ l'offrande
à égorger. Loué soit le bourreau, celui qui se tient sur le trône—.

Le troisième registre, bien que très altéré, ne montre aucune différence notable avec celui de l'étiquette d'Abydos. Il peut donc être lu:

...mr(w) / mr.t jt šm^cj mhw dj(.t) nb.(wt) rhjt
De la place forte de....un navire Merou/Meret (chargé) du blé de Haute et de Basse
Égypte et (de) tout ce qui est à donner au Rekhit.

Le quatrième et dernier registre est aussi très altéré et ne peut donc qu'être partiellement étudié. Néanmoins, de petites variantes épigraphiques méritent d'être notées. L'une d'entre elles concerne l'anagramme : lasso-trône-faucon— constaté sur l'étiquette d'Abydos auquel a été ajouté un signe sous le signe du lasso qui suggère l'unilittère *n*.

S'il s'avérait pertinent, ce complément permettrait de reconnaître le mot *tnj* — remarquable— ou —Celui qui est remarquable—, en d'autres termes, l'anagramme cacherait une personne de rang élevé comme successeur au trône, le futur Horus, ce qui a été justement proposé pour l'étiquette d'Abydos. Situé au bas de l'étiquette, l'énoncé des produits est la partie qui a le plus souffert. On y reconnaît la plante *snw* ainsi que la quantité de 400 jarres d'huile *ht*⁵⁴ qui ne figurait pas sur la version abydénienne. Le reste est pratiquement illisible.

Une partie de ce registre pourrait ainsi être lue:

H³.t tn(w) s.t hrw snw ...400 ht ...
Le meilleur de Celui qui est remarqué au trône d'Horus: plante *senou* ... 400 jarres
d'huile *khet* ...

Reprenant la sémantique du troisième registre dans les deux étiquettes d'Abydos et de Saqqâra, c'est-à-dire celle de l'approvisionnement en vivres de qualité et de l'équipement de la tombe de la victime par l'administration royale, il est intéressant de noter que l'étiquette de Saqqâra fut trouvée avec une autre dans la même tombe S 2171H.⁵⁵

Cette étiquette en bois montre encore les traces d'une inscription à l'encre noire.⁵⁶ Le *serekh* de l'*Horus Djer* y est reconnaissable et est accompagné de deux signes hiéroglyphiques.

Derrière le nom d'Horus se trouve le signe qui, lu *h³*, signifie justement —derrière— ou —être derrière— ce qui permet de le substantiver dans cette inscription par —Celui qui est

⁵⁴ Meeks (1977 : 287 77.3188).

⁵⁵ Quibell (1923 : pl. I).

⁵⁶ Quibell (1923 : pl. XI, fig. 3).

derrière—, en l’occurrence de l’*Horus Djer*. Précédant le tout, le protome du lion, lu *ḥ3.t* avec le sens de —meilleur de, la meilleure qualité de— qualifie la qualité de l’approvisionnement attribué au défunt par l’administration royale auquel avait été attachée cette étiquette comme marque de livraison royale. L’inscription de cette étiquette peut donc être lue:

ḥ3.t ḥ3(w) ḥrw dr

Le meilleur pour —Celui qui est derrière— l’*Horus Djer*

L’épithète du défunt —Celui qui est derrière l’*Horus Djer*—, rappelle bien sûr invariablement la personne portant la dénomination de *mn* figurée derrière ce même souverain sur les deux étiquettes d’Abydos et de Saqqâra. À tel point que l’on peut se demander si cette personne et celle inhumée dans la petite tombe S 2171 H ne serait pas la même.

Cette réflexion est d’autant plus justifiée que sa tombe datée du règne de l’*Horus Djer* se trouvait dans la nécropole de la famille royale à Saqqâra ce qui augure déjà d’un privilège certain et que le duplicata de l’étiquette en ivoire retrouvée dans le complexe funéraire de l’*Horus Djer* à Abydos se trouvait dans cette même petite tombe S 2171 H. La personne inhumée était contemporaine de l’*Horus Djer* et décéda sous son règne.

Le fait d’y faire déposer un duplicata local de celle de l’étiquette d’Abydos avec la même sémantique —celle d’une personne choisie et sacrifiée au cours d’une grande cérémonie dans une grande enceinte— indique très certainement que le défunt inhumé dans la petite tombe S 2171H a été très probablement cette victime sacrifiée en place du souverain.

Les deux signes hiéroglyphiques du hibou, *m*, au-dessus de celui d’une petite vague d’eau, *n*, placés juste derrière le *serekh* de l’*Horus Djer* sur les deux étiquettes d’Abydos et de Saqqâra pourraient alors transcrire un nom *Mn(j)* ou exprimer l’anonymat d’une personne.

Dans le premier cas, même si l’onomastique connaît le nom de *Mn(j)*, on attendrait plutôt qu’il soit écrit avec le signe bilitère *mn* parfaitement attesté à cette époque, ce qui tend à orienter l’attention sur une dénomination de personne du type *mn* —Quelqu’un, un tel—⁵⁷ ou mieux encore *n(j) m(wt)* —celui qui appartient à la mort—, *m* pouvant tout à fait avoir la valeur de *m(w)t*, le *t* étant bien souvent omis dans l’épigraphie thinite.

Ces deux possibilités s’inséreraient parfaitement dans ce contexte particulier de sacrifice d’une victime expiatoire en place du roi pour lequel nul n’était besoin de nommer la victime puisqu’elle était sensée incarner le roi exécuté au cours de la cérémonie.

Dans le cadre de cette réflexion, on ne manquera pas de mentionner une stèle en pierre conservée au Musée de Bruxelles où ces deux hiéroglyphes — celui du hibou suivi de celui de la ligne d’eau — ont été gravés sans titre aucun et sans représentation humaine, et qui fut retrouvée parmi 16 autres par Petrie près du complexe funéraire haut de l’*Horus Djer* à Abydos.⁵⁸

En résumé, l’étude de deux étiquettes trouvées à Abydos et à Saqqarâ datant toutes deux de l’*Horus Djer*, c’est-à-dire de la toute première moitié de la Ire dynastie, véritables

⁵⁷ *WB II*, 64, 13 et 15.

⁵⁸ Petrie (1901 : pl. XXVII, fig. 107).

duplicata de l'une de l'autre, nous informe du même événement et d'une même cérémonie qui se déroulait dans une grande enceinte dans une partie de la nécropole royale à Abydos, à Oumm el-Qâab.

Là au milieu de festivités placées sous l'égide du dieu chien *Sed*, un homme se trouvait au centre de l'attention. Seul, tête dénudée, le corps enveloppé dans un long manteau, il attendait, agenouillé, le moment du trépas. Injurié des noms de « méchant », « mauvais », « ennemi », « offrande à égorger », une gerbe de sang giclant de son front, il était destiné à être sacrifié en place du roi qui l'avait sans doute été en de lointaines époques. Il était une sorte de victime expiatoire qui serait accompagnée de centaines de victimes – ceux des tombes subsidiaires autour de l'enceinte funéraire – dans sa mise à mort rituelle.

Personne choisie à cet effet, il aurait le droit à des funérailles d'ampleur que toute la maisonnée royale s'emploierait à organiser avec le faste qui lui seyait. Une tombe lui serait érigée dans la nécropole royale à Saqqâra⁵⁹, dotée d'un riche approvisionnement et équipement⁶⁰, non loin de celle de son maître tandis qu'une stèle lui serait dressée dans la nécropole royale d'Abydos pour honorer son *Ka* auprès de celui de son souverain.

Exécuté en place du souverain par le futur Horus, il resterait à jamais dans l'anonymat. Son seul signe d'identité pour la postérité serait désormais cette simple épitaphe sur sa stèle – Quelqu'un / Celui qui est destiné à la mort –. Elle témoignerait de son sacrifice pour le renouvellement des forces vitales de son maître qui avait été célébré dans un lieu consacré à cet effet. Disparaissant avec lui, une fois la cérémonie achevée, l'intemporalité des lieux serait à jamais consacrée et ferait de la Grande Entrée un espace redouté et sacré. Célébrée au cours de la fête du dieu chien *Sed*, cette fête pourrait donc bien avoir été à l'origine du *Heb Sed* que tout souverain de l'Égypte pharaonique depuis Oudou-in-Hor (anc. Lu Horus Den) du milieu de la Ire dynastie se ferait un devoir de célébrer au moins une fois au cours de son règne pour le bien être du Double Pays et le sempiternel renouvellement des forces du *Ka* royal.

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59 Quibell (1923 : pl. I et pl. XI, fig. 6–7 et 4). La tombe S. 2171 H fut découverte par Quibell sous un grand mastaba S. 2171 daté de la IIe dynastie. Située à env. 20m du mastaba S 2185 daté de l'*Horus Djer*, la fosse de cette petite tombe mesurait à peine 1,40 m sur 1,00 m.

60 Le défunt fut inhumé avec un faste certain comme en témoignent de petits objets en ivoire, une longue aiguille en or, un couvercle en bois avec système de fermeture, des pointes de flèches en ivoire, le couvercle d'un petit coffre en ivoire avec poignée, des fragments d'incrustation en ivoire, une belle série de vaisselle en pierre, les restes d'un jeu avec des billes en pierres précieuses et les pieds en ivoire en forme de pattes de taureau d'un siège ou d'un lit.

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Culturally Reflexive Aspects of Time and Space in New Kingdom Mythological Narratives

Martin Pehal¹

Abstract

This study shows the culturally reflexive properties of mythological narratives by describing the dynamism stemming from the simultaneous inclusion of various types of temporality and the specific usage of space. The basic premise is that any symbolical system/culture contains antithetical principles which are nevertheless held simultaneously—as in the case of ancient Egypt’s “positional succession” phenomenon. These cultural paradoxes are both a source of discomfort to the system (as they show its incongruence and thus contingency) and a source of alternative symbolical layout, and thus of great power (because they transcend the given social structures). Certain cultural phenomena, myth being one of them, facilitate both coping with these paradoxes and utilizing their transformative potential. To exemplify how exactly such a process occurs, I offer an analysis of the papyrus d’Orbiney, also known as the *Tale of Two Brothers*, subsequently identifying it as a “ring-composition.” Consequences of such an identification in relation to the reflexive quality of mythological narratives are then discussed.

1 Introduction

Even though it is always tricky, claiming that there are certain anthropological invariables to humans as a species, we can safely say that human life is conditioned by the fact that we are spatially and temporally limited beings (that is, we have similar bodies and we die). This is reflected in the way individuals and therefore societies shape their experience around certain experiential fields. As framed by Clifford Geertz, cultures consist of “socially established structures of meaning” embodied in systems of symbols creating

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“webs of significance.”² According to such a theory of culture, personal experience is socially constructed.³ Human groups/cultures therefore tend to conceptualize reproduction (kinship system); groups hold an attitude towards their surroundings (ecological focus); mechanisms for the division of power (political focus) and wealth (economic focus); groups conceptualize the issue of limits (the category of the “other”); and they have an attitude towards death (eschatology), etc. Given the fact that societies are so complex, it is inevitable that certain of these patterns will necessarily collide; as a consequence, the society is faced with unsolvable paradoxes. This “paradox potential” then finds its actualization in individualized and situational examples in which two principles may be valid while their natures simultaneously conflict:

The fact is that any kind of coherent, organized social life would be impossible without the assumption that certain values and norms, imperatives and prohibitions, are axiomatic in character, ultimately binding on everyone. However, for many reasons, the axiomatic quality of these norms is difficult to maintain in practice, since in the endless variety of real situations, norms considered equally valid in abstraction are frequently found to be inconsistent with one another, and even mutually to conflict.⁴

To illustrate this position, I would single out a crucial paradox inherent to our own culture: freedom. Every democratic system stands and falls on the basis of its upholding freedom of its constitutive units, namely individuals. Every democracy thus devises a system of rules, the main aim of which is to safeguard this freedom. That said, the axiom, “Your right to swing your arms ends just where the other man’s nose begins”⁵ speaks to the fact that a democracy cannot function without various types of repressive elements (police, army, judicial system) whose ultimate aim it should be to uphold individual freedom by—paradoxically—suppressing it. Or, at the very least, modulating it, which in turn gives rise to the incessant need for calibrating the correct balance between individual and collective freedoms that form the core of many of our own cultural paradoxes. In a similar vein, we may detect more or less culturally-constitutive paradoxes within every symbolic system, including that of ancient Egypt. The main aim of this essay is to show how these paradoxes are reflected through that culture’s myths.

2 Positional Succession: Crucial Cultural Paradox of ancient Egypt

Cultural paradoxes are often present, albeit admittedly latent, so that, while both poles simultaneously govern the social interaction patterns, they are often not visible—insiders are not consciously aware of them, partly because the paradoxes arise once various experiential fields, which may be conceptualized apart, are for some reason related. An

² Geertz (1977: 3–30).

³ See for example Berger & Luckmann (1990).

⁴ Turner (1967: 39–40).

⁵ According to Shapiro, ed. (2006: 141) this is a quote of an anonymous judge recorded by Z. Chafee, Jr. and published in an article in the *Harvard Law Review* in June 1919.

ancient Egyptian example of such a highly conflicting moment of cosmic dimensions was the death, or rather the ascension, of the pharaoh.

The ancient Egyptian kingship system was a patrilineal system in which the office of king belonged to the oldest son of the ruling king. The system is well documented, thanks to the contemporaneous custom of creating kings' lists which mapped the line of male predecessors (disregarding any possible female rulers) and thus tied it directly to mythical times.⁶ However, as history proved again and again, implementing such a pattern of royal succession in ancient Egypt was fraught with serious legitimacy issues.⁷ Various factions and contenders lay claim to the office, be they members of the royal household or complete foreigners. Yet, in the end, upon becoming pharaoh—and regardless of their background—the given individual would claim to be a legitimate successor of the previous rulers.⁸ “Positional succession/kingship” is what made such a claim possible.

Although a highly complex phenomenon, “positional succession” basically concerns the practice of an individual, upon succession, adopting the name, role and status of the predecessor; (s)he is then addressed in the kinship terms which defined the social position of the predecessor. The term itself seems to have been coined by A. I. Richards in his 1934 article and has been applied ever since to social phenomena observed especially by anthropologists working in central Africa during the last hundred years.⁹ And, while it is

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- 6 See for example Wilkinson (2000). See also Assmann's thoughts on the father-son constellation, in which he considers the son to be an embodiment of his father, who lives on through his progeny (Assmann 1976: 46–49).
 - 7 A. Dodson (2010) speaks of major shifts in the concept of the royal family, which occurred in the New Kingdom especially under the Ramessides, a period especially relevant to the narrative compositions analysed further in this text: “[...] by the end of the reign of Rameses II there was a concept of royalty that extended beyond the conventional couple of the king and queen. There now existed a large group of individuals who were publicly “royal” and belonged to more than one lineage, two of which had nominally the same seniority.” (p. 9) “[...] the existence of more than one Great Wife would seem to have held the potential for dispute as to which “Eldest Son” should be nominated as crown prince.” (p. 8). For a reconstruction of the complicated succession situation surrounding the death of Ramesses II, including the ascension of Sety II, during whose reign the existing copy of the *Two Brothers* was composed, see Gilmour and Kitchen (2012: 1–21).
 - 8 Chimko (2003) analyses the self-presentation of pharaohs of non-Egyptian origin and the indigenous Egyptian reaction. The dynamics were twofold. Foreigners were recognized as legitimate rulers so long as they acted as pharaohs; subsequently, however, there were tendencies to exclude them from official records, accompanied by a period of cultural revival that defined the previous period in negative terms.
 - 9 Ian Cunnison (1959) uses the name “perpetual kinship.” Most of the studies devoted to this phenomenon center on peoples located in Central Africa (today's Angola, southern Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique, and southern Tanzania) and especially those belonging to the Bantu language family; Richards (1960) described the positional succession phenomenon among the Bemba tribes (today's Zambia), Mitchell (1956) among the Yao (southern end of Lake Malawi in today's Malawi and Mozambique), Cunnison (1956) among the Luapula (Zambia), and Watson (1959) among the Mambwe (north-eastern Zambia and Tanzania). Bay (1998) observed this custom to be standard especially in relation to the royal family among the Dahomey in today's Benin. Greene (1998) focused on specific positional woman-marriage among the Con people of Being and Igbo of Nigeria. We may however also note examples from outside

problematic to deduce any type of relationship across half a continent and from evidence approximately 3500 years apart, in anthropology this is not a completely illegitimate strategy,¹⁰ especially as the ancient Egyptians in fact formulated a theological concept of the self-begetting god—„Bull-of-his-mother“ (*kʾ mw.t=f*)—which was shrouded in religious terms and which describes a god/king of unquestionable legitimacy inverting the succession of generations.¹¹

As a legitimizing mechanism, positional succession ensured that, whatever the biological relationship of the ruling king to his predecessor, he—or she for that matter—could claim continuity with the royal line. The question, for our purposes is, what paradox did this practice entail? Once a new king was enthroned, whatever relationships were considered valid before ascension—or their lack thereof—had to be radically rearranged to work in harmony with the newly acquired social position of the ruler. So, for instance, the biological kinship matrix was overlaid by the positional cultural kinship matrix.¹² The individual on the throne was thus identified with the preceding pharaoh, ideally his own father. Socially, his father’s brothers and his own half-brothers then became his sons, etc., alongside his biological sons, whom he fathered. In this way, a latent but undeniable tension was created between the biological and the social order. This tension seems to have been bearable so long as the ruling pharaoh functioned as the defining axis of these

Africa. Urton (1990) identified the phenomenon within the Incan society, and Lebra (1993) in modern Japan.

10 See for example Wendrich (2018).

11 See conveniently Traunecker (2001), with further references; Pehal (2014: 125 n. 379; 129 n. 384; 155). Haeny (1986) suggested that the phrase should be understood differently within the context of the inscriptions at Medinet Habu (the term referring rather to the deity than the king himself, i.e., “[Min is] the bull of his [the king’s] mother”). However, the idea of a mutual relationship of identity between father and son is an essential notion of ancient Egyptian funerary concepts. Haeny’s interesting suggestion therefore adds yet another level of meaning, rather than invalidating the concept of the self-begetting being. I thank J. F. Quack for pointing out this article to me.

12 It is important to note that concepts of kinship based on genetic relationships have been heavily criticized especially by the “new kinship studies” (see the works of Janet Carsten, especially Carsten 2000 and 2004). For an overview and appreciation of the relevant literature, see Olabarria (2018). This approach favors a more contextual and fluid understanding of “relatedness,” relying “on alternative parameters such as personhood, gender, and substance, which allow for an understanding of kinship as a performative process” (Olabarria 2018: 88). Needless to say, the interpretation advocated for in this essay ends with conclusions which are in line with the performative approach: namely that—in reality—relatedness is defined by *enacting* the role of the king, rather than through blood ties. In fact, the whole tale repeatedly refers to performance as the key means of defining relatedness: Anubis is to Bata as a father to a son based on their roles within the household; Bata is to Anubis as a father to a son based on the cultural act of adoption; Bata’s revivification process includes an embrace—a means through which the *ka*/vital energy was channeled between the father and his son (more on the *ka* as the “substance” of relatedness, see Olabarria 2018). At the same time, however, blood ties are marked as an equally relevant principle—Bata’s wife becomes his own mother only after being impregnated by Bata, who is then born to her as her biological son. This is why my analysis considers *also* genetic relationships as a key factor of the monarchical ascension and the interaction of the two ascension models (genetic and cultural) as the main generator of the narrative dynamics.

two systems. At the moment of his death, theoretically at least, two contenders for the throne then arose. The pharaoh's oldest son would have been the legitimate ruler from the biological point of view. From the social point of view, however, the pharaoh's oldest son would have been redefined as the pharaoh's oldest brother.¹³ This central conflict was repeatedly expressed throughout ancient Egyptian history, most explicitly in the Horus and Seth conflict.

Ancient Egyptians conceptualized the notions connected with their royal succession system in a range of ways, among them the mythological complex focusing on the Osiris-Seth-Horus constellation.¹⁴ The succession issue arose once Osiris, the rightful king and ruler of Egypt, died (either a natural death, or was murdered). Two contenders for the throne arose, Horus and Seth. As the papyrus Chester Beatty I, also known as the *Contendings of Horus and Seth*, attests, their claim actually divided the supreme body of gods, the Ennead. Isis herself is several times split between the two—even though she is firmly on Horus's side, there are moments when she acknowledges that the importance of her kinship relations to both parties is equally relevant. Both Horus and Seth contended with each other, both were found to be unfit to rule for one reason or another, and both were in the end elevated to prominent positions: Horus becoming king and Seth occupying a prominent position next to the god-ruler, Pre, in his bark. To extrapolate from this example then, we could say that the clash does not concern two figures or parties battling for the throne so much as it concerns the conflict between the biological and the positional kinship systems. Again, not that these are mutually exclusive. They are not; both contenders are equally legitimate.¹⁵

Moreover, this motif is crucial—its position stressed by the fact that it appears as a constellation in texts which do not explicitly mention these divine actors. I will illustrate this with one specific ancient Egyptian mythological narrative, papyrus d'Orbiney (pBM

13 See also Pehal (2014: 206–208).

14 Before the appearance of the most extensive narrative version of events by two Greeks, Diodorus (Book I, ch. 21–22; Diodorus [1961: 65–71]; for references, see Richter 2001) and Plutarch (see conveniently Griffiths 1960), we find many allusions to various episodes or events of the myth in older and genuinely Egyptian sources such as the Pyramid Texts, Coffin Texts, Book of the Dead, etc. The most extensive Egyptian narrative account is to be found on the stela of Amenmose (Louvre C 286) dating to the 18th Dynasty (published by Moret 1931). For a translation, see, for example, Lichtheim (1973: 81–86). See also a “biography” of Osiris, a composite derived from various Egyptian sources, in Smith (2017: 5–7).

15 The anthropologist Edmund Leach, an outsider to Egyptology, was the first to have identified the positional succession principle at work in ancient Egypt in an article dated 1976 in which he suggested that the conflictual relationship between Horus and Seth could, in fact, have been socially sanctioned. Unsurprisingly, his article remained largely ignored by Egyptology, save a laudatory but brief recognition in the very same volume by Baines (1976) and one critical remark by Egberts (1984), who dismissed “any speculations regarding some sort of special relationship between a person and his maternal uncle [...] since they are only based on a faulty interpretation of the term *sn n mwt* employed in the *Contendings*.” As interesting as Egberts's article is with regard to kinship terminology, it is Leach who takes into consideration more arguments, and his interpretation does not stand and fall with this one issue.

10183), also known as the *Tale of Two Brothers*, the analysis of which informs the second part of this article.¹⁶

The well-known story centers around two brothers, Bata (younger) and Anubis (older). The initial peaceful bucolic setting in which the tale begins is disrupted by Anubis's wife, when she turns lustful towards Bata. After being rejected, she persuades Anubis to kill Bata, who, not surprisingly, decides to flee the scene. After the intervention of Pre-Harakhty, Bata is confronted at the edge of civilization, where he simultaneously cuts off his genitalia, and leaves for the Valley of the Pine. Once there, Bata places his heart atop a cedar tree, while Anubis returns home and brutally punishes his wife. Meanwhile, Bata manages to establish a household and even obtain a wife of divine birth from the Egyptian gods. However, her divine nature also makes her attractive to the pharaoh, who strives for her as well. After he succeeds, Bata's wife instructs the pharaoh to cut down the tree that holds Bata's heart, an act that results in Bata's death. After Anubis learns of this event through certain signs, he sets off for the Valley and for three-plus years he searches for his brother's heart. On finally finding the heart, Anubis succeeds in seeing Bata resurrected by letting him drink his heart. Before returning to Egypt, Bata assumes the form of a bull, then, once in Egypt, he assumes the form of two persea trees, only to be finally reborn as his own son by impregnating his former wife. In fact, it is his wife who facilitates each of the transformations by persuading the pharaoh to kill the bull and to fell the persea trees. After being reborn through the queen/his former wife, Bata becomes the pharaoh's heir, and upon becoming king he appoints his brother Anubis as his successor.

What is fascinating about this story, among other things, is the contrast between the initial and the final situation:

- 1) Anubis is to Bata as a father to a son¹⁷
- 2) Bata is to Anubis as a father to a son¹⁸

To reframe this, Anubis is—and is not—Bata's father, and *vice versa*; both are equally legitimate successors to the throne.

Presented as such, we are confronted with a paradox that stems from the positional succession system described above. It is my contention, though, that the narrative as a whole introduces internal mechanisms that make the inversion seem perfectly plausible (see analysis below). As a result, the story allows listeners to reflexively acknowledge a paradox that is central to the entire symbolical system. I argue that the means for such reflection are the various temporal patterns within the narrative, coupled with a specific

16 See also Pehal (2014), where I develop a coherent analysis of the whole composition and relate it to other New Kingdom mythological narratives. The latest comprehensive study on the topic is Castro (2015).

17 Both are brothers of the same father and mother, living in one household. Anubis is the older brother; however, the story explicitly states that their relationship, economically, was that of a father (Anubis) to a son (Bata).

18 Once becoming pharaoh, Bata adopts Anubis as his heir and successor (*iry-p^c.t*). The kinship relationship is even more complicated as Bata begets himself in the womb of his former wife, who then becomes his mother.

usage of space (simultaneous conceptualization and dissolution of the basic dichotomy Egypt × outside).

3 Temporal Patterns in the *Tale of Two Brothers*

Elsewhere, I have applied an episodic system to the structure of the *Two Brothers* that identifies its basic units and their interrelations.¹⁹ Fig. 1 represents a graphic model of these episodes (capital letters), which vary in length but that generally delimit a certain logical unit of the narrative. In Episode A, the narrative describes the breach of an idealistic relationship between two of the three main protagonists, Bata and Anubis's wife. In Episode B, we witness the reversal of the positive relationship between Bata and Anubis. Episode C then presents a temporary albeit unsatisfactory solution by isolating both brothers in two ontologically different zones (Anubis stays in Egypt and Bata travels to the Valley of the Pine) and enabling Anubis to rid himself of the cause of discord—the woman—by feeding her to the dogs. All of these individual episodes (A–O) are then grouped into larger units, the so-called Episode Clusters, in which they function in a Hegelian tripartite pattern of thesis, antithesis and synthesis (as is apparent in the example of Episodes A–C). These Episode Clusters are then interspersed with Initial Episodes (I–III), which shift the focus of the narrative from one experiential field to another. Thus, Episode Cluster 1 (A–C) focuses on violation of kinship and social rules; Episode Cluster 2 (D–F) establishes contact between inside and outside; Episode Clusters 3a–c (G–I, J–L, M–O) describe interaction between different levels of order and between generations (once Bata returns to Egypt). Fig. 1 further shows that the episodes from individual Clusters are not only interrelated by their inner tripartite dynamic but also that they represent structural variants of each other:

thesis

Episode A: Bata is sexually assaulted by a woman (Anubis's wife).

Episode D: Bata is physically assaulted by a man (pharaoh's envoys).

anti-thesis

Episode B: Bata is unsuccessfully assaulted by a man through the doings of a woman (Anubis's wife persuades her husband to kill Bata, which he fails to do).

Episode E: Bata is successfully assaulted by a man through the doings of a woman (Bata's former wife/sister persuades her husband, the pharaoh, to kill Bata, which he manages to do).

synthesis

Episode C: The aftermath of Episode A and B is Bata's castration and the displacement of his heart (elimination of Bata's virility); feminine principle (Anubis's wife) destroyed.

Episode F: The aftermath of Episode D and E is Bata's death (pine felled); feminine principle (pharaoh's wife) lives on.

¹⁹ Pehal (2014).

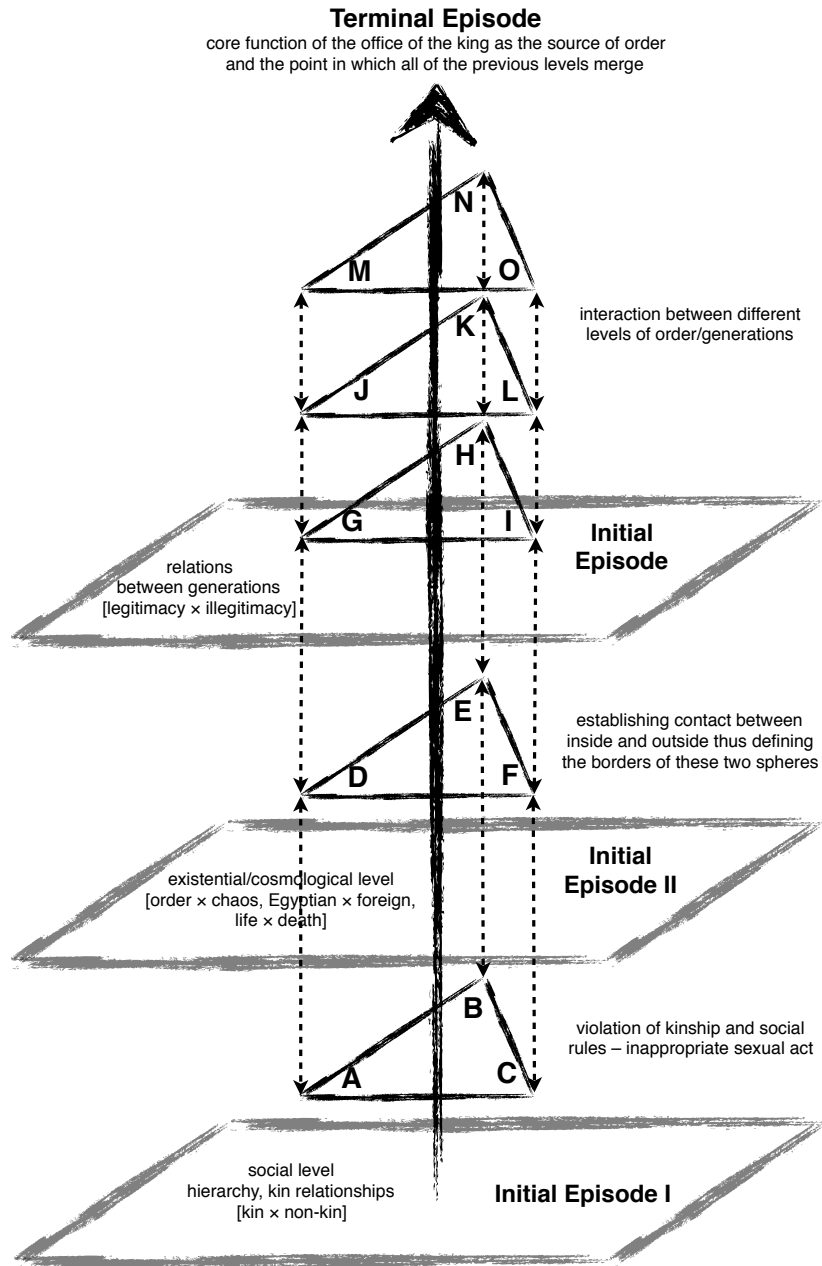


Figure 1

A similar pattern is discernible in relations between other Episode Clusters as well. In these examples, we can see that the text interrelates the whole composition on several levels outside its basic linear narrative sequence. Even though each of the Episode Clusters focuses on different experiential fields, these fields are shown to be intrinsically interconnected by a similar narrative dynamic, i.e., by a repetitive pattern. In other words, what the narrative is saying is that violation of kinship relations through inappropriate sexual acts has a direct link to the categories of “inside” and “outside” or the “other,” and that this directly correlates to the interaction between different levels of order, also represented by the generations. We therefore see a merger of these seemingly disparate experiential fields through the medium of narrative.

However, this does not exhaust the temporally configurational variety of the *Two Brothers*. The whole composition has, as well, a concentric structure: the very beginning of the story is directly linked to the end, being its own inversion in the form of Initial Episode I and Terminal Episode (see fig. 2). This dynamic is also true for the other Episode Clusters. Thus Episode Cluster 1 is directly inverse to the last Episode Cluster 3c, and the individual Episodes are also in direct relationship to either similarity or inversion within the categories of thesis(●)-antithesis(○)-synthesis(⊙). What this suggests is that we should try to read the narrative much as its listeners took it in: in several temporal directions at the same time (sequentially—Episodes A–O; concentrically—Initial Episode 1–Terminal Episode, Episode Cluster 1 and 3c; transversally—within the theses, antitheses, syntheses groups). In this way, we may grasp the narrative’s full meaning regarding its effectively making a statement on the crucial paradox of the positional succession pattern expressed in the antithetical beginning and end of the story. The narrative, shall we say, is biting its own tail; only by knowing the end can we fully understand the meaning of the beginning, and *vice versa*.

What is achieved by all of this? Obviously, circularity does not solve the issue of paradox. What it does do is perform an elegant trick. The *Two Brothers* narrative skillfully manipulates the system of kinship relationships on both the biological and social level in such a way that in the end both Bata, ostensibly, the biological son of the pharaoh (having been self-begotten rather than fathered by the pharaoh himself), and Anubis, Bata’s biological older brother, succeed in becoming kings. The overarching theme of the whole composition is the issue of legitimacy, which is notably not “solved” by one or the other parties gaining advantage over the other. In fact, the myth could well have been used by rival political parties to legitimize their claim to power:

A: “See, the son becomes the pharaoh, it’s in the text.”

B: “See, the older brother becomes the pharaoh, it’s in the text.”

Indeed, I would go further and claim that even if a certain composition were composed with a clear-cut political agenda (such as to legitimize a claim of a certain individual), the material would, on an unconscious level, transcend this private personal motivation, as the author is simply not capable of excising the paradoxes embedded in the succession mechanism. Once one of the parties becomes the pharaoh, the socially ascribed net of relationships takes precedence over the biological pattern, and strife, or griping, becomes

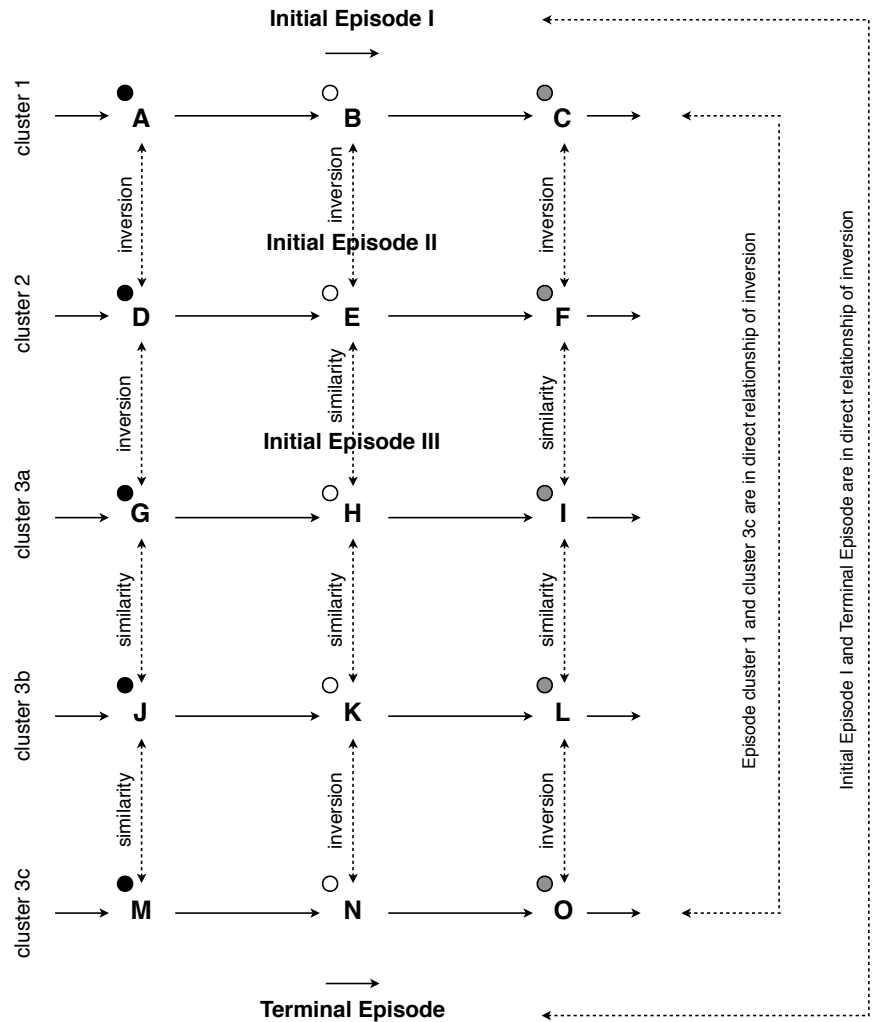


Figure 2

irrelevant. The contenders (biological and social kinship systems) are effectively pacified through the office of positional kingship.²⁰

²⁰ An existence of two parallel but opposing ascension principles was proposed by Verhoeven (1996: 361–363). A similar idea was developed by Campagno (2006) (and many other of his texts), who speaks of “two logics of social organization”—one based solely on kinship relations and the other encompassing all other modes of interaction not regulated by kinship terms mainly directed from the state-elite to the rest of the population.

4 Constructive Dynamism of Cultural Paradoxes

Being at the heart of the social order, such paradoxes are also a source of anxiety to the system for the obvious reason that incongruency does not mesh with the idealized cultural self-image of coherence. If anything, it indicates the haphazard character of a system that actually enables the coexistence of two opposing yet equally binding principles. And, of course, haphazard is in many ways synonymous with being chaotic.

At this point we have reached another—constructive—aspect of cultural paradoxes. Having the capacity not only to uphold and maintain inherently ambiguous concepts but also to found the dynamics of order on their relationship, the ancient Egyptian system also explored the possibility of incorporating various modes of “otherness,” disorderly elements within order. Egyptians were well aware that even though disorder threatens order, it is disorder from which order draws its true potency. Both principles are dependent on each other:

Granted that disorder spoils pattern, it also provides the material of pattern. Order implies restriction; from all possible materials, a limited selection has been made and from all possible relations a limited set has been used. So disorder by implication is unlimited, no pattern has been realised in it, but its potential for patterning is indefinite. This is why, though we seek to condemn disorder, we do not simply condemn disorder. We recognise that it is destructive to existing patterns; also that it has potentiality. It symbolises both danger and power.²¹

Every cultural system can thus be viewed as a conglomerate of more or less haphazardly selected possibilities from the plethora of possible arrangements a certain society could have used, regardless of the fact that there are ecological and historical circumstances that make certain choices more or less (im)probable. At the same time, cultures tend to present this random choice as ancient or eternal, that is, established at the beginning of time.²² This fact—a seeming coherence of any given cultural system with its set of values and norms on the one hand and the simultaneous fact that this very combination is haphazard in essence—once again represents a paradox.

Cultures cannot *solve* these paradoxes. To do so they would have to *dissolve* themselves to recalibrate the relationships. Systems therefore include mechanisms—such as the positional succession system—which try to negotiate among the extreme principles. One of the main reasons for the existence of these mechanisms is the avoidance of conflict which could have a disintegrative effect on the social body. Such is the view, for example, of Lévi-Strauss and structuralists in general, who argue that mythology and other cultural phenomena present ways of distracting the system and individuals alike from realizing the inevitable frustrating character of cultural paradox.

²¹ Douglas (2002: 117).

²² This was most prominently promoted by Mircea Eliade throughout his work; see Eliade (1954). Regardless of whether or not we agree with his approach, it is an especially relevant argument in the case of ancient Egypt and its archaising tendencies.

It strikes me, however, that viewing these phenomena merely as restrictive or distracting mechanisms is short-sighted. In ancient Egypt, especially, the possibility of confronting structurally opposing principles was a means of regenerating the system as a whole. Thus the god Re confronts his arch-enemy, the giant snake Apophis, every night on his journey through the Netherworld. In a similar manner, Re merges with Osiris in the middle of night, as depicted for example in the tomb of Nefertari (Queen Valley 66, Thebes).²³ Both of these events are integral to the sun god's regenerative process—and so to life itself.

By creating mediating mechanisms between opposing positions, mythological narratives function as an example of the sophisticated cultural mechanisms that systems develop to reflect on the paradoxes that in essence form their core. By glimpsing the haphazard/chaotic aspect within a mythologically/ritually regulated context, the system comes into contact with the richness and plurality of potential forms—a characteristic of the disorderly as the zone in which all forms collapse into an undifferentiated pool (of dark waters, i.e., Nun). It is throughout this reflexive process that the various ontological experiential fields (sexuality, ecology, cosmology, physiology, etc.) are related, and the contemporary social set-up may even be altered and adapted, claiming—at the same time—that every change has been there since time immemorial.

5 “Refrigerating” Qualities of Mythological Narrative Ring-structures

As discussed, the tendency of certain symbolic systems to present any type of change as congruent with things at the beginning of time effectively eliminates the notion of change as a symbolically constitutive element. For ancient Egypt, this dynamic translated into the notion that eternity was either static, the “same” (*dt*), or endlessly “recurring” (*nḥḥ*), rather than a never-ending sequence of “new” forms that were developing or evolving from “old” ones.²⁴ This archaizing tendency is recognizable across cultures, and can be seen, for example, in Lévi-Strauss's distinction between “cold” and “hot” societies:²⁵

I have suggested elsewhere that the clumsy distinction between ‘peoples without history’ and others could be fruitfully replaced by the distinction between what for convenience I called ‘cold’ and ‘hot’ societies: the former seeking through the institutions they gave themselves to annul the possible effects of historical factors on their equilibrium and continuity in a quasi-automatic fashion; the latter resolutely internalizing the historical process and making it the moving power of their development.²⁶

It is important to note, however, that Lévi-Strauss does not deny the existence of “historical factors” in either type of society; rather, he describes differing ways of *handling* these factors. He does not deny the fact that even “cold” societies are at some level aware of historic/linear time. (This is an important aspect to note, as criticism often tends towards this

²³ For a color photograph, see Thausing & Goedicke (1971: 41); DuQuesne (2005).

²⁴ Allen (1988).

²⁵ Most explicitly in Lévi-Strauss & Charbonnier (1969).

²⁶ Lévi-Strauss (1966: 233–234).

direction.²⁷) However, “cold” or “primitive” societies, as Lévi-Strauss would say, develop certain cultural mechanisms that enable them to utilize the tension between diachrony/history (events happen and cannot be undone) and synchrony (nothing is in fact “new” but always a version of already existing relationships) to address the cultural paradoxes contained within their structure, such as outlined above, with a “cooling” or “refrigerating” effect. Myth is among the most prominent of such cultural mechanisms,²⁸ as can be seen in the *Tale of Two Brothers*.

We have seen the intricate web of interrelations between various parts of the whole mythological narrative, the circular structure being the most prominent feature. This arrangement has parallels around the world in so-called ring-compositions:

The minimum criterion for a ring composition is for the ending to join up with the beginning. [...] A ring is a framing device. The linking up of starting point and end creates an envelope that contains everything between the opening phrases and the conclusion. The rule for closing the ring endows the work with unity [...]. It takes skill to compose a polished specimen. There has to be a well-marked point at which the ring turns, preparatory to working back to the beginning, and the whole series of stanzas from the beginning to the middle should be in parallel with the other series going from the middle back to the start. Each section on the second side of the ring corresponds to a matching section on the first side. The form is well known. It is basically the chiasmic structure, ABBA, or ABCBA, a form that pervades the Bible and other famous archaic texts. It comes in many sizes, from a few lines to a whole book enclosed in its macro-envelope, arranged throughout in intricately corresponding parallelisms.²⁹

A closer analysis of the *Tale of Two Brothers* reveals that the composition represents a text-book example of such a ring-composition (see below). If anything, I would claim that the ring form is ideally suited to stressing the recurring, cyclical aspect over the sequential, “historical” one. Tying the end to the beginning and shaping their correct understanding through their inversion seems to be an unequivocally effective way of “cooling down” or “refrigerating” a set of symbols. Sequential ordering is crucial in that it not only shows the identity of the beginning and the end but also defines how the episodes are to be later

27 Especially in Gell (1996). Needless to say, Gell’s criticism often exaggerates Lévi-Strauss’s arguments to extremes so as to show they are untenable. Lévi-Strauss understands that it is impossible for societies and individuals to “destroy” time completely, and views the various mechanisms which he describes as more or less effective in doing so in a very similar manner, as he views the function of mediators and their ability to bridge the essentially unbridgeable cultural paradoxes between which they (strive to) mediate. These various mechanisms are described hyperbolically as “destroying” time—they do not concern “time” as such but rather only some of its effects and only on a limited scale. After all, the sheer existence of these “time-destroying” mechanisms indicate the awareness of the existence of temporality.

28 Since the publication of Lévi-Strauss’s ideas, several anthropologists have shown that both modes of thought typical for “cold” and “hot” societies can and often do operate simultaneously, sometimes even within one speech act of one individual. See for example: Tan (2013); Santos-Granero (1998); Turner (1988); Rappaport (1985); Goody (1968); and many more.

29 Douglas (2007: 1–2).

interrelated within the ring itself. It simply matters whether a certain character enters the scene at one moment and not at another. Without this sequence, the parallelisms could be too obscure (*contra* Lévi-Strauss). Once the sequence is completed, though, it is immediately revealed to be forming a circle. As Douglas remarks (2007: 8–9), the criticism and allegation of “repetition,” “clumsiness,” and “episodic character” or generally incoherence has always been connected with a modern reading of these ring-structures. Repetitiveness, however, enables us to draw parallelisms which, once linked, then reveal a further meaning.

Douglas (2007: 36–39) defines seven basic indicators of a ring structure. I will now apply each of these criteria to the *Tale of Two Brothers*. Each indicator is also accompanied by a simple diagram for ease of visualising the various characteristics. (See the end of the essay for the fusion of all features into a comprehensive diagram.)

- 1) *Exposition or prologue* (fig. 3): states the theme and introduces the main characters. As Douglas states, “[i]t is laid out so as to anticipate the mid-turn and the ending that will eventually respond to it” (2007: 36). This is precisely the case with the Initial Episode I, in which such an introduction is provided and ideal relationships are described.³⁰
- 2) *Split into two halves* (fig. 4): “The convention draws an imaginary line between the middle and the beginning, which divides the work into two halves, the first, outgoing, the second, returning” (Douglas 2007: 36). I would expand on this idea to say that this feature may be divided into two aspects—processual and spatial. The processual aspect refers to the furthest point within the narrative from which the story’s dynamic reverts from “outgoing” to “returning”; that, in the case of our story, is Bata’s death in *rubrum* 12 (Episodes D–F).³¹ Up to that point, Bata was trying to escape the consequences of the initial events. His death, however, represents a transformational moment after which his return to Egypt commences. The first half would thus include *rubra* 1–12 (Initial Episode I–Episode F)³² and the second half *rubra* 13–24 (Initial Episode III–Terminal Episode).³³

Taking the spatial aspect into account, however, requires charting two ontologically different zones: Egypt proper and an area the geographic identity of which is debatable, but which is deemed ontologically different (foreign lands/netherworld). The “Egyptian” half comprises Initial Episode I, Episodes A–C,³⁴ G–I, J–L, M–O, and the Terminal Episode.³⁵ The “other” half comprises Initial Episode II, Episodes D–E, Initial Episode III.³⁶ The processual aspect is important for the analysis of the following indicator (*Parallel sections*). Fig. 4 therefore illustrates the spatial

30 Pehal (2014: 99–102).

31 Pehal (2014: 129–134).

32 Pehal (2014: 99–134).

33 Pehal (2014: 134–161).

34 Pehal (2014: 99–117).

35 Pehal (2014: 146–161).

36 Pehal (2014: 118–146). Compare this division to the spatial relationship of Egypt and Syria in the tale of Sinuhe as analyzed by Pérez-Accino (2011).

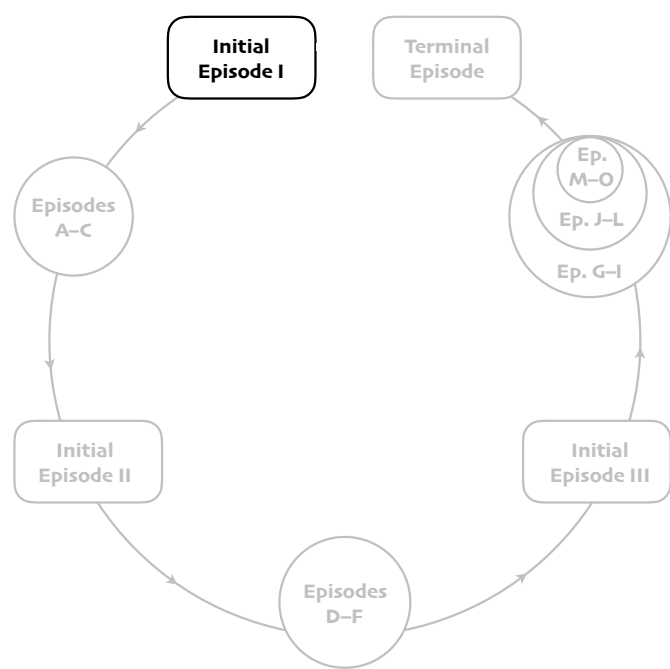


Figure 3

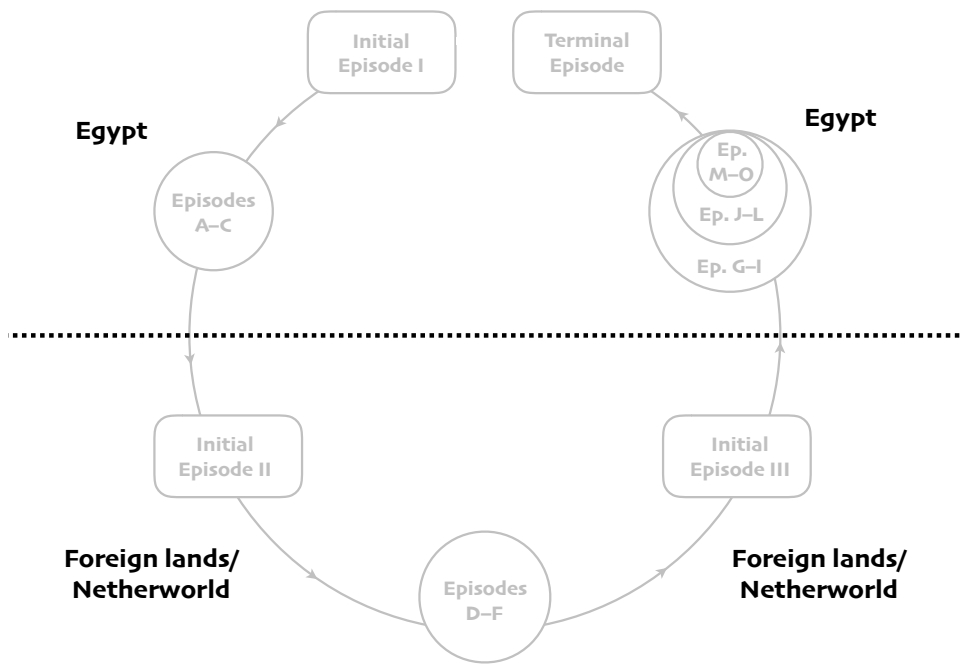


Figure 4

division into two ontological zones, which will in turn be interpreted in relation to the story as a ring-structure, below (see section 5, “*Spatial pattern in the Tale of Two Brothers*”).

- 3) *Parallel sections* (fig. 5): “After the mid-turn the next challenge for the composer of a ring is to arrange the two sides in parallel. This is done by making separate sections that are placed in parallel across the central dividing line. Each section on one side has to be matched by its corresponding pair on the other side. In practice, the matching of sections often contains surprises; items are put into concordance that had not previously been seen to be similar.” (Douglas 2007: 36). Douglas further urges that we not dismiss such analogies, surprising as they might be at first glance, but rather try and find out what they have in common. This parallel patterning is illustrated in the *Two Brothers*. The beginning-end section (initial ideal situation; Bata/Anubis ascends the throne)³⁷ is in direct parallel to the middle section (Bata is killed)³⁸ in that both represent an extreme position which Bata attained—complete and absolute power vs. complete and absolute disintegration (see also indicator 2 above). The events following the middle term can then be directly linked to their counterparts in the first half of the story, “across” the middle line, creating parallelisms described as “chiasm.”³⁹ Nevertheless, in case of the *Two Brothers* we actually have parallelisms not only on a horizontal level between parts directly opposing each other but also crosswise: (A) Episodes A–C⁴⁰ describe the process of solving the antipathy between the two opponents/brothers by evicting one (Bata) to an outside domain (Valley of the Pine). The parallel passage which includes Episodes G–I, J–L and M–O⁴¹ also describes the process of solving an antipathy (between Bata – pharaoh/Anubis) but through an inverted process of physical inclusion of various elements into one another (Anubis gradually becomes Bata’s son). Same process, inverted dynamics. (B) Initial Episode II⁴² describes the process of re-integration through accumulating various vestiges of social identity but with the omission of the key elements (emasculated and heart-less Bata founds a household and obtains a wife). Initial Episode III⁴³ describes the process of re-integration by ridding the character of the secondary vestiges of identity (household, wife) and including the essential parts (heart is put back in its place, virility regained as the protagonist assumes the form of a bull). Same process, inverted dynamics. (C) Initial Episode II⁴⁴ describes the dynamics of an attempt to establish a mirror image of a structure within an Egyptian/orderly setting (household/wife) but in an ontologically different

37 Pehal (2014: 99–102, 159–161).

38 Pehal (2014: 129–134).

39 A very useful overview of the works recognizing this system of ordering within various compositions (and also a testament to its widespread character); see Welch & McKinlay (1998).

40 Pehal (2014: 102–117).

41 Pehal (2014: 146–159).

42 Pehal (2014: 118–129).

43 Pehal (2014: 134–146).

44 Pehal (2014: 118–129).

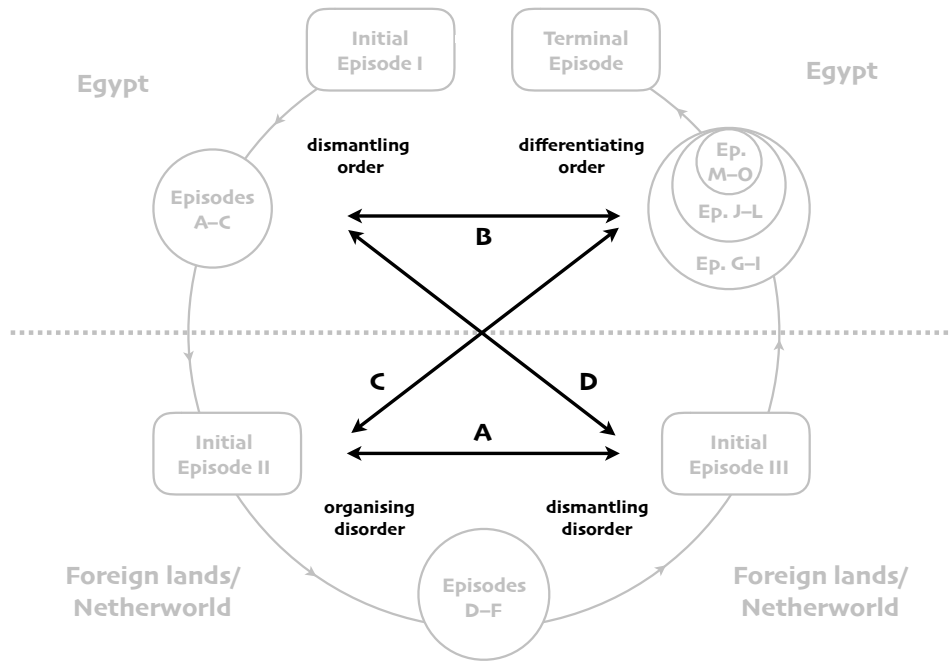


Figure 5

environment (organizing disorder).⁴⁵ Episodes G–I, J–L, and M–O⁴⁶ describe the process of differentiating levels of orderliness within order (differentiating order; Bata nears the source of order—the pharaoh—through gradual rebirths). In both cases the dynamism is of constructive differentiation; in one case, the differentiation proves futile (outside Egypt), whereas in the other it proves essential and effective. Same dynamics applied on inverted categories. (D) Episodes A–C⁴⁷ (attempt at incest, conviction, attempt at murder, flight) describe the process of disintegrating functioning structures within Egyptian society/order, whereas Initial Episode III⁴⁸ describes the process of disintegrating a disorderly situation (one who is without a heart and is emasculated regains his vital organs and their strength). Same dynamics applied on inverted categories. From this brief overview, we can see that the parallelisms are comprehensive and holistic, and that they include several layers.

- 4) *Indicators to mark individual sections*: “The primary problem is to make clear to the reader or listener where one section stops and the next begins. Otherwise the pattern

45 Moers (2011: 171) identified this process also in the case of Sinuhe during his exile in Retjenu: “In order to make the things Sinuhe tells about his foreign life understandable for the implicit audience of the story, this Egyptian audience has to imagine Sinuhe’s foreign home as regularly defined in terms of Egyptian conceptions.”

46 Pehal (2014: 146–159).

47 Pehal (2014: 102–117).

48 Pehal (2014: 134–146).

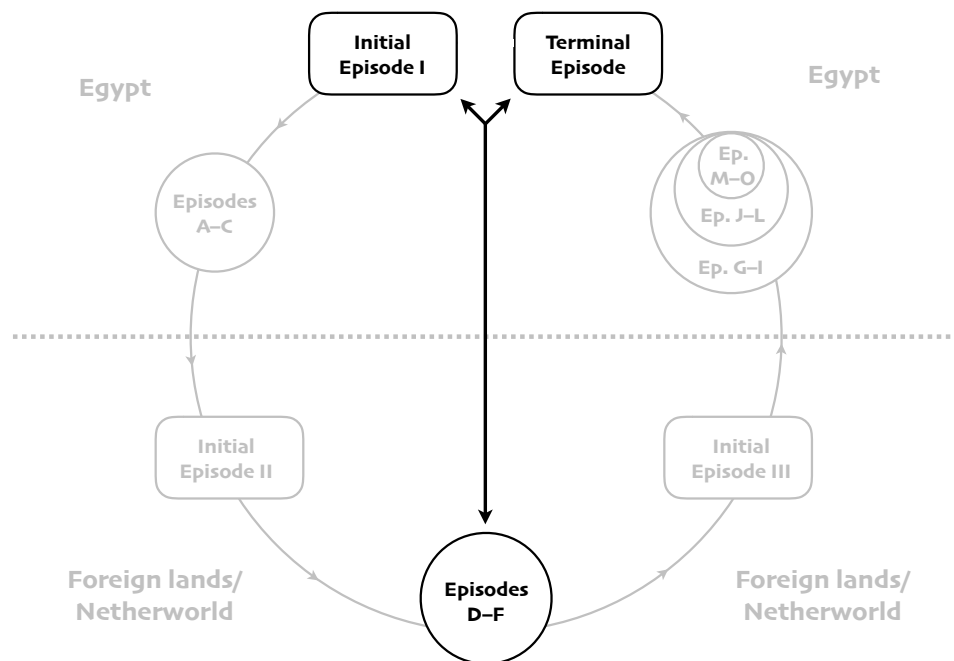


Figure 6

fades out” (Douglas 2007: 36). As already noted, for example by J. Assmann,⁴⁹ in the case of the *Two Brothers* the scribe used syntactic means⁵⁰ and *rubra* to indicate individual “chapters,” twenty-four in total (see below).

- 5) *Central loading* (fig. 6): “The turning point of the ring is equivalent to the middle term, C, that is the middle term of a chiasmus, AB/C/BA. Consequently, much of the rest of the structure depends on a well-marked turning point that should be unmistakable” (Douglas 2007: 37). With respect to our tale, the turning point is closely linked in structure and meaning with both the exposition (beginning) and the end of the composition. The obligatory parallel relationship between the beginning+end–middle reveals the intricate relationship of identity between the two main characters of Bata and Anubis. In the case of the beginning-end sequence, it is stated explicitly, each having a simultaneous filial/paternal relationship to the other. In the case of the middle passage, the moment of Bata’s death triggers omens which

49 Assmann (1977: 3–4); Assmann (1973: 2). See also Wettengel (1992).

50 The major *rubra* begin with a typical narrative form: *hr jr (m-ht)* (Now [after]...) followed by Present I with stative, further specifying the situation, such as *hrw.w qn.w hr-s3 nm* (...many days after this), *t3 hq 2 n hrw hrw* (...the land became light and the second day began), *hr tr n rwh3* (...it was evening), *grh hrw* (...the night came), *hr [...]* *3.t šrj.t* (...a [small] moment), *hr tr n* (...at the time of...). The only exception is the beginning, which includes the phrase *jr mnt.f hr=tw* (Once, it is said...). The text is further interspersed with shorter *rubra* (mainly containing the dependent narrative form *wn jn=f hr sdm*) which, however, do not seem to define any significant units.

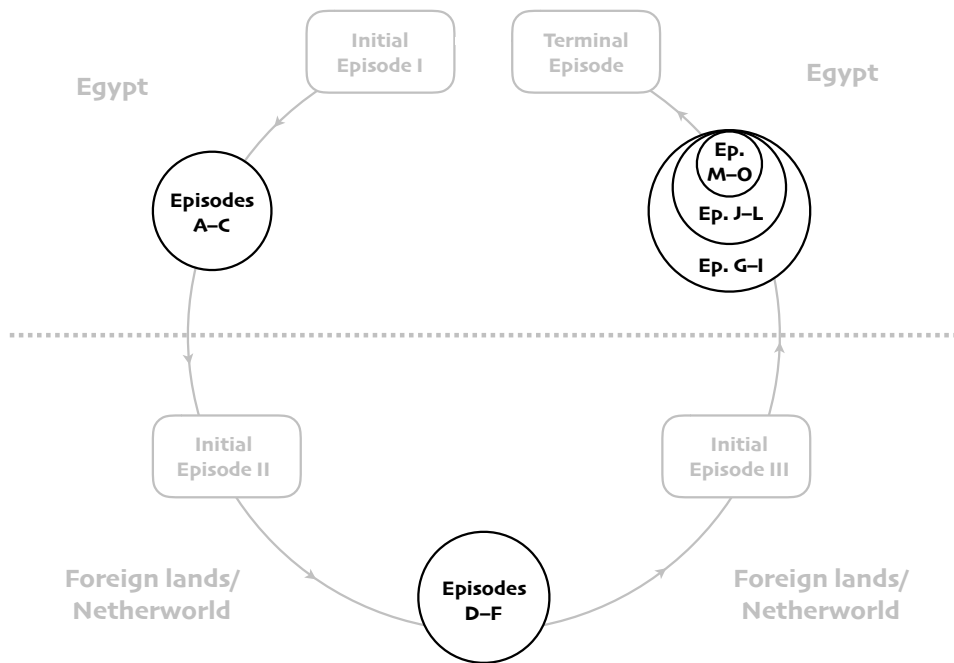


Figure 7

notify Anubis of his brother's demise, thereby underscoring the existence of an essential link between them (see also indicator 3 above).

- 6) *Rings within rings* (fig. 7): "[...] the major ring may be internally structured by little rings. Some rings emphasise the division into two halves by making each half a ring [...]. A large book often contains many small rings. They may come from different sources, times, and authors. One large ring can be composed entirely from minor rings strung together in groups" (Douglas 2007: 37). In the case of the *Two Brothers*, every Episode Cluster with its Hegelian dynamic of thesis–antithesis–synthesis has exactly this circular quality. Furthermore, through repetition, the sequence of Episode Clusters 3a–c (Bata is killed after transforming first into a bull, then into two sycamore trees only to reincarnate, finally, as his own son in the body of the one who had caused his deaths) actually models a concentric ring-like structure, with the office of the pharaoh forming the imaginary center around which events revolve.⁵¹
- 7) *Closure at two levels* (fig. 8): "By joining up with the beginning, the ending unequivocally signals completion. It is recognisably a fulfilment of the initial promise. [...] The exposition will have been designed to correspond to the ending. When it comes the reader can recognise it as the ending that was anticipated in the exposition."

⁵¹ Pehal (2014: 146–159).

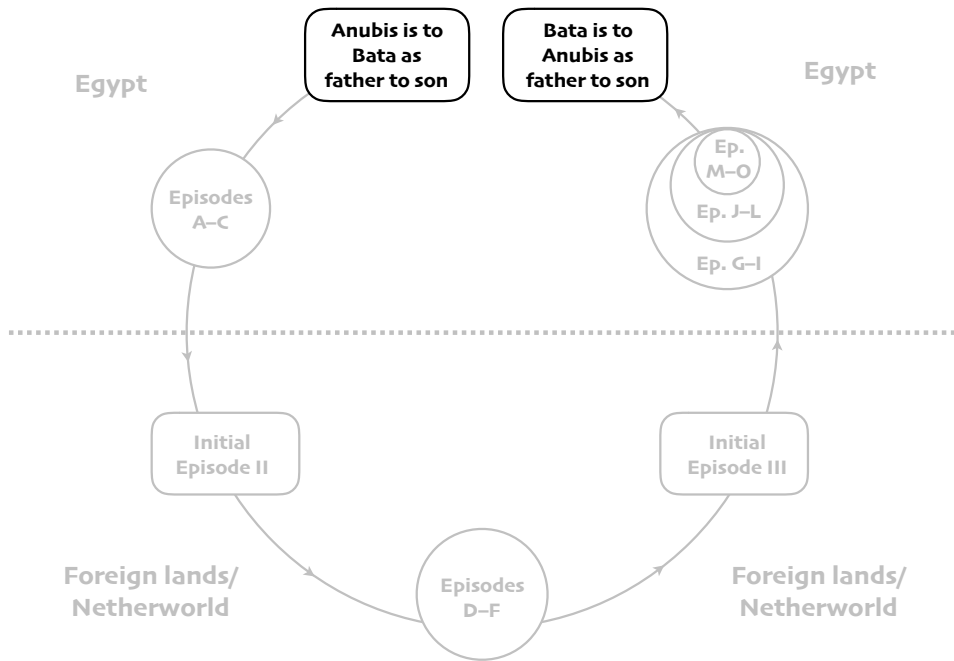


Figure 8

(Douglas 2007: 37–38). Here we find the central paradox of the whole composition—Anubis is to Bata as a father is to a son, and *vice versa*.⁵²

Once we combine all of the previously mentioned criteria into one diagram, we get an idea of the comprehensiveness of the whole structure (fig. 9).

Another (emic) feature which strengthens the ring-structure is also present: the 24-hour cycle as defined by the twenty-four *rubra* which divide the whole composition. Assmann argues that the composition seems actually to be following the course of the sun in the sky and during its nether-worldly journey.⁵³ Of course, there is no definitive way of knowing whether this was the intention of the text, or whether the 24 *rubra* is more or less coincidental. Looking at the text through this prism, however, does make sense as it also provides further grounding for the interpretation I present here. Even though I follow Assmann's and, later, Wettengel's periodization of the text in my previous work,⁵⁴ for this article, I have shifted the division (fig. 10) to comply with spatial patterns that are defined by the narrative (see below).

⁵² Pehal (2014: 169).

⁵³ Assmann (1977).

⁵⁴ Pehal (2014: 163–177), where I also explain (p. 163, n. 434) how the inconsistencies in the usage of *rubra* in relation to the 24-hour cycle (remarked, for example, by Quack, 2005: 202) may be understood. To this end, I devised an Episodic system (Pehal 2014: 97–197) to which I refer throughout this text.

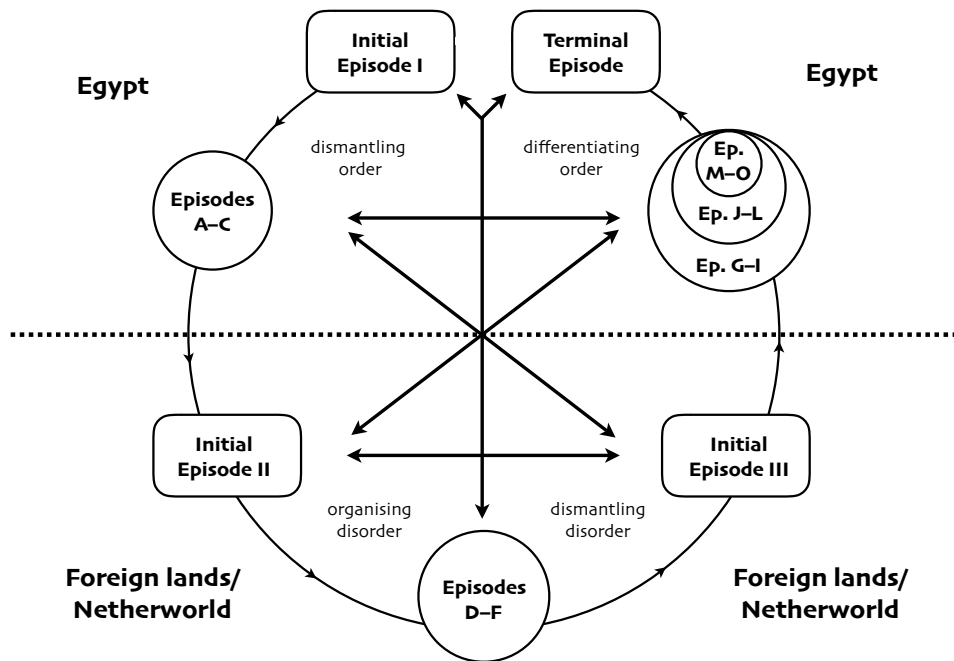


Figure 9

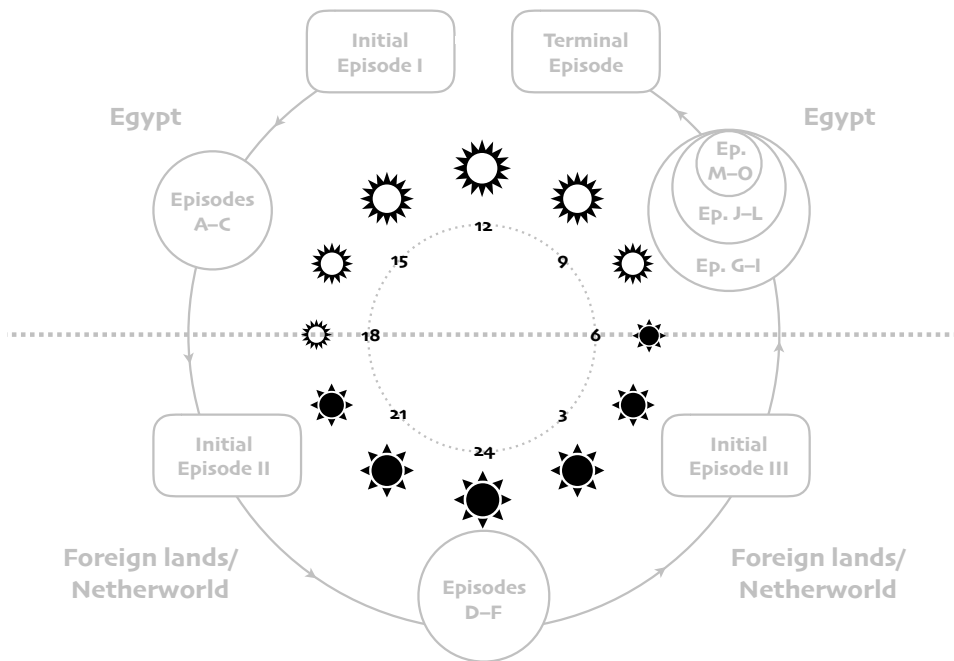


Figure 10

The myth begins at noon when the sun is at full strength, and events are dominated by its order-giving ability, thereby establishing the ideal situation, that of balance. From that point on, as the sun wanes, so too does a process of gradual deterioration commence (attempt at incest, murder) (13.00–18.00). The first crucial moment comes with Bata's emasculation (Episode C) and departure from Egypt to an ontologically different area (netherworld). There, the sun makes its way through the nether-worldly landscape (19.00–24.00), thus actually bringing order to these distant, cold, dark regions in the same way that Bata strives to create an impression of an orderly life in the Valley of the Pine (with household and wife). The crucial moment comes in the dead of night (24.00) when Bata is stricken and dies. This crisis nonetheless triggers a revivification process (1.00–6.00) symbolized by his brother's attempts at finding Bata's heart. This Anubis succeeds in doing, thus enabling Bata/the sun to exit the Netherworld (in the form of a virile bull) and reenter Egypt once again (6.00). The last stretch (7.00–12.00) of the myth includes the gradual progression of Bata through the levels of order by "maturing" in his physical forms (bull, two sycamore trees, crown-prince). With every transformation, Bata draws closer to his form of the full sun/pharaoh at noon. In fact, if we then superimpose this model on the ancient Egyptian cosmological model as defined by the triad of Shu, Nut and Geb, we see that the crucial moments of Bata's emasculation and his reincarnation in the form of the virile bull correspond to the moments of swallowing and giving birth to the sun by the goddess Nut (fig. 11).⁵⁵

6 Spatial Pattern in the *Tale of Two Brothers*

So far we have devoted most of our attention to temporal patterns. The events, however, also take *place* and thus necessitate an examination of the spatial aspect of the composition. The specific form of the whole mythological narrative as a ring-structure conditions how space is utilized, which may be conveniently described using the van-Gennepian ritual framework of separation–liminal-period–reintegration.⁵⁶ The whole narrative structure of the *Two Brothers* has an initiatory character related to the function of kingship in ancient Egypt and its symbolical connotations. Space within the *Two Brothers* is thus structured as an element that contrasts three key areas—the area before change (Egypt); a liminal,

55 Needless to say, the traditional understanding of the whole composition as a *collage* of episodes "[r]eplete with doublets and inconsistencies [...]" (Ayali-Darshan 2017: 183), often non-Egyptian in origin, is still very much alive.

56 For a basic overview, see van Gennep (1960). In direct relation to the *Two Brothers*, Assmann (1977: 23–25) suggested that the whole composition comprises a rite of passage and actually hinted that some such ritual could have existed. This notion has been rightly criticized by Moers (2011: 166–167), who, unfortunately, threw out the baby with the bathwater in that he only viewed it as an "example of how structuralist poetics can exploit ancient texts to tell an ethnocentric story about its own validity" (Moers 2011: 167). The rite-of-passage structure of the *Two Brothers* becomes meaningful once related to the narrative ring-structure, without having to presuppose the existence of an actual rite.

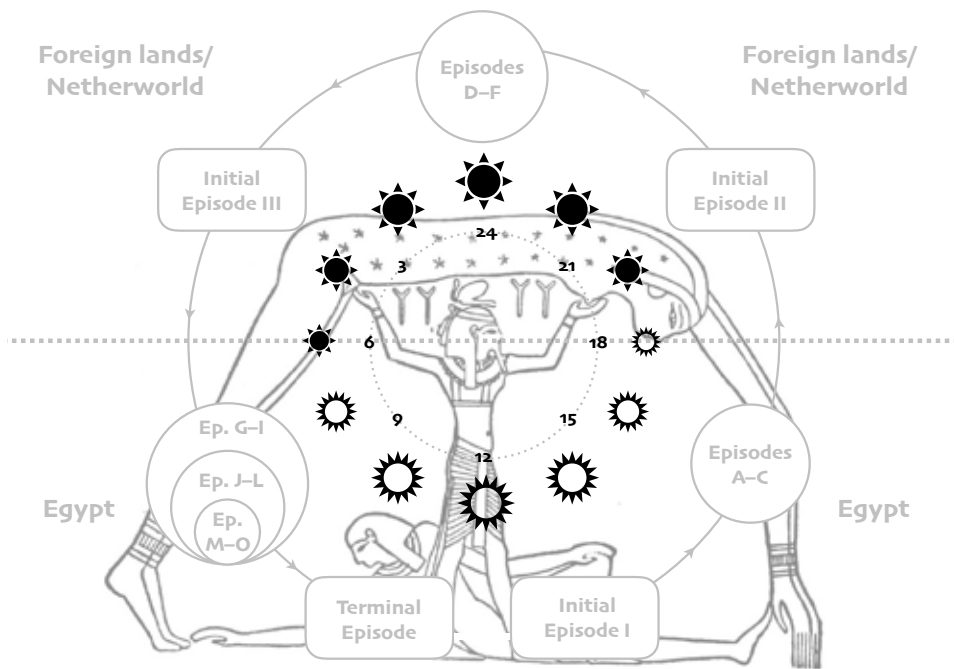


Figure 11

transformative area (outside Egypt); and the area after reintegration (Egypt).⁵⁷ The space within the mythological narrative therefore provides more than a mere backdrop to the narrative ring-structure. Spatial relations provide critical clues to the integrity of the mythic narrative as a whole.

As has been noted elsewhere,⁵⁸ the van-Gennepian framework *per se* is a rather simplified idealization of complex (ritual) processes which aid individuals and groups that are undergoing transitions in the social structure. The main argument against the van Gennepian framework is that it is too rough and idealized to be of use in interpreting actual ritual enactments. Nevertheless, written compositions cannot be reduced to actual physical enactments and we can expect the synchronic, formalized structure of a written work to be stressed. Also, written compositions often present similarly idealizing patterns, the same as with van Gennep as when he extracts an underlying tripartite structure from a complex ritual. Imperfect as it is, van Gennep's framework therefore still provides a useful tool for understanding how space functions in the *Two Brothers*.

In order to show the paradoxes inherent in the whole system and the gradual progression and emancipation of the main hero(es) through the narrative, the story needs an ontologically different zone—an “outside,” “foreign,” “nether”-world—onto which are

57 Without any reference to van Gennep, Pérez-Accino (2011) understands the relationship between Egypt before Sinuhe's flight–Syria during his exile–Egypt after his return in a very similar manner.

58 For a concise evaluation of the weaknesses of this model and an appreciation of the main literature, see Hays (2013), also Pehal and Preininger Svobodová (2018: 125).

projected contrasting qualities. Being a projection of the Egyptian context, the story maintains certain characteristics that would clearly identify such an area as “different,” while at the same time enable addressing purely Egyptian concepts. That is why the Valley of the Pine⁵⁹ shares characteristics of both a “foreign” land and of the Egyptian Netherworld.⁶⁰ This “foreign” zone is then utilized as a liminal, powerful region in which emancipation of the characters occurs, only to return them to Egypt proper later in the text, to settle a purely Egyptian issue.⁶¹ Rituals of transition provide a performative framework that can: (a) manage the transformation, thus limiting the possibility of failure by providing commonly shared schemata on how to proceed, and/or (b) provide indicators that the transformation actually occurred in those cases where the state of before and after is not clearly discernible by physical signs (e.g., marriage as opposed to first menstruation), or when a physical transformation also has important social consequences that must be recognized (e.g., death, coming of age).

The majority of such transitions concern most members of a given society and, because they occur on a relatively common basis, tend to be successful. There are, however, transitions that concern only a very limited group or a single person, as is the case with the coronation of a monarch. The symbolic constellations—and the paradoxes which stem from them—in which such an individual plays a crucial role are based on similar ideas and concepts as those of individuals who occupy less axial social positions. However, in the case of the king, these tend to be amplified and of much greater importance, having even cosmic consequences. These heightened symbolical expectations, while they do bring the social structure under heavy strain, also present an opportunity to reveal the structure’s inherent paradoxes. Speaking metaphorically, if we say that the social body has neuralgic areas that require some sort of remedy, then we can say that this pain is caused by cultural paradoxes. They hurt, they itch. What mythology and ritual, among other cultural mechanisms, represent are powerful means of reflecting on these sources of social anxiety.

7 Society and the Individual: Reflexive Qualities of Time and Space in Mythological Narratives

Whenever a certain symbolical system provides a means of confronting itself with the fact of its own relativity—either by admitting the possibility of an alternative arrangement or a complete, if temporary, dissolution into formlessness—we are then seeing a reflexive process taking place. That said, the notion that the founding principles of any system

59 Fort the latest work on the possible foreign sources of this motif, see Ayali-Darshan (2017).

60 Pehal (2014: 145–146).

61 The Valley of the Pine displays the characteristics of the “God’s land” (*t3 ntr*) (see Kilani 2016 for a most recent study; Cooper 2011 for a critical review of previous scholarship)—a cosmographic concept especially relevant to New Kingdom political and religious thinking—an area at the edge of the world, a source of precious materials and friendly foreigners, and closely associated with the goddess Hathor. As a liminal area, the Valley of the Pine is ideally suited for interactions with the divine.

may be understood only in relation to its own self-contradicting principles is a troubling realization. This very realization also leads to reflexivity as a means of coping. Reflexivity generally reveals that any social set-up is essentially a collection of haphazard choices that could vary, given differing circumstances. Paradoxes then only express the most extreme possibility—a complete inversion of a certain principle and the simultaneous socially sanctioned efficacy of both extremes.

I have so far been speaking of symbolical systems as independent entities. This is partly because the structuralist-functionalist tradition from which I borrow many hermeneutic concepts favors such an approach. Nevertheless, it is a model fraught with grave problems, as noted by authors such as Anthony Giddens, one of its most strident critics.⁶² Let me state then that since societies are composed of individuals, the reflexive dynamics of myth we have identified on the cultural (macro) level must also be relevant in relation to the individual (micro-level).⁶³ The relationship between the two is that of mutual dependency. Even though societies “outlive” the individual (in the sense that they exist before one’s birth and continue after one’s death), without individuals we could hardly speak of a society in the first place. And while this seems like a trivial observation, it has important methodological consequences for our discussion because it implies that the building blocks of any symbolical system will be both similar to and different from the lived experience of the individuals in that system. In other words, the actual content of the symbols that constitute the system as a whole will be based on the experience of these individuals and their surroundings (see *Introduction*). They will be different, however, in the sense that once transposed to the cultural level, these highly subjective and idiosyncratic individual experiences become structured, axiomatized, idealized, and necessarily also simplified. This transformation happens so that a society can craft a seemingly coherent system, a collective consciousness to which all of its individual entities may refer. However, because the origin of these axiomatic categories lies in individual, lived experience—which more often than not tends to be anything but a structured set of idealized principles—the paradoxical notions inherent in the individual become pronounced axiomatically on the cultural level as well.

On the individual level, these inconsistencies and incoherencies may be contextually and especially performatively suppressed or, indeed, completely ignored. In fact, the diachronic and performative quality of lived experience is what enables one to isolate the potentially conflicting principles within a discrete sequence of (physically enacted) events or actions.⁶⁴ On the cultural level, however, these opposing principles clash, especially as various cultural forms (writing, art, etc.,) juxtapose equally valid but opposing principles.

62 His theory of structuration analyzes social systems from the perspectives of both its structure and agency of individuals, without necessarily favoring one over the other. See especially Giddens (1984).

63 This is a very simplified characterization of complex dynamics described for example by Assmann (2008, 2011), who distinguishes three levels of memory – individual, social (communicative), and cultural. I thank H. Navrátilová for reminding me of this link.

64 This is a phenomenon most often encountered in the field while studying ritual enactments. See for example the discussion in Humphrey and Laidlaw (1994) on the multiplicity of “orthodoxies”

Even though societies tend to externalize the chaotic element outside their own structure, its source lies with its constituent units, in other words, the individual. The perplexing and troubling realization that chaos (individual experience) lies within the heart of any cultural system (order) and that the only solution is to embrace chaos as the sole source of order is the implicit message of these reflexive cultural mechanisms and presents the most basic *Ur*-paradox. Symbolical systems therefore develop mechanisms that enable them to incorporate the “chaotic” individual—its building blocks—within, while simultaneously safeguarding the coherence of the axiomatic system as a whole. Can this paradox-sustaining business be resolved? No. Not so long as people (individuals) constitute societies.

In order to understand the mutual dynamics of the society-individual relationship in terms of mythological narratives then, it is useful to begin by summarizing Claude Lévi-Strauss’s position on the two modes of temporality encompassed by myth—the diachronic (irreversible) and the synchronic (reversible).⁶⁵ The diachronic aspect, according to Lévi-Strauss, is exhibited through the story in terms of sequences, one after the other, while the synchronic is represented by the myth’s “bundles of relations,” regardless of their diachronic order. On the one hand, Lévi-Strauss claims that the medium which enables the myth to connect both types of temporality is its *story*. In practice, however, he repeatedly discards the story-sequence in favor of creating a *collage* of episodes which he then contrasts to each other, regardless of their position proper within the narrative.⁶⁶

According to Terence Turner, this distortion is a result of Lévi-Strauss’s faulty notion that myth actually *fuses* the two types of temporality.⁶⁷ Rather, Turner states, one must focus on the modes of interaction of these “dialectically opposed tendencies,” which in turn fuels the dynamics of myth:

[...] the impossible attempt to reconcile the two incompatible modes of temporality within a single, conceptually unitary mode of “mythical time” leads inevitably to the displacement of one mode by the other. In Lévi-Strauss’ case, synchrony ends up completely eclipsing diachrony, with the result that the problem of narrative structure (i.e. the patterning of sequences of events) is made to disappear into the quite distinct problem of the logical relations of the semantic values of the elements of the narrative.⁶⁸

Turner then deepens his critique by pointing out that:

[...] the line between synchrony and diachrony cannot be drawn between the paradigm of relations of the “bundles” of structural elements (as the synchronic component) and the sequence of events of the narrative (as the diachronic component). [...] Narrative

present during a Jain *pudja*: “The same person could give several meanings for a single act, with no sense of contradiction between them” (p. 204).

65 Lévi-Strauss (1955).

66 For a thorough analysis of the way Lévi-Strauss and other structuralists discard diachrony, see especially Allison (1978).

67 Lévi-Strauss (1955: 431–432); Turner (1969: 30–32); see also TenHouten (2005: 127–128).

68 Turner (1969: 31). Lévi-Strauss (1955: 430).

patterns are themselves highly structured forms, analogous in many ways to the syntactic level of language (which is “synchronic” and part of *langue* as opposed to *parole*).⁶⁹

According to Turner, what we are missing from the equation is precisely the individual and his “chaotic” experience—the only truly diachronic element in the otherwise synchronic structures created by a certain culture, specifically, in this case, myth. These structures are always created by and for individuals who are using the given symbolical system—therein lies the interaction of the “dialectically opposed tendencies” and its reflexive potential.

While there are various ways in which such a reflexive process may occur, certainly the use of varying temporal narrative patterns within mythological narratives—supplemented by a specific handling of space—is one of them. As we have seen with respect to the *Two Brothers*, these patterns connect various experiential levels and show them to be intrinsically interconnected: social relations are thus directly related to ecological and astronomical events, human sexuality, and all of these are interlinked with the crucial cultural position of the king and the succession mechanism whereby his legitimacy is safeguarded. This system of experiential levels is synchronic in nature—each unit of the composition draws its meaning from the neighboring units, thereby presenting a semiotic whole.⁷⁰ This system nevertheless “always corresponds to the psychological time of the individual’s experience.”⁷¹ People generally follow a story word by word, scene by scene, image by image, in the order set out by the author/narrator. The axiomatic images, which the synchronic structure of the story utilizes, nevertheless parallel the individual experiences of the listeners. The ensuing interaction between the macro (synchronic, cultural) and micro (diachronic, individual) levels is mediated through the various temporal patterns, thereby creating a coherent whole, a collective consciousness that implies mutual interaction between the individual and the symbolical system.⁷²

8 Summary

According to B. Babcock, reflexivity “describe[s] the capacity of language and of thought—of any system of signification—to turn or bend back upon itself, to become an object to itself, and to refer to itself.”⁷³ In such a capacity, it is a paradoxical phenomenon:

69 Turner (1969: 32). Similar criticism has been delivered by Sahlins (1985) and Gell (1996: 23–29).

70 This is a well-established principle in narratology, see for example Altman (2008: 291–314).

71 Turner (1969: 34, 64).

72 Very similar explanations have been presented by anthropologists in relation to the reflexive nature of ritual. Even though “reflexivity” is by many authors in the field also considered a form of communication (Severi 2002), or a mechanism of “commenting on” or providing actions with meanings (Humphrey & Laidlaw 1994), if we look at the notion of reflexivity as communication in a broader sense, we inevitably have to include performance as another reflexive modality. Such was the approach of Turner (1967b), or, most recently, Grimes (2014: 307–312) in the sense that rituals “attune bodies” to a solely physical way of experiencing. The various modes of ritual reflexivity were summarized by Stausberg (2006: 632–637), and Rozenberg (2011).

73 Babcock (1980: 4).

“the mind by its own operation attempts to say something about its operation—an activity difficult both to contemplate and to describe without conceptual vertigo and verbal entanglements.”⁷⁴ This “bending upon itself” is exactly what I have tried to describe and exemplify by the *Tale of Two Brothers*. My approach may be summarized by the following key points: (1) every symbolical system contains paradoxes (two principles of conflicting kind valid simultaneously) stemming from the system’s entitlement to coherence and the necessity to accommodate divergent social dynamics (“positional succession” in the case of ancient Egypt); (2) the existence of these paradoxes is systemically frustrating, (3) thus giving rise to the need for mechanisms that enable reflection on these paradoxes—ritual and myth being among the most prominent of such mechanisms; (4) even though paradoxes cannot be solved, the reflexive process is implicitly transformative; (5) reflexivity, in myth, is achieved by the inclusion of two basic modes of temporality—the subjective, diachronic experience of the reader/listener, and the various synchronic aspects of the composition; (6) even though narratives are an example of prototypical linear ordering of elements, the full understanding of these compositions is achieved only once we realize that there are several perspectives in which the events are interlinked.

Among the implications of this line of reasoning is the notion that we should be reading mythological narratives in a similar way to how we “read” Egyptian iconography—often in a circular, transversal or even concentric manner.⁷⁵ “As a kind of syntax, the ring form brings ambiguity under control and reduces confusion” (Douglas 2007: 38). Space in the *Two Brothers* is really a compelling extension of Egypt that provides a framework in which typically Egyptian issues are formulated and typically Egyptian solutions found. The ring-like spatiality in the myth’s structure enables the narrative to address certain topics which would be difficult or impossible to address solely within an Egyptian context—precisely because without the confrontation with an ontologically different zone, the paradox does not stand out.

For the sake of the system’s proper functioning, the disquieting character of the paradox must be muted. On the level of the story itself, that muting takes place when the main character undergoes transformations which would be impossible in the original Egyptian setting. Thus we see the initiatory character of his journey⁷⁶ and the van-Gennepian spatio-temporal division.

Roman Jakobson, in fact, considered correspondences and parallelism the basic way the human brain reflects on its own activity: “There is a system of steady correspondences in composition and order of elements on many different levels: syntactic constructions, grammatical forms and grammatical categories, lexical synonyms and total lexical identities, and finally combinations of sounds and prosodic schemes”.⁷⁷ In other words, specific aesthetics lie behind this tendency of the mind to duplicate its own workings. Even though

⁷⁴ Babcock (2005: 7647).

⁷⁵ Angenot (1996: 9–10) shows that the placement of narrative daily life scenes in Old Kingdom tombs and mastabas may exhibit a spiral time sequence.

⁷⁶ As a general, almost universal framework most systematically described by Campbell (1949) in his many-times republished work.

⁷⁷ Jakobson & Pomorska (1983: 102–103).

Jakobson was approaching the phenomenon from a linguistic point of view, the same dynamism seems to be at work on the level of symbolism in both verbal (myths) and performative (rituals) forms. If we return to the concept of linear and circular time, we realize that even though the narrative is linear in composition, it bites its own tail—linearity is used to stress the circularity of the whole system on several levels (beginning and end, individual episode clusters). By having such a structure, the narratives effectively connect various experiential levels by presenting principles—which, under normal circumstances, are simultaneously valid—in a seemingly linear sequence. The story line presents these paradoxes in ways that are less disturbing, even though they do not cease to be paradoxical. The *Two Brothers*, in other words, incorporates a seemingly satisfactory solution to the positional succession paradox through the concept of the autogenetic ruler in whom the two kinship systems (biological and social) converge i.e., the *Kamutef*, Bull-of-his-mother motif in which the king begets himself in the womb of his wife/mother.⁷⁸ In reality, of course, the paradoxes persist; indeed, the fact of their sheer persistence itself underscores the tension between a system's greatest limitation and its source of transformative power.

List of figures, credits

- Figure 1: after Pehal (2014).
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⁷⁸ Pehal (2014: 125 n. 379; 129 n. 384; 154–155).

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Deictic Motion Verbs and Divine Interaction

Placing the Individual and the Divine in Time and Space

Daniel M. Potter¹

Abstract

This study examines the use of deictic verbs of motion in relation to divine interaction, as expressed within post-Amarna period, New Kingdom sources. The methodologies and axioms of the field of deixis have increasingly been utilised within Egyptology as a means for understanding the positioning of the individual in time and space, however, this mapping has infrequently been employed in relation to divine-human interactions. Following an overview of deictic theory and a summary of its Egyptological application, this paper assesses the use of ‘come’ (*īy/īw*) and ‘go’ (*šm*) as deictic verbs of translational motion in relation to the divine. This phenomenological approach is also applied to rotational motion verbs which describe divine interaction and attention through the emphasis on the human back. The examples are discussed from the theoretical perspective of pragmatics and cognitive linguistics. The role of presupposition is explored as a way of expressing understanding of divine interaction. The related idiom of winds and breezes is also explored as a means of positioning the divine in the field of view of the speaker.

1 Introduction

Appraising anthropological work, Maurice Bloch noted that ‘only those statements by informants that seemed odd and therefore interesting by anthropologists and their readers were recorded, while, at the same time, other more familiar images were ignored as unworthy of interest’ (Bloch 1998: vii). This situation is reflected within the Egyptological examination of religious expressions; eye-catching phrases such as ‘seeing darkness by day’² or those surrounding *h3w*³ have received specific attention, more commonplace elements of language have not been fully appraised. In the spirit of this, the current paper

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The current work stems from a paper given at *Temps et espace en Égypte ancienne/ Time and Space in Ancient Egypt*, Louvain-la-Neuve, 9–11th June 2016 which in turn reflected research conducted as part of my PhD thesis at the University of Liverpool. I am grateful for the thought provoking and constructive comments from the participants in Louvain-la-Neuve and the organisers, as well as those of Roland Enmarch. Any errors are of course, my own.

2 See Galán (1999: 18–30).

3 See Borghouts (1982: 1–70).

examines the role of deictic motion verbs in relation to human-divine interaction within *dieseitsorientiert* texts. Deictic verbs encode subjective, attentional, intentional and context dependent elements. These pragmatic elements provide a way into the mind of the speaker, clarifying their perception of themselves and the divine within time and space.

1.1 Deixis as a field of study

Meaning a mode of proof or a demonstrative force/pointing in Greek (δείξις),⁴ deixis was first discussed by Karl Bühler in 1934, who described a method of relating the spatio-temporal context of the utterance centred upon the speaker.⁵ Bühler proposed that ‘here’ and ‘there’ altered the position of the speaker in the same way that ‘I’ and ‘thou’ shift interlocutors (Bühler 2011 [1931]). Deixis forms part of the pragmatics tradition, functioning as a vital part of everyday language, providing essential contextual information about the ‘I’ ‘now’ and ‘here’ of utterances, and consequently they may only be interpreted in terms of their relationship with the speaker (Brown 2002: 61). Nevertheless, deixis has often been overlooked within linguistic study, as the functions of the deictic categories of person, space and time are frequently treated as self-evident by grammars (Levinson 2004: 112).

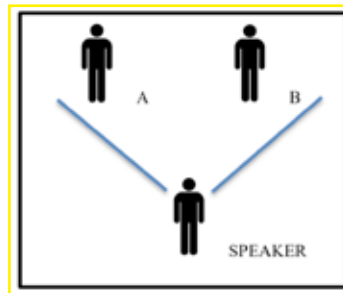


Figure 1: The Speaker's view of A and B (after Fillmore 1997:28)

As in other areas of pragmatics, deixis relies on two participant roles:

- Speaker/sender who is the encoder of the utterance
- Hearer/addressee who is the intended decoder of the utterance

In the above figure, a deictic statement in English would be; ‘B is to the right of A’ as this can only be understood via its relationship to the speaker⁶. The statement ‘B is to A’s left’ does not carry deictic information as it is not related to the speaker. This structure may be described in terms of implicature, namely deictic information is not made explicit but

⁴ Literally ‘to point to’, Liddell & Scott (1891[2002]: 152).

⁵ Terminologically, deixis and indexicality are often used interchangeably as they both indicate contextually-dependent references; deixis used within the discourse of linguistics, indexicality used in philosophical discourse.

⁶ Though this canonical example is given, it should be noted that not all languages (e.g. French) produce the same implication of the view of a speaker.

relies upon the co-operative principles expressed by Grice (1989:26–7). The focus of the utterance is known as the deictic centre/origo (Bühler 2011 [1934]), a theoretical set of points to which the utterance is anchored for example; ‘I am here now’ conveys the central person, central time and central place of the utterance. The speaker naturally takes the role of deictic centre/ primary origo (Fricke 2003: 69–93), when the speaker does not fulfil this role we encounter what Lyons describes as deictic projection (Lyons 1977: 579), a reflex which enables speakers to project themselves into different deictic worlds i.e. different place, time or person.⁷ This may be simplified by thinking of this as a shift in points of view (Fillmore 1975).

1.2 Coming and going

The pairing of marked and unmarked lexical items has been explored by Hill (1982: 13), who suggests that pairs are based upon the asymmetry of the human body.⁸ For example, the human head allows for marked and unmarked lexemes in the English language; it is possible to describe the front of the head as the face, while the back of the head does have its own marked lexeme, occiput, this is infrequent in non-medical usage. ‘Face’ may consequently be understood as a part of the head with special qualities – explicitly, it is the home of the eyes and thus a large part of perception.⁹

The most notable marked/unmarked pair in relation to motion events in many languages is the analogues of the pair expressed in the English as ‘come’/‘go’. This study utilises the Egyptian equivalents of verbs ‘come’ and ‘go’ (*īy/iw* and *šm*) as a starting point for the examination of divine motion events. While not all languages have a deictically based distinction between verbs¹⁰ there is a voluminous literature assessing the differences between ‘come’ and ‘go’ in those languages which do; three prominent approaches to the linguistic structure of these verbs are summarised below to provide a basis for discussion of the use of these verbs in Egyptian.

1.2.1 Towards and away from the deictic centre

Fillmore’s formative work on the variable functions of ‘come’ and ‘go’ in English is notable for its scope (Fillmore 1997: 77–102). Early in his treatise, Fillmore notes that an understanding of motion events presupposes an understanding of both time and space, which are intrinsically linked (1997: 78). He provides seven developmental hypotheses with two addenda and two post-scripts to define the differences between the ‘come’ and

7 There are some languages which formally mark deictic projection including Inuktitut which includes a ‘field shifting prefix’ (Denny 1982: 359–384)

8 The scheme of paired lexemes is also present within Egyptological literature; Westendorf (1962: 324) proposes *Korrelativverben* as groups of paired verbs, grouped by their specific semantic uses, though he does not discuss the ramifications of his suggested pairings.

9 This focus is not a universal construct; Egyptian uses marked lexemes for the back of the head, including *mkhꜣ* rather than marking the lexeme *hr*.

10 Notably Polish and Russian. See Ricca (1993). Those languages which do not have deictic motion verbs often compensate through affixes, morphemes and particles to indicate direction.

‘go’, ultimately providing a five-part situational definition of ‘come’ (as the marked verb of the two) which may be summarised in the following way:

- Movement towards the speaker’s¹¹ location at coding time (CT)
- Movement towards the speaker’s location at arrival time.
- Movement towards the addressee’s location at CT
- Movement towards the addressee’s location at arrival time
- Movement towards the home-base maintained at CT by speaker *or* addressee¹²

Within his discussion of ‘come’/‘go’, Fillmore introduced a means of distinguishing place and time, where the initial state is shown as $P(\text{lace})_i T(\text{ime})_i$, the final state as $P_n T_n$ and the path between these two as $P_i T_i$ (1997: 80). Huang (2007: 135) further simplified Fillmore’s approach, describing ‘go’ as movement away from the deictic centre, and ‘come’ as movement towards the deictic centre. The focus of understanding on the role of the deictic centre has led to the labels of centrifugal and centripetal to describe movement towards and away from the deictic centre. This simple dichotomy may be seen within the use of ‘come’ and ‘go’ within British (and American) Sign Language where the gesture for ‘come’ moves towards the body and ‘go’ is expressed as an extension of the hand away from the body – in both cases the individual who is signing is taken as a prototypical deictic centre¹³.

The distinction between coding time (CT) and receiving time (RT) as introduced by Fillmore (1975) allows for a further appreciation of time deixis as CT provides the *now* of the utterance. As with person deixis whereby the speaker is the assumed deictic centre, it is often assumed that CT and RT are identical, this is known as deictic simultaneity (Lyons 1977: 685). This issue is most keenly felt in contexts such as letter writing, whether the deictic centre remains on the speaker and the CT (‘I write this letter while drinking coffee’) or whether it will be projected to the addressee and the RT (‘I wrote this while drinking coffee’).¹⁴ By considering the CT of each utterance in relation to the selection of motion verbs we are able to place the individual in time as well as space.

1.2.2 Telicity and Q-Scalar implicature

Levinson (2004: 97–121) offers a neo-Gricean analysis of ‘come’ and ‘go’, suggesting their differences are telic in nature: ‘saying ‘go’ where ‘come’ might have been used but wasn’t implicates that the speaker is not able to use the stronger, more informative ‘come’ because its conditions have not been met, and thus that the motion is not towards the deictic centre’ (Levinson 2004: 118). The verbs may then be placed into a Q-scalar model of implicature as proposed by Horn (1979: 3–28), hence $\langle \text{come, go} \rangle$.

¹¹ Sometimes known as the encoder.

¹² After Huang (2007: 161).

¹³ Cf. Lincke & Kutscher (2012) have successfully linked the analysis of Egyptian and the visual linguistic system of German Sign Language.

¹⁴ After Levinson (1983: 73–4). My thanks to Jean Winand who reminded me that these differences are culturally conditioned, citing the use of the past as the default time frame Latin letter writing.

1.2.3 Image Schemata

Basing his work upon the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL framework provided by Lakoff (1987: 275), Di Meola (2003: 18) proposes image schemata to illustrate the differences between these two verbs. In these schemata, while following an identical path in both utterances, the observer focusing upon the SOURCE utilises the verb ‘go’ whereas the observer who is aware of the GOAL utilises ‘come’. This approach again iterates a difference in telicity whereby for the speaker to use ‘come’ he needs to be aware of the GOAL; this reinforces the proposition that ‘go’ is semantically weaker than ‘come’. This approach allows great flexibility, choosing to focus upon the attentional nature of deixis. While tackling the problem differently, there is a clear overlap with the approach of Fillmore in terms of P_1T_1 , P_1T_i and P_nT_n .

1.3 Deixis and ‘come’/‘go’ in Egyptology

To this date, the only published study which relates to both deictic elements and religious language is that of Groll (1991: 143–153). Of the five deictic elements of language (i) demonstratives, (ii) 1st and 2nd person pronouns, (iii) tense markers, (iv) adverbs of time and space, and (v) motion verbs, Groll focuses upon the use of demonstratives and pronoun usage within selected personal piety inscriptions. Through the ego-centric and semantically stronger *p3-A* construction compared to the generic qualities of *ø-A* constructions Groll considers Nebre’s shift from bystander to participant within the text of Berlin 20377, showing an increased proximity to the divine. This same proximity is also expressed using pronouns *=f* and *=k*, as deictic means of establishing face-to-face interaction. By using *=k* anaphorically,¹⁵ there is an implication of direct contact, whereas *=f* does not invoke such proximity.¹⁶ By using *=f*, ‘who calls (to) him’ [Berlin 20377, 15–16] is less personal than *=k* and by extension the direct *ntk* (Groll 1991: 148).

While not employing deictic terminology, Depuydt (1986: 22–30) brings together several strands of research in this area, examining the semantic structures of the verbs ‘come’ and ‘go’. He also distinguishes ‘come’ and ‘go’ as marked and unmarked lexemes, wherein ‘come’ relates **move-to-me-and-or-to-you** and ‘go’ relates **move-NOT-to-me-NOR-to-you**, after all, ‘it seems reasonable to assume that human beings attach some importance to motion approaching themselves’ (Depuydt 1986: 29). This stresses an egocentric element.

The link between *iy/iw* and *šm* has also been discussed by Winand (1991: 357–387), through several non-religious examples in which the two appear side by side. Much of the discussion focuses on the distinctions between *iy* and *iw*, which Winand concludes share

15 Anaphoric in a grammatical sense meaning a referent term to a previously mentioned entity within the discourse. Opposed to the rhetoric sense of a repetitious element at the start of an utterance. See Levinson (1983: 67).

16 See: Groll (1991: 147). The differentiation between the second and third person pronoun is clear when compared to English, where the second person pronoun (you) is more direct in terms of interaction than the third person (he/she/it/they). This is partly because the Egyptian language tends when identifying nominalising participles to consider them as distinct to the thing they are identified with.

a semantic meaning, forming a suppletion paradigm within Late Egyptian (Winand 1991: 383–384). *īy/īw* and *šm* are again appreciated in terms of marked and unmarked motion as in the French «aller» and «venir», with a suggestion that it may be possible that *šm* is utilised when the deictic centre is not clear.

To date, Edgar Gregersen (2003: 213–217), has provided the only explicit treatise of the concept of deixis within Egyptian to date, focusing upon the presentation of several exemplars for the lexical pairings of left/right, come/go and in front of/behind, based heavily upon the work of Hill (1982) as well as the notion of deictic centre shifting (another way of describing deictic projection). While offering an overview of the lexical differences, its strength lies in its treatment of the verbs *īw* and *šm*. A precise example of this treatment is a section of the Late Egyptian story, *The Tale of the Two Brothers*.

Ex.1 P. BM EA 10183 [P. d’Orbiney] (*LES* 23,3–6)

...and he spent three years seeking it without finding it. Now, when he began what was four years, his heart desired to **COME** (back) to Egypt, and he said: ‘I shall **GO** tomorrow’ so he said in his heart¹⁷

(13,5) *īw=f ir 3 rnpwt n wh3=f nn gm=f*

hr-ir šsp.n=f t3 nty 4 rnpwt

īw h3ty=f sb(i) iit r kmt

(13,6) *īw=f hr dd īw=i (r) šmt n=i dw3w*

*i.n=f m h3ty=f*¹⁸

Gregersen utilises this passage to illustrate the shift of the deictic centre between two spaces and times, that of the narrator residing in Egypt describing the past and Anubis, residing outside of Egypt describing his personal future. Gregersen also discusses instances found in two Letters to the Dead, and epistolary material dating from between the Eleventh and Twentieth Dynasties which show similar deictic characteristics (Gregersen 2003: 214–215).

Elsewhere, Peust (2007: 67–80) has surveyed the conjugation patterns of go-type verbs within Egyptian. Lincke¹⁹ is also researching the use of verbal deixis in Sahidic Coptic, concentrating upon **ⲉⲓ** ‘come’ and **ⲃⲱⲕ** ‘go’ motion events. Her interpretation of these familiar verbs focuses on the use of the GOAL at Coding Time (CT) or Event Time (ET). The inclusion of these frames of reference expands the understanding of deixis

17 Gregersen (2003: 213–14) translates this passage as ‘When Anubis had spent three years in Asia then he was seized with the wish to COME back to Egypt, and he thought in his heart: ‘Tomorrow I GO forth’.

18 The use of the ethic dative in relation to the deictic verb is an area in which research may be fruitfully developed. Within this passage and others, it may be the case that the use of this form may further enhance the understanding of the use of the deictic verb in relation to telic choice and cognition. JW: see Winand (2006) for the use of the so-called dative with VoM.

19 Papers presented at *Crossroads: Whence and Whither? Egyptian-Coptic Linguistics in Comparative Perspectives*, Berlin, 17–20th February 2016 and *Temps et espace en Égypte ancienne/ Time and Space in Ancient Egypt*, Louvain-la-Neuve, 9–11th June 2016.

within Egyptian from purely spatial dimension allowing for further information from each utterance to be garnered.

1.4 Methodology

The current study takes a phenomenological approach to the problem of deictic verbs of motion and their interpretation. The dataset gathered is formed from sources dating from the Amarna period to the start of the Third Intermediate period, selected due to their internal textual coherences and continuities in language. This chronological selection reduces the potential issues associated with more diachronic studies, preferring to provide a qualitative examination of the shared lexicon of the period in question. A variety of language registers and genres are included, to eliminate as much as is feasible, the specific idiolects of corpora.

Each instance forms part of human rhetoric to describe divine movement, in other words, they are used in personal invocations or to describe divine movement in relation to the individual. The verbs on which this study focuses are *īy/īw*²⁰, *šm*, and *pr(i)*. Each of these verbs expresses a true motion event/translational motion.²¹ Based upon the concept of lexical pairing within languages, this study originally began with the assumption that *šm* would be used as the antithesis to *īy/īw* expressing negative and positive divine interaction. This was influenced by my own native language, English, and previous observations of *īy/īw* and *šm* as antonyms in specific usage. Experimental data made it clear that *šm* was not employed in this manner case, as such *ʕm* and other phrases describing rotational motion are included as part of this paper²².

2 Findings: ‘come’, ‘go’ and others

2.1 ‘Come’

Of the instances of *īy/īw* ‘come’ within the sources examined, there are three tropes which describe its usage within the sources: as part of an invocation, as part of the narrative and functioning as characterisation. Of the deictic motion verbs examined in this study, it is the most numerous, reflecting the interactive quality of this divine during this time.

20 *īw* and *īy* are often considered as two verbs, however, Winand (1991: 38) has shown that while they show morphological variances, they do not show any semantic differences.

21 I.e motion in which a body moves from one point to another. Cf. Goddard (1997: 147–162).

22 The question of whether ‘turn’ is deictic or not was raised within discussion at *Temps et espace en Égypte ancienne/ Time and Space in Ancient Egypt*, Louvain-la-Neuve, 9–11th June 2016. It appears that the perception of such verbs is highly influenced by personal native language. The author takes the position that if turning towards/away, this motion can only be understood in terms of the view of the speaker as it relies on its perception of the face or the back of the head which would not be perceived by a separate observer.

2.1.1 Using *īy/īw* ‘come’ as an invocation

The most common usage of ‘come’ is in the form of the direct address to the divine, expressed though the imperative form. Deictically the speaker is the GOAL at coding time and thus fulfils the role of deictic centre and the focus of the utterance. The speaker often provides further support for this using *n=i*. Using this idiom, the individuals place themselves at the centre of their language world in terms of time and space with the divine reacting as the addressee.

Ex.2 P. BM EA 10335 (*KRI* VII: 416,8–9)
 ...saying: ‘Come [to me Amun] of Pa-[Kh]enty, my good and beloved lord.
 (rt.1) *ḏd=f mī [n=i imn]* (rt.2) *p3[h]nty p3y=i nb nfr mr*
 [The same invocation is repeated vs.3–4]

Ex.3 O. BM EA 5625 (*KRI* VI: 252, Demarée 2002: Pl.9–10)
 ...saying: ‘Come to me, my good lord!
 (rt.3) *m-ḏd mī n=i p3y=i nb nfr*

Ex.4 P. BM EA 10243 [P. Anastasi II] *Prayer to Pre-Herakhti* (*LEM* 18,8–10)
 Come to me Pre-Herakhti so that you may make a plan to me.
 (10,1) *mī n=i p3-r^c-ḥr-3ḥ.tī īry=k n=i šhrw*
 Come to me every day Atum, You are the august god!
 (10,2) *mī n=i itm r^c-nb ntk p3 ntr špsy*

Ex.5 P. BM EA 10780 verso (Gardiner 1935: II pl. 67–8)²³
 Come to me Amun, the *X*
mī n=i imn p3 ḥ

Ex.6 Cairo JE 37463 (*Urk.* 22: 2075–2076)
 Come in peace (my) lord Nebkheperure.
 (vs.1) *mī m ḥtp nb(=i) nb-ḥprw-r^c*

In a few examples, the petitioner provides a reasoning for his/her desire of divine interaction. Predictably, given the human condition, the most common iteration following the invocation is a wish to be saved. A small number of other wishes are also expressed.

Ex.7 P. BM EA 10244 [P. Anastasi V] *Prayer to Thoth for skill in writing* (*LEM*: 232–234)
 Come to me Thoth,
 (9,2) *mī n=i ḏhwti*
 Come to me, so you can advise me,
 (9,3) *mī n=i īry=k n=i šhrw*
 [9,3 repeated verbatim at 9,7]

23 This phrase is repeated as the introduction to each utterance in this hymn; only one instance is presented of the seven preserved. Gardiner (1935: I, 120, f.4) notes that the copy of this text inscribed upon P. Chester Beatty XI (PBM EA 10691) omits *mī n=i*. It is probable that it was intended as an implied anaphora rhetorically i.e. the lines which follow and omit the phrase are served by the original.

Ex.8 P. BM EA 10185 [P.Sallier I] *Prayer to Thoth* (LEM: 86,5)

The one who takes water (from) a distant place²⁴, come (to me?) so that you may save me, O silent one, Thoth.

(8,5) *p3 iṭzy mw (m) st w3w mī (n=i) šd=k wi p3 grw dḥwty*

Ex.9 O. Gardiner 45 (HO I: pl.viii, 1)

Come to me Amun, save [me...]

(rt.1) *mī n=i imn šd [-wi...]*

Come to me Amun, save [me...]

[...] *p3y [... rest lost...]*

(rt.4) *mī n=i imn šdy [-wi...]*

(rt.5) [...] *p3y [...]*

Ex.10 O. Gardiner 46 (HO I: pl.viii, 2)

[Com]e to me Amun, Lord of strength.

Come to me, so that (my) heart may rejoice your successful deed

Come (to me²⁵), that you might save (me) from the speech of dreadful people, (from) the noise of their mouth.

(rt.1) [*mī*] *n=i imn nb nḥt*

mī n=i {-k} rš (rt.2) ib(=i) ḥr sp=k mʿr

mī (n=i) nḥm=k m (rt.3) r3 n rmṯ n ḥryt m ḥrw (rt.4) r3=w

In ex. 11, the lot of the soldier is compared to that of the scribe. While the scribe is saved from toil and protected from all kinds of work (P.BM EA 10185 6,10), the soldier is not as fortunate, contending with the wilderness and the enemy:

Ex.11 P. BM EA 10185 [P. Sallier I] *The profession of a scribe is superior to all* (LEM: 84,16–17)

...the soldier goes and calls to his god: ‘Come to me, so you may save me’.

(7,5) *iw p3 wʿw (ḥr) šmt ḥr (7,6) ʿš n nṯr=f mī n=i šd=k wi*

In the case of the soldier, his SOURCE is known by the narrator (likely the camp), but the GOAL is not thus necessitating the semantically weaker ‘go’. The motion of the soldier as described by the narrator provides the first CT and first event. The deictic centre then shifts from the narrator to the soldier, who invokes the divine using *mī*, creating a second coding time and placing themselves at the deictic centre and also the GOAL of the utterance.

The shift between the narrator and the speaker is also present in ex. 12, which opens as an invocation on the part of the the narrator (as speaker 1), stating that others (as speaker 2) would also call out to Amun. This provides two coding times and thus two separate GOAL, that of speaker 1 and that of speaker 2, acting as a prototypical devotee. Ex. 13 develops further the positioning of the divine in relation to numerous coding times.

24 As the following utterance takes the form of an invocation, it seems likely that this means that Thoth can find water in a distant place and thus help the devotee.

25 Possible implied inclusion due to the repetition in the two previous utterances.

Ex.12 P.BM EA 10691 [P.Chester Beatty XI] (Gardiner 1935: II Pl.67)
 (Come to me) Amun, the sweet breeze to the man who is in [captivity]. [He who calls to] him: ‘Come to me, Amun!’ – when the day dawns, you have released him.
 (vs. 2,7) (*mī n=i*) *imn p3 t3w nḏm n s [nty] m [hn]i [...]=f mī n=i imn ḥd-t3 iw whʕw=k -sw*

Ex.13 P.BM EA 10249 [P. Anastasi IV] *Longing to Memphis* (LEM: 39,12–13)
 Come for (me) Ptah, to take me to Memphis, may you allow (me) to see you freely!
 (5,2) *mī n(=i) pth r iṯt=i r mn-nfr* (5,3) *dī=k m3=i tw m wstn*

In Ex. 13 Ptah is initially invoked with ‘come’, centering the utterance deictically upon the individual. The request entails a further motion event as it is followed directly with the wish that the individual may be taken (*iṯt*) to Memphis (as a second expressed GOAL). A similar encoding may be seen in exx. 14–15:

Ex.14 O.Petrie 39 (HO I: pl.viii, 3)
 Whenever I come forth to go about, bring me (back) to your city Amun
 (rt.4) *tnw pr=i r mšʕ²⁶ in wī r* (rt.5) *nīwt=k imn*

Ex.15 O. Cairo Unnumbered (HO I: pl.v, 1)
 He who is (in) Syria (says²⁷): ‘Come, bring me to Egypt!’
 (rt. 2) *p3 nty (m) ḥ3-rw (ḥr-dḏ) mī in -wī r kmt*

Though they have not been fully examined within Egyptian, the differences between the causative deictic verbs ‘bring’ and ‘take’ have been explored by Fillmore (1997: 82–83,91), who related the use of these verbs to those of ‘come’/‘go’, interpreting ‘go’ and ‘take’ as ‘motion toward a location which is distinct from the speaker’s location at coding time... the encoder is at P₁ and T₁’ (Fillmore 1997: 83). This situates ‘take’ (ex. 13) in the future after Ptah has come to the individual. The deictic movement ex. 14 may be summarised in three stages:

1. COME
 The movement of Ptah towards the deictic centre of the individual (CT)
 Individual functions as GOAL
 P_n T_n
2. The god is with the individual (ET)
3. TAKE
 The movement of the individual and Ptah towards Memphis
 Individual functions as SOURCE, Memphis functions as GOAL
 P₁ T₁

²⁶ The writing *m-ʕ šmt ʕ* is likely a corruption of *mšʕ* meaning ‘to go on a journey’ *Wb* II, 156 carried into the Coptic **ⲙⲟⲟⲩⲉ** (Crum 1939: 204–206).

²⁷ *ḥr-dḏ* see Kitchen (2007: 152).

The utilisation of ‘bring’ *ini* may be interpreted in two ways; either ‘bring’ is chosen in order to indicate that the divine is in the company of the speaker at reference time (Fillmore: 1997, Hypothesis VI) , or that the focus of the second part of the utterance is the GOAL opposed to SOURCE. When comparing the use of *iti* (ex. 13) and *ini* (ex. 14–15), there are clearly pragmatic and deictic factors at work; in the case of *iti* though there is a lexicalised GOAL, the focus is movement away from the location of the speaker [SOURCE] at coding time. *ini* represents a focus on the GOAL, whereby there is movement towards the deictic centre created by the encoder ($P_n T_n$).

These utterances recall several instances in the corpus of *Late Ramesside Letters* in which Dhutmose asks his son, Butehamun, to appeal to Amun, asking him to ‘Bring me back alive’²⁸. In this utterance, ‘bring’ is projected from the CT (when the letter was written), and beyond the RT (reading the letter) to an ET further in the future when Amun is petitioned in Thebes by the recipients of Dhutmose’s letters. This places the focus of this future utterance on the location of the petitioners, acting as the projected deictic centre.

2.1.2 Using ‘come’ in narrative

Following their supplications, the speaker sometimes goes on to explain further their interaction with the divine.

Ex.16 P. BM EA 10249 [P. Anastasi IV] *Supplications to Amun in a year of need* (LEM: 45,6 and 45,9–10)

Come to me Amun, save me in the wretched year.

(10,1) *mī n=i imn šd wī m t3 rnpt g3b*

I found²⁹ Amun having come in peace, the sweet breezes before him.

(10,3) *gm(=i) imn* (10,4) *iw m htp p3 t3w ndm r-h3t=f*

Ex.17 The Qadesh Poem of Ramesses II (KRI II: 43,1–6)

I found that Amun came when I called him,

(§123) *gm.n=i imn iw dr ʕš=i n=f*

Ex.18 Graffito of Pawah in the tomb of Pairi (Gardiner 1928: Pl.VI)

You will come from afar so that you may allow your servant, the scribe Pawah to see you.

(22) *iw=k r iy m w3w* (23) *dī=k ptr tw b3k im sš p3-w3h*

28 This phrase appears in seventeen of the Late Ramesside Letters. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13, 14, 15, 23, 24, 28, 29.

29 *Contra Caminos* (1954: 171) who reads *gm* as a particle meaning ‘perhaps/perchance’. This reading appears to be an *ad hoc* solution to allow for a translation which places some uncertainty on the probability of the coming of Amun. No other examples of the use of *gm* as a particle are provided by Caminos. As such, within this instance *gm(i)* is translated as a verb. It may also be possible to read the passive *sdmw=f* which has some survival into Late Egyptian, hence ‘finding’.

Ex.19 P. Berlin 20377 (KRI III: 654,11–12)

I found that the Lord of the Gods had come in the north wind, with sweet breezes in front of him.

(8) *gm. (9)n=i nb ntrw iw m mhyt t3w ndm r-h3t=f*

Ex.20 P. Turin N 50058 (KRI III: 773,4–5)

...and I called out to my mistress finding she came to me with sweet breezes.

(11) *iw=i hr ʕš n t3y=i (12) hnt gm(=i) st ii.ti n=i m t3w ndm*

Ex.21 TT 409 – Samut called Kyky (KRI III: 336,12)

She has come, the north wind in front of her, since I called upon her name.

(9) *ii.ti mhyt r-h3t=s dr (10) ʕš=i hr rn=s*

This narrative use of ‘come’ also shows deictic projection. In ex. 22 Paser exhorts the King to be firm, reminding him of the presence of Amun-Re. The speaker (Paser) does not function as the deictic centre, which is fulfilled by the King as Amun-Re moving towards him as GOAL. Ex. 23 also shows this feature; as the divine speaks directly to Djehutiemhab in a dream, the goddess fulfils the role of speaker and Djehutiemhab that of the GOAL.

Ex.22 P. Turin 1940–1941 *Tuthmose III in Syria* (Botti 1955: Fig.2)

Allow me to speak, so that you may strengthen your heart, King Menkheperre l.p.h!

Look, Amun-Re King of the Gods, your good father, has come for you, so that he may do for you every matter that is in your heart.

(2, rt.2) *imi dd(=i) n=i ih smn=k ib=k nsw mn-hpr-rʕ ʕ.w.s*

(2, rt.3) *mk imn-rʕ nsw ntrw p3y=k it nfr iw n=k iry=f n=k hrt nb(t) nty m ib=k*

Ex.23 TT 194 – Djehutiemhab³⁰ (KRI VII: 153,14–15)

I am the beautiful *Hely*³¹, in the [form³²] of Mut, who has come in order to instruct you:

(11) *ink hnrii nfrt iw ir[w?...] n mwt*

i-irt^{III} (12) *ii r mtr=k*

2.1.3 Using ‘come’ as part of characterisation

As a third reflex of the use of ‘come’ in relation to the divine is characterisation. Particularly notable is the use of ‘come’ within epithets in inscriptions which correspond to the personal

30 (Text 119 (Scene 52.1) also known as ‘A Dream from Hathor’.

31 Frood (2007: 239) notes that *Hely* is also used as a personal (human) name, thus suggesting a greater level of intimacy between the goddess and Djehutiemhab.

32 Due to a lacuna, the full meaning of this line is unclear, though I am inclined to agree with Seyfried (1995: 72), who suggests that given what remains of the [eye] (D4) and possible [likeness] (A53) classifiers, makes the reading ‘Abbild’ or ‘Wesen’ possible.

33 Reading it as an early writing of the verb *iri* used periphrastically. In proper Late Egyptian one would expect *iir ii r mtr=k*. cf. Junge (2005: 133).

piety tradition. These epithets place the prototypical speaker of the *nmḥ^{HS}* at the centre of the utterance. The implications of this use will be discussed in section 3.2 below.

Ex.24 Turin N 50042 (KRI I: 391,1–2)

I adore Re when he sets, the noble god, beloved and merciful, who hears prayers, who hears the petitions of one who calls to him, who comes (at) the voice of one who pronounces his name

(2) *dwz* (3) *=i r^c m ḥtp=f p₃ nṯr špss mry ḥtpy* (4) *sdm nhy sdm snmḥ n i-š n=f*
(5) *ii (ḥr) ḥrw n dmw rn=f*

Ex.25 Berlin 20377 (KRI III: 653–655)

Upper Register (KRI III: 653–5–7)

Amun-Re, Lord of the thrones of the two lands, great god foremost in Karnak, noble god who hears prayers, who comes at the voice of the *nmḥ* and (the) afflicted, who gives breath to the weak.

(1) *imn-r^c nb nswt t₃wy* (2) *nṯr ʿz* (3) *ḥnty ipt-sw nṯr šps sdm nḥt ii ḥr ḥrw* (4) *nmḥ ind dd t₃w n g₃by*

[The epithet ‘who comes at the voice of the *nmḥ*’ is repeated in *Lower Register* lines 4 and 7]

Lower Register (KRI III: 654,6)

For you are [merciful³⁵] when one calls to you, you are he who comes from afar.

(5) *ntk [ḥtp]* (6) *iw=tw ḥr i ʿš n=k ntk p₃ ii m w₃iw*

2.2 Negating ‘come’

There are no examples focussing wholly upon a lack of interaction; a situation which may contribute to the absence of ‘go’ type verbs within the examined corpus. Nevertheless, there are a small number of instances which describe a situation in which the desired interaction is not achieved, expressed through a negation of ‘come’. In exx. 27–28 the inattention of the divine is not permanent, eventually the divine comes to Neferabu (ex. 26) and the country is set back on track by Tutankhamun.

Ex.26 Turin N 50058 (KRI III: 772,16–773,1)

...and I called out for breeze, without (it) coming to me!

(6) *iw=i ḥr ʿš n t₃w nn iw n=i/=f^{HT}*

34 See: David (2011: 73–85).

35 It is unclear what signs rest in this lacuna, Kitchen (KRI III, 654) suggests three horizontal lines as shown, though contextually *ḥtp* makes more sense.

36 Though the inscription includes both *=i* and *=f* both refer to Neferabu; indeed, the pronoun usage is varied throughout the text. Kitchen (KRI III, 773) annotates *=f* as an error. It is possible that the *=f* may refer to the breeze, so *nn iw=f n=i*.

Ex.27 Tutankhamun Restoration stela CG 34183 (*Urk.* IV,22: 2025–2032)

If one prayed to god to ask from his arm a thing, he wouldn't come at all.

Likewise, if one prayed to any goddess, she wouldn't come at all.

(9) *ir snmḥ=tw n nṯr r nḏ ḥt m-ḥ=f n ḏ.n=f r-sy ir sšzy=tw n nṯrt nb m mūt n ḏ.n=s r-sy*³⁷

2.3 Rotational motion

An additional idiom is present within these sources, involving rotational motion, i.e. turning. While this is not a translational motion, it is highly attentional and may only be understood from the point of the observer and may thus be treated as deictic. As noted earlier in this study, turning is not appreciated as deictic in all languages. While this is the case, the presence of this idiom within the Egyptian texts dealing with divine interaction merits its inclusion in this study.

The idiom of turning is used in positive and negative ways contextually³⁸, this is apparently based upon marked and unmarked lexemes in relation to the body; the face may be turned towards or away from the individual – a clear marker of attention in communication. There is an amount of variations in the choice of idiom/verb chosen to communicate the rotational motion; the most frequent use of this idiom utilises the verb *ʿnn* ‘turn’³⁹ which employs the [reversed legs] classifier (D55), visually which may visually represent this action, moving backwards or similar.

Negative turning

Ex.28 O.Berlin 11247 (*KRI* III: 533,1–4)

Said by the draftsman Pay to his son, the draftsman Pre[...⁴⁰]:

‘Don’t turn your back on me, I am not well. Don’t be s[paring] in tears for me because I am in the [...] my Lord Amun’s back is towards me!’

(rt.1) *ḏd in sš-ḏd pzy n sš=f sš-ḏd pṣ-r* [3 groups]

(rt. 2) *m ḏr ḥṣḥ ḥṣ-k r=i nn tw=i m sš*

m-ḏr g[ṣw](rt. 3) m rmyt n=i pṣ-wn tw=i m pṣ [approx. 2 groups]

(rt. 4) *nb=i imn ḥṣ=f r=i*

Ex. 28 compares the possible disregard of kin with that of the divine. The combination of the verb *ḥṣḥ*⁴¹ and *ḥṣ*⁴² to describe the potential negative action of the son may be under-

37 The writing of *nn sdm.n=f* is considered to be a graphic artefact writing rather than a *bona fide* form. This is supported by the parallel writings which show *nn* and *n*, as such both instances are translated using *n sdm.n=f* form. Bennett (1939: 15).

38 Di Biase-Dyson (Forthcoming) notes a similar dichotomy in the use of the verb *pn* as used within *The Teaching of Menena* which is also rotational.

39 *Wb*, I, 188–189.

40 *KRI* III, 533 restores *ḥtp* to make the recipient of this letter Prehotep. However, as Pay (i) also had a son named Preemhab (i) who was also a draftsman so both sons have the potential to be the recipient of this letter (Davies 1999: 149).

41 *Wb* III, 227.18.

42 *Wb* III, 8–13.

stood only in terms of the speaker's view, and thus may be seen as deictic as this would require the speaker (as deictic centre) to be viewing the back of another. *ḥ3* provides a challenge to felicitous translation, as it is more specific in meaning 'the back of the head'. However, as noted above there is not a marked lexeme in the English language which expressed this idiom clearly, for example: 'my Lord's occiput is towards me!'.⁴³

The idiom of having turned your back to someone provides a clear representation of a lack of attention, whereby, the eyes of the addressee are not focussed upon the speaker⁴³. This idiom can be found in two other ostraca (exx. 30–31) from the village of Deir el-Medina which both involve at least one member of the family of Pay (i)⁴⁴:

Ex.29 O. Černý 19 (KRI III: 534,4–5)

Do not turn your back on anything that I have told you

(vs.5) *m-ir ḥ3ᶜ ḥ3=k r p3*(vs.6) *i-dd=i n=k nbt*

and

Ex. 30 O. W.M. Staring (KRI III: 542,2–3)

Do not turn your back on us, so that you could cheat us

(vs.4) *m-ir ḥ3ᶜ ḥ3=k r=n*⁴⁵ *i*.(vs.5) *g3bw=k n=n*

It is possible that all three of these letters could have been addressed to Preemhab⁴⁶; perhaps he was either exceptionally forgetful or fickle. The context of all three of these instances shows clearly that this phrase is an attentional one, functioning as a deictic marker within the text as it can only be understood from the speaker's viewpoint.

In Ex. 28 (rt.4) instead of requesting action, Pay states that Amun's back is directed towards him, using the adverbial phrase: *nb=i imn ḥ3=f r=i*⁴⁷. Kitchen (*RITA* III, 372) translates this passage as 'Amun [car]es about me.', Keller (2008: 152) also suggests 'my lord Amun is protecting me!'. However, I have yet to find a convincing reason to read *ḥ3* as *ḥ3-ib* meaning 'care' in this case, such a reading would this require textual emendation, as there is no damage to the inscription at this point. Similarly, the writing of *ḥ3* is identical and fully determined in rt.2 as well as rt.4, hence the surviving determinatives do not fit with such a reading.

Given the context of the requests noted above to 'not turn your back' the idea that Amun's back is directed towards Pay and thus the rotational motion is complete and thus the divine does not provide the expected assistance. Pay does not state why Amun would have neglected him, though it is not unusual for the offence to go unmentioned within other texts dealing with divine punishment.

43 Compare invocations to the divine which request *imi ḥr=k n=i* or *ḥr=k n=i* (Jansen-Winkel 2001: 204, n.10). See also Klotz (2016).

44 Davies (1999: Chart 10).

45 Likely an unetymological writing of *r=n* expressed as *i.ir.n=n*.

46 O. W.M. Staring is the only letter of the three which does not have a complete rendering of Preemhab's name, missing the first two groups: likely *p3-rᶜ*.

47 For the use of *ḥ3* as a noun see *Wb* III, 8.5–9, which provides the meanings: Rückseite; Hinterseite; Außenseite; das Hinten; Hinterkopf

Ex.31 Tutankhamun Restoration stela CG 34183 (*Urk.* IV, 22: 2025–2032)

The land was in distress, the gods were turning away from this land.

(7) *wnn* (8) *t3 m sny mnt ntrw mkh3-sn t3 pn*

Ex. 31 further emphasizes the state of divine inattention described by the speaker in ex. 27. The lexical choice of *mkh3* provides a vivid metaphor for the attention, having two related meanings, ‘back of the head’ and the verb ‘to neglect’⁴⁸. In many languages the face, based upon its special qualities, is the marked lexemes, however, Egyptian prefers marked lexemes for the back of the head. This neatly highlights the attentional aspect of deixis, as without the focus of the face/eyes/mouth communication is certainly neglected.

Positive turning

Ex.32 Graffito of Pawah in the tomb of Pairi (Gardiner 1928: Pl.VI)

Turn yourself to us, O Lord of Eternity.

You were here before (anything) had come into being.

You will be⁴⁹ here when they⁵⁰ are gone⁵¹.

(19) *‘n-twst n=n p3 nb nh3*

wn=k dy iw bw (20) *hpr.t*

iw=k dy iw=w Hnw

Ex.33 Turin N 50058 (*KRI* III: 773,6)

She turned to me as a merciful one

(13) *iw=s ‘nn* (14) *n=i m htpy*

Ex.34 Berlin 20377 (*KRI* III: 655,1–2)

The breeze turns back to us in peace. Amun has turned with his winds. As your *Ka* endures, you will be merciful. We⁵³ don’t again turn back.

(11) *swhtw ‘nn.ti n=n m htpw* (12) *imn kdw⁵⁴ hr t3w=f w3h k3=k iw=k r htp bw w3m=n ‘nn*

48 *TLA* Lemma 77100. See also *Wb* II, 163.

49 *iw=k dy* as an analogical Future III, see Winand (1996)

50 Who ‘they’ are is unclear. Assmann (1994: 18) interprets the references to ‘they’ and ‘them’ as the instigators and followers of the Aten religion of the Amarna period. While this is possible, it may be more likely that ‘they’ refers to other gods as a way of expressing the primacy of Amun in the view of Pawah; this would mean that Amun was the first god and that he will outlast all others.

51 *Wb* III, 103.

52 According to Gardiner (1928: 11) which understands an error between the dependent pronoun *-tw* and the suffix pronoun *-tn*, this seems likely given the context in which the god is being addressed.

53 Nebre and Nakhtamun, i.e. the God has turned in a positive way, so the individuals will not turn in a negative way.

54 Kitchen (1999: 288–289).

3 Some considerations

3.1 Deixis and divine attention

The most notable characteristic of the divine interactions examined in this study is the human nature of the divine action. This is exemplified in two ways: the use of deictic verbs is in the same manner as human-human interaction and the perceptual, palpable fashion in which the divine interacts with the human sphere illustrated through contextual elements.

Considering the differing characteristics of the verbs ‘come’/‘go’ as discussed within section 1.3, the instances chosen by Gregersen (2003) and Depuydt (1986) were confined to those in which two human characters were involved. An identical lexicon is utilised to describe the movements and attention of the divine as is used concerning human individuals. By using the same deictic verbs in relation to the divine – which contain the same implicature and entailment – an increasingly personal relationship between humans and the divine is emphasised. Namely, when considered in a cognitive manner, a human ‘coming’ and a god ‘coming’ are the same; they are both palpable and perceptible within the human sphere – an element of perceptual not conceptual reasoning. No matter whether the gods are conceived as visible and living characters, this is ultimately of no consequence to the individual who requires their assistance, they are understood to act as though they were.

There is a distinct absence of gods ‘going’ or moving away from the individual. Instead, the motif of turning away is preferred. This choice appears to express an understanding that the divine character has not completely abandoned the individual: rather they have withdrawn their attention. This structures divine movement using the same lexicon as human-human interaction, it also resists a wholly pessimistic viewpoint, allowing for redemption on the part of the individual.

Outside the use of deictic verbs elements of divine physicality as modelled on human interaction may also be found. For example, in the Qadesh *Poem* of Ramesses II, Amun is perceptibly close to the King, so close that Amun is said to have ‘called from behind (as if) face to face’ (*KRI* II: 43,7–10). On the graffito of Pawah (exx. 17, 29) the phrase ‘desire to see you’ iterated five times has been interpreted as the textual focal point by Assmann (1994: 15)⁵⁵. The phrase ‘give your face...’ *imi hr=k* is employed on O. IFAO 2181 (Posener 1971: 61–62 and pl.15b) and elsewhere, Emerit (2011: 63) references an instance in which the divine is asked to ‘bend an ear’. These elements all contribute to the view of the divine as an active force, modelled upon human interactions⁵⁶. The interactions described within the sources examined above provide a (fairly) synchronic view of the deictic verbs in relation to the divine. The era from which the majority of texts examined within this study originate is frequently branded as one of the personal, interactive deity⁵⁷. Whether the clear quantitative increase of data reflects a ‘qualitative change in Egyptian

⁵⁵ Restated by Spalinger (1998).

⁵⁶ Cf. Xenophanes, *Miscellanies* (5.110).

⁵⁷ See Luiselli 2008 for a summary of the study of personal piety and the related theories.

thought or practice’ (Ritner 1989: 104) is up for discussion⁵⁸. With this broader landscape in mind, there is a noticeable trend in the use of deictic verbs of motion in relation to the divine within textual sources which predate those which are the focus of the current study. Those sources which explore divine interaction via deictic verbs represent ‘come’ type movement of the divine in relation to the deictic centre of the king or the country and *not* the individual. For example, the *Poetical Stela* of Tuthmose III CG 3410 (Urk. IV: 610–619) employs a visually and linguistically anaphoric phrase in which Amun-Re speaks to the King saying: ‘I came to allow you to crush/tread on *X’ ii.n-idi=i titi-k X*, each utterance projects the deictic centre from the speaker to the King⁵⁹. Elsewhere, in the Hymn to Hapi (Helck 1972) the divine is described as coming (*iy*) to Egypt, thus placing the whole country as the deictic centre⁶⁰. While the instances presented are not exhaustive, there is a clear quantitative shift in which the non-royal individual is able to take the role of deictic centre in relation to the motion of the divine.

3.2 Presupposition and the god who ought to attend

Two instances (exx. 26–27) in this study appear to imply that the divine ought to attend when the individual is in need, both are framed as an incomplete or unsuccessful request for assistance. These instances both show elements of presupposition; a reflex of language may be thought of as an element of common ground based upon the context of the utterance, whereby an inference or proposition acts as a pre-condition to the utterance⁶¹. In both instances, the presupposition is formed around an aspectual/change of state predicate for example:

‘John has/hasn’t stopped driving his car’

>> John has been driving his car (Or John used to drive his car)⁶²

This utterance hinges upon the change of state/aspectual verb ‘stop’, there are several aspectual verbs such as: start, finish, carry on, take, leave, enter, come, go and arrive. In the instances mentioned we have a similar cessation voiced through a negation.

‘I called out for breeze, without (it) coming to me!’ (ex. 26)

>> When called upon, the breeze comes

‘If one prayed to god to ask from his arm a thing, he wouldn’t come at all.

Likewise, if one prayed to any goddess, she wouldn’t come at all.’ (ex. 27)

>> If one prays then the gods come

⁵⁸ Lichtheim (1997: 29) suggests a qualitative change, whereby ‘piety has become a visible and verbalised partner of the individual’s morality’. Eyre (2012: 114) expresses scepticism as to what may be understood through changes in belief in comparison to changes in visibility.

⁵⁹ Cf. the Hymns to Senusret III in which the anaphora ‘he has come...’ is repeated in reference to the King (Collier & Quirke 2004: 18).

⁶⁰ Cf. CT IV, 125b–c (S1C) Spell 317.

⁶¹ Huang (2007: 65).

⁶² >> meaning presupposes, ~>> meaning does not presuppose.

Following these sentiments, Tutankhamun (ex. 27) continually reiterates the previous state of affairs and describes how these situations are being reversed within his reign. Similarly, later in the inscription of Neferabu (detailed fully in ex. 18) his pleas to the divine are heeded. Both texts contextually reinforce the presupposition that the divine ought to come to his assistance, by discussing the eventual positive results, therefore the previous aspectual change to the negative has been reversed.

It may also be possible to view the use of the epithets found in exx. 22–23 as a variety of presupposition. Namely, that by stating that the god is a one who does *x*, then the gods do *x* as a matter of habit, as an intrinsic element to their character.

This bias towards positivity is further present in the inscriptions of Berlin 20377 (*KRI* III: 655,2) and the graffito of Pawah (Gardiner 1928: Pl.VI, 21–22). In both sources, the speaker uses the form of an oath to guarantee the positive interaction of the divine, that ‘As your Ka endures...’ interaction in the form of visibility (Pawah) or mercy (Berlin 20377) will occur. This approach provides a naive paradox for the divine, almost forcing their hand into action.

3.3 Turning the back and turning around

The examples presented in this study have highlighted another manner of describing a lack of attention in a deictic manner. There are six examples from the examples presented which a character is said to have ‘turned’ or ‘turned their back’. There are three lexical variations of this attentional metaphor which can carry both positive and negative implicature: *ḥn(n)*⁶³, *mkḥz*⁶⁴, and *ḥzḥz*⁶⁵ – with a single instance in which *ḥd(w)* is utilised⁶⁶. This choice is also notably human as it does not use the generic *sḥ* (*Wb.* IV, 8.14–10.3).

The attentional metaphor of turning is not limited to positive or negative motive within the instances presented in this chapter, as there are examples of turning in a negative way i.e. being ignorant as well as turning in a positive way, i.e. turning back. Both share an attentional nature through face to face interaction – either the face of the divine is turning towards the individual in a positive manner or away in a negative manner. For example: ‘Turn yourself to us, O Lord of Eternity.’ (ex. 32) and ‘my Lord Amun’s back is towards me!’ (ex. 28). The same idiom is used to describe human motion, for example, within the *Late Egyptian Miscellanies* there are several examples in which an individual turns (their) back (*ḥzḥz*) upon writing, responsibility or their profession, for example:

63 *Wb.* I, 188.

64 *Wb.* II, 163.

65 *Wb.* III, 227 and Caminos (1954: 137).

66 Kitchen (1999: 288–289), *ḥd* is a common Late Egyptian lexeme meaning to turn (the ancestor of the Coptic *ⲕⲱⲧⲉ*).

Ex.35 P.BM EA10185 [P.Sallier I] *The scribe is not taxed like the peasant* (LEM 83,4-5)

Furthermore, I am told that you have abandoned writing and whirl round in pleasures, that you have applied yourself to working in the fields and have turned your back (upon) god's words ⁶⁷

(6,1) *r-nty dd.tw n=i h3c=k sš š3m^c=k m i3bw di=k hr=k (r) b3k (6,2) m šht h3c=k h3=k <r> mdw-ntr*

Ex.36 P. BM EA 10249 [P.Anastasi IV] *The Idle Scribe* (LEM: 37,5–6)

I will do all these things to him after he has turned his back on his office.

(3,2) *i.ir=i n=f nn r-drw iw h3c=f h3=f r i3wt(=f)*

The variability of this metaphor keenly represents the change of attention over time. Whether one is turning away or turning back, this expounds an aspectual change in the same manner that those instances which entail a presupposition. Particularly, that each movement may only be understood as movement from an opposite. For example, if turning back is requested by several individuals, we may understand a rotational movement in terms of space, but also appreciate a sense of time – that previous to this invocation, divine attention is removed.

This idiom is also present in texts which date to periods outside the purview of this study (exx. 38–39). For example, dating to the reign of Tuthmose III, the stela of the scribe of recruits Intef (Chicago OIM 14053), utilises *mkh3* in the same way to the Restoration Stela of Tutankhamun (ex. 31) to describe neglect of one's city. On the Banishment stela, where the high priest of Amun, Menkheperre praises 'the great god', *ʿn(n)* is used to express a positive turning to heal the sick.

Ex.38 The Stela of Intef Chicago OIM E 14053 ⁶⁸

...god is father and mother for him who places him in his heart. (He) turns away from the one who disregards his city ...

(9) *ntr it mwt n rdi sw (10) m ib=f mkh3(=f) wny niwt=f*

Ex.39 Banishment stela Louvre C 256 (Beckerath 1968: 7–36)

(He) turns back to heal the sick, looking towards mankind, without him forgetting anyone

(14) *ʿn(=f) sw r snfr mn ptri r rmt nn mh=f hr nb*

3.4 Winds and Breezes

The metonym of winds and breezes broadly meaning the divine (often associated with grace/favour) is seen in six examples in this study. Due to its utilisation in prominent examples from the personal piety corpus, it was one aim of this study to assess whether the

⁶⁷ A copy of this section is also preserved in P. BM EA 10244 [P. Anastasi V] LEM: 64–65. A similar passage may also be found in P. BM EA 10244 [P. Anastasi V] *Reproaches to an idle and incompetent scribe* (LEM 58).

⁶⁸ Photograph: <https://oi-idb-static.uchicago.edu/multimedia/2051586/N34321.1920x1200.jpg> (Accessed: 29/04/2016)

pairing of a deictic verb and winds/breezes was a set lexical grouping. I have classified the winds/breezes as a metonym for the divine due to its dual usage as an addition to the divine (i.e. god coming with winds) but also as a wholesale replacement for a divine character; for example, when individuals call out for the wind rather than directly for the divine (Turin N 50058 ex. 24)⁶⁹. *ṯꜣw* is used to describe several air-based phenomena including winds, breezes and breath⁷⁰ and is found across textual genres and time periods⁷¹.

The representations of the divine as ‘coming’ or ‘turning’ relates neatly to the palpability of winds, in that air can be felt to come towards an individual or to turn around them, but it is difficult to explain where a wind is going. This metonym appears to function deictically in two ways. They are described identically to that of the divine, through verbs of motion. Secondly, the movement of the divine can be directly understood through the position of the winds/breezes through the interpretation of prepositional phrases.

Exx. 16, 19, 21 all describe the phenomenon as ‘in front of/before’ the divine using *r-ḥꜣt*. The work of Hill (1982: 13–42) examines in depth the use of such deictic markers as a means of understanding the position of objects in relation to the speaker and other characters. The ego-centric nature of deictic markers suggests that there is a perceptual element placing the winds in front of the divine, between the individual and the divine.

Di Biase-Dyson (2012: 247–292) has conducted a wider investigation into complex prepositions formed with *ḥꜣt*. These complex prepositions are formed using a simple preposition (*r/m/hr*) + relational noun (*ḥꜣt*), thus describing the location of a noun in relation to another one (Hopper & Traugott 1993). Generally, these complex prepositions relate nouns in a ‘spatio-temporal’ sense⁷²; while the diachronic study of Di Biase-Dyson (2012: 247) shows an increasing level of abstraction during the latter part of the New Kingdom. Due to the nature of sgrammaticalization, it is difficult to establish whether *r-ḥꜣt* is being used to relate a physical location or something more abstract through a more grammaticalized form. This form of language change also accounts for the developing uses of *r-ḥꜣt* as well as *m-ḥꜣt* and *hr-ḥꜣt*. This change allows for the development of meanings related to the concept of pre-eminence, as an extension of the spatial preposition usage. The variability of the use of *ḥꜣt* based prepositions is clear. As Di Biase-Dyson (2012: 267, 271) states, in separate instances during the New Kingdom, the use of *r-ḥꜣt* spatially is rare whilst also stating that it is rarely used to describe pre-eminence.

A combination of the approaches of Hill and Di Biase-Dyson provides for an understanding of the divine in relation to the individual in a highly personal and direct

69 Cf. Tuthmose III in Syria (X+2,6) the King requests assistance in the form of a ‘single rebellious wind comes to me...’ (Manassa 2013: 112–114, Botti 1955: Fig.2) within which three elements of the god Montu are hidden.

70 *Wb* V, 350–353.

71 Pascal Vernus (1976: 139–145) has examined the phrase ‘breath of the mouth’ in Middle Kingdom texts, while Shlomit Israeli (1998: 271–283) has examined the use of the phrase *ṯꜣw n ṛnh* in the Medinet Habu war texts of Ramesses III. In P.Ebers (854f), life is intrinsically linked to hearing the breath of life (Emerit 2011: 64–65) and in the Pyramid texts, the south wind is described as nurturer and the north wind as nurse (Allen 2005: *PT* 107d).

72 Most directly as a BLC (Basic Location Construction).

manner, via not only the deictic verbs of motion but also the positioning of other elements in relation to the divine.

4 Conclusions

Through the examples discussed above, it is clear that when communicating positive divine interaction ‘come’ (*iy/iw*) is employed, placing focus upon the individual as the deictic centre. The instances gathered also show a notable preference to the use of the direct address form of the imperative. In opposition to this, whilst it is the case in other languages, ‘go’ (*šm*) is not used. Inattention on the part of the divine is defined through the negation of ‘come’ or by lexemes and idioms which are related to rotational motion and the back of the head. Divine inattention is impermanent; several examples iterate a presupposition of divine intervention to the individual. Similarly, the idiom of turning is not limited to positive action. Overall the description of divine interaction within these examples is modelled directly upon human-human interaction, thus allowing for this non-royal to act as the deictic centre.

Deictic analysis of Egyptian sources has, to date, been mostly limited to documentary texts which express elements of human-human interaction. However, if we are to understand a divine which may be communicated with, the reflexes of language must also function in relation to the divine.

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The Representation of Space, Time, and Event Sequence in an Ancient Egyptian Netherworld Comic

Daniel A. Werning¹

Abstract

This article explores signs of space and time in the ancient Egyptian graphic narrative “Book of Caverns,” inspired by comic research, Peircean semiotics, and diagrammatology/*Diagrammatik* research. Based on a thorough distinction between “narrative” space or time and “narrated” space or time, the panel tableau layouts and their relation to narrated space and time are discussed. The tableau layouts are found to be “productive” for the narrative sequence. A major result is a mental map of the reconstructed mental model of the Egyptian underworld geography as underlying the Book of Caverns. Signs of “situation time” are identified in the very form of the sun god. Furthermore, the narrative sequences are explored and compared to the probable narrated sequences of the journey. Inspired by comic research, the article identifies and analyzes comic phenomena in Caverns such as splash panels, opening panels functioning as establishing shots, split panels, and polyptychs. Moreover, the occurring panel-to-panel transitions are described and problems related to their categorization are exposed.

Keywords

Book of Caverns, comic, graphic narrative, graphic novel, netherworld book, underworld, journey, Aker, time, space, diagram, topography, mental map, narrated space, narrative space, narrated time, narrative time, tableau, register, productive layout, split panel, opening panel, splash panel, polyptych, panel-to-panel transitions.

Contents

- 1 Introduction
 - 1.1 Netherworld “comics”
 - 1.2 Narrated vs. narrative time/space

1 [EXC Topoi, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin \(name\[at\]email.com\)](#).

This article is one of the main outcomes of my research project C-4-5 “Diagrammatic Representations of the Ancient Egyptian Underworld” in the research group C-4 “Pictorial Constructions of Space(s)” in the Excellence Cluster 264 “Topoi. The Formation and Transformation of Space and Knowledge in Ancient Civilizations” (2013–2017).

- 2 Signs of Space and the geography of the underworld
 - 2.1 Earth material texture
 - 2.2 Panel tableaus, splash panels, and narrated realms
 - 2.3 Spatial interpretation of the tableau architecture (2.3.1 Basic schemes | 2.3.2 Regions of hell below the main level | 2.3.3 The Aker scene)
 - 2.4 Topographical mental model: reconstruction of a mental map of the underworld
- 3 The journey of the sun god: time, event sequence, and narration
 - 3.1 Indexical Signs of Time
 - 3.2 Panel sequences (3.2.1 Reappearance of the main character | 3.2.2 Split panels and polyptychs | 3.2.3 Narrative times: reading sequences in tableaus | 3.2.4 Narrated time: reconstruction of the narrated temporal sequence | 3.2.5 Panel-to-panel transitions)
- 4 Conclusions

1 Introduction

1.1 Netherworld “comics”

This article investigates the representation of space and time in the diagrammatic text/image composition of the Ancient Egyptian netherworld book “Book of Caverns” (henceforward simply “Caverns”) from the 13th century BCE.² Written after the “Amduat” and the “Book of Gates,” Caverns is the youngest of three great underworld books from the New Kingdom (16th–12th century BCE).³ The main topic of these books is the journey of the sun god from the western to the eastern horizon through the underworld and his interactions with its inhabitants. Probably more than the earlier two books, Caverns also tries to represent, I argue, a coherent mental model of the geography of the netherworld.⁴

The underworld books include images and accompanying texts. Originally, they were composed in the form of long papyri, drawn and written in black and red ink, the images sometimes colored. The images are usually arranged in tableaus with three rows, “registers” in Egyptological terminology (Fig. 1). The tableaus are comparable to the page or “tableau” in modern comics, while scenes correspond to “panels” in comic terminology.⁵ Texts appear between as well as inside image tableaus. Inside the tableaus they appear

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- 2 Werning (2011). Latin nos. of scenes in this article refer to this publication.
 - 3 Hornung (1999). For the character of a loose set of scenes of what is traditionally called “Book(s) of the Earth,” see Roberson (2012: 8–9).
 - 4 Barta (1987: 10) believed quite the contrary: “Eingeteilt in sechs Abschnitte verzichtet [das Höhlenbuch] auf die Wiedergabe geographisch-lokaler Verhältnisse der Unterwelt, wie sie wenigstens andeutungsweise in Amduat und Pfortenbuch mit Hilfe der Lokalisierung des Unterweltsstromes im Mittelregister der Stundengebiete verwirklicht worden waren.” This article shows to what extent this judgement was unjustified.
 - 5 Abel & Klein (2016: 89), Schüwer (2008: 210). Cf. the brief treatment of an Egyptian scene tableau as a comic by McCloud (1993: 12–15).

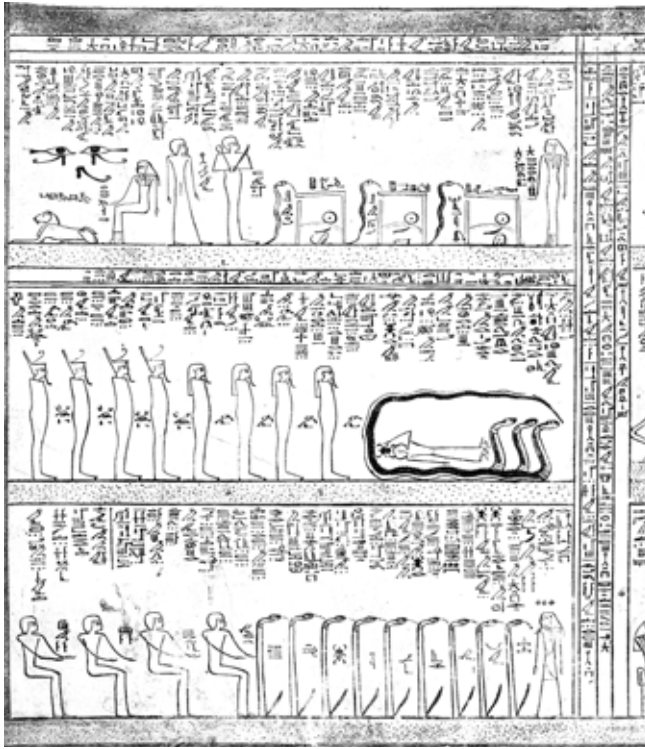


Figure 1 | 6th tableau of the Amduat on a wall of the tomb of Amenophis II

inside, above, or next to individual scenes. In contrast to modern comics,⁶ scenes are not normally separated by lines or “gutters.” In the 3rd–7th tableaux of Caverns, however, the margins of the text columns between scenes simultaneously create comparable dividers. The inscriptions inside the scenes usually refer to specific figures. In this case, they are oriented in accordance with these figures. There are various categories of texts and text–image relations:⁷ most importantly, (i) identifying names or labels next to individual figures, (ii) direct speech, (iii) narrative texts, and (iv) descriptive texts. Furthermore, there are (v) offering statements and/or (vi) litanies, which are probably part of a secondary text layer. Moreover, some copies exhibit (vii) personalized textual or pictorial additions for the respective book “owners,” which are clearly secondary.⁸

As to Caverns specifically, it has to be imagined as a long papyrus with seven large image tableaux including ca. 80 scenes and accompanying texts.⁹ Between the tableaux, there were long text blocks (see Fig. 2).

6 McCloud (1993: ch. 3), Abel & Klein (2016: 91).

7 On text–image relations in modern comics, see McCloud (1993: 152–155).

8 Werning (2007: sect. II.3), Werning (2011, I: ch. III.C.6).

9 Cf. Werning (2011, I: 5–8 with fig. 1).

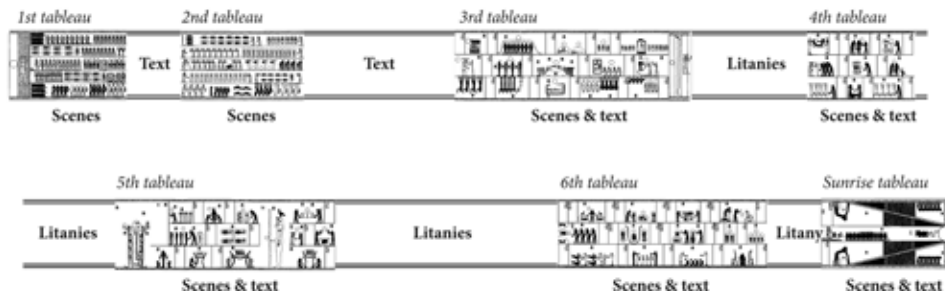


Figure 2 | Schema of the Book of Caverns

Similar Ancient Egyptian compositions have already, however rarely, been compared with modern “comics” (alias “graphic novels”) in comic research¹⁰ as well as in Egyptology.¹¹ However, it has been acknowledged in and outside Egyptology that the case of Egyptian “comics” is special in certain respects. For example, the border between writing and image is less clear in the Egyptian case.¹² The Egyptian hieroglyphic script also allows for different writing directions and orientations.¹³ This serves the same purpose as the “spikes” of word balloons in modern comics. The text–image relations are also not quite the same. As mentioned above, in addition to direct speech and descriptive inscriptions, Egyptian “comics” also usually contain short identifying labels referring to the figures.¹⁴

In this “comparative” spirit, the following investigation is partially inspired by comic research,¹⁵ the notion of “comic” being understood along the lines of Scott McCloud’s definition as

-
- 10 McCloud (1993: 13–15) suggests comparing a scene tableau from the tomb of Menena with modern “comics” (cf. his definition on p. 9).
- 11 Assmann’s (1998, 147) higher judgement of the potential of Egyptian multimodal compositions as compared with modern comics (“komplex[e] Lesebilder, die [...] in dem Reichtum der Verbindung von Bild und Schrift *weit über das hinausgehen*, was selbst auf dem Gebiet der modernen Bildnarrativik (Comics) möglich ist”, highlighting D.W.) seems to be partial if we look at the full potential of modern comics (cf. McCloud 1993: e.g., ch. 5, 8; for the frequent bad judgement of comics as opposed to literature and pictures, see especially ch. 1 and 9).
- 12 McCloud (1993: 142, 145 “pictures and words once *together* in the center of our iconic abstraction chart”, 161); Assmann (1988: 147): “der *fließende Übergang* zwischen *Beischrift* (der ins Bild integrierte Text) und *Illustration* (das in den Text integrierte Bild) im Rahmen gegenseitiger ›Determination‹”; Lapčić (2014); D.A. Werning, “Mental Images and Diagrams in Egyptian Art,” in: Bawden *et al.* (2016). Note however that the underworld books were originally written in *cursive* hieroglyphs with some hieratic sign shapes (Werning 2011, I: 74–77), which are less iconic than monumental “hieroglyphs” proper.
- 13 Assmann (1988: 147): “die vollkommene *Flexibilität* der Schrift, die sich mit dem Wechsel der Schriftrichtung (rechts/links, horizontal/vertikal) vollkommen der Bildkomposition und der Figurenrichtung [...] anpassen kann.” Note, however, that, in modern comics, the inscription framing and the word balloons and their shape (cf. McCloud 1993: 134) fulfill similar functions.
- 14 Assmann (1988: 147): “die *dreifache Funktion* der Schrift, das Bild zu *erklären* [...]), die Personen usw. zu *identifizieren* [...] und durch Wiedergabe der Reden, also *Tonaufzeichnung* multimedial zu ergänzen.”
- 15 Abel & Klein (2016), McCloud (1993), Nöth (2007; in print), Schüwer (2008).

“juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer” (McCloud 1993: 9).

1.2 Narrated vs. narrative time/space

For the discussion of the representation of event sequence and space in the underworld books, it is useful to differentiate between “narrated” time or space, on the one hand, and “narrative” time¹⁶ or space, on the other hand (cf. Tables 1 and 2). In our case, rather than time in general, temporal sequence is especially interesting. “Narrated” time/sequence is the natural flow of events that the comic tells. “Narrative” time/sequence refers to the order of the discussion of events as aligned by the author. (“Narration” time, the time of the actual reading of the book is not relevant for my discussion.)

Table 1 | Narrated vs. narrative vs. narration time (in the underworld books)

<i>Narrated time</i>	<i>Narrative time</i>	<i>Narration times</i>
Continuous, unidirectional	Sequence as laid out in the comic (with, e.g., flashbacks, ...)	Time of individual performance (e.g., reading)
Event A	Event C	Event C
Event B	Event A	–
Event C	Event B	Event B
...	...	Event B
Event Z	Event Z	...
(Imagined) journey of the sun god	Presentation of the journey in the Netherworld Book	Reading of (parts) of the Netherworld Book

Similarly, I use “narrated” space for the spatial mental model of an imagined 3-dimensional space, for example, the underworld topography, and “narrative” space for the usually 2-dimensional spatial arrangement of the figures, scene panels, and tableaux in the book. As for the narrative space, it may be helpful to further differentiate between the “original” narrative space, as intended by the author, and the narrative spaces of individual copies, which might, for example, be abbreviated, stretched, or distributed over different walls in a tomb (i.e., a 2-dimensional plane arranged in a 3-dimensional space).¹⁷

¹⁶ Cf. Nöth (2007, 2014) referring to Gérard Genette’s (1980) three times in narratives.

¹⁷ This differentiation is especially crucial in the case of the Amduat. The decoration remarks in this book (e.g., “These (manifestations) are executed with their names according to the *vorlage* (*sšm*) that is drawn onto the eastern side of the ‘Hidden Chamber’ of the underworld,” *Amd.* 650–651, translation D.W.) obviously refer to the execution of copy of the Amduat on the walls of a room. Differing from Hegenbarth-Reichardt (2006), I believe that this *narrative* space of room wall copies can not be transferred to the *narrated* space, i.e., the mental model of the underworld, in all its details. Specifically, I am not convinced by the cyclic shape of the path of the sun god through the netherworld, as reconstructed by Hegenbarth-Reichardt (2006: 254–260).

Table 2 | Narrated vs. narrative space (in the underworld books)

<i>Narrated space</i>	<i>Narrative space</i> <i>(original manuscript)</i>	<i>(individual copies)</i>
Spatial mental model of the narrated world (3D)	Space as laid out in the original book (2D)	Spatial realization of a copy (2D/2D in 3D space)
Mental model of the topography/topology of the underworld	Presentation of the underworld space in tableaux and panels on a long papyrus	E.g., abbreviated papyrus, different format, relief on tomb walls



Figure 3 | A possible modern visualization of the reconstructed mental model of scene XXI of Caverns



Figure 4 | Reconstruction of the archetype of scene XXI of Caverns.



Figure 5 | Scene XXI of Caverns on papyrus BM EA 10490 (Nedjmet).

Since the underworld books mainly describe a directed journey, time and space, notably event sequence and path/topology, are intimately related in these books. In the following sections, I suggest a reconstruction of the narrated space/time, based on narrative space/time as laid out in the reconstructed archetype of Caverns (and, simultaneously, I reconstruct how the narrated space was transformed into narrative space).

2 Signs of Space and the geography of the underworld

2.1 Earth material texture

One of the most noticeable signs of the netherworld space is the strip of earth material that frames the whole book, i.e., the tableaux as well as the text blocks between them (see, for example, Fig. 2 and Fig. 9). It is designed as a texture of alternating rows of red and black dots on a kind of light red background (cf. Fig. 6). A few text witnesses have instances with the background coloring left out (e.g., in Fig. 7).¹⁸ Conversely, certain scenes (notably XXXVIII–XL) and certain text witnesses in general (Osireion, TT33/Pet) exhibit no dots, displaying only a red, ocher, or yellow ground. In any case, the texture is very obviously an iconic sign for earth material, i.e., soil, sand, gravel, or the like. The earth “frame” of the book is to be interpreted as a sign for the fact that the netherworld is indeed an underworld inside the earth.

¹⁸ Scene IIa on papyrus BM EA 10490 (Nedjmet), scene LVIII in the tomb of Ramses VI.

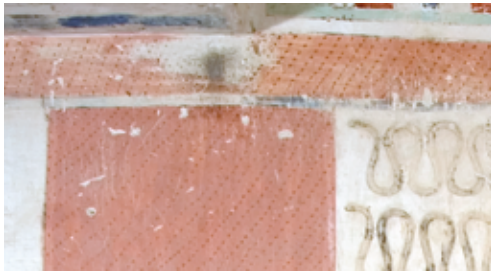


Figure 6 | Earth frame and part of Scene IIa in the tomb of Ramses IV.



Figure 8 | Part of Scene LV in the tomb of Ramses VI.

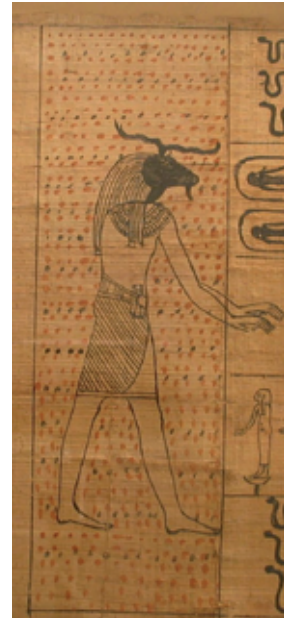


Figure 7 | Scene IIa on papyrus BM EA 10490 (Nedjmet).

Red, ocher, or yellow background coloring is occasionally also used for the body of hills and the background of whole scenes.¹⁹ Strangely enough, it is not always exactly the same color as that used for the earth frame. However, some individual text witnesses even exhibit the dotted texture for scene backgrounds, hills, and what seem to be pits (see Fig. 8) in a few scenes.²⁰

It becomes clear that there are two slightly different interpretations for the earth material areas: in one case they signify the foreground, i.e., solid bodies of earth, and in other cases they refer to a background, i.e., the walls of a cave or a pit. The upper and lower strips of earth are definitely to be interpreted as compact bodies of earth “around” the netherworld, i.e., as the walls of the underworld cave system. Similarly, the hills with this texture can be interpreted as compact bodies of earth, and the creatures or objects drawn “on top of” them are probably to be interpreted as being buried inside them, *embedded* in

19 Scene LXXXVIII in RVI, Pet; whole scenes: scenes of the 3rd tableau in Osireion, RVI, scene LVIII in Osireion.

20 Backgrounds: scenes XXVIII–XXIX in RVI; hills: scenes XII and LXVIII in RIX; pits: scenes XI and XXII–XXIII in RIV, LV in RVI and Pet. No two text witnesses display exactly the same color pattern. There also seems to be some confusion with the coloring of the characteristic ovals that some creatures lie in. These ovals are probably the creatures’ sarcophagi, which the texts repeatedly mention. However, individual text witnesses clearly iconically identify some of the ovals as pits using the dotted texture (scenes XI and XXII–XXIII in RIV and scene LV in RVI and Pet), notably inconsistent with the textual descriptions of the very scenes, which in each case speak of the divine creatures as lying in “sarcophagi” (*Hb.* 12.2, 25.12, 26.1, 65.1.9). However, the sarcophagi are probably to be thought of as lying in pits (cf. *Hb.* 27.7: *čph.wt*²⁰).

earth material.²¹ In other cases, however, the earth areas clearly serve as a *background* to the figures “on top of” them,²² i.e., they highlight the earth walls of a cave. This interpretation as a background also accounts for the initial and final scenes of the book in which the sun (god) is depicted largely “on top of” a strip of earth (see Figs. 7 and 12). These scenes depict the entrance and exit of the underworld. What at first might look like the sun god breaking through or traversing a barrier of sand like a ghost – at least to an Egyptological eye – is indeed to be interpreted, I suggest, as the sun god passing an *opening* of the cave to the upper world. The earth is just a background.²³ At least, this interpretation is in line with a literal²⁴ interpretation of the textual evidence, which speaks of a gateway situation at the entrance (*Hb.* 1.6 “I ... open the sky gate in the west.”).

2.2 Panel tableaux, splash panels, and narrated realms

All three netherworld books group their scenes (henceforth “panels”) in a number of tableaux with between three and five rows, i.e., “registers” in Egyptological terminology. The two later books, *Gates and Caverns*, also exhibit large panels with the same height as the multi-register tableaux. In comic research terminology, these are called “splash panels.”²⁵ The *narrative* spaces of the three underworld books seem to correspond partially to similar, partially to different mental models of the *narrated* spaces, though in each case not absolutely straightforwardly (Table 3).

Table 3 | Narrative space vs. narrated space in the underworld books.

	<i>Narrative space</i>	<i>Narrated space</i>
<i>Amduat</i>	12 tableaux	12 “hour” realms (incl. eastern horizon); separated by gates
<i>Book of Gates</i>	12 tableaux + 12 gate panels (incl. a judgement splash panel) + sunrise splash panel	12 “hour” realms + eastern horizon land; separated by gates (with guarding snakes)
<i>Book of Caverns</i>	6 tableaux (incl. 2 entrance splash panels) + extra sunrise tableau	3+3 “caverns”, i.e., cave systems (incl. regions of hell below) + eastern horizon land; entrances partially guarded by snakes

21 E.g., scenes XII and LXVIII in RIX.

22 E.g., scenes XXVIII–XXIX in RVI.

23 Compare also scene XXXVIII–XL. Interestingly, there is a gap in the background/earth color behind the sun god in one individual text witness in this sequence of scenes (Osireion).

24 In *Caverns*, one may also interpret this particular mention of a gate as a metaphor. However, since other texts from the same and later periods also repeatedly mention the “sky gates” (cf. D.A. Werning, “Mythem-Netze: Mytheme im Kontext des Sonnenaufgangs in ägyptischen Texten und Bildern,” in preparation), this is probably not likely.

25 Abel & Klein (2016: 91–92).

The earliest book, the *Amduat*, has twelve panel tableaux which seem to correspond to the same number of successive “hour” realms, one realm per hour of the night. The end of the twelfth hour realm is identical to the horizon. Gateways that separate the realms are not depicted but only mentioned in the texts. The second book, the *Book of Gates*, likewise has twelve main tableaux, each followed by a gate splash panel. Inside the splash panel of the 5th gate, there is an extra scene (the judgement before Osiris). In addition, the *Book of Gates* has an extra splash panel after (and probably as a part of) the 12th gate panel. It elaborates the sunrise after the twelfth realm. Despite the differing amounts of “compartments,” twelve tableaux in *Amduat* compared with twelve tableaux including twelve gate panels with two “extra” splash panels in the *Book of Gates*, the two books do not seem to refer to largely different mental models, i.e., narrated spaces. In both cases, there are twelve realms with gates between and after them. The end of the twelfth realm coincides with the horizon land.²⁶

The *Book of Caverns*, on the other hand, is separated into only seven panel tableaux. Like the final splash panel in *Gates*, the last panel tableau of *Caverns* is an elaboration of the sunrise in the eastern horizon land (Fig. 12, below). At the beginning of the 1st and after the 3rd tableau, there are splash panels that depict the proceeding sun god (Fig. 9 and 40, below). The “interior”²⁷ splash after the 3rd tableau also exhibits a guarding snake, “who unites the two underworlds” (*Hb.* 43.4). As this makes clear, the underworld cave system is separated into two parts. The tableaux of the first part each contain a set of guarding snakes in the first panel of the uppermost register (scenes III, XV, XXV). The snakes are repeatedly called “doorkeepers” (*jr. (i)w^{nt}-s³ḏm*). However, this job title probably

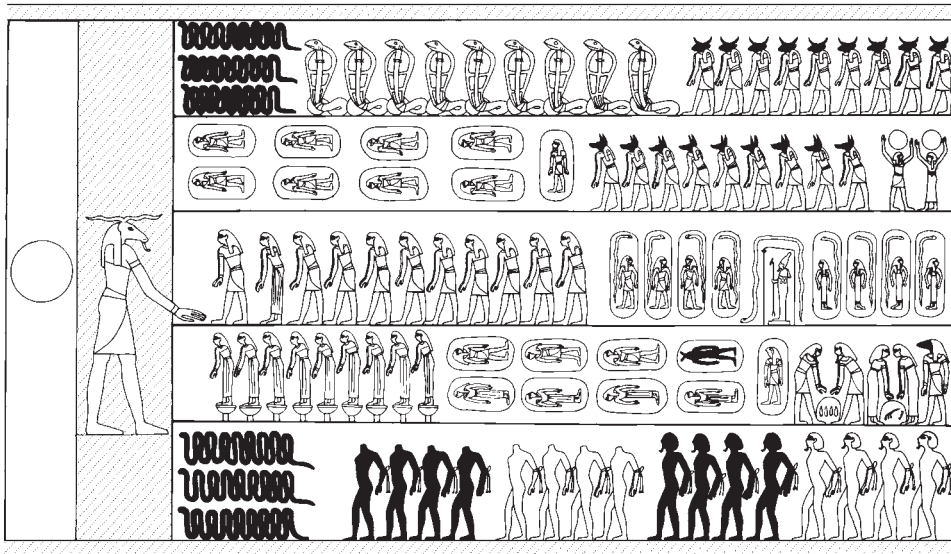


Figure 9 | Opening panel tableau of the *Book of Caverns*.

26 Compare the summaries and interpretations of Barta (1990: 14–15, 86–87, and figs. 1–24).

27 Abel & Klein (2016: 92).

does not necessarily imply actual doors with door leaves but may also be employed in the case of simple straightened passageways between caverns. At least, there is no mentioning of doors between the realms in Caverns except for in these titles.

The case of the first panel tableau including the initial splash panel, however, is special (Fig. 9). It is, I argue, comparable to what is called an “opening splash” in comic research, functioning as an “establishing shot.”²⁸ The tableau enumerates important creatures from the first part of the underworld. It sets the scene and simultaneously introduces important protagonists from not only the first but also later parts of the underworld, notably Osiris in his shrine from the realm of the 3rd tableau.²⁹ If Osiris in his shrine in the 1st tableau does not correspond to an actual *locus* inside the *first* cavern, as I argue, perhaps the whole 1st tableau might not correspond to a separate realm on its own in the mental model of the underworld. However, the introduction of the 2nd tableau as the “second cavern of the first (sc. part of the two underworlds)” (*Hb.* 18.1) seems to support the interpretation of at least parts of the opening splash tableau as a separate realm on its own. If this interpretation is correct, the first splash panel and tableau of Caverns is directly comparable to Massimo de Vita’s opening splash in Walt Disney’s graphic novel “Das Tal der Pharaonen.”³⁰ It



Figure 10 | Opening splash panel and following page of the comic “Das Tal der Pharaonen.”

28 For the terms “opening splash” and “establishing shot,” see Abel & Klein (2016: 91–92, 86).

29 Compare the scenes IX and XXIX from the 1st and 3rd tableau, respectively.

30 Sarda & de Vita (2003), first published 2002 in Italian under the title “Indiana Pips e il faraone d’Amazzoniaa,” in *Topolino* no. 2439.

introduces the initial setting (a kind of Nilotic landscape) and the first scene of the story (a plane approaching) as well as the main protagonists, only one of which, however, is actually present in the “first” scene of the story after the opening splash (Mickey; see Fig. 10). It is a hybrid space/time. Parts of the opening splash are the beginning of the story, other parts are a time/space-less introduction of protagonists. Similarly, the first splash plus tableau of Caverns introduces the initial setting (the first of the two underworld parts) and a first scene (sun god enters and exchanges greetings with the inhabitants of the underworld) as well as the main protagonists (sun god, Osiris, further inhabitants of the underworld) (Fig. 9).

2.3 Spatial interpretation of the tableau architecture

2.3.1 Basic schemes

There are three fundamentally different ways of interpreting the spatial arrangement of the panel in the tableaux of the underworld books: a “ground plan” interpretation, a “plain scheme” interpretation, and a “vertical section” interpretation.

Some tableaux are to be interpreted in such a way that the middle register signifies a *central pathway*, while the upper and lower registers correspond to spaces on *both sides* of the central pathway in the same plain. I call this roughly coherent space in a horizontal plain the “ground plan scheme.” It comes in two versions. In one case, the upper and the lower registers are both vertically oriented towards the middle, the upper register(s) being upside down. This type is well exemplified by the 1st tableau of Gates and the final tableau of Caverns (Fig. 11 and 12). In the other case, all panels are vertically oriented upright. This is exemplified by the 7th tableau of Amduat (Fig. 13) and by the 2nd tableau of Caverns (Fig. 14), except for the lowest register (for which, see below).

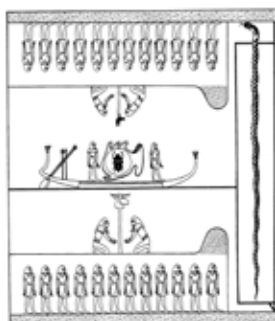


Figure 11 | 1st tableau of the Book of Gates.

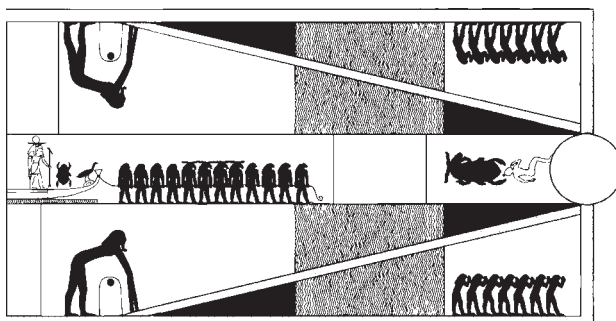


Figure 12 | 7th tableau of the Book of Caverns.

The fact that the upper register is turned upside down, mirroring the lower register, in the first type signifies, I believe, a centralized perspectivization from the central pathway, i.e., the sides are meant to be perspectivized from the pathway as *left and right*, respectively (not from a bird’s eye perspective). More specifically, I call it the “perspectivized ground plan scheme.” The second type, on the other hand, is, I believe, not perspectivized at all

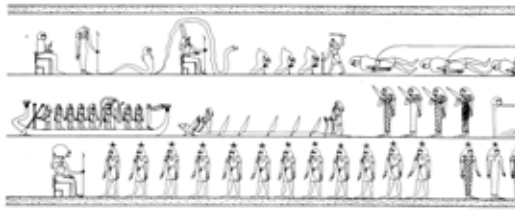


Figure 13 | Beginning of 7th tableau of the Amduat.

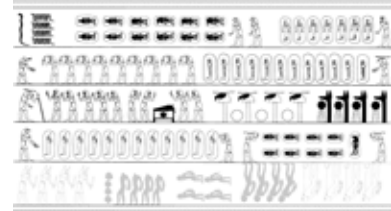


Figure 14 | 2nd tableau of the Book of Caverns (ground plan scheme panels highlighted).



Figure 15 | Ground plan scheme in an image of a building.

(rather than a bird's eye perspective or a reader perspective). This scheme is also frequent in Egyptian images of architecture. Compare the following image of an office building, roughly contemporary to the Book of Caverns (Fig. 15).³¹

There are, however, tableaux in which there is no reason to assume that the scenes that are central in the narrative space of the tableau are also central in the narrated space. Among the scenes of the tableau – notably apart from the “entering” scene with the sun god in the middle registers (see below) – no scenes are clearly more prominent than the others and consequently likely on the central pathway. The only thing that is clear is that the scenes are all roughly on the same plain. The panels may still be arranged in a meaningful way, e.g., in a specific sequence, but not topologically like in the ground plan scheme. Good candidates for this “plain scheme” are the 7th tableau of Gates (Fig. 16) and, again except for the lowest register (see below), the 4th tableau of Caverns (Fig. 17). Both exhibit a basically enumerative set of panels.

Fundamentally differently, some tableaux exhibit panels in different registers which are obviously vertically above each other not only in the tableau (narrative space) but also in the mental model of the narrated space. Clear examples of this are the pathway that crosses all registers in the 4th tableau of Amduat, as well as the Sokar hill scene in the 5th tableau

31 Drawing published and discussed in Borchardt (1907), Schlüter (2009: 107–111). Compare the discussion of the principles of Egyptian images and possible spatial implications in Schlüter (2009: 27–30).

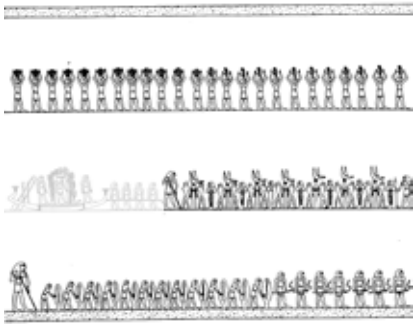


Figure 16 | 7th tableau of the Book of Gates (plain scheme panels highlighted).

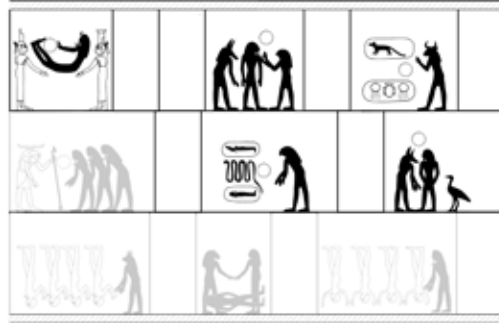


Figure 17 | 4th tableau of the Book of Caverns (plain scheme panels highlighted).

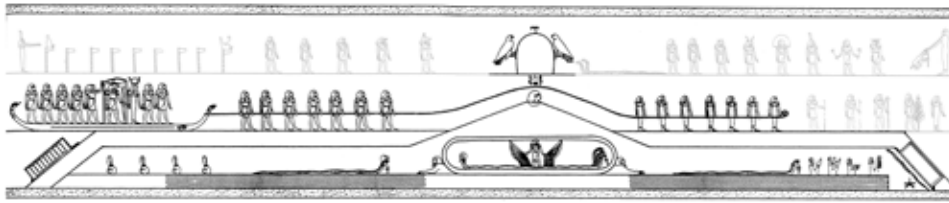


Figure 18 | 5th tableau of the Amduat (vertical section scheme highlighted).

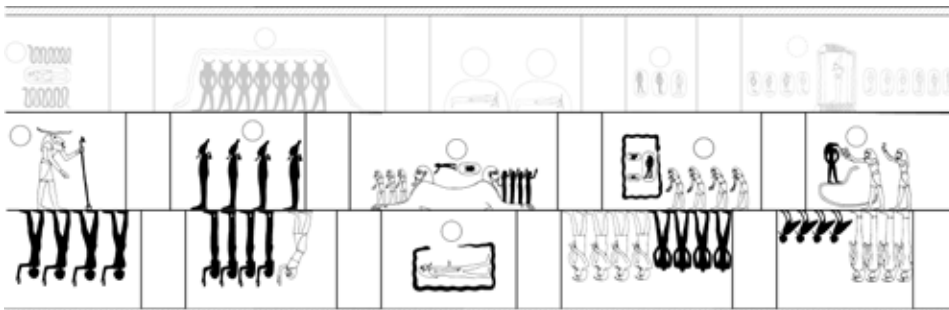


Figure 19 | 3rd tableau of the Book of Caverns (vertical section scheme panels highlighted).

of Amduat (Fig. 18) and the Osiris-under-Aker scene in the center of the 3rd tableau of Caverns (Fig. 19; see the discussion in §2.3.3, below). This “vertical section scheme,” as I call it, does not have a pure example in the underworld books. All instances exhibit some other scenes that need to be interpreted according to the (enumerative) ground plan scheme.

The basic interpretation schemes are enumerated in Table 4. However, none of the tableaux in Caverns is a pure example of one of these schemes. Notably, the interpretation schemes of Caverns, as found in the 1st–6th tableaux, are always a mixture of all three basic schemes. As discussed in the following two sections, the lowest register always corresponds to a level below the main level of the underworld (*vertical section scheme*).

Furthermore, most tableaux have what I call an “entering scene” which depicts the sun god as he enters the respective cavern at the beginning of the middle register (§3.1, below).³² This scene is to be interpreted as marking the pathway of the sun god, which is to be imagined on the central axis at least in the passageways between two of the major caverns (*ground plan scheme*). The scenes in the upper register(s) are to be interpreted, I argue, as likewise lying on the main level – however, without further implication for an exact position (*plain scheme*). Furthermore, in the 2nd and 3rd tableaux (Figs. 14, 19), the middle register contains a panel that displays an obviously important scene, which is probably to be reconstructed as lying in the central axis of the underworld (*ground plan scheme*). However, in the 4th–6th tableaux, none of the scenes in the middle or upper registers is obviously conceptually “central.” No specific position of the scenes seems to be implied (*plain scheme*). In the case of tableaux with not three but five registers, the 2nd and 4th registers next to the middle register behave like the upper register.

Table 4 | Tableau registers (narrative space) and basic spatial interpretation schemes (narrated space/time)

	<i>Plain scheme</i>	<i>Ground plan scheme</i>	<i>Vertical section scheme</i>	<i>Basic scheme of Caverns</i>
<i>Upper register</i>	On plain	On one side of central pathway	Uppermost level	Main level
<i>Middle register</i>	On plain	Central pathway	Middle level	Main level, partially central
<i>Lower register</i>	On plain	On other side of central pathway	Lowermost level	Lower level

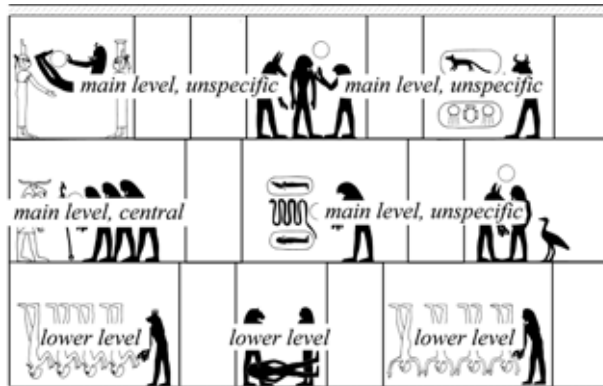


Figure 20 | Interpretation scheme of the 4th tableau of the Book of Caverns.

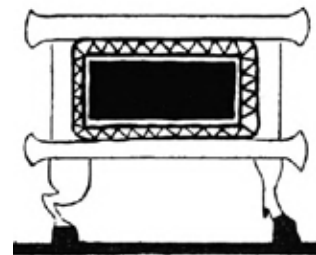


Figure 21 | Image of a stool from the tomb of Hesy.

³² In the 1st tableau, this scene is designed as a split splash panel (Fig. 9; see §§3.2.2, 3.2.3, 3.2.5). In the 5th tableau, we find it incorporated into the initial splash panel, i.e., the “cave of the Mysterious (Underworld)” (scene L; Fig. 26f).

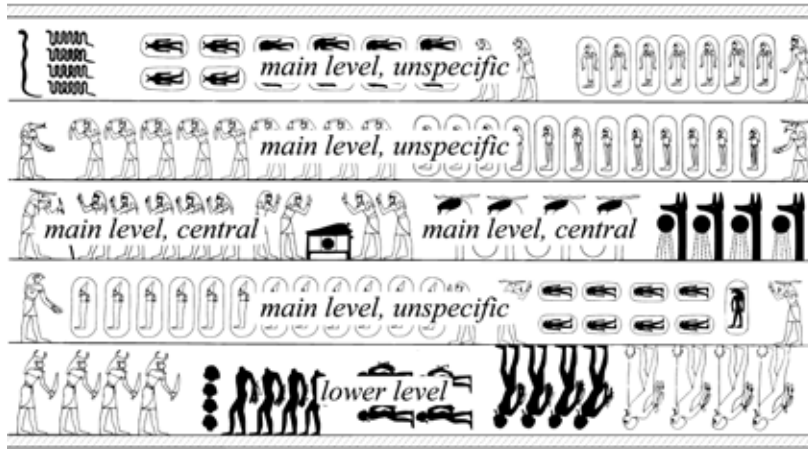


Figure 22 | Interpretation scheme of the 2nd tableau of the Book of Caverns.

To sum up, the basic scheme of Caverns is the following (compare Table 4): The “entering scene” at the beginning of the middle register represents the central pathway on a main level, and the lowest register represents a lower level. The upper register displays loci on the main level without specification as to their position. The rest of the middle register displays loci on the main level that are either central or not. The basic scheme is well represented in the 3rd and 4th tableaus (cf. Fig. 20) and its adaptations to a tableau with five registers in the 2nd tableau (Fig. 22). The spatial interpretation of the registers of the 4th tableau is actually roughly comparable, I argue, to respective parts in the famous stool image from the tomb of Hesy (Fig. 21), which likewise displays two axes in a simple plain.³³

In comic research, the page layout is categorized according to the questions (i) whether the story and the tableau layout are independent of each other or not and (ii), whether the comic authors designed the tableau layout according to the needs of the narrative sequence, or whether they predetermined a layout of the tableaus and adjust the narrative sequence to it (cf. Table 5).³⁴

Table 5 | Mutual influences of story and narrative sequence and tableau layout.³⁵

	<i>Narrative sequence dominates tableau layout</i>	<i>Tableau layout dominates narrative sequence</i>
<i>Independence of tableau layout from story</i>	Neutral layout	“Decorative” layout
<i>Influence of story on tableau layout</i>	“Rhetoric” layout	“Productive” layout

³³ Cf. Schäfer (1963: 145f.).

³⁴ Cf. Abel & Klein (89–90), Schüwer (2008: ch. 4.1), with reference to Benoît Peeters (*Case, planche, récit*, 1991). Note that the descriptions of the four categories are not fully identical in these three scholarly works.

³⁵ Cf. Schüwer (2008: 211–213, 238), who writes “Gesamttableau dominiert Layout” (‘entire tableau dominates layout’) instead of ‘tableau layout dominates narrative sequence.’

In Caverns, I argue, we clearly find predominantly *productive* tableau layouts. The tableau layout is influenced by the story. For example, the scenes of hell are always placed in the lowermost register (see the following section), and the concept of a pathway with two sides is responsible for a layout with three registers in the 7th tableau (see above). Furthermore, I argue, the “basic scheme” tableau layout, as discussed above, also influenced the narrative sequence. For once, the regions of the main level and the regions of hell are discussed apart from each other although they are probably visited and addressed in turns (see §3.2.4, below). Furthermore, the amount of space covered by scenes from the main level and the amount of space covered by scenes from hell are inevitably in a proportion of 2:1 (for tableaus with three registers) or 4:1 (for tableaus with five registers). In both respects, the tableau layout of Caverns clearly had a “productive” influence on the narrative sequence.

2.3.2 Regions of hell below the main level

The Book of Caverns exhibits many panels that display scenes from hell regions, in which the “enemies of Re and Osiris” are annihilated. All these panels are distributed across the lower registers of all tableaus (narrative space). The only exception is the final sunrise tableau, which elaborates the eastern horizon land and adheres to the perspectivized ground plan scheme (§2.3.1). Simultaneously, the inscriptions occasionally make it explicit that the regions of hell are situated *below* the main level on which the sun god travels according to the mental model of the underworld (narrated space):

Ex. 1 $m^{-}=čn^{III} w(j)^{\Delta} \varsigma pi^{\Delta}=i^{\Delta} m-hrw^{-}=čn^{III}$ (Hb. 16.15, scene XIV, 1st tableau)
 ‘(O, you who are being annihilated! ...) I pass by *above* you.’

Ex. 2 $\varsigma pi^{\Delta}.jn nčr^{\Delta} pn \varsigma_3 m-hrw^{-} htm.yt^{\square}$ (Hb. 85.59, scene LXIII, 5th tableau)
 ‘Then The Great God passes by *above* the hell.’

This corresponds to a *lower level* in the underworld, as testified by, among others, the address to the guarding snakes of the lowest register in the 1st tableau (Fig. 9):

Ex. 3 $j nn-n(i) hf\beta w.(w)^{\Delta=III} hr.(i)w^{III} tw\beta.t^{\Delta\square} hr.(i)t^{\Delta} 'sjr^{\Delta}$ (Hb. 15.8; scene XIII)
 ‘O, you snakes of the *lower (regions)* of the netherworld, which also has Osiris (in it).’

It is therefore clear that the described mental model of the underworld includes two levels: the main level on which the sun god travels and a lower level with the regions of hell.

2.3.3 The Aker scene

As discussed in the preceding section, the scenes of hell are situated below the other scenes in narrative as well as narrated space. However, it is not normally to be interpreted as an exact relative placement.³⁶ As an exception, a much more iconic spatial relation exists between the panel with the double-headed lion *Aker* in the middle register and the panel with the corpse of Osiris in the lower register of the 3rd tableau (see Fig. 19, above).

³⁶ As is clear from the discussion in §2.3.1 and §2.4.

Indeed they are to be interpreted as one single scene (XXXIII) referring to one coherent space. This is made clear by three texts which relate the two panels, for example, in the speech of the sun god to Osiris in the “entering scene” of the 3rd tableau:

- Ex. 4 $h\dot{3}.t^{(n)}=k\ tw.w^{(n)}=k\ jmn^{(n)}.n=k\ hr\ \dot{3}kr^{(n)}$ (Hb. 15.8)
 ‘... your (i.e., Osiris’) corpse, your image, which you have hidden under (the double lion) *Aker*, ...’

In addition, there is another “spatial” element in this scene. There is a god above the back of *Aker* who doesn’t stand upright but rather “lies” horizontally, his arms bent forward ($\overleftarrow{\text{r}}$). The inscriptions related to the figure reveal that this is:

- Ex. 5 $Gb(b)^{\dot{3}}\ z\dot{3}u^{(n)}\ \dot{3}kr^{(n)}$ (Hb. 37.2)
 ‘Geb, who guards *Aker*’
- Ex. 6 ... $\check{c}r^{(n)}=f\ sw\ hr\ psf^{(n)}-\dot{3}kr^{(n)}$
 $z\dot{3}u^{(n)}=f\ s.\check{s}t\{.t\}^{(n)}\ jm(.i)\ tw\dot{3}.t$ (Hb. 37.15f.)
 ‘... as he *bends over* *Aker*’s back
 and guards the mystery that is in the underworld.’

I argue that the specific posture of the earth god *Geb*, described as bending over *Aker* like a shield,³⁷ signifies the massive body of earth that forms the vaulted ceiling of the cave of *Aker* (compare Fig. 23 and Fig. 24).

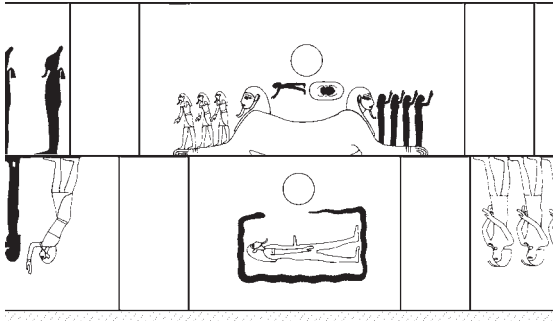


Figure 23 | Aker/Osiris scene (polyptychon) in the center of 3rd tableau of the Book of Caverns.

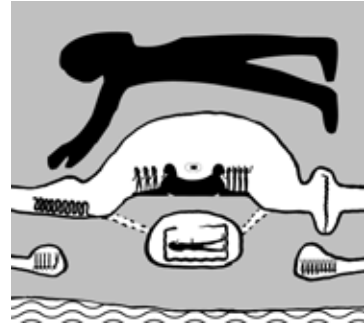


Figure 24 | Schematic spatial interpretation of the mental model of the 3rd cavern.

2.4 Topographical mental model: reconstruction of a mental map of the underworld

Based on the results from the preceding sections and some additional considerations regarding the Egyptian image of the world, I try to reconstruct and draw a “mental map”³⁸ of the underworld as underlying the Book of Caverns. We may assume that it consists of

37 For a discussion of this interpretation of the verb $\check{c}r$, see Werning (2011, II: 523–524).

38 For the concept of a “mental map,” compare Lynch (1960).

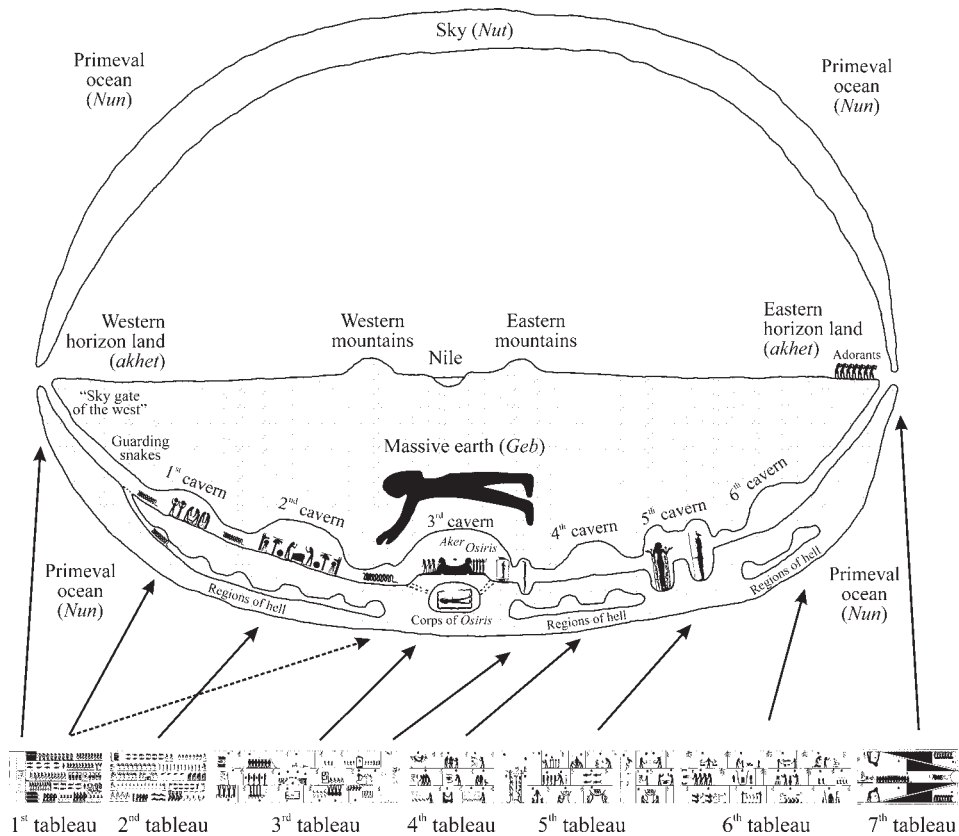


Figure 25 | Mental map of the reconstructed mental model of the Egyptian underworld according to the Book of Caverns from the 13th century BCE

a chain of six large caverns (§2.2) in the earth (§2.1), with an entrance in the western horizon land and an exit in the eastern horizon land. At this exit (Fig. 12), a group of divine adorants wait to welcome the sun god at sunrise, i.e., when he leaves the underworld, after he has passed a body of water from the primeval ocean, in the middle of which the world was created.³⁹ Below the chain of caverns on the main level, there is another set of caves in which the damned dead are being annihilated: the regions of hell (§2.3.2). The entrance of most of the caverns on the main level are guarded by snakes (§2.2), as is the entrance to the regions of hell (§2.3.2). A cavern of utmost importance is the cavern displayed in the 3rd tableau. This is where Osiris-the-Chief-of-the-Westerners resides in a shrine, where the two bodies of the sun gods lie and in which a giant “hill” lies in form of the double lion *Aker* with the corpse of Osiris buried under it (§2.3.3) – notably protected against the surrounding regions of hell by a surrounding snake (Fig. 24). Figure 25 below presents a schematic mental map of my reconstruction of the mental model of the underworld ac-

³⁹ I plan to discuss the sunrise tableau of Caverns in detail in another publication. For the creation and the primeval ocean, cf. Assmann (2000: 169), Bickel (1994: ch. I).

according to the Book of Caverns from the 13th century BCE. It takes the form of a modern section through the world “bubble” from west to east. In addition, the corresponding image tableaux and splash panels of the book are related to the different loci.

In terms of Peircean semiotics and diagrammatology/*Diagrammatik* research,⁴⁰ the spatial “diagram” of the panels in the Book of Caverns is very much comparable to the mental “diagram” of the mental model of the underworld. The narrative space is a “diagrammatic-iconic” sign for the narrated space.⁴¹

3 The journey of the sun god: time, event sequence, and narration

3.1 Indexical Signs of Time

Like the other netherworld books, the Book of Caverns describes the journey made by the sun god through the netherworld *every night*. Consequently, signs of a specific *historical time*,⁴² e.g., an era or even a specific reign, are missing. However, there is an index of *situation time* which is comparable to signs of the daytime in modern comics:⁴³ the very form of the sun god. In the 1st–5th tableaux (Fig. 26), he takes a mixed form with an anthropomorphic body and the head of a sacred ram (Eg. *b3*). The ram-headed figure is the unmarked ‘manifestation’ (Eg. *b3*) of the sun god *in the night*. In the 6th tableau (Fig. 26h), on the other hand, he takes the shape of a scarab beetle (Eg. *hpr*). This shape is first of all associated with the *sunrise*,⁴⁴ on the occasion of which the sun god is also named *Khepri*, i.e., ‘the transforming one’⁴⁵ (Eg. *hpr{r}j*). However, denoting the sun god’s ‘transformation’ in the course of the sunrise, he also seems to take this shape a certain time before and after the very moment of leaving the underworld, marking his transformation as a process rather than a sudden change. In the sunrise tableau of Caverns, we find representations of both these forms of the sun god: the ram-headed *b3*-form and the scarab-shaped ‘transformation’-form (Figs. 26j–k). In one instance they appear next to each other, in the other case we find a combination of the two, together with yet another representation as a royal child, which signifies the ‘rejuvenation’ of the sun god, achieved towards the end of the night.⁴⁵ Both the form of the beetle and the form of the child are clear signs of time for the latest phase of the journey of the sun god, the approach of and the appearance in the eastern horizon land.

40 Cf. Nöth (2000: 193–196), Bauer & Ernst (2010: ch. 2.3.I–II).

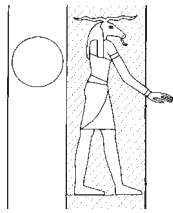
41 In this respect, the Book of Caverns is roughly comparable, I argue, to modern subway diagrams (cf. Nöth 2000: 489–490), for which the term “maps” is commonly used at least in English (see Cartwright 2012).

42 See Nöth (in print: §6.1).

43 Nöth (in print: §6.1). Both Nöth (*loc.cit.*) and Abel & Klein (2016: 94) mention the length of shadows as an index for the specific altitude of the sun as well as the daylight of a scene.

44 Cf. Minas-Nerpel (2006).

45 Note that youth as a *sign of age* (Nöth, in print: §6.1) has very different implications in this case of the Egyptian sun god than in the case of non-divine persons in modern comics.



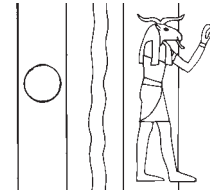
(a: Split splash panel of 1st tableau)



(b: 2nd tableau)



(c: 3rd tableau)



(d: Split splash panel after 3rd tableau)



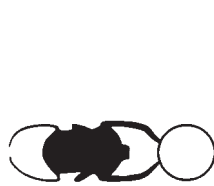
(e: 4th tableau)



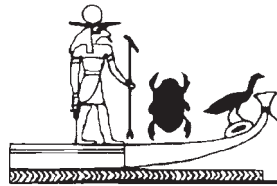
(f: 5th tableau, first part)



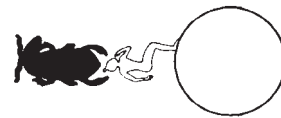
(g: 5th tableau, second part)



(h: 6th tableau)



(j: 7th tableau, left)



(k: 7th tableau, right)

Figure a–k | Representation of the sun god in the 1st–7th tableaux.

3.2 Panel sequences

3.2.1 Reappearance of the main character

In the preceding section, we saw that, like in modern comics, the main protagonist reappears in different panels. However, this reappearance occurs only once per tableau (or tableau section⁴⁶). From the 3rd tableau onwards, it is rather the sun disk which reappears from panel to panel (cf. Fig. 20). The sun disk is described⁴⁷ and depicted (see Figs. 26a–k) as following the sun god. As a reappearing sign, I argue, it stands *pars pro toto* also for the sun god. Notably, it is regularly not depicted in the panels of the regions of hell in the

⁴⁶ In the 5th and 7th tableaux, the sun god appears twice.

⁴⁷ *Hb.* 29.4 (scene XXX), 36.28 (XXX–XXXI), 44.19 (XXXVIII+XL), 74.44 (L), 76.64 (LII), 81.9 (LIX).

lowest register, which the sun god (and the sun disk) do not enter (cf. §2.3.2). Why there is no repetition of the sun disk in the first two tableaux (Figs. 9 and 22) is not quite clear.⁴⁸

3.2.2 Split panels and polyptychs

As argued in Section 2.3.3, the two panels in the center of the middle and lower registers of the 3rd tableau display one spatially coherent scene. The panel with the corpse of Osiris is under the panel with the double lion *Aker*, just as the corpse lies buried under *Aker* in the underworld (compare Fig. 23 and Fig. 24). As the two panels form one common continuous space, they can be categorized as one single “split panel.”⁴⁹ Compare Figure 27, in which one coherent scene is “cut” into four panels.



Figure 27 | Example for a “split panel” in Alison Bechdel’s “Wer ist hier die Mutter?” (2014, p. 155).

In this specific case, however, both parts of the split panel exhibit a representation of the main character of the story in the form of the sun disk (§3.2.1). Such a split panel, which displays one coherent space and, simultaneously, multiple representations of a protagonist in each part of the split panel (and therefore no coherent time) is called a “polyptych” in comic research.⁵⁰ Compare the *Aker*/Osiris scene to Scott McCloud’s explanatory polyptych (Fig. 28), in which what is obviously the same character reappears in the coherent space of a kitchen that is “chopped” into a coherently arranged set of panels.

48 The fact that these two tableaux, as opposed to the other tableaux, do not exhibit any panel borders probably plays a role. In the 1st tableau, the sun disk in the initial splash panel may compensate for the repetition. However, in the second tableau there is no comparable representation of the sun disk (unless one takes the four disks in the central scene as one). The unsystematic distribution of sun disks in the 7th tableau may have to do with the mixed status of the “tableau” as displaying one scene (split splash panel) or set of scenes (tableau).

49 Abel & Klein (2016: 92), McCloud (1993: 97). Another case of a split panel is the combination of the initial splash panel with the sun disk and the sun god and the first scene of the middle register of the first tableau with the adorants (see Fig. 9).

50 McCloud (1993: 115), in the translation into German: “polyptychon” (McCloud 2001: 123); Abel & Klein (2016: 87).



Figure 28 | Polyptych (explaining a comic “polyptych”) from McCloud, *Understanding Comics*.

3.2.3 Narrative times: reading sequences in tableaux

In this section, I discuss the question of reading sequences in the tableaux of the Book of Caverns, more precisely in the 1st–6th tableaux, the 7th tableau with its “perspectivized ground plan scheme” (see §2.3.1) being a separate case. In order to understand the reading sequence, it is crucial to differentiate between the hints from the tableaux (plus incorporated texts) and the hints from the contiguous text blocks behind the tableaux. This is especially justified by the fact that the text blocks were probably created in a separate, secondary step.⁵¹

The panel tableaux themselves do not make an intended sequence for their reading explicit, e.g., by a numbering system. Some hints, however, come from the distribution of certain categories of figures. The most obvious hint is the single, and therefore marked, representation of the sun god either in his form as a semi-anthropomorphic, ram-headed god or in his form of a scarab beetle (cf. §3.1). This representation invites the reader to understand the respective panels as the first ones to be read in each tableau. According to this interpretation, it is normally the first scene of the *middle* register which is to be read first (compare Fig. 29).⁵²

Moreover, representations of the sun god often include a group of divine adorants. Indeed, as suggested by the distribution of texts, the sun god and the adorants form a

51 As presented in a talk “The Textual History and Functional Layers of the Book of Caverns” on occasion of the international conference “Ancient Egyptian Funerary Literature. Tackling the Complexity of Texts,” Basel, 9–11 December 2010. Publication of the arguments following.

52 This includes the case of the second section of the 5th tableau. In the special cases of tableaux with an initial splash panel (1st/5th tableau), it is – as one would naturally assume – the splash panel which is to be read first. Notably, the first scene of the middle register of the 1st tableau is actually connected to the initial splash panel with the sun god.

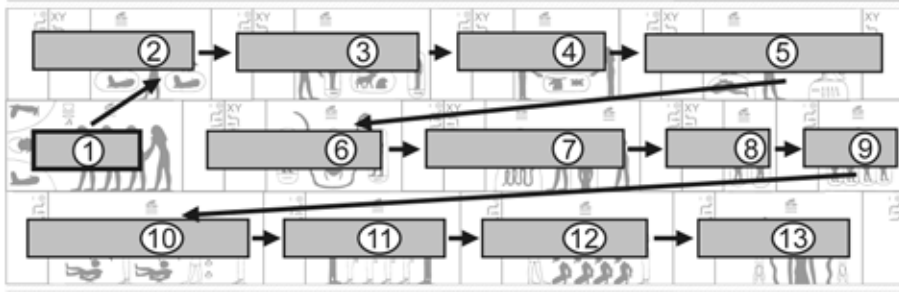


Figure 29 | Reading sequence of the 6th tableau of the Book of Caverns.

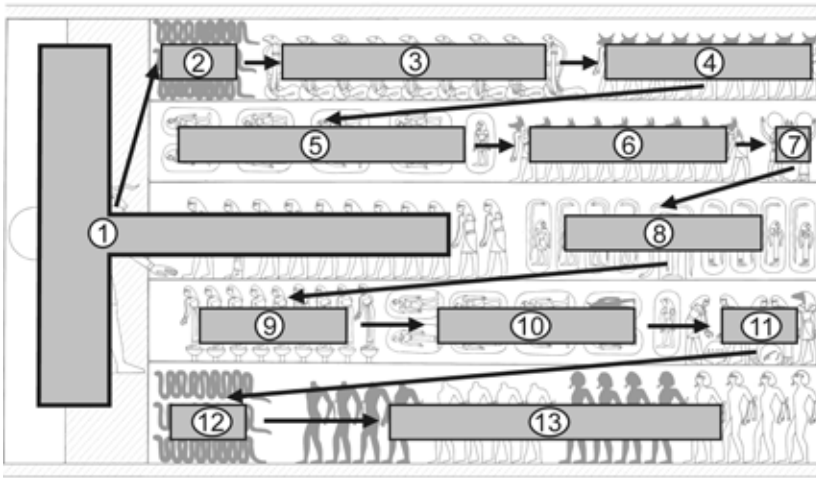


Figure 30 | Reading sequence of the 1st tableau of the Book of Caverns.

single “entering scene” in most tableaux.⁵³ Notably, this is also true in the case of the 1st tableau, in which the entering scene is a “split panel,”⁵⁴ covering the initial splash panel and the first scene of the middle register of the following tableau (“1” in Fig. 30). Indeed, the fact that both panels form a single split panel is further marked by the exceptional phenomenon that the arm of the sun god crosses the border between the initial splash and the panel in the middle register (see Fig. 9, above). As an exception, in the 3rd and 5th tableaux, separate autonomous panels seem to fulfil an equivalent function: the first scene in the *upper* register in the case of the 5th tableau, and possibly the second scene in the *middle* register in the case of the 3rd tableau (Fig. 19).

Another hint about the reading sequence is the distribution of guarding snakes in the first three tableaux. In each of them, a set of guarding snakes appears in the first panel of

53 1st tableau: scene II (split panel: IIa+IIb); 2nd tableau: scene XX; 4th tableau: scene XLIV; second part of the 5th tableau: scene LXI; 6th tableau: scene LXVIII. In the 3rd tableau, scene XXXI cannot clearly be identified as equivalent.

54 For the notion of “split panel,” see §§3.2.2; for further discussion of the case of the 1st tableau, see §3.2.5.

the upper register. I understand that these snakes guard the entrances to the three caverns that correspond to the three tableaux, and I take their placement in the tableau as a hint that the *upper* registers are the first of the registers to be read. In summary, the tableaux themselves suggest to first read the “entering scene” with the sun god (plus adorants) in the middle register as well as the panel with the guarding snakes at the beginning of the upper register, most likely in this sequence. Naturally, one would finish reading the upper register, followed by the other registers from top to bottom (compare Fig. 30).

This reading sequence register-by-register from top to bottom is supported by separate information from the long text blocks between the tableaux, more precisely those text blocks that discuss the panels of the preceding tableau.⁵⁵ These are contiguous texts, i.e., they exhibit a clear reading sequence. In each case, the basic reading pattern is that the panels of each register are to be read sequentially in the same direction, e.g., from left to right, and the registers from top to bottom, the eye basically following a “zigzag” line, like in modern texts.⁵⁶ This is a common reading scheme in Egyptian multi-register compositions.⁵⁷ However, the evidence concerning the relative position of the entering scenes is dichotomous. In the case of the 1st and 6th tableaux, the entering scene with the sun god plus adorants is discussed first⁵⁸ (and not again in the middle of the text block). See the reading sequences in Fig. 29 and Fig. 30⁵⁹. This observation is completely in line with the assumption that the entering scene in the middle register is to be read *before* the rest of the panels, as suggested by the tableau design (discussed above). In the case of the 2nd tableau and the second section of the 5th tableau, on the other hand, the entering scenes are discussed in the *middle* of the respective text block, i.e., the text block discusses the registers strictly from top to bottom seemingly without treating the entering scene any differently from other scenes.⁶⁰ A possible solution to this surprising observation is that, according to this “reading,” the entering scene is mentally split into two parts: (i) the entering sun god and (ii) the welcoming divinities. While the sun god would still be recognized first, but not be discussed separately, the welcoming divinities are counted as a “normal” panel, separate from the sun god, discussed in turn with the other scenes. Compare the two competing reading sequences marked by “1–10” and “A–K,” respectively, in Fig. 31⁶¹.

55 I.e., the text blocks behind the 1st, 2nd, 5th, and 6th tableaux. The text blocks after the 4th tableau and after the splash panel behind the 3rd tableau do only very partially or not at all, respectively, discuss the panels of the respective preceding tableau.

56 See *Hb.* 1–17, 18–28, 74–85, and 101, discussing the 1st, 2nd, 5th, and 6th tableau of Caverns, respectively.

57 Cf. Angenot’s (1996, 2000) type 1 “brisé (en partant du haut).”

58 This is probably also, however not clearly, true for the case of the 4th tableau (*Hb.* 57.16–31); compare Fig. 34.

59 Notably, in case of the first tableau, this is also true for the second part of the split panel of the entering scene in the middle register (scene IIb).

60 As to the 5th tableau, Barta (1987: 10–14) called attention to this. However, his estimation that this can be transferred to all other tableaux proved to be wrong.

61 Same tableau without/with smaller overlay: Figs. 14 and 22.

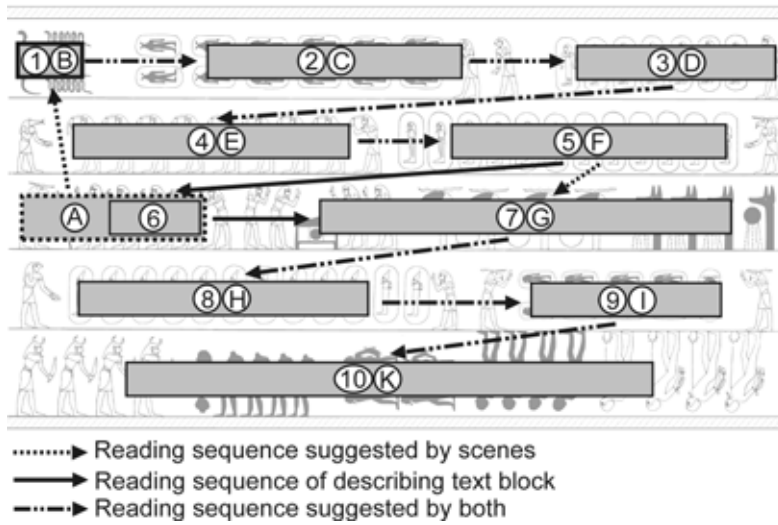


Figure 31 | Competing reading sequences of the 2nd tableau of the Book of Caverns

As to the 7th tableau, which is designed according to the perspectivized ground plan scheme (§2.3.1), I can only hypothesize a dedicated reading sequence based on the content of the scenes (Fig. 32). The sun god enters the eastern horizon land (no. 1), passing a pair of hills (2). He dives through a body of water (3) and transforms into the young sun of the morning when he rises on the horizon (4, 5). On the earth gods adore him as he rises (6).⁶²

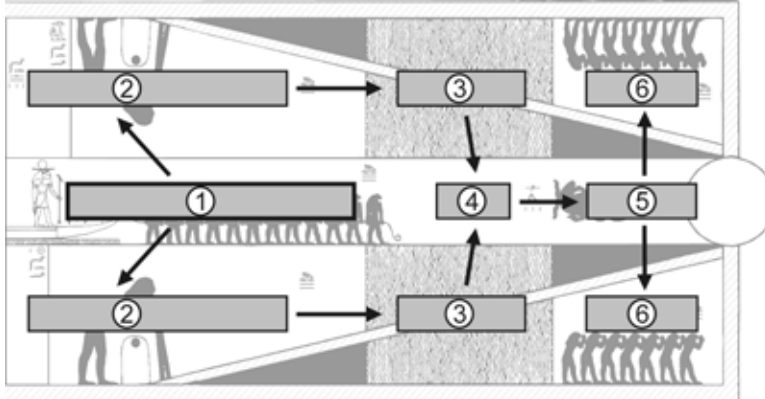


Figure 32 | Hypothetical reading sequence of the 7th tableau of the Book of Caverns.

3.2.4 Narrated time: reconstruction of the narrated temporal sequence

As discussed in Section 2.3.2, the sun god does not enter the regions of hell that are regularly displayed in the lowermost registers of the 1st–6th tableaux and which are to be understood as lying on a lower level than the main underworld cave system. He just passes

⁶² Cf. the discussion in Werning (in print).

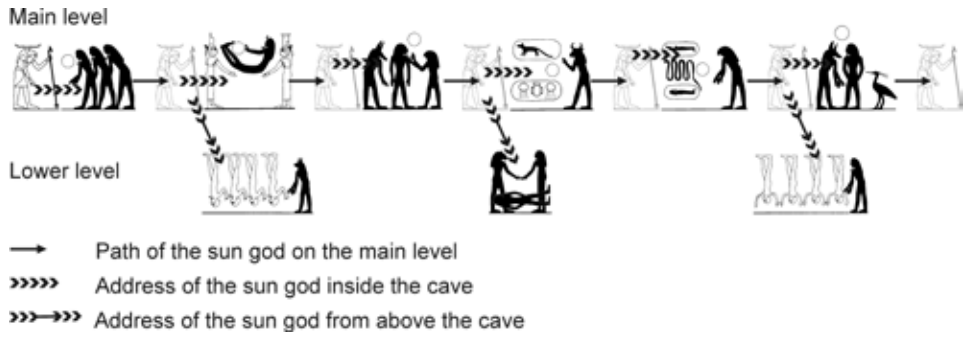


Figure 33 | Hypothesis on the journey of the sun god and temporal sequence of addresses to the caves of the 4th tableau of the Book of Caverns

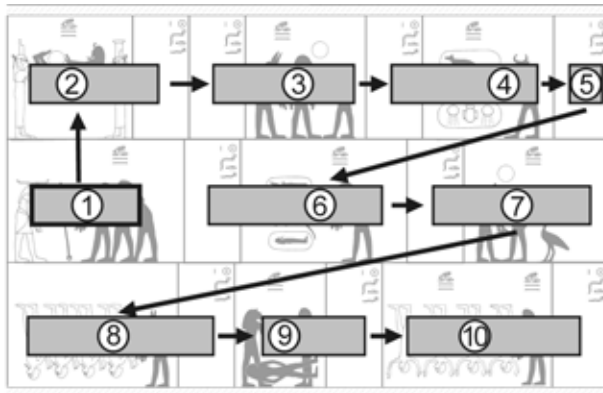


Figure 34 | Reading sequence of the 4th tableau of the Book of Caverns (reconstruction analogous to reading sequences of other tableaux).to the caves of the 4th tableau of the Book of Caverns

by “above” them on the main level.⁶³ Consequently, it is only the other caves that the sun god actually visits that are visually marked by the representation of the (red) sun disk which follows the sun god. As to the temporal sequence of events, I believe that the sun god’s addresses to the regions of hell from the main level take place *not after* finishing the visits to the caves on the main level, as suggested by the *narrative* sequence discussed in the preceding section, but that it takes place by turns, *parallel* to these visits (see Fig. 33). This assumption allows for a straightforward reconstruction of the regions of hell as lying directly under the caves of the main level, as suggested by the tableau layout (compare Fig. 25).⁶⁴ The *narrative* sequence of the book and the *narrated* sequence of the journey

⁶³ The only scenes in the lowermost registers that the sun god enters are the scenes XXXIIIu and LXXVI, which both do not display parts of hell. (Note that the figures in it are both guarded by protective snakes.)

⁶⁴ Otherwise we either had to assume that the regions of hell displayed in the lowest register of, e.g., the 2nd tableau, are situated under a path *behind* the caves of the main level – this resulted in a rather strange imbalanced world image –, or we had to assume that the sun god goes back in the cave system on the main level and travels through this cave system a second time in order



Figure 35 | Categorization of panel-to-panel transitions from McCloud, *Understanding Comics*.

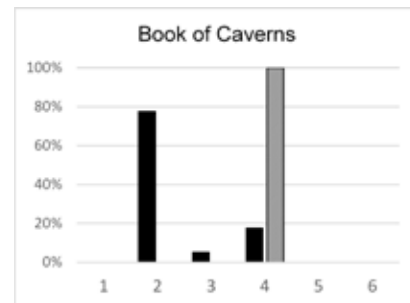
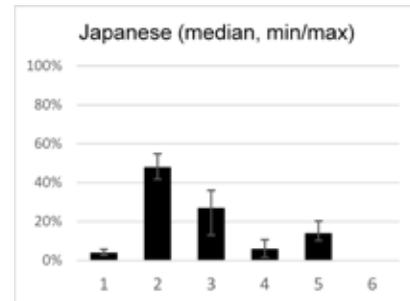
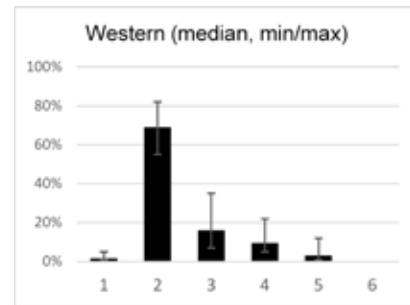


Figure 36a–c | Proportions of panel-to-panel transitions in American/European and Japanese comics and the *Book of Caverns* compared

are therefore not identical, I argue (compare Fig. 33 with Fig. 34). Rather the non-lowest and lowest registers display two different “aspects” of the journey: the visits to the caves with blessed dead and divinities on the main level vs. the addresses to the caves of hell in a lower level, respectively. In *narrative* sequence they are presented one after the other, while in *narrated* time the addresses to the main level and the lower take multiple turns.

to address the regions of hell – a rather complicated scenario without further support from the inscriptions.

3.2.5 Panel-to-panel transitions

In the context of comic research, it is interesting to categorize the transitions from panel to panel and to compare their distribution. Scott McCloud suggested a categorization based on six types (see Fig. 35), and he compared proportions of occurrences across different modern comics.⁶⁵ In doing so, he identified what might be termed different comic cultures: a European/American, i.e., “western,” and a Japanese culture. In the western comic culture, we find a mix of basically *action-to-action* transitions plus some *subject-to-subject* and *scene-to-scene* transitions (Fig. 36a). In Japanese comics, in addition, we find a few *moment-to-moment* transitions, a considerable percentage of *aspect-to-aspect* transitions and relatively more *subject-to-subject* transitions (at the expense of the other two types; Fig. 36b).⁶⁶

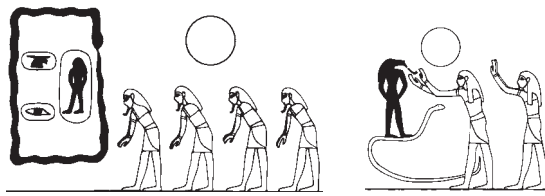


Figure 37a–b | Transition scenes XXXIII–XXXIV (3rd tableau)



Figure 38a–b | Transition scenes XXII–XXIII (2nd tableau)

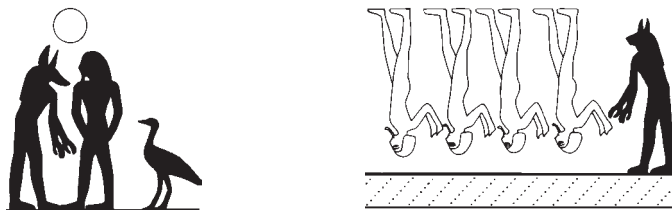


Figure 39a–b | Transition scenes XLVI–XLVII (4th tableau)

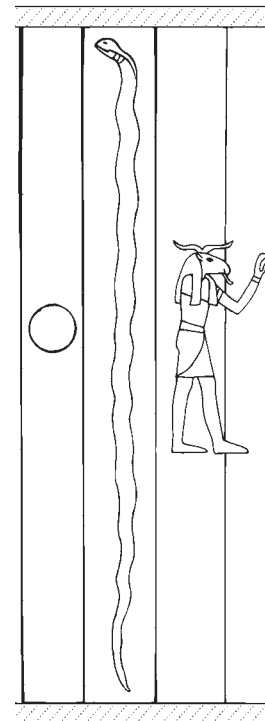


Figure 40 | Splash panel scenes XXXVIII–XL

As to the Book of Caverns, we basically find three or four types of panel-to-panel transitions, depending on interpretation. The most frequent transition is the one from one locus in the cave system of the main level of the underworld to a subsequent locus on the same level. It comes in two versions: either with or without an index for the trav-

⁶⁵ McCloud (1993: 70–80), summary in Abel & Klein (1996: 84–86). For a more detailed description and interpretation and a review of McCloud’s categories, see Schüwer (2008: 51–52, 273–275).

⁶⁶ McCloud (1993: 75, 76, 80).

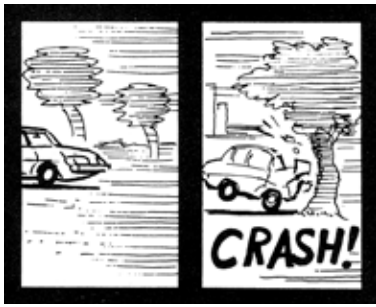


Figure 41 | Scott McCloud's (Understanding Comics) third example for action-to-action transitions.

eling protagonist, i.e., the sun god, in the form of the sun disk (compare Fig. 37 and Fig. 38). Apart from the repeated presence of the sun disk, the texts that correspond to the scenes in both cases make it clear that the panels- display different points in time.⁶⁷ We cannot know the exact time that passes by between the arrival at two subsequent loci. Nevertheless, a rough approximation is relevant for a classification of the transition. The sun god visits at least approximately 80 loci in the twelve hours of the night. In addition, we have to account for the extra way between two caverns, the proportional length of which is unfortunately unclear (compare

Fig. 25). Nonetheless, the time progression between the arrivals of the sun god in two subsequent scenes in the same cavern can be computed to be approximately between a few and ten minutes.

In any case, the classification of these transitions in terms of McCloud's categories is ambiguous. On the one hand, the traveling of the sun god from locus to locus is comparable to McCloud's example of a traveling car in subsequent loci, which he classifies as a case of *action-to-action* transitions (Fig. 41).⁶⁸ On the other hand, the temporal and spatial distance between two scenes is rather "significant," I feel. Based on this evaluation, the transitions are cases of *scene-to-scene* transitions.⁶⁹ This classification suggests itself even more in the case of the second version of the transitions that lacks the pictorial representation of the traveling sun god or disk, which are only mentioned in the corresponding texts. Indeed, the case of the described transitions in Caverns suggests, I argue, that the border between *action-to-action* and *scene-to-scene* transitions is fuzzy.⁷⁰

Usually once per tableau, we find an again slightly different type of transition: a switch from a locus on the main level to a locus in the regions of hell (Fig. 39). As argued in the preceding section, this implies a temporal a "flashback." This leap back in time computes roughly to between half an hour and two hours. Moreover, the travelling sun god only addresses the loci of hell from a distance. In this case, there is no doubt that these

67 On the temporal implications of word balloons vs. captions in comic panels, see McCloud (1993: 95–99). If it were not for the texts that follow the tableaux, the 1st and 2nd tableaux would probably be interpreted as exhibiting mainly *aspect-to-aspect* transitions, which "bypas[s] time for the most part and se[t] a wandering eye on different aspects of a place, idea or mood" (McCloud 1993: 72; cf. also Schüwer 2008: 274).

68 McCloud (1993: 70): "transitions featuring a single *subject* in distinct *action-to-action* progressions." Cf. Schüwer (2008: 274): "zeitliches Verhältnis: weit *rhythmisierend*; räumliches Verhältnis: keine oder geringe Unterschiede; Handlung: enger Zusammenhang."

69 McCloud (1993: 71): "*scene-to-scene* transitions [...] transport us across *significant distances of time and space*." Cf. Schüwer (2008: 274): "*gravierender Sprung im Raum, in der Zeit, in der Handlung oder in mehreren Bereichen zugleich*."

70 For the difference between *moment-to-moment* and *action-to-action* transitions as gradual, see Schüwer (2008: 51–52).

transitions are cases of *scene-to-scene* transitions. The same may be true for the transitions in the other direction, i.e., from a locus in hell to a locus on the main level, which implies, I argue, a small leap forward in time.

As to the fourth type of transition, we find it in the entering scene of the 1st tableau (including the adorants) and the interior splash panel(s) after the 3rd tableau (Figs. 9 and 40). They both depict the sun god with the sun disk, which is considered to follow him, as they cross a boundary. In the first case, it is a “barrier” of earth, which the sun god transgresses (cf. §2.1, above). In the second case, there is an additional figure, a guarding snake, which the sun god is said to “pass” (*Hb.* 44.2–6). In both cases, the figures are separated by lines so that it seems that they are distributed across separate panels. According to this reading as a sequence of panels, these cases exhibit *subject-to-subject* transitions.⁷¹ However, as suggested by the other entering scenes (Figs. 26c, e–g), the disk and the sun god are rather to be understood as belonging to a *single* scene. Accordingly, each sequence of panels is a case of a single coherent “split panel.”⁷²

To sum up, depending on interpretation, one may classify all transitions in Caverns as *scene-to-scene* transitions or one may differentiate between cases of *scene-to-scene*, *action-to-action*, and *subject-to-subject* transitions (Fig. 36c). In the latter case, the “fingerprint” of proportions of panel-to-panel transition types in Caverns turns out to be roughly in line with the proportions in western comics (compare the minimum/maximum marks in Fig. 36a). However, it has become clear that the figure obscures the fact that the *action-to-action* transitions in Caverns are not fully comparable to McCloud’s examples, in which the actions themselves are always conceptually clearly in the foreground. In Caverns, on the contrary, the “actions” of visiting the individual caves are comparatively less prominent, I feel, than the visited loci and creatures – at least on the pictorial level.

Whether this rather special characterization of *panel-to-panel* transitions in the Book of Caverns is representative for other Egyptian netherworld books, or even for Egyptian “sequential art” more generally, remains to be seen.

4 Conclusions

For the netherworld “comic” Book of Caverns, a diagrammatic analysis of the tableau layout combined with the textual information on the topography of the underworld allows for a largely consistent reconstruction of a mental model of the Egyptian underworld in the 13th century BCE (§2.4; cf. the “mental map” in Fig. 25).

Based on a comparison with phenomena discussed in research on “sequential art” (comics, graphic narratives, graphic novels), certain peculiarities related to the representation of space in Caverns appear in a new light: for example, the interpretation of the 1st tableau as an “establishing shot” tableau (§2.2), the interpretation of the tall initial and

71 McCloud (1993: 71): “[A subject-to-subject transition] takes us from *subject-to-subject* while staying within a scene or idea.” Cf. Schüwer (2008: 274–275): “zeitliches Verhältnis: tendenziell eng rhythmisierend; räumliches Verhältnis: *unterschiedliche Ausschnitte*; Handlung: *enger Zusammenhang*.”

72 For the notion of “split panel,” cf. §3.2.2.

interior panels with the entering sun god and his sun disk as “split panels” (§§2.2, 3.2.5), and the interpretation of the Aker/Osiris scene as a “polyptych” (§2.3.3).

The distinction between “narrative” sequence and “narrated” sequence enables a plausible hypothesis on the spatial relation of the main cave system of the divinities and the dead and the lower cave system of hell, as well as on the narrated journey of the sun god through the underworld topography (§§3.2.3–4). Based on this analysis, a comparison between distributions of panel-to-panel transitions in modern comics and those in Caverns is possible. It reveals interesting difficulties related to the categorization of the transitions in Caverns. Nevertheless, certain similarities but also certain differences in the proportions of transitions types as compared with modern comics become apparent (§3.2.5).

Illustrations

- Figure 1 From Bucher (1932: pl. xxxiii).
- Figure 2 Werning (2017: 42, fig. 1).
- Figure 3 ©Daniel A. Werning, CC BY-SA 3.0 DE.
- Figure 4 ©Daniel A. Werning, CC BY-SA 3.0 DE. Cf. Werning (2011, I: 58, fig. 23, 69; fig. 6; 333, tab. 1 [case XXIIb]).
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- Figure 8 From *Theban Mapping Project: Photo Database*, image no. 15085, database file.
- Figure 9 Text critical reconstruction of Werning (2011, I: pl. vii), with correction of the earth texture (©Daniel A. Werning, CC BY-SA 3.0 DE).
- Figure 10 Sarda & de Vita (2003: 34–35).
- Figure 11 Part of Barta (1990: fig. 13).
- Figure 12 Text critical reconstruction of Werning (2011, I: pl. xiii), with correction of the earth texture, deletion of place holders for texts, addition of two text block borders (©Daniel A. Werning, CC BY-SA 3.0 DE).
- Figure 13 Part of Barta (1990: fig. 7).
- Figure 14 Text critical reconstruction of Werning (2011, I: pl. viii), with correction of the earth texture and highlighting.
- Figure 15 Borchardt (1907: fig.1).
- Figure 16 Part of Barta (1990: fig. 19), highlighting D.W.
- Figure 17 Text critical reconstruction of Werning (2011, I: pl. x), with correction of the earth texture and deletion of place holders for texts (©Daniel A. Werning, CC BY-SA 3.0 DE).
- Figure 18 Part of Barta (1990: fig. 5), highlighting D.W.
- Figure 19 Text critical reconstruction of Werning (2011, I: pl. ix), with correction of the earth texture, deletion of place holders for texts, and highlighting (©Daniel A. Werning, CC BY-SA 3.0 DE).
- Figure 20 Text critical reconstruction of Werning (2011, I: pl. viii), with correction of the earth texture and deletion of place holders for texts, plus overlay text (©Daniel A. Werning, CC BY-SA 3.0 DE).
- Figure 21 Quibell (1913: pl. xviii).
- Figure 22 Text critical reconstruction of Werning (2011, I: pl. x), with correction of the earth texture and deletion of place holders for texts, plus overlay text (©Daniel A. Werning, CC BY-SA 3.0 DE).

- Figure 23 Text critical reconstruction of Werning (2011, I: pl. ix), with correction of the earth texture and deletion of place holders for texts (©Daniel A. Werning, CC BY-SA 3.0 DE).
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- Figure 26 a–g: Parts of the text critical reconstructions of Werning (2011, I: pls. vii–xi), with correction of the earth texture.
h/j/k: Parts of the text critical reconstructions of Werning (2011, I: pls. xii–xiii).
- Figure 27 Abel & Klein (2016: 92, fig. 24).
- Figure 28 McCloud (1993: 115).
- Figure 29 ©Daniel A. Werning, CC BY-SA 3.0 DE (background: text critical reconstruction of Werning 2011, I: pl. xii).
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- Figure 35 McCloud (1993: 74).
- Figure 36 Data for the American/European and the Japanese proportions are median values (error indicators: minimum and maximum) based on the 16 and 5 charts, respectively, in McCloud (1993: 75/76, 80). (The data for the Japanese comic “750 Rider” are left out since its chart obviously contains a mistake: it adds up not to 100%, but to 110%.)
- Figure 37 Text critical reconstructions of Werning (2011, II: 136, 140).
- Figure 38 Text critical reconstructions of Werning (2011, II: 98).
- Figure 39 Text critical reconstructions of Werning (2011, II: 198, 200), with correction of the earth texture.
- Figure 40 Text critical reconstructions of Werning (2011, II, 162), with correction of the earth texture.
- Figure 41 McCloud (1993: 70).

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