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Only the dead can tell us: on ancestor worship, law, social status, and gender norms in ancient Egypt

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3. Analysis of the Opening of the Mouth Ritual, the Tekenu ritual, and the Haker feast

The following chapter is structured into three sections, each dedicated to diverse textual sources concerning specific ancient Egyptian death rituals. The first section is focused on the OMR scenes 9 and 10, the second one pertains to the Tekenu ritual, while the third section discusses the Haker feast in the context of the Mysteries of Osiris celebrated at Abydos.

3.1 The Opening of the Mouth Ritual scenes 9 and 10

In the present section the captions concerning the OMR scenes 9 and 10 will be examined and commented. The two scenes are known from several sources, none of which date before the New Kingdom.³⁵⁴ Their content was subjected to a restricted number of variations over time, the most remarkable being the presence, within some textual witnesses, of special words, which functioned as ritual remarks, placed at the end of some sentences. The analysis proposed here mainly focuses on two sources: the tomb of Rekhmire (TT100), governor of Thebes and vizier who lived during the 18th dynasty (from the reign of Thutmose III to that of Amenhotep II), which is also one of the most ancient attestations currently known; and the tomb of Seti I (KV 17), the second king of the 19th dynasty.³⁵⁵

³⁵⁴ E. Otto 1960, Vol I, 21-30.

³⁵⁵ Both inscriptions are transcribed in the work by E. Otto 1960, 21-30; For the copies here utilised of scenes 9 and 10 in TT100 see: No. de Garis Davies 1943, Plates CVI and CVII; For KV 17 see: E. Lefebure 1886, Plate II.

Scene 9, according to TT 100 (Rekhmire)

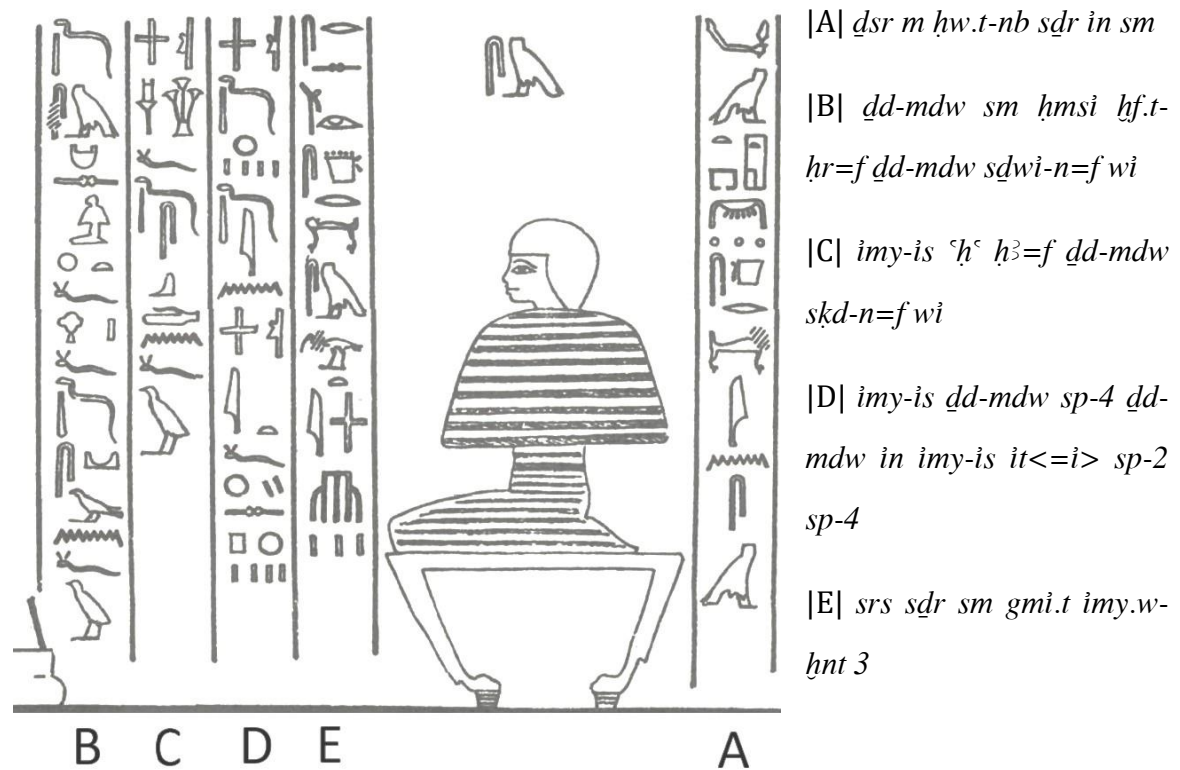
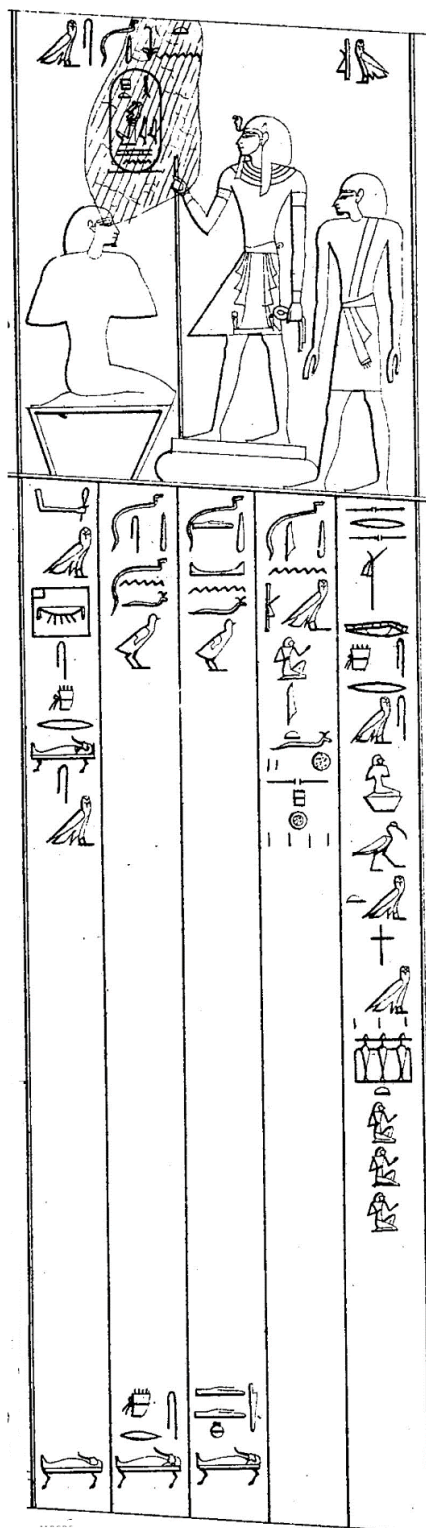


Figure 7: OMR scene 9, TT 100

- |A| The seclusion in the House of Gold (1) and the ritual sleep (2) by the *sem* priest
- |B| Recitation by the *sem* priest who sits in front of him (3); recitation: “he hurt me! (4)”
- |C| The *imy-is* (5) who stands behind him; recitation: “he hit me!” (6)
- |D| The *imy-is* who recites four times; recitation by the *imy-is*, four times: “My father! My father!”
- |E| Waking up by the one who sleeps, the *sem* priest; the finding of the three *imy-khent* (7).

Scene 9, according to KV 17 (Seti 1st)



Above the figures: *dd(mdw) sm; (nswt Mry-n-Pth); imy-is*

|A| *d̄sr m hw.t-nbw s̄dr sm* |*s̄dr*

|B| *d̄d-mdw s̄dw̄i-n=f w̄i* |*s̄dr*

|C| *d̄d-mdw d̄dw-n=f w̄i* |*k̄dd*

|D| *d̄d-mdw in imy-is it<=i> sp-2 sp-4*

|E| *srs s̄dr sm gm̄i.t imy.w-ḥnt 3*

Above the figures: Recitation by the *sem* priest; the King Mery-en-Ptah (Sety I); the *imy-is* (5)

|A| The seclusion in the House of Gold (1) and the the *sem* priest's ritual sleep (2) |To sleep (8)

|B| Recitation: he hurt me! | To sleep (9)

|C| Recitation: he hit me! (10) |The dream (11)

|D| Recitation by the *imy-is* four times: "My father! My father!"

|E| The waking up of the one who sleeps, the *sem* priest; the finding of the three *imy-khent* (7)

Figure 8: OMR scene 9 in KV 17

Notes

1. The term House of Gold, *ḥw.t nbw*, indicates a special place where the main officiant of the ritual, the *sem* priest, is secluded (Otto 1960, Vol. II, 54). According to H.-W. Fischer-Elfert this place is to be identified with the quarry from which the material to make the statue of the deceased was extracted (H.-W. Fischer-Elfert 1998, 9). This latter interpretation does not preclude that this place could have functioned as a set for dramatic rituals since the very beginning of the Egyptian history. See: Fritschy 2019, 161-176. Altenmüller, instead, hypothesises that during the New Kingdom this term indicated a ritual setting located near the tomb of the deceased. (Altenmüller 2009, 14).
2. For the term *sḏr* as “ritual sleep” see section 2.6, third argumentation.
3. The third-person masculine singular pronouns refer to the deceased or, more likely, to a sculpture portraying the latter.
4. The verb *sḏwi* (Wb 4, 380.7-10), creates an alliteration with the verb *sḏr*. The verb *sḏwi* literally means “to break” or “to penetrate”. It likely refers to an action performed on the statue by the sculptors. (Otto 1960, Vol. II, 54). The same verb is also used to describe the “ritual of breaking the red pots”, and it clearly shows “an aggressive” meaning. (Szpakowska 2003, 149).
5. The term literally means “the one inside the tomb” and indicates a ritualist.
6. Among the testimonies collected by Otto, the sentence *skd-n=f wi* recurs only in TT 100. The other sources show *ddw-n=f wi* (Otto 1960 Vol. I, 22-23). As for the verb *skd* with the meaning of ‘push’, ‘poke’, ‘shove’, ‘shake’, or ‘jolt’ see: Szpakowska, 2003, 149, and Hannig 1995, 990.
7. The term literally means “the ones who are inside”; it indicates a group of ritualists.
- 8 and 9. KV 17 shows the presence of certain words – *sḏr* and *ḳd* – placed at the end of some sentences which are to be intended as ritual remarks. These words recur also in other sources. (Otto 1960, Vol. II, 54-55).
10. The sentence *ddw-n=f wi* is not attested in TT 100 (see note 6). The verb *ddw* is quite rare and it is not attested in the Wb. Given the existence of a word etymologically linked to this verb, meaning “flour” (Wb 5, 502.8-10) a possible meaning would be “to crush”, “to hammer”, or “to grind”. In addition, the verb *ddw* creates an alliteration with the term *ḳd*. (Otto 1960, Vol. II, 54-55).
11. The term *ḳdd* has been translated as “sleeping” by Otto (1960, Vol. II, 54); Helck considered it as a shamanic trance experienced by the *sem* priest (Helck 1984 A, 104). H.-W- Fischer-Elfert suggested “meditation” (Fischer-Elfert 1998, pp. 64-72). Finally, according to Szpakowska (2003, 17), from the 19th dynasty onwards this term assumed the meaning of “dream”.

Scene 10 according to TT 100 (Rekhmire)

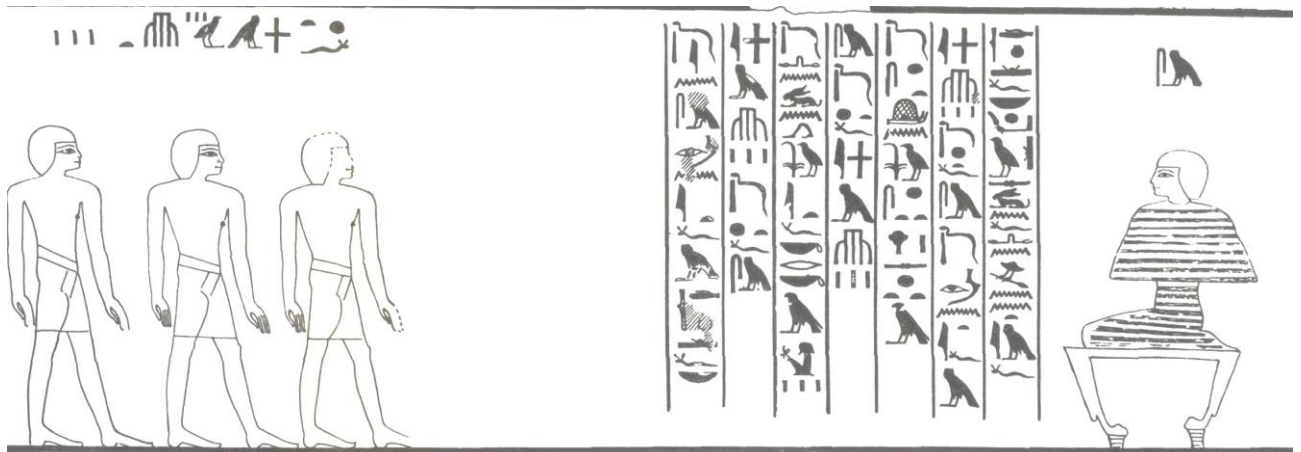


Figure 9: OMR scene 9 in TT 100

[A] Above the figure of the sleeping *sem* priest: *sm*; above the three man standing: *hft imy.w-hnt 3*

1.[B] *dd-mdw in sm m³³-n <=i> it<=i> m kd=f nb*

2.[C] *imy.w-hnt 3 dd-mdw hft sm*

3.[D] *dd-mdw nn wni sw it=k r=k* |wnw-Hr

4.[E] *sm dd-mdw hft imy.w-hnt 3*

5.[F] *dd-mdw sht-n sw sht.t-hr* |sht.t Hr

6.[G] *imy.w-hnt 3 dd-mdw hft sm* [H] *dd-mdw m³³-n<=i> it<=i> m*

7. *kd=f nb* [I-1] *hwi<=i> sw n=f* [I-2] *nn hnn.t im=f*

[A] The *sem* priest is in front the three *imy-khent*.

[B] Recitation by the *sem* priest: “I have seen my father in all his forms”.

[C] The three *imy-khent*; recitation in front of the *sem* priest;

|D| recitation: “your father will not turn himself away from you” |The messenger of Horus (1)

|E| The *sem* priest; recitation in front of the three *imy-khent*;

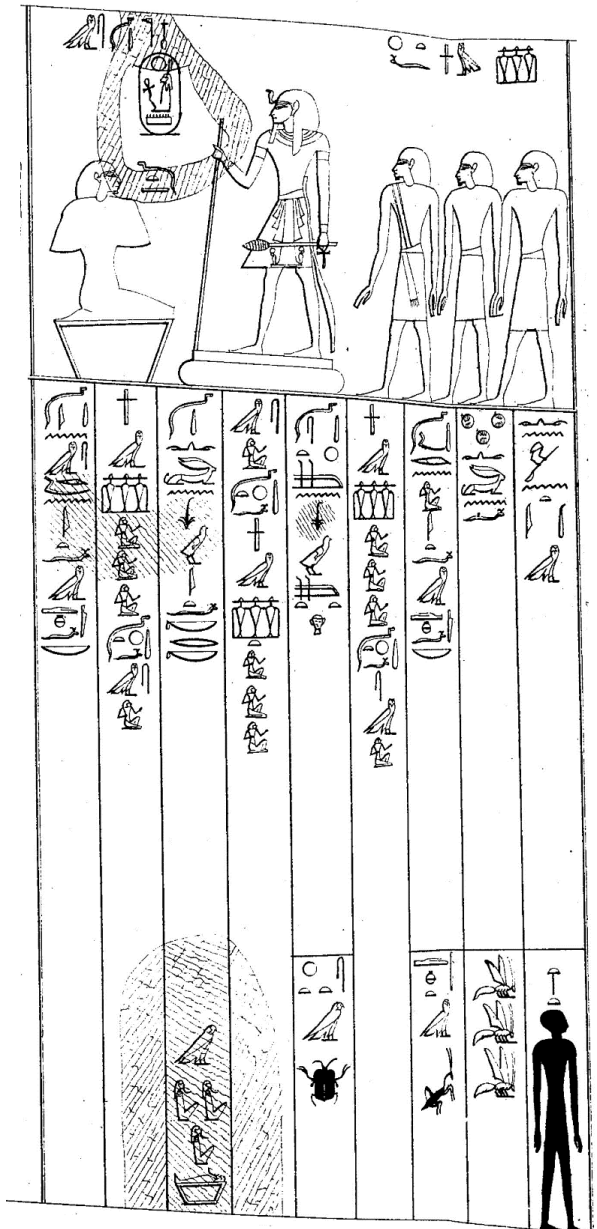
|F| recitation: “the spider-*hr* (2) has captured him”. | The spider is Horus (3)

|G| The three *imy-khent*; recitation in front of the *sem* priest;

|H| recitation: “I have seen my father in all his forms”.

|I-1| “I prevented him from suffering,”

|I-2| with no trace of putrefaction in him”.



Scene 10 According to the tomb of Seti 1st
(KV 17)

[A] (Above the figures) *dd-mdw sm; nfr-ntr*
Mn-M³.t-R^c; hft imy.w-hnt 3

[B] *dd-mdw in sm m³³-n <=i> it<=i> m*
kd=f nb

[C] *imy.w-hnt 3 dd-mdw hft sm*

[D] *dd-mdw nn wn sw it=k r=k*
|wnw-Hr sdr

[E] *sm dd-mdw hft imy.w-hnt 3*

[F] *dd-mdw sht-n sw sht.t-hr*
|sht.t Hr

[G] *imy.w-hnt 3 dd-mdw hft sm*

[H] *dd-mdw m³³-n<=i> it<=i> m kd=f nb*
|kd m 3bi.t

[I-1] *hwi<=i> <s>wn=f*
|bi.wt

[I-2] *nn hnn.ti im<=f> |šw.t*

Figure 10: OMR scene 10 in KV 17

[A] Recitation by the *sem* priest – the Perfect God, Men-Maat-Ra (Sety I) – in front of the three *imy-khent*.

[B] Recitation by the *sem* priest: “I have seen my father in all his forms”.

[C] The three *imy-khent*; recitation in front of the *sem* priest;

D recitation: “your father will not turn himself away from you”	the sleeping messenger of Horus (1)
E The <i>sem</i> priest; recitation in front of the three <i>Imy-khent</i> ;	
F recitation: “the spider- <i>hr</i> (2) has captured him”	the spider is Horus (3)
G The three <i>imy-khent</i> ; recitation in front of the <i>sem</i> priest;	
H recitation: “I have seen my father in all his forms”	image of a mantis (4)
I-1 “I prevented him from suffering”	bees (5)
I-2 with no trace of putrefaction in him	shadow (6)

Notes

1. Both the groups of signs  (TT100) and  (KV 17) pose some difficulties. This ritual remark is attested with different spellings (E. Otto, op cit. 1960, Vol I, p. 26), the most interesting being that occurring in Butehamun’s coffin, currently in Turin (Egyptian Museum C 2237/3),

which reveals the phonetic value of the group of signs: , *Hr-wnw sdr*. The signs 

(A55) and  (D40) could be both read as *sdr* (for this verb written with the sign D40, see Wb IV, 390.5).

It is important to stress that the verb *sdr* does not recur in all the testimonies (E. Otto, op. cit. 1960, Vol. I, p. 26), for example, it does not recur in TT 100. According to H.-W. Fischer-Elfert, the term *wnw* should be translated as “Offenbarung”, “vision” (H.-W. Fischer-Elfert, op. cit. 1998, pp. 28-36). Another possible meaning is that of “messenger” (*inw/wnw*, Wb 1, 91.19-92.1), which has been suggested by E. Otto because of a parallel with PT 327 (Otto 1960, Vol. II, 56; see also Altenmüller 2009, 8). This latter rendering is particularly interesting, since it can be interpreted as a reference to a mythical episode narrated in CT spell 312 – which plays a foremost role to fully understand the mythological background of the religious practices considered here (this topic is elaborated further in section 3.2.1c) – and in PT 364, which shows numerous affinities with OMR scene 10 (this topic is further elaborated in section 3.1.a).

2 and 3. The term *sh.t-hr* probably indicates a type of spider: so, it has been translated as “the spider-*hr*”. The term is etymologically linked to the verb *sh.t* (Wb 4, 263.6-1), whose meaning is “to trap”, also creating an alliteration with the aforementioned noun and the ritual remark at the end of the sentence. As for the latter, in

some textual sources (such as KV 17), the ritual remark is determined with the sign  (L1), which clearly confirms that the word *šht.t* actually indicated an invertebrate animal, such as an insect or an arachnid. The

sign G5 placed at the end of the ritual remark  should be intended, according to Otto, as a determinative for “divine being”, rather than as the name of the god Horus since, in this latter case, the sign would be placed at the beginning of the group hieroglyphs. (Otto 1960, Vol. II, 56). One could however interpret *šht.t Hr* as a nominal sentence: “the spider is Horus”. In fact, it is clear the intent of creating a word play between the subject of the sentence F and the related ritual remark. According to Fischer-Elfert this ritual remark is to be intended as a code-word for a technical term, the “grid”, an instrument used by painters and sculptors to catch the feature of three-dimensional figures (Fischer-Elfert 1998, 85). For Altenmüller, instead, it has to be interpreted as a supernatural being dwelling in the netherworld, or as a term referring to a ritualist linked to Horus. (Altenmüller 2009, 8).

4. *kd m iḥbi.t*, literally “image of a mantis”. This ritual remark is not attested in TT 100. (Otto 1960, Vol. II, 56-57). According to Fischer-Elfert, it is a code-word to indicate the outlining of the sculpture (H.-W. Fischer-Elfert 1998, p. 83). For Altenmüller, instead, it has to be interpreted as a supernatural being dwelling in the netherworld. (Altenmüller 2009, 14).

5 *bi.wt*, literally “bees”. This group of signs is not attested in TT 100. (Otto 1960, Vol. II, 56-57). According to Fischer-Elfert, this term is another code-word used to indicate the grid used by the artists. (Fischer-Elfert 1998, 83). For Altenmüller, it is a kind of supernatural being. (Altenmüller 2009, 14-15).

6 The term *šw.t* literally means “shadow”, it usually indicated a component of human beings often associated to the *b³*. (Allen 2001). This ritual remark does not occur in TT 100. According to Fischer-Elfert, within this specific context the term is used as a code-word to indicate the outlining of the sculpture. (Fischer-Elfert 1998, 85). For Altenmüller, instead, it must be interpreted as a supernatural being. (Altenmüller 2009, 14-15).

3.1.a PT 364 and OMR scene 10

OMR scenes 9 and 10 have been considered as the survival of an archaic religious practice because of two main reasons: the lack of explicit references to the Egyptian pantheon, and the main role played by some phenomena – such as the interactions between the living and the dead through dreams – that a certain tradition of studies considered as typical of “primitive religions”. As regards the first argument – the absence of mythology – a study by H. Altenmüller has shown how several scenes of the OMR, traditionally considered “without mythology”, must be rather understood as a “sacred representation” pertaining to an episode of the Osirian myth narrated in PT 364,³⁵⁶ a passage from the Pyramid Texts which narrates how Horus was able to heal the wounded corpse of Osiris, and open the eye and mouth of the latter by donating his own eye:

PT 364 (Teti Pyramid) – Pyr. 609 a- 621 c

[609a] *dd-mdw h³ Wsir N pw ‘h^c r=k* [609b] *iy*
Hr ip=f tw m-^c ntr.w i-mri-n tw Hr [609c] *htm-*
n=f tw sdmi-n n=k Hr ir.t=f ir=k [610a] *wpi-*
n n=k Hr ir.t=k m³³=k im=s [610b] *t(3)s-n*
n=k ntr.w hr=k i-mri-n=sn tw [610c] *sd³-n tw*
(3)s.t hn^c Nb.t-hw.t [610d] *n hri Hr ir=k twt*
k³=f [611a] *htp hr=k n=f i-wn k(w) šsp-n=k*
md(w).t Hr htp=k hr=s [611b] *sdm n Hr n*
sww n=k rdⁱ-n=f šms kw ntr.w [612a] *Wsir N*
rs r=k ini-n n=k Gb Hr ip=f tw [612b] *gmi-n*
tw Hr 3h-n=f im=k

[609 a] Recitation: Oh Osiris-N, arise! [609b] Horus comes to judge³⁵⁷ you among the gods! Horus has loved you, and [609c] he equipped you: Horus has placed on you his eye for your advantage; [610a] Horus has opened your eye so that you can see through it! [610b] The gods have tied for you your face, (because) they loved you! [610c] Isis and Nephthys made you safe! [610d] Horus is not far from you since you are his Ka! [611a] May your face be happy because of him. Hurry up, receive the words of Horus, and be happy about it! [611b] Listen to Horus! You will not suffer, since he caused the gods to follow you. [612a] Oh Osiris-N, awake! Geb brought Horus to you! And he will judge you!³⁵⁸ [612b] Horus has found you and he appeared to you in the form of an 3h-spirit.

³⁵⁶ H. Altenmüller 2009, 10.

³⁵⁷ The verb *ip* (Wb 1, 66.1-13), as other verb belonging to the same semantic category, can assume a more specific meaning of “judging”, see: Grieshammer 1970, 30-51.

³⁵⁸ Grieshammer 1970, 30-51

[613a] *si^c-n n=k Hr ntr.w rdi-n=f n=k sn*
shd=sn hr=k [613b] *di-n tw Hr m-h³.t ntr.w*
rdi-n=f i^{ti}=k tw.t / wrr.t (?) nb.t [613c] *mr-n*
sw Hr.w ir=k n wpi-n=f ir=k [614 a] *s^cnh-n tw*
Hr m rn=k pw n ^cnd.ti [614 b] *rdi-n n=k Hr*
ir.t=f rwd.t [614 c] *di-n n=k s imim=k nri n=k*
hft.i=k nb [614 d] *m^h-n kw Hr tm.ti m ir.t=f m*
rn=s pw n w³h.wt ntr [615 a] *i-hm^c-n n=k Hr*
ntr.w [615 b] *n bi³i-n=sn r=k dr bw smi-n =k*
im [615 c] *ip-n n=k Hr ntr.w* [615 d] *n bi³i-*
n=sn r=k dr bw m^hi=k im [616 a] *ink-n n=k*
Nb.t-hw.t ^c.wt=k nb.t [616 b] *m rn=s pw n*
Sš³.t nb.t ikd.w. [616 c] *sd³-n<=s> n=k sn*
[616 d] *rdi.t n mw.t =k Nw.t m rn=s n krs.wt*
[616e] *ink-n=s tw m rn=s n krs.w* [616f] *i-si^c.ti*
n=s m rn=s n i^c

[613a] Horus has caused the gods to ascend to you; he has given them to you so that they may brighten your face. [613b] Horus has placed you at the head of the gods and he has caused you to take every *tw.t / wrr.t*-crown.³⁵⁹

[613c] Horus has joined you; he will not part with you! [614 a] Horus has caused you to live in this your name (form) of *^cnd.ti*.³⁶⁰ [614b] Horus has given you his strong eye. [614 c] He gave it to you so that you might become strong and make all your enemies afraid of you. [614d] Horus has filled you completely with his eye in its (the eye's) name “God's donation”. [615a] Horus caught the gods for you [615b] so that they cannot get away from you, from the place where you went to. [615c] Horus has judged³⁶¹ the gods for you, [615d] so that they cannot get away from you, from the place where you drowned.³⁶² [616a] Nephthys has assembled for you all your limbs, [616b] in her name (form) of “Seshat, lady of builders”, [616c] and she preserved them (the limbs) for you. [616d] You were given to your mother Nut, who took the name (form) of “sarcophagus”, [616e] and she embraced you in her name (form) of “sarcophagus”. [616f] You have ascended to her (Nut, the goddess of the sky), who took the name (form) of “tomb”.

³⁵⁹ The transliteration and the translation of this group of signs is not clear. In this regard, see: K. Goebis 2008, 73 and note 378.

³⁶⁰ *^cnd.ti* (Wb 1, 207.12) is a god of Busiris, associated with the sphere of fertility and often identified with Osiris himself.

³⁶¹ For this verb with the of meaning of “judging”, see: Grieshammer 1970, 30-51.

³⁶² A clear reference to Osiris' death by drowning.

[617a] *i^cb-n n=k Hr ^c.t=k n r_di-n=f swn=k*
[617b] *dm_d-n=f kw n hnn.t im=k* **[617c]** *s^ch^c-n*
t_w Hr m nwtwt.w **[618 a]** *h³ Wsir N pw wts*
ib=k ir=f^ci ib=k wn r^c=k **[618 b]** *nd-n t_w Hr*
n ddi-n nd=f t_w **[619 a]** *h³ Wsir N pw twt ntr*
shm n ntr miw.ti=k **[619b]** *r_di-n n=k Hr*
msw=f wts=sn t_w **[620a]** *r_di-n=f n=k ntr.w nb*
šms=sn t_w shm=k im=sn **[620b]** *f³i-n t_w Hr*
m rn=f n hnw **[620c]** *wts=f kw m rn=k n skr*
[621 a] *nh.t(i) nmnm=k r^c nb* **[621b]** *h³.ti m*
rn=k n h³.t prr.t r^cw im=s **[621c]** *w³s.ti spd=ti*
b³.ti shm.ti n d.t d.t

[617a] Horus has brought your limbs together
 (and) he did not cause you to suffer **[617b]** He
 has reassembled you with no trace of
 putrefaction in you. **[617c]** Horus made you
 stand up, don't falter! **[618a]** Oh Osiris-N,
 may your heart rejoice for him! You are glad,
 your mouth is open! **[618b]** Horus has
 protected you, and it didn't take long for him
 to protect you! **[619a]** O Osiris-N, you are the
 mightiest god and there is no other god like
 you. **[619b]** Horus gave you his children to lift
 you up. **[620a]** He has brought to you all the
 gods so that they will follow you and you will
 have power over them. **[620b]** Horus will lift
 you up in his name (form) of *hnw*-bark; **[620c]**
 he will lift you up in his name (form) of *skr*-
 bark. **[621a]** May you live and move every
 day! **[621b]** You are one who appears as an *h³*
 whose name is "Horizon-from-where-Ra-
 goes-forth". **[621c]** You are powerful, you are
 equipped, you are endowed with a *B³*, you are
 a mighty one for ever and ever.

PT 364 contains numerous explicit references to certain actions, probably of a ritual nature, which perfectly match with the two OMR scenes previously analysed. In Pyr. 610a it is stated that Horus opened Osiris ‘eyes to grant him the sense of sight (*wpi-n n=k Hr ir.t=k m³ =k im=s*), while in Pyr. 618a it is said that Osiris’s mouth has been opened (*wn r=k*). Especially noteworthy are a restricted number of passages which show an undeniable affinity with some sentences occurring in OMR scene 10. Pyr. 617a – “he did not cause you to suffer” (*n rdi-n=f sw n=k*) – clearly recalls “I prevented him from suffering” (*hw i<=i> sw n=f*) attested in OMR scene 10 I-1. Pyr. 617b, “with no trace of putrefaction in you” (*n hnn.t im=k*) is practically identical to OMR scene 10 I-2, “with no trace of putrefaction in him” (*nn hnn.t im=f*). Finally, Pyr. 610d, “Horus is not far from you” (*n hri Hr ir=k*) shows a certain similarity with OMR 10 D, “your father will not turn himself away from you” (*nn wni sw it=k r=k*).

Several scholars have suggested that the OMR scenes must be understood as a *scenario* for a dramatic ritual: a piece of writing providing the outline of a story and the details concerning its mise-en-scene, such as the entrances and the exits of the actors (the ritualists, in this specific cases).¹

For the specific case of OMR 10, its text can be considered as the “stage direction” for the dramatic performance of a mythical episode already known in a much more ancient source, PT 364, which was about the revivification of Osiris through the performance of the funerary rituals and the establishment of his mortuary cult (Pyr. 610c and 616a-c). Moreover, if we adopt the emic point of view of an ancient Egyptian, the facts narrated in PT 364 were likely perceived as the founding model from which the actual funerary and mortuary rituals were created. The strong connections between PT 364 and OMR scene 10 are therefore not surprising since the first was the founding myth of both funerary and mortuary rituals, and the latter concerned the vivification of a cult statue to be used in the mortuary cult.

Another important theme of PT 364 pertains to the Eye of Horus since in several passages it is stated that Horus was able to appear in front of his father in the form of an *ꜥh* in order to donate his eye to him (Pyr. 609c; 612b; 614b).

It is therefore necessary to dwell on the complex symbolism attributed to Eye of Horus. In the textual sources, it is known by two different names: *ir.t-Hr*,² which is the most ancient term, and *wꜥd³.t*,³

¹ E. Otto 1960, Vol. II, 3; J. C. Goyon 1972, 92; K. Szpakowska 2003, 147-148; R. A. Gillam 2015, 69 ; H. Altenmüller 2009, 9.

² Wb 1, 107.12-19.

³ Wb 1, 401.12-402.2.

attested for the first time in the Coffin Texts. Above all, the Eye of Horus was associated to protection and healing; nonetheless, it also symbolised the offerings for the deceased, and in a broader sense it represented the “gift par excellence”, encompassing all the kinds of offerings.⁴ Both these symbolisms can be found in PT 364, as clearly shown in Pyr. 614b-d, where the Eye of Horus is described as “the god’s donation” par excellence and, at the same time, it is a gift able to protect Osiris and make him strong.

Indeed, within the Pyramid Texts the Eye of Horus is often associated with the ritual action of opening the mouth of the deceased/Osiris.⁵ And, in this regard, it is certainly suggestive that OMR scene 7 – which concerns a censuring ceremony and, in several testimonies, immediately precedes OMR 9 and 10 in the ritual sequence, as attested in Rekhmire’s tomb (see the figure below) – is mainly focused on the donation of the Eye of Horus to the statue of the deceased:

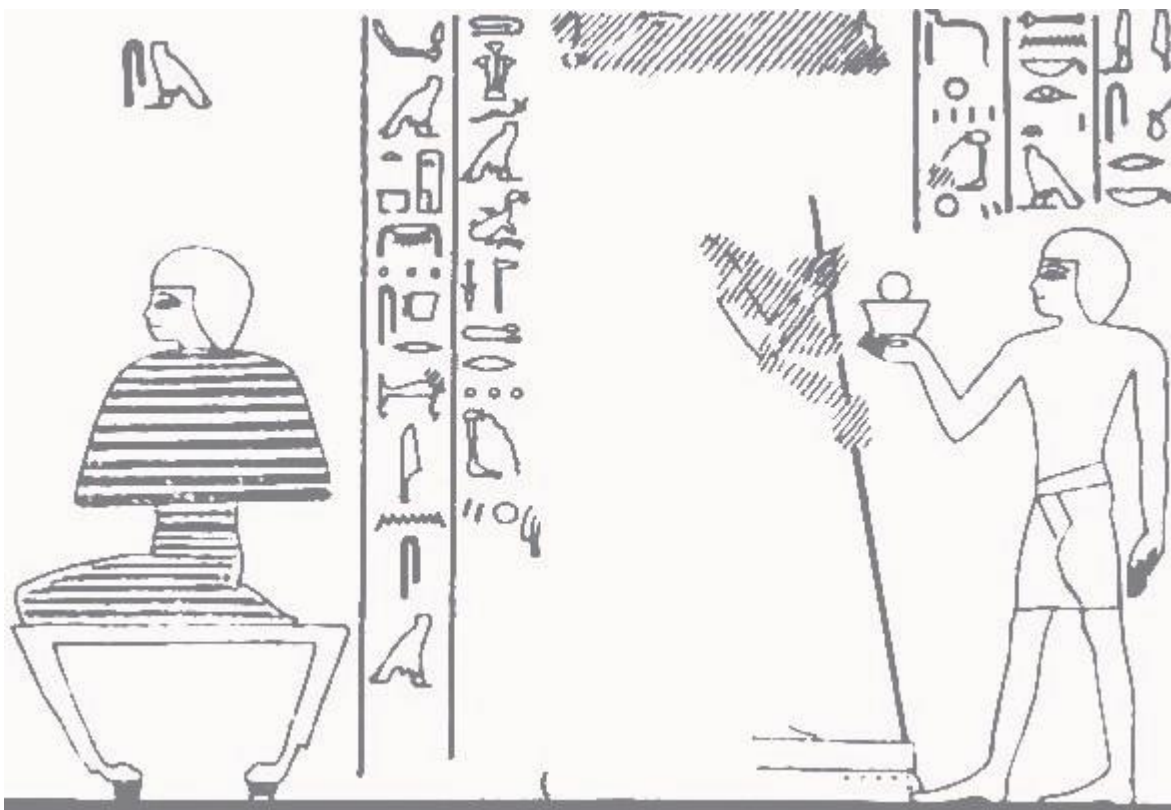


Figure 1: OMR 7 in TT 100

⁴ J.-P. Corteggiani 2007, 381-385. The symbolisms related to Eye of Horus will be further analysed in chapter 3, section 3.2.1.c

⁵ H.M. Hays 2012, Vol. II, 579-580.

OMR 7, According to TT 100 (Rekhmire's tomb) ⁶

1. *pḥr ḥ³=f m t³ snṯr wḥb sp 2*

2. *ḏḏ-mdw sp 4 wḥb sp 2*

3. *mīn=k ṯr.t Ḥr sty r=k*

1. Going around him (the statue of the deceased) with a pellet of incense doubly pure.
2. Recitation four times: pure! pure!
3. Receive the Eye of Horus! May the scent reach you!

In sum, OMR scene 10 clearly refers to a mythical episode of the Osiris myth. Thanks to the intervention of Horus and the donation of his eye, the enactment of the funerary rituals and the establishment of his mortuary cult, Osiris is transfigured into a powerful *ḥ* (Pyr. 612b), and he is finally crowned king of the netherworld. The achieving of this special status is symbolised by the *ṯw.t* / *wrr.t* crown (Pyr. 613b), which stand for the leadership acquired over the celestial gods.⁷ Finally, even though this is not quite explicit in the text, it can be assumed that the celebration of both the funerary and mortuary rituals for Osiris was considered as the fundamental prerequisite for legitimising the succession of Horus as the new ruler of Egypt.

3.1.b The Letters to the Dead and OMR scene 9

Several elements of the OMR scene 9 appear to be typical of the New Kingdom. Even the noun *ḳdd* used in this text to indicate the “dream” experienced by the *sem* priest seems to reflect a regional scribal tradition which originated in the Theban area around the 19th dynasty.⁸ Moreover, the whole composition perfectly matches with the cultural climate of this historical phase, which was characterised by an increasing interest in dreams as a means of contact with the divine sphere.⁹

On the other hand, sporadic textual sources describing oneiric experiences as a means to communicate with the deceased can be already found in two Letters to the Dead dating to the First Intermediate

⁶ E. Otto 1960, Vol. I, 18-19; Vol. II, 51-52.

⁷ K. Goebis 2008, 73-74.

⁸ K. Szpakowska 2003, 16-18.

⁹ K. Szpakowska 2003, pp. 146-147.

Period (third millennium BCE): P. Naga ed-Deir 3737 MFA 38.2121 ¹⁰ and a stela, likely from the same site, currently at Michael C. Carlos Museum 2014.033.001.¹¹

P. Naga ed-Deir 3737 is a letter written by a man called Heni to his deceased father, Meru. Specifically, Heni is invoking the supernatural help of his ancestor to ward off another man – probably a deceased person as well, but scholars are not unanimous in this regard¹² – called Seni, who was a funerary servant involved in Meru’s mortuary cult. Based on the words of the sender, the spirit of Seni is persecuting him by appearing in his dreams:

[**Recto 2**] *i'nw n sp 3h i'nw nm'w n=k hr nn irw d.t=k sni n rdi.t m3 sw* |3|
b3k=im m rsw.t m niw.t (w'.t) [hn']=k

Help a million of times! May your help be useful ¹³ with regard to the things your funerary servant, Seni, does: for causing me – your servant (Heni) ¹⁴ – to see him in a dream in the (Sole) City [with] you.

Of particular interest is the terminology used here to describe the interactions between the living and the dead. Above all, the expression *m33 m rsw.t*, which literally means “to see in a dream”, can provide interesting hints about the emic conception of the oneiric visions. In the ancient Egyptian language, a verb indicating the action of “dreaming” is not attested, while nouns for “dream”, such as *rsw.t* and, starting from the New Kingdom, *kd(d)*, are well documented. Such a linguistic peculiarity highlights how for the Egyptians, the dreams were not perceived as an intimate, individual experience, or an action that someone can experience, but as an actual liminal space – referred to by Szpakowska as “the dream zone” – in which the sleeper could be awake.¹⁵

Also noteworthy is the expression *niw.t (w'.t)*, which can be translated as the Sole City, or the Unique City. The term *niw.t* per se is often used to indicate the necropolis, an element that suggest a religious idea of post-mortem survival meant as the prosecution of the earthly social position held by deceased and the social network related to such social status.¹⁶ As for the expression “Sole City”, besides the text analysed here, this term recurs in a very restricted number of documents: another letter to the

¹⁰ S. Donnat Beauquier 2014, 48-50; K. Szpakowska 2003, 24-27; A. Roccati 1967, 324-326.

¹¹ S. Donnat Beauquier 2014, 53-55; R. Nyord 2021 A, 3-19. This document is analysed in detail in chapter 5.

¹² J. Hsieh 2022, 172 and note m.

¹³ The sentence is problematic. I followed here the interpretation given by Roccati. See: A. Roccati 1967, p. 325.

¹⁴ The writer denotes himself as the servant of his deceased father (*b3k-im*) as a form of respect.

¹⁵ K. Szpakowska 2003, 33 and. ff.

¹⁶ J. P. Allen 2006, 11 and 17. See also the section dedicated to the captions concerning the Tekenu ritual (chapter 3, section 3.2.1.b), where the word *niw.t* is often used to indicate the necropolis.

dead – the Qaw Bowl¹⁷ – and an inscription from the Roman Period in the temple of Opet at Karnak.¹⁸ It is also possible to find similar idiomatic expressions – *niw.t tn*, *niw.t wr.t*, *s.t w^c.t* – within the Coffin Texts, where they are used to indicate proximity to certain supernatural beings.¹⁹ In the light of these parallels, the Sole City would seem to indicate a netherworld region, where the living and the dead could come into contact with each other (literally being all together in the same place) and, therefore, somewhat similar to what Szpakowska referred to as the “dream zone”.

The Sole City seems also to show certain affinity with other sacred places attested in diverse Letters to the Dead, such as the City of Eternity (*niw.t nhh*), which recurs in the Berlin bowl,²⁰ or the Place of Justification (*s.t m³-hrw*) attested in the Louvre bowl.²¹ According to Donnat Beauquier, all these expressions were probably used to indicate actual earthly places located within the necropolis, where special rituals concerning the interaction between the living and the dead – which could take the form of a ritualised judgment²² – were enacted.²³

These two different interpretations – a liminal zone of the netherworld where the living and the dead were allowed to interact with each other, and a specific zone of the necropolis meant as a sacred space to perform specific rituals to interact with the dead – are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Another similar place is known in the textual sources, the “Island of Fire” (*iw-nsr^r*), which is often mentioned in the Coffin Texts spells and also recurs in P. Berlin 10482, an early Middle Kingdom document that certainly belonged to the same religious milieu of the so-called Letters to the Dead.²⁴ The “Island of Fire” was indeed a region of the netherworld, which is to be identified with the eastern horizon where the sun god rises each day to cyclically defeat his enemies and, consequently, it was also considered as one of the settings in which the judgment of the dead occurred.²⁵ Nonetheless, diverse textual sources suggest that this celestial region was also assimilated with a concrete sacred area located near the tomb, or with the tomb itself, which was the actual setting for the celebration of special rituals focused on the revenge of the deceased over their enemies and a ritualised version of the judgment of the dead.²⁶

¹⁷ S. Donnat Beauquier 2014, 38-39 and note f. See also chapter 3, section 4.4.

¹⁸ C. De Wit 1958, 209.

¹⁹ K. Szpakowska 2003, 38 and note 93.

²⁰ S. Donnat Beauquier 2014, 62.

²¹ S. Donnat Beauquier 2014, 60 and note e.

²² For further information on this kind of ritual, see chapter 3, section 3.3.3.

²³ S. Donnat Beauquier 2014, 39.

²⁴ I. Regulski 2020, 285; S. Donnat Beauquier 2014, 64 and note a.

²⁵ K. Goebis 2008, 10-11.

²⁶ I. Regulski 2020, 285. See also: J. F. Borghouts 1971, 104.

It can therefore be said that, according to the Egyptian mindset, there was an overlap between certain ritual areas located in the necropolis, some regions of the netherworld, and a special dimension that the sleepers could experience through their oneiric visions, and that this belief was already attested during the 3rd millennium BCE.

As for the letter on a stela from Nag ed-Deir, in one of the two missives written on this document, a sick lady invokes the help of a deceased woman.²⁷ The sender asks the spirit to heal her illness by appearing in a dream and fight on her behalf:

Columns 3–4:

ih ꜥh =t n<=i> [hft]-hr=i mꜥ=i ꜥhꜥ=t hr=i m rsw.t

May you manifest to me in the form of an ꜥh in front of me! May I see you fight for me in a dream!

The terminology used is worthy of attention. Besides the expression *mꜥꜥ m rsw.t* already encountered in P. Naga ed-Deir 3737, particularly interesting is the sentence *ih ꜥh =t n<=i> [...]-hr=i*, where the lexeme *ꜥh* is used as a verb,²⁸ which can be rendered as “to appear in the form of an *ꜥh*-spirit”. As mentioned in the first chapter, the word *ꜥh* was often used as an epithet referring to a category of deceased who have been subjected to special rites (the *sꜥh.w* rites) thanks to which they acquired special powers and could affect the vicissitudes of the living people.

The letter on the stela from Naga ed-Deir seems also to suggest that dreams could somehow be sought and directly asked from a supernatural being, a practice that could be interpreted as a kind of incubation ritual.²⁹

The term “incubation” indicates a religious practice consisting in a ritual dormition performed within a sacred place, usually a sanctuary, but also a tomb, in order to receive a dream inspired by a supernatural being, such as a god, a hero, or a deceased person endowed with superhuman powers.³⁰ Yet, the existence of this practice within pharaonic Egypt is a problematic issue: incubation rituals are certainly attested from the Late Period onwards and, above all, during the Greco-Roman

²⁷ For the kind of relationship between the sender and the recipient see chapter 5, section 5.2.

²⁸ Wb I, 15.3.

²⁹ G. Renberg 2016, 714-716.

³⁰ G. Renberg 2016, 3-5 and 32.

dominations, but there are not enough relevant sources dating to previous historical phases.³¹ Several scholars pointed out how this type of rituals appears to be more the result of foreign stimuli, rather than a custom rooted in an ancient autochthonous tradition³² and, as a matter of a fact, sanctuaries specifically aimed at the performance of incubation practices are not known for most ancient Egyptian historical phases.³³ On the other hand, although it is not possible to establish whether the sick lady who wrote the letter on the Naga ed-Deir stele spent the night within the tomb of the deceased invoked, this option cannot be ruled out a priori.³⁴ It is certainly significant that the letter was written on the back of a funerary stela, likely placed inside the tomb of the deceased to whom the missive was addressed, an element that could confirm the enactment of a ritual sleep within the necropolis to seek a dream.³⁵ Likewise, the reference to the “Sole City” in P. Naga ed-Deir 3737 might indicate that the nightmare experienced by the writer could be identified as a sort of solicited dream too, and that the latter perhaps occurred during a ritual sleep performed in the necropolis.

Egyptian sources testify to the existence of nocturnal ceremonies enacted during the night preceding the burial of the deceased, some of which date back to the Middle Kingdom.³⁶

Also remarkable is that some nouns etymologically derived from the verb *sḏr* recur in several documents describing the Middle Kingdom Mysteries of Osiris celebrated at Abydos.³⁷ It cannot be excluded, therefore, that these rituals performed during the night hours might include special actions aimed at establishing a form of interaction between the living and the dead. This kind of communication, that according to the definition provided in the present thesis can be considered as a necromantic action, was likely established by means of a special kind of ritual sleep (*sḏr*), which was enacted during specific occasions and performed in specific sacred areas – such as the “Sole City” or the “Island of Fire” – whose nature, according to the Egyptian emic perspective, shared the same kind of liminality characterising both certain regions of the netherworld and the dimension experienced by the sleepers through dreams.

3.1.c OMR scenes 9 and 10: summary and conclusions

Several scholars have interpreted the OMR scenes 9 and 10 as somewhat of anomalous and unusual in the context of the Egyptian religion and, consequently, as “the living fossil” of an “archaic” or even “shamanic” practice. The two main arguments behind this interpretative scheme were the

³¹ K. Szpakowska 2003, 42-146.

³² J.D. Ray 1976, 130.

³³ K. Szpakowska 2003, pp. 142-146.

³⁴ G. Renberg 2016, 714-716.

³⁵ G. Renberg 2016, 714-716.

³⁶ H. Willems 1988, 145 and ff.

³⁷ See chapter 3, section 3.3.1.

absence of explicit references to mythological episodes and the foremost role played by dreams as a means to communicate with the dead.

The first argument is certainly false: the mythological background of OMR scenes 9 and 10 can be identified with specific episodes of the Osiris myth, above all the one narrated in PT 364, which shows significant parallels with scene 10. As for OMR 9, instead, the action expressed by the verb *sḏr* and the vision of the deceased father could find significant parallels in two Letters to the Dead of the First Intermediate Period and in certain rituals performed during the Middle Kingdom Mysteries of Osiris at Abydos.³⁸

The apparent absence of mythology can be explained through the fact that the OMR scenes did not intend to narrate a myth but provide the directions on how to enact a series of ritual actions, which were meant to be executed in the form of a dramatic ritual aimed at vivifying an effigy of the deceased.³⁹ It is also important to stress that in the ancient Egyptian culture there was a certain reticence in explicitly describing some episodes of the Osiris myth, especially those concerning the death and the violence suffered by the god. Moreover, this reticence had to be stronger in the contexts of rituals which involved a large audience and/or certain forms of interactions between the living and the dead.⁴⁰

As regards the second argument – the role played by the dream – it must be said that this element cannot be interpreted as an unusual feature, alien to the pharaonic religion. As shown by two Letters to the Dead dating to the 3rd millennium BCE, practices involving the dreams as a means of communication between the living and the dead were not uncommon, and OMR 9 therefore does not constitute a unique and isolated case in the history of ancient Egyptian religion.

Furthermore, the important role played by the oneiric visions in some religious practices cannot be mechanically framed as the survival of an “archaic shamanic practice”. As stressed by cognitive anthropologists, the human mind is structured in a way that makes certain beliefs “more believable” than others, and beliefs concerning the vision of ghosts or spirits through dreams are practically attested all over the world and in a huge number of historical contexts.⁴¹ The diffusion of this type of belief can be therefore easily explained in the light of a cognitive faculty – that all human beings

³⁸ See chapter 3, section 3.2.1.c and chapter 3.3.1, table 4.

³⁹ R. A. Gillam 2005, 69-73; J. C. Goyon 1972, 92.

⁴⁰ See chapter 2, section 2.6, second argumentation.

⁴¹ S. Atran 2002, 52-56; P. Boyer 2020.

share – which can encourage the rise of similar cultural phenomena within diverse contexts, also distant from each other in space and time.⁴²

It follows that what needs to be analysed here is not the fact that the Egyptians were able to see deceased people in their dream. This is a banal fact that virtually every human being can experience and reveals nothing on the salient characteristics of this ancient society. The object to be researched, instead, is the historical-cultural conditioning to which a physiological phenomenon was subjected. It is also important to consider that, probably, the actions described in these textual sources by the terms *sḏr*, *ḳd/ḳdd*, or *mꜣꜣ m rsw.t* may not always correspond to what we – according to our etic perspective – intend for “sleeping” and “dream”.⁴³ Given that the Egyptians perceived the dreams as a liminal experience, it is reasonable to posit that they created specific ritual actions shaped on the model of these physiological phenomena. In other words, it can be posited that certain ritual actions symbolically mimicked the condition of sleeping or the oneiric experiences with the specific aim of solving certain kinds of existential crisis.⁴⁴

If we put ourselves into the point of view of an ancient Egyptian, the death of an elite member at the head of a prestigious extended family involved a whole series of rather concrete problems, which went far beyond the grief felt for the loss of a beloved person. That was certainly a delicate moment of transition during which unpleasant situations could occur, if not actual threats. For example, disputes could arise concerning inheritance and succession, or other rival families could take advantage of this moment of weakness for embezzling goods and properties.⁴⁵

⁴² S. Atran 2002, 52-56; P. Boyer 2020, 470-472.

⁴³ Nonetheless, it is beyond of doubts that this kind of ritual action was perceived by the Egyptians as a something actually identical to a physiological dream.

⁴⁴ With regards to the cultural mechanic involving the appropriation of physiological experiences as a model to create ritual actions see: E. De Martino 2013, 69.

⁴⁵ This kind of situations - which must have been much more common than one might think at first glance - are a recurring element in the Letters to the Dead, in which the deceased family member is often invoked to solve and vindicate this typology of abuses. See chapter 4.

The passage of power from the deceased father to his legitimate heir needed therefore to be officially formalised and the dangers inherent in it had to be warded off through special ritual actions, which often took the form of dramatic rituals. Indeed, it is easy to figure out that social display played a fundamental role in this kind of situations, since they pertained to the reconfirmation of the prestige of the family in front of society.

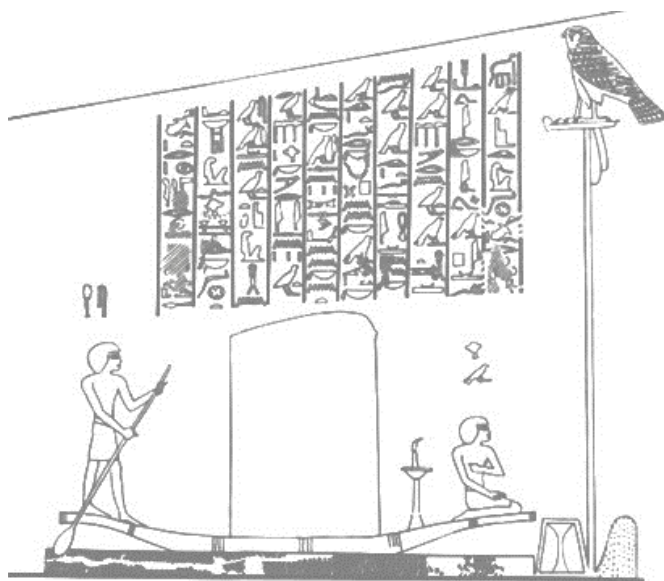


Figure 2 PT 364 in TT 100

The dramatic ritual described in OMR scenes 9 and 10 is strictly focused on the relationship between the deceased father and his living heir, structured on the basis of the mythical

model of the bond that united Horus to his deceased father, Osiris. Moreover, as stressed by Altenmüller, it seems that this dramatic ritual also entailed specific phases which could perfectly match with an action of social display, such as a public procession and a fictitious battle during which the enemies of the deceased were defeated.⁴⁶

Noteworthy is that PT 364 was frequently copied on diverse New Kingdom elite tombs in connection with scenes concerning collective rituals.⁴⁷ In TT 100, for example, it is possible to identify a copy of PT 364 transcribed above the depiction of a bark landing on the netherworld, carrying two persons identified by the captions as the *smr*⁴⁸ and *hr* (Fig. 12). The scene is located on the South wall of the passage, which portrays the procession of the deceased to the tomb, and several funerary rituals, including the Tekenu (which will be covered later). This is indeed a significative element. In the light of what has been said so far, one would have expected to find a copy of PT 364 on the North wall of the same passage, where several scenes of the OMR (9 and 10 included) are reproduced. This allows to hypothesise that the episode treated in PT 364 refers to a mythical episode from which diverse

⁴⁶ H. Altenmüller 2009, 17.

⁴⁷ Often grouped together with PT 593, 356-357 and 677. See: H. M. Hays and W. Schenck 2007, 103-104.

⁴⁸ The term *smr* usually indicates a title (see Wb 4, 138.5-139.5). Within the context of the OMR, it can indicate an officiant who took part in the rite as a substitute of the *sem* priest. E. Otto 1960, Vol. I, 11-12.

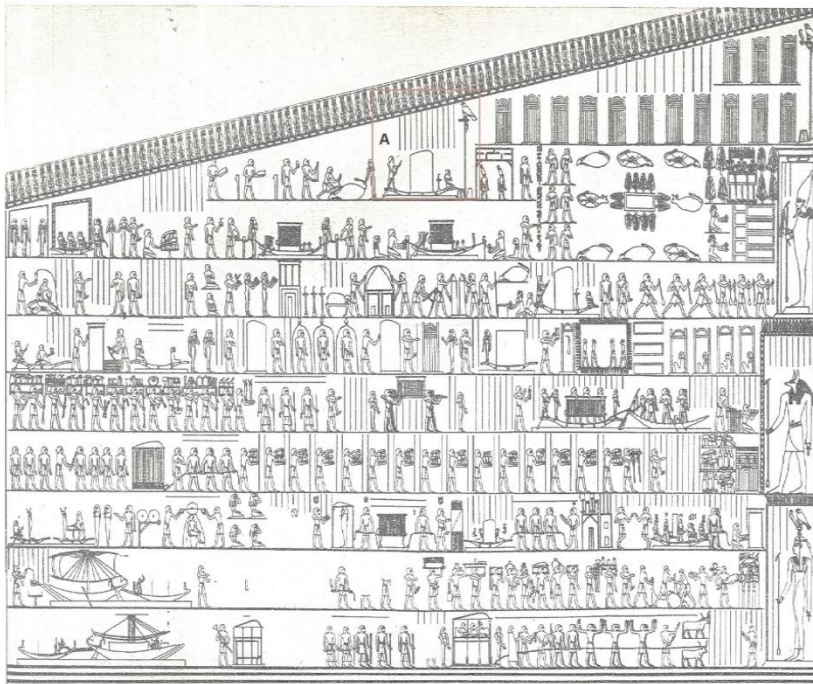


Figure 3 PT 364 (see box A) within the South wall of the passage in Rekhmire tomb (TT 100)

types of dramatic rituals concerning the interactions between the living and the dead stemmed. Finally, one has to consider that the role of main officiant – that of *sem* priest – was traditionally held by the eldest son of the deceased⁴⁹ and several elements suggest that performing this ceremony affected not only the status of the dead, but also that of the ritualist/ legitimate heir. That is particularly evident in

Tutankhamun's tomb. Here, Ay, who was not a kinsman of the deceased monarch, is depicted with the typical leopard-skin of the *sem* priest, while performing the Opening of the Mouth on Tutankhamun, and indeed it has been hypothesised that the main aim of this wall decoration was that of legitimising the succession of Ay during an historical phase characterised by a profound political crisis.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ J. Assmann 2005, 313

⁵⁰ M. Eaton-Krauss 2016, 119; J. Baines 2021, 82.

3.2 The Tekenu ritual

The following tables summarise all the currently known sources about the Tekenu ritual. The documents are listed in chronological order: table number 1 shows Old and Middle Kingdom data; table number 2 concerns the New Kingdom; finally, table number 3 shows Late Period data.⁵¹

Table 1: Old Kingdom and Middle Kingdom

.	Tomb	Date	Place	Type of Tekenu	Other related rituals
1	Mastaba of <i>Ḥhy</i> (<i>Idw.t</i>) (1) (Kanawati & Abder-Raziq, 2003, 34)	5 th dyn.	Saqqara, Unis cemetery	One a sledge, perhaps anthropomorphic	Funerary procession; <i>Mww</i> -dancers (Butic Burial?)
2	TT 60 ² – <i>Sn.t</i> and <i>Ḥni-ḥt=f-ikr</i> (2)	12 th Sesostri I	Sheikh 'Abd el-Qurna	On a sledge, shapeless	Funerary procession
3	Tomb of <i>Ḥtp-ib-r</i> ^c	12 th dyn.	Ramesseum	On a sledge, anthropomorphic	Funerary procession; <i>Mww</i> -dancers (Butic Burial)

Notes

1. The mastaba was originally built for *Ḥhy*, vizier under the king Unis, 5th dynasty. Subsequently reused for a princess, *Idw.t*, daughter of king Teti (6th dynasty). The Tekenu scene was depicted for the first owner of the tomb. See: N. Strudwick 1985, 63.

2. Glennise West mistakenly dates TT 60 to the 18th dynasty (West 2020, 123). The tomb, instead, belonged to a high rank woman called *Sn.t*, who was the wife, or the sister, of *Ḥntf-ikr*, vizier of Sesostri I, who lived during of the 12th dynasty. See: No. de Garis Davies, A. H. Gardiner, Ni. De Garis Davies 1920.

⁵¹ A section of the bibliography is specifically dedicated to the sources from which the data were obtained.

Table 2 - New Kingdom

	Tomb	Date	Place	Tekenu typology	Other related rituals
4	TT 12 – <i>Hri</i>	17 th / 18 th	Dra 'Abu el-Naga	On a sledge, anthropomorphic	Funerary procession
5	TT 15 – <i>Tiki</i>	18 th	Dra 'Abu el-Naga	On a sledge, anthropomorphic	Funerary procession
6	EK 7 – <i>Rnni</i>	18 th	El-Kab	On a sledge, anthropomorphic	Funerary procession
7	TT 81 – <i>Inni</i>	18 th	Sheikh 'Abd el-Qurna	On a sledge, anthropomorphic	Funerary procession
8	TT 24 – <i>Nb-Imn</i>	18 th	Dra' Abu el-Naga	On a sledge, anthropomorphic	Funerary procession
9	TT 125 – <i>Dw^c.wi-r-nhh</i>	18 th	Sheikh 'Abd el-Qurna	1) On a sledge, perhaps shapeless; 2) Recumbent on a bed, anthropomorphic	1) Funerary procession; 2) Butic Burial, erection of two obelisks
10	TT 11 – <i>Dhwiti</i>	18 th	Dra' Abu el-Naga	1) Standing man with the <i>msk³</i> -skin in his hand; 2) On a sledge (damaged)	Funerary procession, perhaps involving a funerary ritual concerning the <i>msk³</i> -skin
11	TT 39 – <i>Pwi-m-r^c</i>	18 th	El-Assasif	On a Sledge, anthropomorphic	Funerary procession
12	TT 53 – <i>Imn-m-h³.t</i>	18 th	Sheikh 'Abd el-Qurna	On a sledge, shapeless	Funerary procession
13	TT 82 – <i>Imn-m-h³.t</i>	18 th	Sheikh 'Abd el-Qurna	On a sledge, shapeless	Funerary procession; pilgrimage to Abydos
14	TT 104 – <i>Dhwiti-nfr</i>	18 th	Sheikh 'Abd el-Qurna	On a sledge, shapeless	Funerary procession
15	TT 127 – <i>Sn-m-i^ch</i>	18 th	Sheikh 'Abd el-Qurna	On a sledge, shapeless	Funerary procession
16	TT 123 – <i>Imn-m-h³.t</i>	18 th	Sheikh 'Abd el-Qurna	On a sledge, shapeless	Funerary procession; pilgrimage to Abydos
17	TT 260 – <i>Wsr</i>	18 th	Dra' Abu el-Naga	On a sledge, damaged	Funerary procession; <i>Mww</i> -dancers
18	TT 17 – <i>Nb-Imn</i>	18 th	Dra' Abu el-Naga	On a sledge, damaged	Funerary procession
19	TT 20 – <i>Mntw-hr-hpš=f</i>	18 th	Dra' Abu el-Naga	1) On a sledge, anthropomorphic 2) On a sledge, anthropomorphic 3) As a standing man holding the <i>msk³</i> -skin NB. There are other two figures rather similar to a Tekenu on a sledge, but they are two Nubian captives about to be killed (cf. fig 1)	The Tekenu n. 1 funerary procession; Tekenu n. 2 and 3: funerary ritual involving the <i>msk³</i> -skin.
20	TT 42 – <i>Imn-ms</i>	18 th	Sheikh 'Abd el-Qurna	On a sledge, likely anthropomorphic (damaged)	Funerary procession; <i>Mww</i> dancers (Butic Burial?)
21	TT 92 – <i>Sw-m-nw.t</i>	18 th	Sheikh 'Abd el-Qurna	On a sledge, shapeless	Funerary procession
22	TT 96 – <i>Sn-nfr</i>	18 th	Sheikh 'Abd el-Qurna	Recumbent on a bed	Butic Burial, erection of two obelisks

23	TT 100 – <i>Rḥ-mi-r^c</i>	18 th	Sheikh ‘Abd el-Qurna	1) Recumbent on a bed 2) On a sledge (?), damaged	1) Butic Burial, erection of two obelisks 2) Funerary procession
24	TT 172 – <i>Mnt.w-ii.w</i>	18 th	El-Khokha	On a sledge, anthropomorphic (?)	Funerary procession (damaged)
25	TT 276 – <i>Imn-m-in.t</i>	18 th	Qurnet Murai	Recumbent on a bed	Funerary procession; Butic Burial
26	TT 178 – <i>Nfr-rnp.t</i>	19 th	El-Khoka	On a sledge, anthropomorphic	Funerary procession
27	TT 224 – <i>Tḥ-ms [1]</i>	18 th	Sheikh ‘Abd el-Qurna	On a sledge (?)	Likely, funerary procession
28	TT 112 – <i>Mn-ḥpr-R^c-snb [2]</i>	18 th	Sheikh ‘Abd el-Qurna	On a sledge (?)	Likely, funerary procession
29	TT 78 – <i>Ḥr-m-ḥb</i>	18 th	Sheikh ‘Abd el-Qurna	On a sledge, shapeless	Funerary procession
30	TT 66 – <i>Ḥpw</i>	18 th	Sheikh ‘Abd el-Qurna	Recumbent on a bed, damaged	Butic Burial? (Damaged)
31	TT 55 – <i>R^c-ms</i>	18 th	Sheikh ‘Abd el-Qurna	On a sledge, shapeless	Funerary procession
32	TT 49 – <i>Nfr-ḥtp</i>	18 th	El-Khokha	On a sledge, shapeless	Funerary procession
33	TT A4 – <i>S³-wsr/wn-sw</i>	18 th	Dra’ Abu el-Naga.	On a sledge, shapeless;	Funerary procession; dancers (Butic burial?)
34	TT C4 – <i>Mri-m³.t</i>	18 th	Sheikh ‘Abd el-Qurna	On a sledge, anthropomorphic	Funerary procession
35	EK 3 – <i>P³ḥri</i>	18 th	El-Kab	On a sledge, shapeless	Funerary procession; Butic burial, pilgrimage to Abydo
36	TT 41 – <i>Imn-m-ip³.t</i>	19 th	Al’ Asasif.	Recumbent on a bed (?)	Butic Burial,
37	TT 284 – <i>P³-ḥm-ntr</i>	20 th	Dra’ Abu el-Naga	On a sledge, anthropomorphic	Funerary procession
38	TT A 26 – name unknown [3]	Ramesside Age	Dra’ Abu el-Naga	On a sledge (?)	Funerary procession (?)
39	Sarcophagus of <i>Dt-Mw.t</i> Vatican Museum, MV25008.2.1–2.	20 th	Deir el-Bahri	Recumbent near the coffin, (probably dragged together with the coffin)	Funerary procession

Notes

1. Doc. 28. There is little information about the Tekenu scene in TT 112. A transcription of the captions has been made by Ni. De Garis Davies and A. H. Gardiner in the monograph dedicated to TT 82; see: Ni. De Garis Davies and A. H. Gardiner 1915, 51 and note 2. The inscription attracted the attention of the scholars because it is quite similar to that in TT 82. Since the latter concerns the dragging of the Tekenu within the funerary procession it can be hypothesised that the caption in TT 112 concerned a similar scene. The inscription is translated and detailed in section 3.2.1.b, document 9.

2. Doc. 27. There is little information about the Tekenu scene in TT 224. A transcription of the captions has been made by Ni. M. De Garis Davies and A. H. Gardiner in the monograph dedicated to TT 82 (see: Ni. M. de Garis Davies and A. H. Gardiner 1915, 51 and note 2). Since the inscription is quite similar to that in TT 82 and the latter concerns the dragging

of the Tekenu within the funerary procession, it can be hypothesised that the scene depicted in TT 224 was similar. The inscription is translated and detailed in section 3.2.1.b, document 10.

3. Doc. 38. Very little is known about TT A 26; the wall painting with the Tekenu scene is not currently available cf. G. West 2020, 153-154.

Table 3: 25th and 26th dynasty

	Tomb	Date	Place	Tekenu typology	Other related rituals
40	TT 34 – <i>Mntw-m-ḥ3.t</i>	25 th	El-Asasif	On a sledge, anthropomorphic	Funerary procession(?)
41	TT 36 – <i>Ybi</i>	26 th	El-Asasif	1) On a sledge, shapeless 2) On a sledge, anthropomorphic	1) Funerary procession 2) Funerary procession
42	TT 279 – <i>P3-n-bsi</i>	26 th	El-Asasif	On a sledge, shapeless	Funerary procession
43	TT 389 – <i>B3s3</i>	Saite	El-Asasif	On a sledge, shapeless	Funerary procession

Discussion

The Tekenu ritual appears to be an iconographic theme typical of the elite sphere and, as common practice for the scenes pertaining to the funerary procession or the inhumation of the corpse, there are no Tekenu depictions in royal tombs.⁵² The oldest attestation currently known dates back to the final part of the 5th dynasty and shows the Tekenu within the funerary procession. We have relatively few attestations prior to the New Kingdom, but this may depend on the fact that more recent historical phases are usually better documented.

Most of the scenes collected here – 36 out of 43 – date back to the New Kingdom, and most of the latter – 32 out of 36 – belong to the 18th dynasty.⁵³ All New Kingdom data currently known come from the Theban area and are also characterised by more innovative traits: the Tekenu continues indeed to be depicted within the context of the funerary procession, but it also appears to be involved in other ritual actions, such as those of the sleeping Tekenu (docs.: 9, 22, 23, 25, 30, 36), or the removal of the *msk3*-skin (docs. 10 and 19). Noteworthy also is that all these innovative scenes come from a very small geographical area.⁵⁴ The strong interest for the Tekenu among the New Kingdom Theban elites and the irruption into their tombs of innovative figurative themes concerning this ritual cannot solely depend on the best preservation of the Theban necropolises compared to other archaeological sites. As stressed by H. Willems, it might be explained by the notable importance gained by the posthumous cult of Amenhotep I in this geographical area.⁵⁵ This king, such as other members of the Ahmosid

⁵² Indeed, within the figurative themes characterising the royal tombs, one can recognise a certain reticence in depicting the funerary procession to the necropolis, or the mummy of the deceased. The only exception can be identified in Tutankhamun's tomb (KV 62), where both the transportation of the king's remains in his bier and the performing of the OMR ritual on his mummy are depicted. Yet, as highlighted by D. Laboury, this kind of scenes are quite unusual for royal tombs and, under this point of view, it can be considered as an exception. D. Laboury 2020, 44-45. Also, see chapter 3, section 3.2.2.

⁵³ Only four sources belong to the Ramesside Age, see docs: 36, 37, 38, 39.

⁵⁴ Sheik 'Abd el-Qurna, Qurnet Murai, Al' Asasif, Dra 'Abu el-Naga, see table 2, docs.: 9, 22, 23, 25, 30, 36, 10, 19.

⁵⁵ H. Willems 1996, 114.

line, become the patron god of the Theban West Bank, and several festivals – which also involved special moments dedicated to the commemoration of the dead – were periodically enacted in his honour.⁵⁶ The emergence of these new festivals led to a reformulation of both the funerary and the mortuary rituals and, consequently, significant changes in their iconographic depictions into elite tombs.⁵⁷ It was also hypothesised that Hatshepsut was the one who gave particular prominence to these celebrations, reshaping previous traditions in the perspective of a grandiose propagandistic aim.⁵⁸ Her challenging position of woman ruling as a king required special legitimising measures and, remarkably, her majestic funerary temple at Deir el-Bahri – built close to the aforementioned temple of Mentuhotep – seems to be clearly designed to play a key role in the processions that characterised the Theban festivals.⁵⁹

Then, after a gap of more than four centuries, the Tekenu reappears in Late Period tombs. This phenomenon is to be explained in the light of an artistic trend, which was particularly strong among the elite circles during the Late Period. Especially during the so-called “Ethiopian and Saite Renaissance”, Old Kingdom monuments, were considered ideal models to draw inspiration from, and the iconographic repertoires of ancient tombs were copied in new sepulchres.⁶⁰ It is, therefore, no coincidence that the Tekenu depictions belonging to the 25th and 26th dynasties strongly resemble in their style the only Old Kingdom source currently known; yet, we have reasonably to assume, that the artists of that time knew more Old Kingdom tombs to use as a model, than the only example available to us.

3.2.1 Tekenu: a philological analysis

The only sources that explicitly describe the Tekenu ceremony are wall paintings in elite tombs,⁶¹ sometimes accompanied by captions. Unlike the OMR, previous studies on the Tekenu have not investigated the existence of references to this ritual in other literary sources, nor has its mythological background been identified. This can be explained in various ways. Firstly, most works concerning the Tekenu were conducted from a predominantly archaeological and iconographical perspective, for example, by investigating the possible connection between the Tekenu-figure and other similar symbols.⁶² Secondly, scholars have not yet reached unanimous consensus about the meaning and the etymology of the word “Tekenu”, and this may have discouraged a philological investigation concerning the occurrence of this term in other sources. It should also be considered that the captions

⁵⁶ Y.M. el Shazly 2015, 193-195.

⁵⁷ H. Willems 1996, 114.

⁵⁸ Y.M. el Shazly 2015, 229-236.

⁵⁹ Y.M. el Shazly 2015, 229.

⁶⁰ J. Kahl 2010.

⁶¹ The only known exception is a 20th dynasty coffin, see table 2 doc. 39.

⁶² See, for example: M. R. Valdesogo Martín, 2005, 311; R. Metawi 2008, 196.

concerning the Tekenu scenes are quite obscure, and undoubtedly this constitutes an obstacle to fully understanding the function of the ritual or its mythological background.

In the light of these premises, the present section aims at:

- investigating the meaning of the word “Tekenu” and its etymology;
- translating and analysing all the tomb inscriptions currently known concerning the Tekenu;
- identifying the potential mythological background of the Tekenu ritual

3.2.1.a Etymology and meaning

The term *tknw* (Wb 335.14-15) is attested with diverse spellings, the most common being ; ; ; other less frequent variants are , in which the sign X1 is replaced with U33 and  attested only twice: in TT 20,⁶³ datable to the 18th dynasty, where this spelling alternates with the variant , and the tomb of Basa, TT 389, which dates back to the Saite Period.⁶⁴ Moreover, the latter together with tomb TT 17 are the only cases in which this word is written with a determinative; it is the sign  (A40), usually associated to supernatural beings. Otherwise, the word is always attested without determinatives.⁶⁵

As mentioned in chapter 2, the etymology of *tknw* is still considered obscure. Even in the recent monograph by G. West, it is stated that “what scholars have suggested to this point is of little aid to identifying the nature or function of the Tekenu”.⁶⁶ Within the current state of the art it is possible to identify two main theories. According to Gerard van der Leeuw,⁶⁷ Sigrid Hodel-Hoenes,⁶⁸ and Abeer El-Shahawi⁶⁹ the word should be from the verb *tkn* (Wb 5, 333.10-335), which means “to be near; to draw near”, “to approach”. Instead, according to another interpretation, the term *tknw* would be a loan words originally used to indicate a foreign ethnic group.⁷⁰

Especially Eugène Lefébure stated that the term *tknw* derived from a word indicating a foreign tribe and, in this regard, he established a parallel with the accounts of Greek historians, who reported that the Egyptians used to sacrifice red haired (and therefore foreign) people.⁷¹ In his opinion, if the word

⁶³ See chapter 3, section 3.2.1.a, document 18.

⁶⁴ See chapter 3, section 3.2.1.a, document 6. One has to consider that during this historical phase the phonemes *ḏ* and *ṯ* were no longer palatal. B. Gunn and I. E. S. Edwards 1955, 84 and note 4.

⁶⁵ This data were collected thanks to the analysis of all textual sources concerning the Tekenu conducted in chapter 3, section 3.2.1.b.

⁶⁶ G. West 2019, 21.

⁶⁷ G. van der Leeuw 1938, 164.

⁶⁸ S. Hodel-Hoenes 1991, 53.

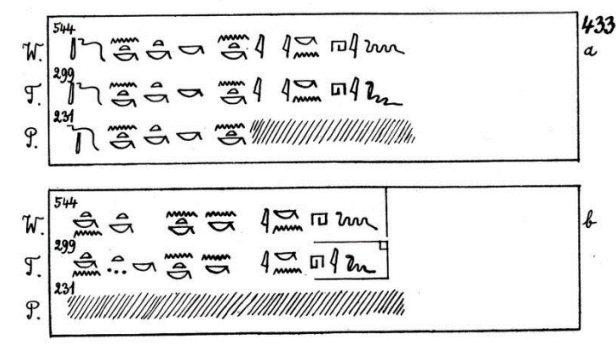
⁶⁹ A. El-Shahawi 2005, 54.

⁷⁰ E. Lefébure 1900, 140-145; No. de Garis Davies 1913, p. 10 and note 3.

⁷¹ E. Lefébure 1900, 140-145.

was etymologically connected with the verb *tkn*, the absence of the determinative would have no explanation, since this kind of omission is usually motivated by apotropaic reasons, and the meaning of the verb *tkn*, “to approach”, does not justify such a precaution.⁷² Indeed, the depictions in TT 20 seem to suggest that the Tekenu ceremony was linked to an execration ritual, which also entailed a ritualised killing of foreign enemies (actual or fictitious). On the other hand, as mentioned above, there is not enough evidence to identify the Tekenu itself with the victim of this sacrifice.⁷³ Moreover, the hypothesis that sees *tknw* as a term used to indicate a foreign ethnic group is based on too fleeting arguments, such as the fact that the word is written without determinatives, or the existence of certain toponyms that appear similar to the word Tekenu.⁷⁴ Even though toponyms or terms referring to ethnic groups showing certain assonance with the word *tknw* exist,⁷⁵ it does not necessarily entail that these words have to be etymologically linked with the latter.

The interpretation which links the word “Tekenu” to the verb *tkn* seems thus the most grounded one. Moreover, it is possible to identify written sources of a religious nature in which this verb is used without determinative. See for example, the following excerpt from the Pyramid of Unas, PT 292 (Pyr.433a-b)⁷⁶:



dd mdw ntk tkk ntk i 'Ikn-hi

tkn tkn(w).t=k n=k 'Ikn-hi

Recitation: you are the one who attacks, you are, oh Iken-Hi snake,

the one who approaches. Your approached things are for you, oh Iken-Hi snake!

⁷² E. Lefébure 1900, 151.

⁷³ See chapter 2, section 2.4.b.

⁷⁴ E. Lefébure 1900, 151-152.

⁷⁵ Wb 5, 410.15; Wb 5, 411.3; M.Th. Derchain-Urtel 1986, 609.

⁷⁶ This is one of the snake-spells belonging to the Pyramid Texts and subsequently reshaped within CT V 282. See: C. Leitz 1996, 421.

Even though this text is certainly unrelated to the Tekenu ritual – this is one of the “snake spells” which are included in the Pyramid Texts – the source clearly shows that in specific religious contexts the verb *tkn* can be used without the determinative. Eugène Lefebvre’s statement, according to which the absence of the determinative cannot fit with the meaning of the verb *tkn* cannot therefore be considered a determining indicator when it comes to establish the etymology of the word. After all, the very meaning of the verb *tkn* is not so neutral if one takes into account that the term can be used to indicate the ability to approach supernatural beings, such as gods, both royal and non-royal deceased, or demonic entities. As already mentioned in chapter 2, Gerard van der Leeuw proposed as a possible meaning “the one who is near” and, thus “familiar”, “close”.⁷⁷ This interpretation of the verb *tkn* is particularly significant since it perfectly matches the type of religious facts herein taken into consideration, which is eminently based on the post mortem survival of the family ties.

⁷⁷ G. van der Leeuw, 1938, 164.

3.2.1.b Captions concerning the Tekenu scenes

As mentioned above, the only sources that explicitly describe the Tekenu ceremony are wall paintings in elite tombs, sometimes accompanied by captions. The latter, however often obscure, are an indispensable source of information to understanding the function of this ritual.

Currently, forty-four sources (forty-three tombs and one coffin) containing a depiction of the Tekenu are known. Among these, only nineteen show inscriptions.⁷⁸ In some cases, these are very short captions, such as “*tknw*” (Tekenu), “*stꜣw tknw*” (the dragging of the Tekenu), or *stꜣw tknw r hr.t-nꜥr* (the dragging of the Tekenu to the necropolis); other texts, instead are more complex, providing useful hints about the ritual.

The inscriptions can be ideally categorised in four main thematic groups, which partially overlap with each other:

1. captions concerning the dragging of the Tekenu – documents 1-17
2. captions concerning “the speech with the god Ruti” – documents 12-13
3. captions concerning the removal of the *mskꜣ*-skin – documents 18-19
4. captions describing the ritual sleep of the Tekenu– documents 20-21

The present section is devoted to an analysis of these inscriptions in order to identify the main characteristics concerning the ritual and its evolution through times.

⁷⁸ Table 1, 2 and 3 docs: 1 (mastaba of *Idw.t/Thi*), 2 (TT 60), 3 (tomb of *Shꜥp-ib-rꜣ*), 5 (TT 15), 7 (EK 7), 8 (TT 24), 9 (TT 125), 10 (TT 11), 12 (TT 53), 13 (TT 82), 18 (TT 17), 19 (TT 20), 23 (TT 100), 27 (TT 224), 28 (TT 112), 31 (TT 55), 35 (EK 3), 40 (TT 34), 43 (TT 389).

Document 1: The mastaba of *Idw.t / Thi* (Table 1, doc. 1)

Date: 5th dynasty - Place: Saqqara, Unis Cemetery.

Bibliography: N. Kanawati, and M. Abder-Raziq 2003, 48 and Pl. LVI; G. West 2019, 57-59.



st³ tkn

The dragging of the Tekenu

Figure 4

Document 2: Tomb of *Shṭp-ib-r^c* (Table 1, doc. 3)

Date: 12th dynasty – Place: Ramesseum

Bibliography: J. E. Quibell, 1898, 25-26, and Pl. IX



Figure 5

[1] [...] *r s.t Imn.t m ḥtp sp 2 ḥr Wsir r s.wt* [2] *n.t nb.w n nhḥ*

To the place of the West, in peace! In peace! To Osiris! To the places of the Lords of Eternity.

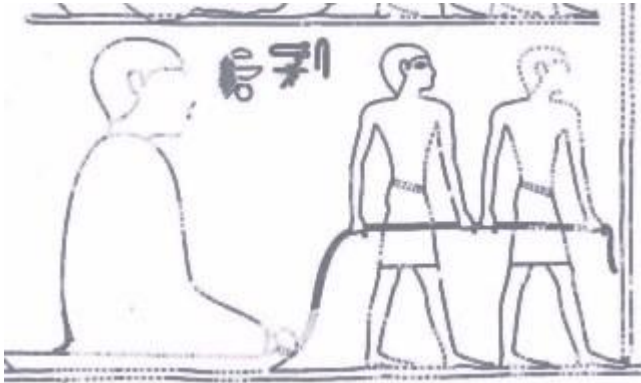
Discussion

The text analysed here shows some resemblances with the one occurring in the tomb of *P³hri* (document 16). The caption probably refers to the arrival of the Tekenu into the netherworld, as suggested by the presence of the *Mww*-dancers. As already stressed in section 2.1.4.b point 3, the latter had the duty of welcoming the deceased and, according to H. Altenmüller (1975 A, 36-37) they can be identified with the ferrymen which had to lead the deceased into the realm of the dead. One has also to consider that reaching the West, the necropolis, or the netherworld is one of the most recurrent themes in the captions concerning the Tekenu ritual. For further discussion see document 16.

Document 3: TT 60 - Tomb of *Ini.t=f-ikr* / *Sn.t* (Table 1, doc. 2)

Date: 12th dynasty, Sesostri I - Place: Sheikh 'Abd el- Qurna

Bibliography: No. de Garis Davies, A. H. Gardiner, Ni. De Garis Davies 1920, 21-21, Pl. XXII A and B; G. West 2019, 123-124.



st³ tknw

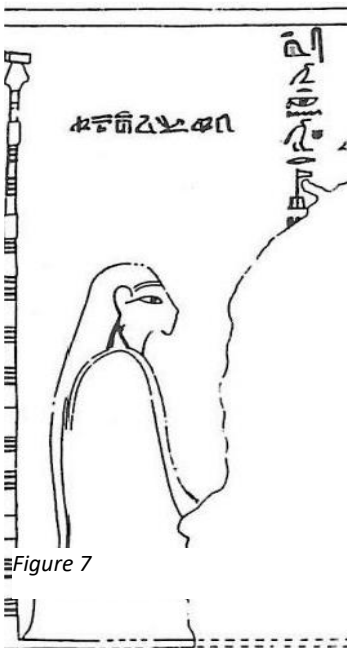
The dragging of the Tekenu

Figure 6

Document 4: TT 15 - Tomb of *Ttiki* (Table 2, doc. 5)

Date: 18th dynasty, Ahmose I - Place: Dra 'Abu e-Naga

Bibliography: No. de Garis Davies 1925, 10-18, and Pl. V; G. West 2019, 112-115.



st³ tknw r hr.t-ntr [...]

The dragging of the Tekenu to the Necropolis [...]

Notes

In the blank space above the depiction of the Tekenu, a hieratic inscription is recognizable:



sš P³-rhnyy - The scribe Parehenny

According to No. de Garis Davies, this individual is to be identified with the artist who drew the scene (1925, 17). Other scholars, instead, identified this individual with a ritualist who plays the role of the Tekenu. cf. H. Altenmüller 1972, 132; J. M. Serrano Delgado 2011, 153.

Document 5: EK 7 - Tomb of *Rnni* (Table 2, doc. 7)

Date: 18th dynasty, Thutmose III - Place: El-Kab

Bibliography: G. Reeder 1994, 57; A. Moret 1922, 48 and fig. 12; G. West 2019, 130-132.



Figure 8

Above the Tekenu

|1| *dr n tph.t n.t* |2| *‘h.t wr*

In front of the Tekenu

|3| *st̥ <.t>knw r hr.t ntr pn*

In front of the dragger

|4| *m hnt (?)*

|1| Leaving the chapel of |2|the Great Palace¹|3| (while) dragging the Tekenu to this necropolis

|4| The imy-khent (?)²

Notes

1. The word *tph.t* (Wb 5, 364.11-366.5) can indicate a cave, a hole, or the chapel of a temple. It is certainly suggestive that in TT 20, the sledge and the *msk̥* skin related to the Tekenu are depicted as buried inside a pit located in the necropolis (see section 2.4.b and fig. 2). Yet, since the Tekenu here is depicted on a sledge while still wrapped in the *msk̥* skin, and the text emphasises that he has not yet reached the necropolis, it does not seem plausible to interpret the caption as a reference to this ritual deposition. As for *‘h.t wr*, another plausible translation might be the “Embalming Place” see the word *wry.t* (Wb 1, 332.13) The verb *dr* (Wb 5, 473.1-474.12) literally means “to expel”, “to remove”, or “to drive out”.

2. The reading is uncertain: if correct, the person dragging the Tekenu could be identified with one of the same ritualists involved in OMR scenes 9 and 10. (see section 3.1).

Document 6: TT 34 - Tomb of *Mntw-m-h³.t* (Table 3, doc. 40)

Date: 25th dynasty, Taharqa /Psamtik - Place: Asasif

Bibliography: H.-W. Müller 1975, 18-33; G. West 2019, 62-64.



Figure 9

Document 7: TT 389 - Tomb of *B³s³* (Table 3, doc. 43)

Date: Saite - Place: El-Asasif

Bibliography: J. Assmann 1973, Pl. XXIX and fig. 40; G. West 2019, 51-52

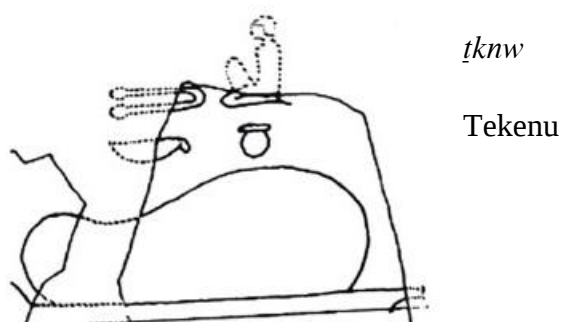


Figure 10

Document 8: TT 82 - Tomb of *Imn-m-h³.t* (Table 2, doc. 13)

Date: 18th dynasty, Thutmosis III - Place: Sheikh ‘Abd el- Qurna

Bibliography: Ni. De Garis Davies and A. H. Gardiner 1915, 51 and Pl. XII; J. G. Griffiths 1958, 118; R. Metawi 2008, 185; G. West 2019, 165-167.

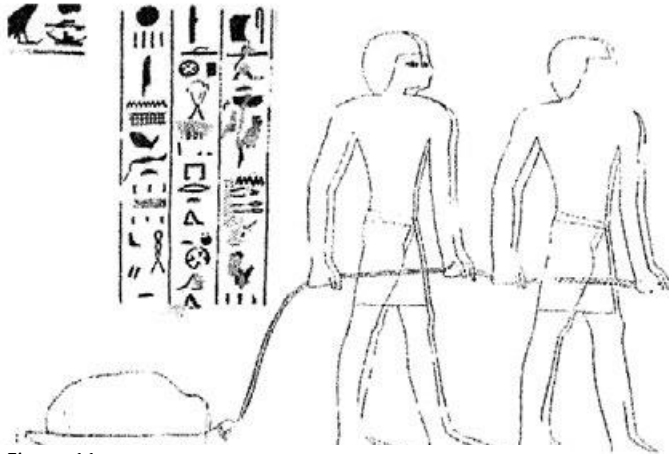


Figure 11

|1| *st³ tknw in rmt* |2| *Kd<m> s³-Srk.t pr.t niw.t k pri* |3| *sp-4 in sp³.t sdm mh.tiw š Hk.t*

|1| The dragging of the Tekenu by the people of Qedem¹ and the priest of Serket. The procession of the city (necropolis): entering and exiting the district |3| four times². The northerners of the pools of Heqet listen³.

Notes

1 The city of Qedem was located in the 6th nome of Lower Egypt (*h³sw*). The city was sacred to Serket and housed a temple of this goddess (H. de Meulenaere 1960, 127-128). The sign  (Q3) is probably a mistake for the sign  (W24), see doc. 9/ TT 224. Notably, the same toponym also occurs in CT spell 38 (CT I 160e).

2 Repeating the same action four times is typical of several Egyptian rituals, including the OMR (see section 3.1, scene 9). Rasha Metawi also suggested to read the following group of signs  as “*sdm*”, a corrupted form for “*stm*”, “*sem* priest” (R. Metawi, 2008, 29). This translation, however suggestive, is not supported by the grammatical structure of the sentence. As for the term *niw.t* used with the meaning of “necropolis” see: Allen 2006 A, 11.

3 *mh.tiw* is a noun, “the people of the North” (Wb II, 126.2); this word is the subject of the verb *sdm* (Wb 4, 384.4-387.14). The term likely indicates the ritualists depicted within the Tekenu ceremony, which, remarkably, are all connected to sacred cities located in the Delta region (the people of Pe, Dep, Qedem, the priest of Serket). Both the pools of Heqet and Khepri played a major role in Egyptian funerary rituals, see also the inscriptions in TT 100 and TT 125 (documents 20 and 21), where the pool of Khepri occurs, and document 11 (TT 125) where the expression “Tekenu’s pools” occurs and document 15 (TT 55).

Document 9: TT 112 - Tomb of *Mn-hpr-R^c-snb* (Table 2, doc. 28)

Date: 18th dynasty, Thutmosis III (usurped during the 19th dynasty) - Place: Sheikh 'Abd el- Qurna

Bibliography: Ni. de Garis Davies and A. H. Gardiner 1915, 51 and note 2; J. G. Griffiths, 1958, 118; R. Metawi 2008, 185; G. West, 2019, 164-168.



|1| [*st³*] *tknw in rmt K[d]<m> s³-Srḳ.t* |2| *pri.t niw.t ḳ pri.t sp-4 in sp³.t {n} sdm mh.tiw š Hḳ.t*

|1|The dragging of the Tekenu by the people of Qedem and the priest of Serqet. |2| The procession of the city (necropolis): entering and exiting the district four times. The northerners of the pools of Heqet listen.

Notes

This text is known only thanks to a transcription made by Ni. De Garis Davies and A. H. Gardiner in the monograph dedicated to TT 82 (1915, 51 and note 2). The inscription caught their attention because it is rather similar to that occurring in this tomb. For further notes on the translation cf. TT 82 (Document 8).

Document 10: TT 224 – Tomb of *Ḥ-ms* (Table 2, doc. 27)

Date 18th dynasty -Place: Sheikh 'Abd el-Qurna, Thutmosis I

Bibliography: Ni. de Garis Davies and A. H. Gardiner 1915, 51 and note 2; J. G. Griffiths 1958, 118; R. Metawi 2008, 185; G. West 2019, 165-167.



st³ tknw.t in rmt Kd n s³-Srḳ.t

The dragging of the Tekenu by the people of Qedem and the priest of Serqet

Notes

This text is known only thanks to a transcription made by No. Davies and A. H. Gardiner in the monograph dedicated to TT 82 (1915, 51 and note 2). The inscription caught their attention because rather similar to that occurring in this tomb. For further notes concerning the translation cf. TT 82 (Document 8).

Document 11: TT 125 – Tomb of *Dwṣ.wi-r-nḥḥ* (Table 2, doc. 9)

Date: 18th dynasty – Location: Sheik ‘Abd el-Qurna

Bibliography: J. Settgast 1963, 59 and Tafel. IV; G. West 2019, 231.

pr.t niw.t ꜥ sp 4 in sp³.t n mh.tiw š tknw

Exiting the city (necropolis) ¹ and entering the district four times by the northerners of the three Tekenu's pools.²

Notes

This text is known only thanks to a transcription made by Settgast. It was probably the caption related to a scene (currently lost) concerning the dragging of the Tekenu within the funerary procession. See Settgast 1963, Tafel IV. In TT 125 it is also attested a scene of the sleeping Tekenu, cf. Document 21.

1 For the term *nīw.t* used with the meaning of “necropolis” see: Allen 2006 A, 11.

2 Noteworthy is the reference to the “three pools of the Tekenu” to be identified with the three pools of Heqet, Khepri and Sokar, which are depicted in TT 100 (cf. Documents 20). The pool of Heqet also occurs in TT 82 and TT 112 (cf. Documents 8 and 9), while the pool of Khepri occurs in the captions of TT 100 and 125 (CF. documents 19 and 20). The Northerners likely refers to the ritualists involved in the ceremony, which are usually linked to sacred cities in the Delta region (see Documents 8, 9 and 10).

Document 12: TT 17 - Tomb of *Nb-Imn* (Table 2, doc. 18)

Date: 18th dynasty, Amenhotep II - Place: Dra 'Abu el-Naga

Bibliography: T. Säve Söderbergh 1957, 31, Plates XXIV and XXV; J. G. Griffiths 1958, 118; R. Metawi 2008, 181; G. West 2019, 115-117 and 169-170.



Figure 12

[1] *rm̄t p* [2] *st̄(w) tknw* [2] *r hr.t-ntr Hr ii m Rwti* [3] *n.t m̄n.t*

[1] The people of Pe. [2] The dragging of the Tekenu to the necropolis. The speech¹ of Horus with Ruti of the stagnant water region.

Notes

1. I rendered the word *ii* (Wb 1, 36.14) as “speech”. A similar translation has been already proposed by Rasha Metawi (2008, 186), who, however, considers this term as an archaic form of the verb *dd*; in this regard, it must be said that this verb is only attested as a parenthetic (J. P. Allen 2014, 303). In several religious texts, Ruti is often considered as the gate-keeper of a liminal area placed between the world of the living and that of the dead. This god often obstructs anyone who wishes to reach and see Osiris in the nrtherworld by posing him questions. Such a verbal encounter between Ruti and another god or the deceased is described in several Coffin Texts spells, in particular CT 383, CT 242 and CT 312 (H. Willems 1996, 263-270). The latter will be covered in detain in section 3.2.1.c.

2. The same scene, or at least a quite similar scene, perhaps occurred in TT 53, the tomb of *Imn-m-ḥ̄t*. (Document 13)

Document 13: TT 53 – Tomb of *Imn-m-ḥ³.t* (Table 2, doc. 12)

Date: 18th dynasty, Thutmose III - Place: Sheikh ‘Abd el-Qurna

Bibliography: The only source regarding the existence of this caption is the transcription made by No. de Garis Davies (*Notebooks MSS*, 11.40, 19). The text has been taken into consideration by various scholars, who provided quite divergent translations: J. G. Griffiths 1958, 118; R. Metawi 2008, 186, and note 40; G. West 2019, 66-69 and 169. The original copy of the sketch is available in the recent monograph by G. West, (2019, 68).

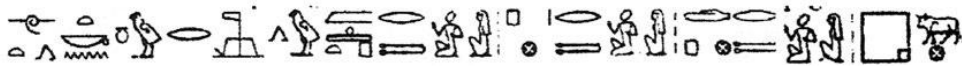
Discussion

This document is highly problematic. Nonetheless, it is certainly significant that J. G. Griffiths (1958), R. Metawi (2008, 186 and note 40) and G. West (2019, 66-69) agreed on the fact that the short text sketched by No. de Garis Davies, besides alluding to the dragging of the Tekenu (*st³w t³ tknw*) also mentions a speech with the god Ruti (*ii Rwti*). It is therefore possible to hypothesise that the inscription was quite similar to the one attested in TT 17 previously analysed (see document 12, note 1).

Document 14: TT 24 – Tomb of *Nb-Imn* (Table 2, doc. 8)

Date: 18th dynasty, Thutmose III - Place: Dra ‘Abu el-Naga

Bibliography: U. Bouriant 1887, 97–98; J. G. Griffiths 1958, 118; J. Settgast, 1963, 41 and note a; R. Metawi 2008, 185; G. West 2019, 117-118 and 172.



st³ tknw r ḥr.t-nṯr iw m ḥtp rmt P rmt Dp rmt Ḥw.t-iḥw.t

The dragging of the Tekenu to the necropolis coming in peace; the people of Pe, the people of Dep, the people of Hutwerihut¹.

Notes

1 Pe and Dep were two ancient localities; to be precise it was the double city of Buto, also known as *Db̄wt*. See: H. Altenmüller 1975 B, 1098-1099. See also: I. Shaw 2020, 600; *Ḥw.t-iḥw.t* is a graphical variant of *Ḥw.t-wr-iḥw.t*. See: A.A. VV. 1992, 295. It is associated with Pe, Dep and other holy cities in CT spell 132 (CT II 155 c-d).

Document 15: TT 55 – Tomb of *R^c-msw* (Table 2, doc. 31)

Date: 18th dynasty, Amenhotep III – Amenhotep IV /Akhenaten

Place: Sheikh ‘Abd el-Qurna

Bibliography: No. de Garis Davies, T. E. Peet, H. Burton 1941, 22-23, Pl. XXV; J. G. Griffiths 1958, 118; R. Metawi 2008, 185; G. West 2019, 41-42.



Figure 13

[1] *st³w t(knw) in r(mt) Ntr.w* [2] *k (pri.t) i(n) [sp³.t] [...]* [3] *st³w i(n)* [4] *iri.iw-ih.t-nswt ir.t w³.t nfr.t r t³ r ³.wy ³h.t r s.t=f* [5] *im (t³) dsr s³r(w) imi-r³ niw.t t³ty iry-Nhn* [6] *hm-ntr-tp.i R^c-msw m³³-hrw r hr.t-ntr htp(w)=f* [7] *rwd(w) h³.t=f d.t sp 2 r nhh* [8] *rmt.t P Dp Wn.t s [...]*

[1]The dragging of the Tekenu by the people of Behbet el-Hagar¹. [2] Entering and exiting by the district [...]² [3] The dragging by [4] the custodians of the king's property, walking down the beautiful road, towards the earth, towards the two doors of the horizon, towards his place, [5] which is in the holy land. May the governor of the town, vizier, warden of Nekhen [6] and high priest, Ramose, justified, ascend to the necropolis! May he be at peace! [7] May his corpse endure for ever and ever for the eternity! [8] the people of Pe, Dep, the Hare Nome [...].

Notes

1 *Ntr.w* / Behbet el-Hagar is a city in the Delta region; cf. Wb 2, 365.12.

2 Through comparison with other similar texts, such as that of TT 82 (document 8), the lacuna could be filled with “district of the three pools”; see No. de Garis Davies, T.E. Peet, H. Burton 1941, 22-23. Unfortunately, modern pictures of the tomb show that most of the text has practically disappeared. See: G. West 2019, 39, fig. 4.2.10. For the involvement of pools in the Tekenu ritual see also document 8 (TT 82), 9 (TT 112), 11 (TT 125) 20 (TT 100), 21 (TT 125).

Document 16: EK 3 – Tomb of *P3hri* (Table 2, doc. 35)

Date: 18th dynasty

Location: El-Kab

Bibliography: A. Moret 1922, 47 and fig 10; E. Naville, J.J. Tylor and F. LI. Griffith 1894, 19-21 and Pl. V; R. Metawi 2008, 185; G. West, 2019, 55-57 and 268.

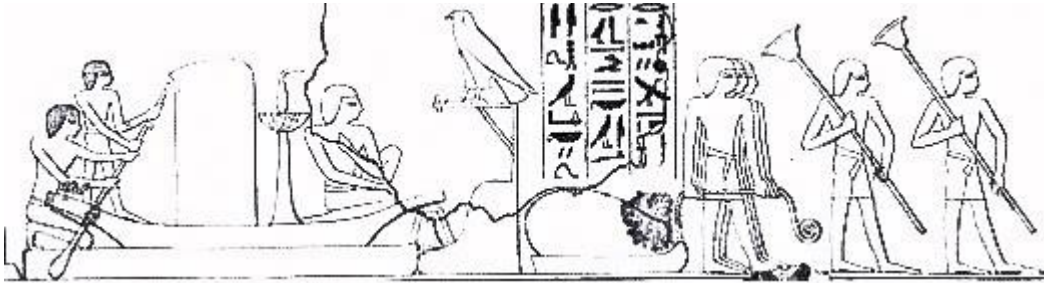


Figure 14

[1] *r ʿImn.t sp 2 p3 t3 ndm ʿnh* [2] *r bw n(.ti) wnn=k im=f* [3] *yh mi{=k}*

[1] To the West! to the West! The land of the sweet life! [2] To the place where you will be! [3] Hey! Come¹!

Note and discussion

1 *mi* is an anomalous imperative (Wb 2, 35.8-14). It is hard to explain the presence of the suffix pronouns. As stressed by G. West, it could be a scribal error (2019, p. 168).

The text does not make explicit references to the Tekenu but since it is written just above a scene depicting the typical dragging scene, several scholars have linked this inscription to the ritual under analysis here (A. Moret 1922, 47; E. Naville, J.J. Tylor and F. LI. Griffith 1894, 19-21; R. Metawi 2008, 185; G. West, 2019 268). In order to better understand the meaning of this inscription, it can be useful to analyse it within a broader framework, by taking into consideration the scene depicted on the left of the Tekenu: a bark landing to the netherworld, as clearly shown by the prow of the boat touching a symbol similar to the Egyptian hieroglyph indicating the West, , to be intended here as both the Westbank of the Nile (where the tombs were usually located) and the realm of the dead. This kind of scene usually described as “the arrival of the dead at the necropolis” (No. de Garis Davies 1943, 72), or as “the landing on the Westbank” (J. Settgast 1963, 83) is quite common in ancient Egyptian private tombs. Indeed, we have already seen it in the tomb of Rekhmire (TT 100), where it is associated with PT 364 (see section 3.1.c). Remarkably, a quite similar inscription is attested in the tomb of *Shṭp-ib-rʿ* (document 2).

Document 17: TT 20 – Tomb of *Mnt.w-ḥr-ḥpš=f* (Table 2, doc. 19)

Date: 18th dynasty, Thutmosis III

Location: Dra ‘Abu el-Naga

Bibliography: No. De Garis Davies 1913, 9-10 and Pl. II: G. West 2019, 77.



Figure 15

Caption in the upper part of the register

|1| *wḏ³ r m³³ st³ tknw šms mrḥ.t r tp [ḏw] [...] [mnt.w-] ḥr-ḥpš=f*

Captions related to the three men on the left dragging the Tekenu

|2| *s³ srḳ.t* |3| *s³* |4| *wṯi*

Caption between the men and the Tekenu

|5| *m-rk st³ [tknw] šm=f n niw.t=f*

|1| To go in procession to see the dragging of the Tekenu. Offering the unguents to the top of the mountain of *M[mnt.w-]ḥr-ḥpš=f*, justified. |2| The priest of Serqet |3| the guardian,¹ |4| the embalmer |5| in proximity of the dragging of the [Tekenu], (while) it goes to his city (necropolis).²

Notes

TT 20 is the tomb that provides more information about the Tekenu ritual. Another scene depicting the dragging in connection with the *msk³*-skin ritual is depicted on the same wall (see document 19). Moreover, in TT 20 also appears the famous scene of the ritual killing of the Nubian prisoners and pits inside which are buried some tools related to the Tekenu, such as the sledge, or the *msk³*-skin. (See figures 2 and 3).

1 See: Wb 3, 418.1-4; since the term seems to refer to an individual, it probably indicates a ritualist similar to the *s³ Srḳ.t*. One could also posit that a scribal error occurred and the term *s³* of *s³ Srḳ.t* was written twice.

2 For the term *niw.t* used with the meaning of “necropolis” see: Allen 2006 A, 11.

Document 18: TT 11 – Tomb of *Dḥwti* (Table 2, doc. 10)

Date: 18th dynasty, Hatshepsut

Location: Dra ‘Abu el-Naga

Bibliography: J. M. Serrano Delgado 2011, 161, Pl. VIII fig. 9; G. West 2019, 98-100 and 176-178.



Figure 16.

[1] *msk³* n- [2] *hr=f sfh* [4] *šm=f n d.t=f* [1] *tknw m-rk n niw.t*

[1] The *msk³*-skin¹ [2] above him is removed² [3] and he (the Tekenu) goes towards his (of the deceased) body.³ [4] The Tekenu approaches³ the city (the necropolis)⁴.

Notes

1. The term *msk³* is followed by a strange determinative which was identified by G. West as the sign I36, “piece of a crocodile skin”. G. West 2019, 178. It seems more likely an identification with the sign F32, “belly of an animal with tail”, or a strange, upside-down form of the sign F26, “skin of a goat”.
2. The verb *sfh* is used to indicate the removing of a piece of cloth. Remarkably, it is also the same verb used to describe the change of dress performed by the *sem* priest in OMR 19.
3. According to Serrano Delgado (2011, 61), *d.t=f* should be translated as “he leaves for his eternity” (Wb 5, 507.4-508.13). G. West, instead, interpreted *d.t* as “body” (2019, 178) and therefore translates: “when he (the deceased) goes to his body”. Indeed, the expression “his eternity” is not common and I was not able to find any parallel for the word *d.t*/eternity followed by a suffix pronoun, while “his body” is instead a common expression. One has to consider that this part of the text is damaged, yet, despite the lacuna, it seems possible to recognise a hieroglyph, perhaps the same one which in the previous sentence followed the term *msk³* (F32 or F23), these could perfectly match with the meaning of “body” or “corpse”. On the other hand, one has also to keep in mind that, according to G. West, the Tekenu was not a ritual but a symbolic representation of a journey enacted by the Ka of the deceased. Rather, given that the *msk³*-skin occurs in a letter to the dead as an object, which entails rights over an inheritance (see section 4.5) and it also played a role within the Haker feast (see section 3.3.4), it is more reasonable to posit that the Tekenu was a real ritual. The general meaning of the sentence is that the Tekenu is approaching the corpse of the deceased. Not by chance, the next sentence states that the Tekenu is near the necropolis.
4. Literally “the Tekenu is near the necropolis”. For this specific meaning of *m-rk* see Wb II, 458.3.
5. For the term *niw.t* used with the meaning of “necropolis” see: Allen 2006 A, 11.

Document 19: TT 20 -Tomb of *Mnt.w-ḥr-ḥpš=f* (Table 2, doc. 19)

Date: 18th dynasty, Thutmosis III

Location: Dra 'Abu el-Naga

Bibliography: No. De Garis Davies 1913, 9-10 and Pl. VIII W. Helck 1987, 34; R. Metawi 2008, 183; G. West 2019, 173-177.

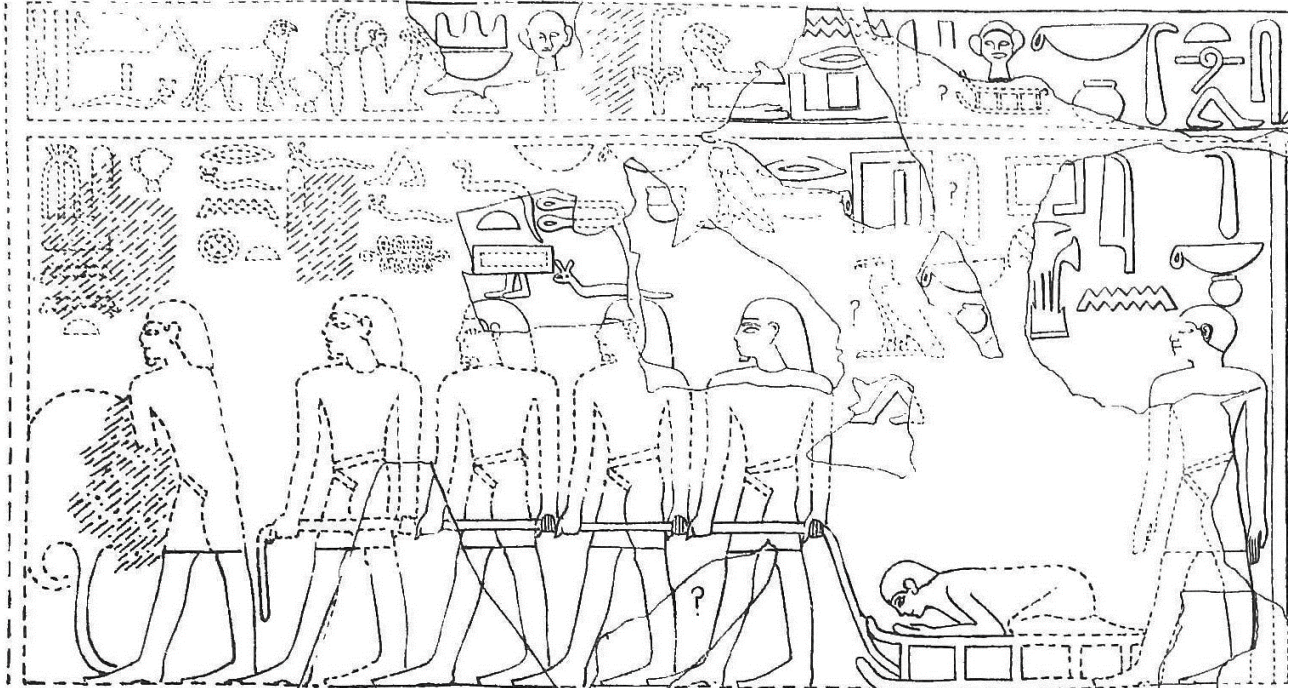


Figure 17

Inscription over the register

*iw.t m ḥtp r m³³ st³ tknw ḥr tm.t in ir.y-p^ct (ḥ³ti-^c) nswt [...]ḥr ḥ³w.t nb.t [ir.y ḥw Mnt.w-ḥr-ḥpš=f
m^{3c}-ḥrw]*

Coming in peace to see the dragging of the Tekenu on the sledge by the patrician, the nomarch, the [...] of the king, the one who is upon every desert region, the fan-bearer *Mnt.w-ḥr-ḥpš=f*, justified.

Legends

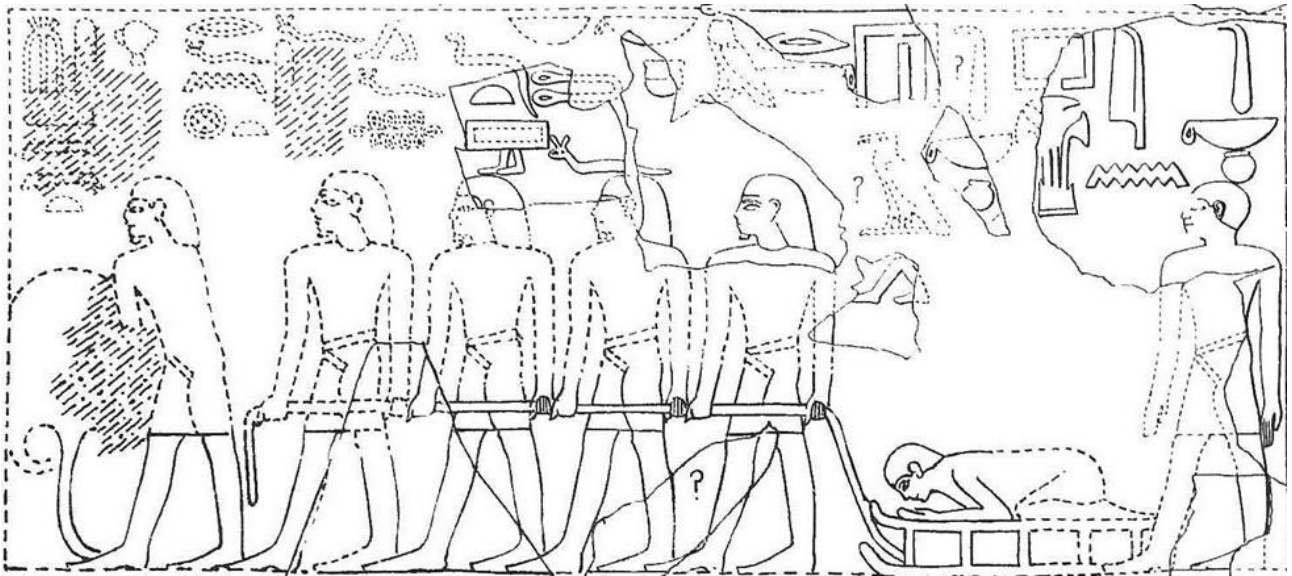


Figure 18

[1] *Ms[kʒ]* (*n.ti*) [2] *hr* [3] = *f n niw.t* [4] = *f s[fh (?)]* [5] *iw=f sʒ* [6] *nb-d.t tknw m-rk šm=f* [7] *hʒ*
[8] *tknw* [9] *pr hʒ* [10] *in tknw*

[1] The *mskʒ*-skin¹ which is [2] above [3] him [4] in his city (the necropolis)² [4] is [removed (?)]³. [5] He comes; [6] The Lord of Eternity protects the Tekenu⁴ as he proceeds. [7] The Tekenu descends, [8-9] the Tekenu walks out.

Notes

1 This scene shows undeniable similarities with the one attested in TT 11 (document 18). In this regard, Serrano Delgado posited that “the style and technique used are manifestly similar in both tombs, which suggests the possibility of them originating from the same artistic tradition or, probably, from the same group of artisans or workshop” (2011, 160). Given this premise, the lacuna occurring after the group of signs  can be restored through comparison with the inscription in TT 11. In the light of these data, the translation proposed by G. West – “producing water over/on him for his city, when he [?] passes away” – is unfounded (2019, 175).

2 For the term *niw.t* used with the meaning of “necropolis” see: Allen 2006 A, 11.

3 Based on comparison with TT 11, and given the presence of both signs S 29 and I 9, the lacuna can be restored with the word *sfh*. cf. TT 11 (doc. 17) for further considerations.

4 The spelling used to indicate the Tekenu in this sentence, , is different from that used in other occurrences in the legends analysed here and in other inscriptions within the same tomb. Also, the disposition of the hieroglyphs signs is strange. One could therefore argue that this part of the text was copied from a different source. *Nb-d.t*, “The Lord of Eternity” is usually an epithet of Osiris. It is difficult to grasp the actual meaning of the sentence, one can cautiously speculate that Osiris is protecting the Tekenu along his path.

Document 20: TT 100 – tomb of *Rḥ-mi-r*^c (Table 2 doc. 23)

Date: 18th dynasty, Thutmosis III / Amenhotep II – Place: Sheikh ‘Abd el- Qurna

Bibliography: No. De Garis Davies 1943, Pl. LXXXXIII; J. G. Griffiths 1958, 117; R. Metawi 2008, 186; J. M. Serrano Delgado 2011, 155; G. West 2019, 230-233 and 179.



Figure 19

|1| *rdi.t ii n niw.t msk*³

|2| *m tknw sdr hr=f*

|3| *m š hpr*

|1| Causing the coming to the city (necropolis)¹. The *msk*³-skin |2| (is) together with the Tekenu sleeping² under it |3| in the pool of Khepri³.

Notes

This text shows a strong resemblance with the Tekenu caption attested in TT 125 (Document 21).

Settgast hypothesised the presence of a second depiction of the Tekenu in this tomb, located in a damaged area (Settgast 1963, Tavel IV). It would have been represented within the funerary procession, while dragged by a group of men. (G. West 2019, 224-225).

1 For the term *niw.t* used with the meaning of “necropolis” see: Allen 2006 A, 11.

2 The verb *sdr* is the same term used to describe the ritual sleep performed by the *sem* priest in OMR 9-10. See also chapter 3.1.

3 The pool of Khepri, together with other sacred pools, played a foremost role in ancient Egyptian funerary rituals. See also Document 9 (TT 82) for further information. Remarkably, in TT 100 we also have a depiction of the three sacred pools of Khepri, Heqat and Sokar.

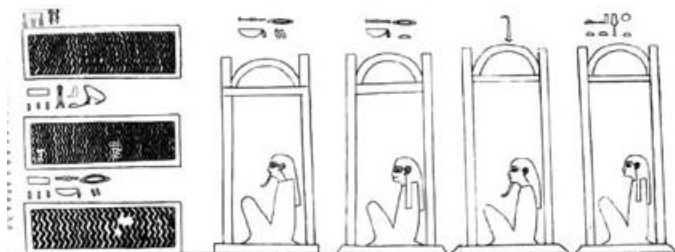


Figure 21 The three pools of Khepri, Heqat and Sokar in TT 100

Document 21: TT 125 - Tomb of *Dw³-wi-r-nḥḥ* (Table 2, doc. 9)

Date: 18th dynasty, Hatshepsut – Original location: Sheikh ‘Abd el- Qurna; present location: Hildesheim, Roemer und Pelizaeus Museum, inventory number 1887.

Bibliography: A. Eggebrecht 1987, 314–315; S. Wohlfarth 2005, 139.



Figure 22

|1| *rdi.t ïi n niw.t msk³*

|2| *m tknw sdr*

|3| *rdi.t sgr m š Hpr*

|1| Causing the coming to the city (necropolis)¹. The *msk³*-skin is |2| together with the Tekenu; sleeping² and causing silence in the pool of Khepri³.

Notes

The text is rather similar to the one in TT 100 (document 20). Furthermore, as for TT 100, also in TT 125 there was another depiction of the Tekenu already treated within this section (see Documents 11)

1 For the term *niw.t* used with the meaning of “necropolis” see: Allen 2006 A, 11.

2 the verb *sdr* is the same used for the ritual sleep of the *sem* priest in OMR 9 and 10. cf. also Document 20 (TT 100).

3 The expression “causing silence in the pool of Khepri” can be connected with the sentence attested in both TT 82 and TT 112 (documents 8 and 9): “The northerners of the pool of Heqet listen”. The northerners, here, are likely the ritualists linked to the sacred cities of the Delta region, often depicted in the scenes concerning the dragging of the Tekenu, such as the People of Pe, Dep, Qedem and the priest of Serqet. It can be argued that, once the Tekenu arrived at the sacred pools, the ritualists and the other individuals involved in the ceremony had to keep silence; then some liturgy was recited.

Discussion

The most ancient captions regarding the Tekenu date back to the end of the late 5th dynasty (document 1) and describe the Tekenu as dragged by a group of men in the context of the funerary procession, which is the most common representation of the Tekenu also in the subsequent historical phases. One can thus infer that this was perceived as one of the most characteristic moments of the ritual.

According to the inscriptions analysed here, the captions concerning the dragging of the Tekenu always contain verbs of motion, such as *stꜣ*, *ḳ*, *pri*, *šm*, *iw*, *sꜣr*, *hꜣi*. The texts also provide information about the destination of the Tekenu: the necropolis (*hr.t-ntr*, *niw.t*), the West (*Imn.t*), the body of the deceased (*d.t=f*), or the place where Osiris dwells. It can therefore be said that the ceremony was mainly focused on the passage from the world of the living to the realm of the dead, to be understood either as the necropolis or as a region of the netherworld. A further proof of the liminal function of the ritual is also given by the presence of the *Mww*-dancers, whose role was that to introduce the deceased into the netherworld,⁷⁹ and the verbal encounter between the Tekenu and the god Ruti, the gate-keeper of the realm of the dead.⁸⁰ Furthermore, remarkable is that the Tekenu is often depicted within an iconographic theme typical of the New Kingdom elite tombs, the so-called “Butic Burial” or “Sacred Temenos”, which was a special site for rituals located on the way from the Embalming Hall to the tomb,⁸¹ specifically meant as a transitional place between the earth and the netherworld.⁸²

Only a restricted number of sources describes other actions involving the Tekenu, such as the ritual sleep performed near the pool of Khepri (*sdr*) or the removal of the *mskꜣ*-skin.

Given these data, the hypothesis that sees the Tekenu as a dynamic ritual, comprising multiple phases, appears well-founded, especially if one considers that in several tombs the Tekenu is depicted more than once while involved in different ritual actions. Yet it must be underlined that all the scenes portraying the sleeping Tekenu and the removal of the *mskꜣ*-skin date back to the New Kingdom, the majority belonging to the 18th dynasty.⁸³

As for the two textual sources concerning the removal of the *mskꜣ*-skin and the two texts referring to the sleeping Tekenu (documents 18, 19, 20, 21), they belong to a very narrow period of time between

⁷⁹ H. Altenmüller 1975 A, 35-38.

⁸⁰ H. Willems 1996, 263-270.

⁸¹ A. Wilkinson 1994, 391.

⁸² A.-K. Diamond 2012, 109.

⁸³ See table 2, docs.: 10 and 19 (removal of the *mskꜣ*-skin); 9, 22, 23, 25, 30, 36 (sleeping Tekenu). All documents are dated to the 18th dynasty, the only exception being doc.36, datable at the beginning of the 19th dynasty.

the reigns of Hatshepsut and Thutmosis III and occur only within a small geographical area, which includes Dra Abu el-Naga and Sheikh ‘Abd el- Qurna.⁸⁴

We are dealing with just four textual sources, yet some considerations can be made. J.M. Serrano Delgado, for example, highlighted that, since the two textual sources concerning the removal of the *msk³*-skin (documents 18 and 19) are not only quite similar, but also situated in the same, small, geographical area, it may be reasonable to attribute them to the same workshop.⁸⁵ The same reasoning can be also made for the textual sources concerning the sleeping Tekenu in TT 100 and TT 125 (documents. 20 and 21).

On the other hand, one may wonder whether the innovative themes concerning the Tekenu were new elements added to the ritual during the New Kingdom or, more likely, a reformulation of more ancient religious practices.⁸⁶

As regards the ritual function of the *msk³*-skin, it is to be mentioned that in a Middle Kingdom stela from Abydos (München Gl. WAF 35), reference is made to a ceremony involving some leather hides, that occurred during the Mysteries of Osiris. This latter document seems also to imply that obtaining the *msk³*-skins bestows a certain social status and some privileges granted by the king.⁸⁷ See also a passage from the Middle Kingdom pRamesseum E, line 85, where it is attested a reference to the “one who is under the *msk³.w*-skins”.⁸⁸ In addition, a *msk³*-skin is also mentioned in a Letter to the Dead datable to the 6th dynasty, the so-called Cairo Linen (JdE 25675), and the possession of this object seems to entail rights over an inheritance.⁸⁹ It can be thus theorised that the *msk³*-skin played a role in both funerary and mortuary rituals already starting by the late Old Kingdom.

As for the sleeping Tekenu the issue is more complex. The verb *sdr* recurring in the captions is the same one used in the New Kingdom OMR scenes 9 and 10 to describe the sleeping *sem* priest. Yet, it is important to stress that, starting from the early Middle Kingdom, nouns derived from this verb attested in several documents describing the nocturnal rituals enacted during the Mysteries of Osiris at Abydos (*sdr.t Pkr*, *grḥ n sdr.t*, *sdry.t n Hr Šn/Šn-Hr*).⁹⁰ Given that the Mysteries celebrated at Abydos were structured as a funerary ritual enacted for the god Osiris,⁹¹ these nocturnal ceremonies

⁸⁴ See section 3.2, table 2: docs.: 9 and 23 for the sleeping Tekenu, and docs.10 and 19 for the removal of the *msk³*-skin.

⁸⁵ J.M. Serrano Delgado 2011, 160.

⁸⁶ H. Willems 1995, 110-116.

⁸⁷ See chapter 3, section 3.3.4.

⁸⁸ C. Theis 2011, 83.

⁸⁹ See chapter 4, section 4.5

⁹⁰ Z. Végh 2011,153-154.

⁹¹ See chapter 3, section 3.5.

were probably meant as a reformulation of a ritual already characterising the elite funerals. So, it would be plausible to posit that something similar to the ritual sleeping of the Tekenu was already performed during the Middle Kingdom or even before. Indeed, the existence of articulated ceremonies performed between the embalming place and the tombs during the night preceding the inhumation are well attested,⁹² and the fact that the sleeping Tekenu is sometimes flanked by torches might suggest that this ritual was performed at night.⁹³

In this regard, particularly remarkable is that all the scenes pertaining to the sleeping Tekenu collected in Table 2 are always depicted within a figurative pattern attested in a restricted number of New Kingdom tombs.⁹⁴ This articulated iconographic theme was interpreted by J. Settgast as the setting of a consecrated area, whose main characteristics were the presence of incense burners, the ritual erection of two obelisks, and the purification of two shrines.⁹⁵

TT 100, datable between the reign of Thutmose III and Amenhotep II, shows the more detailed depiction of this sacred area. Starting from the left, two women, identified by the captions as the mourners, are enacting a censuring ceremony in front of a building. The subsequent scene portrays the ritual dormition of the Tekenu which, according to the caption previously analysed, is performed “in the pool of Khepri”.⁹⁶ To the right of the Tekenu, both the *sem* priest and the *smr* are depicted while enacting a purification ritual on two shrines. The caption relating to these buildings is an obscure reference to “the red crown (*dšr.t*) of the South” and the “red crown (*dšr.t*) of the North”, where one would have expected to find the white crown in connection with the South.⁹⁷ In this regard, C. Theis reasonably posited that the red crown sign indicates here the preposition “n”, to be grammatically intended as a dative; therefore, the scene should be interpreted as the purification of both the North and the South shrine.⁹⁸

⁹² J. Assmann 2005, 260-278

⁹³ M.E. Strong 2021, 112-125.

⁹⁴ See Table 2, docs: 9 (TT 125), 22 (TT 96), 23 (TT 100), 25 (TT 276), 30 (TT 66); 36 (TT 41).

⁹⁵ J. Settgast 1963, 90-93.

⁹⁶ See chapter 3, section 3.2.1.b, document 20.

⁹⁷ J. Settgast 1963, 91.

⁹⁸ C. Theis 2011, 83-84.



Figure 23 The sleeping Tekenu in TT 100

According to J. Settgast, a quite similar figurative pattern also recurs in TT 125, where he recognises the presence of a ceremony performed by a group of ritualists (the *smr*, the *hry-ḥb*, and two women, probably the two mourners) followed by another, damaged scene and, finally, the ritual erection of the obelisks, flanked by the sleeping Tekenu in the pool of Khepri.⁹⁹ It must also be noted that the captions of the sleeping Tekenu strongly resembles those in TT 100.¹⁰⁰



Figure 24 The sleeping Tekenu in TT 125

Settgast confirms the presence of the two obelisks scene also in TT 276 (whose owner probably lived under the reign of Thutmose IV) and TT 96 (datable to the reign of Amenhotep II).¹⁰¹ As for TT 41 (belonging to the early 19th dynasty), the sleeping Tekenu is shown as flanked by two *Mww*-dancers, the scene of the two obelisks being depicted in another register on the same wall immediately above the Tekenu.¹⁰² Even though severely damaged, the same pattern may be theorised for TT 66 (Thutmose IV), where the scene pertaining to the purification of the two shrines is recognizable.¹⁰³

It is unclear whether this sacred area should be considered as being part of the Butic Burial or depicting a different ritual setting.¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, its close connection with the sleeping Tekenu is undeniable.

⁹⁹ J. Settgast 1963, 90-93, Pl. X.

¹⁰⁰ See chapter 3, section 3.2.1.b, documents 20 and 21.

¹⁰¹ J. Settgast 1963, Pl. X.

¹⁰² J. Assmann 1992, Pl. 40.

¹⁰³ No. De Garis Davies and Ni. De Garis Davies 1963, Pl. XIII; G. West 2019, 136-137.

¹⁰⁴ J. Settgast 1963, 93.

According to Junker, this sacred area should be interpreted as belonging to the Butic Burial. Since the latter often involves pilgrimages to diverse ancient Egyptian Holy Cities, such as Buto, or Sais, the presence of the obelisks would testify to a pilgrimage to Heliopolis.¹⁰⁵ Yet, as stressed by H. Willems, another valid hypothesis could be Sais, which already in Middle Kingdom sources is associated with the two obelisks and symbolised the Embalming Hall within the context of the funerary rituals.¹⁰⁶

The only thing that can be said with certainty is that all the symbols recurring in this sacred area seems to insist on the aspect of liminality, by depicting a sort of border between the realm of the dead and that of the living.¹⁰⁷ We have already highlighted that, according to the Egyptian mindset, there was an overlap between certain ritual areas located in the necropolis, some regions of the netherworld and a special dimension that the sleepers could experience through their oneiric visions.¹⁰⁸ Especially the presence of the two obelisks could be interpreted as a liminal symbol indicating the passage from earth to the celestial regions.¹⁰⁹ Indeed, besides the well-known monumental ones linked to temple architecture, obelisks were also placed at the entrance of private tombs.¹¹⁰ Moreover, as previously mentioned, H. Willems underlined that the presence of the two obelisks could be associated with the symbolic pilgrimage to Sais and therefore with the rituals performed at the entrance of the Embalming Hall.¹¹¹ One could thus theorise that the iconographic pattern herein analysed describes a phase of the funerary rituals, which also included the sleeping Tekenu, and took place at night, before the inhumation, at the entrance of the Embalming Hall, or in another ritual setting positioned on the funerary procession route.¹¹²

The real question to ask is whether the ritual of the sleeping Tekenu existed in earlier historical phases or added to the ritual during the 18th dynasty. Although all the tomb showing the sleeping Tekenu date back to a narrow timeframe between the reigns of Hatshepsut and the early 19th dynasty,¹¹³ they could actually testify to the reformulation of more ancient rituals to be linked to the emergence of the festivals for the posthumous cult of Amenhotep I in the Theban region.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁵ H. Junker 1940, 22.

¹⁰⁶ H. Willems 1996, 113-114, and note 342.

¹⁰⁷ J. G. Tassie 2000, 41.

¹⁰⁸ See chapter 2, section 2.1.b.

¹⁰⁹ G. West 2019, 205-206.

¹¹⁰ T. Bács 1983, 1-16; J. M. Galán 2017, 187.

¹¹¹ H. Willems 1996, 113-114 and note 342; H. Willems 1988, 147.

¹¹² H. Willems 1996, 112-113.

¹¹³ See section 3.2, table 2: docs. 9 and 23.

¹¹⁴ H. Willems 1996, 114; see also section 3.2.

Indeed, several elements characterising the sacred area in which the sleeping of the Tekenu took place are well documented since before the advent of the New Kingdom. For example, the depictions of the *Mww*-dancers are known from the Old Kingdom onwards,¹¹⁵ while the theme of the basins of Heqet and Khepri finds a significant precedent in a Middle Kingdom Coffins Texts spell, CT 234.¹¹⁶ Also, the scene concerning the erection of the two obelisks, as mentioned above, finds a significant parallel with two obelisks depicted within the *object frieze* of a Middle Kingdom coffin, where they are associated with the symbol of the goddess Neith and the flagpoles of the city of Sais.¹¹⁷ As mentioned above, this Holy City, within the context of the elite funerary rituals, symbolised the Embalming Hall and the Middle Kingdom data testifies to a number of nocturnal ceremonies herein enacted, such as those described in CT spells 60-61, which strongly resemble the Ptolemaic *Studenwachen*,¹¹⁸ and the *hsb.t* 𓂏.w, a ritualised judgment of the dead enacted at the entrance of the Embalming Hall which shows strong affinities with other rituals occurred during the Middle Kingdom Mysteries of Osiris celebrated at Abydos.¹¹⁹ These rituals were performed shortly before the starting of the funerary procession, and it cannot ruled out a priori that might have included a ritual sleep, which was not too different from that *sdr.t/sdr.yt* occurred during the Middle Kingdom Mysteries of Osiris.¹²⁰

3.2.1.c Coffin Text spell 312 and the ritual sleep/*sdr*

Although scarce, the little evidence concerning the existence of a ritual sleep prior to the New Kingdom could be understood as the tip of an iceberg testifying to a ritual practice already attested, at least, since the end of the Old Kingdom. After all, we have already seen that some Letters to the Dead datable to the First Intermediate Period could testify to a ritual sleep performed near the tomb of the deceased to seek a dream.¹²¹

Both S. Donnat Beauquier and U. Verhoeven sustained that the mythological background behind the practice of addressing deceased relatives through missives probably stemmed from the facts narrated in P. Chester Beatty I, recto, 14,6-15,8.¹²² This textual source is particular interesting to analyse the

¹¹⁵ H. Altemüller 1975 A, 9.

¹¹⁶ H. Willems 1996, 110.

¹¹⁷ H. Willems 1996, 113-114, and note 342.

¹¹⁸ H. Willems 1988, 145.

¹¹⁹ H. Willems 1988, 146-150. See also section 3.3.3.

¹²⁰ See section 3.3.1.

¹²¹ See section 3.1.b.

¹²² S. Donnat Beauquier 2014, 218-219; U. Verhoeven 2003, 38.

intersection between, law, religion and society taken into consideration here,¹²³ by narrating how the legal issue between Horus and Seth for the the throne of Egypt was settled by summoning Osiris himself from the realm of the dead thanks to a letter written by the god Toth.¹²⁴

It is however important to stress that P. Chester Beatty I, recto, 14,6-15,8 dates back to the Ramesside Age, probably to the Reign of Ramesses V. However, other, more ancient religious texts might be identified, which could validate the existence the ritual sleep during the Middle Kingdom and explain the mythological background of the most ancient Letters to the Dead and the nocturnal rituals enacted during the Mysteries of Osiris at Abydos.¹²⁵

Coffin Texts spell 312 [CT IV68a – 86w] is particularly interesting in this regard. This spell is currently known thanks to six testimonies, all belonging to elite exponents, and datable to a period of time between the end of the First Intermediate Period and the 12th dynasty:

1. D1C – Coffin of *Bb* (Cairo, CG 28117); Dendera; First Intermediate Period.¹²⁶
2. T1C – Burial chamber of *Hr-ḥtp* (Cairo, CG 28023); TT 314 (Thebes West, Deir el-Bahri); Early Middle Kingdom.¹²⁷
3. B4C – Outer coffin of *Sṓ.t-ḥd-ḥtp* (CG 28086); Deir el Bersha; Middle Kingdom.¹²⁸
4. B2BO – Inner Coffin of *Dḥwty-nṣḥt* (Boston 21. 962-62); Middle Kingdom.¹²⁹
5. B6BO – Fragmentary outer coffin of *Sṓ.t-mk.t* (Boston 21.810-11 and 21.968); Deir el Bersha; Middle Kingdom.¹³⁰
6. B6C - Inner coffin of *ḥṣ-nḥ.t*, the reused by lady Djehutinakht (Cairo, CG 28094); Deir el-Bersha; end of the 11th dynasty - reigns of Senusret II/III, 12th dynasty.¹³¹

Of these six sources, only one, B6C, contains the complete spell. The other documents, instead, show significant lacunas or contain an abbreviated version of the text: D1C ends at 81j; T1C and B6BO ends at 71f; B2BO at 80g; finally, B4C contains only the very initial part of the spell, ending at 68e.¹³²

¹²³ M. Campagno 2006.

¹²⁴ U. Verhoeven 2003, 38.

¹²⁵ See section 3.2.1.c.

¹²⁶ H. Willems 2014, 159 and note 117.

¹²⁷ H. Willems 2014, 173.

¹²⁸ H. Willems 2014, 148-149.

¹²⁹ H. Willems 2014, 151-153.

¹³⁰ H. Willems 2014, 151-153.

¹³¹ G. Long, M. De Meyer, H. Willems 2015, 225, and p. 236.

¹³² A. de Buck 1949, 87.

The text seems to have enjoyed a certain popularity also in the subsequent historical phases, and a later version of it is attested in the Book of the Dead (BD chapter 78).¹³³

Although the general plot of the mythical episode narrated in spell 312 is clear, the best-preserved version, B6C shows several anomalies, its translation posing a number of problematic issues. The archetypical text from which the spell derived was likely structured as a dramatic text, in which several characters – Osiris, a chorus of gods, Horus, the Image of Horus, and Ruti – talk to each other, and their speeches are reported in the first person; some of the CT 312 testimonies which has come to us indeed reflect the original structure and, as pointed out by A. de Buck, the version copied on D1C is likely the most faithful to the original.¹³⁴ In B6C, instead, some of the main *dramatis personae* of the text – specifically Osiris, Horus, and the Image of Horus – are identified with the deceased. The result is that the replacement of the first-person pronouns referring to these supernatural entities with the personal name of the deceased involved the formation of sentences which do not follow the usual rules of ancient Egyptian grammar.¹³⁵ If one considers that B6C is the only testimony which reports the text in its entirety, this aspect creates quite a few problems for the understanding of the final part of the spell, since sometimes it is hard even to understand which of the *dramatis personae* the deceased's name is replacing (CT IV 82a-86w).

Despite these problems, the plot of spell 312 can be reconstructed without difficulties. In the present section, some excerpts of this spelled will be analysed in the light of the interpretation provided by H. Willems in 2001.¹³⁶ For the translation I mainly based myself on the one provided by A. de Buck.¹³⁷ It begins with Osiris asking Horus to reach Djedu (Busiris) and perform for him the funerary rituals:

[68b] *Oh Horus, come to Djedu,* [68c] *clear my ways for me*¹³⁸ [68e] *and*
[68f] *parade (dbn)*¹³⁹ *around my tomb,* [68f] *that you may see my form (irw)* [69a]

¹³³ A. de Buck 1949, 87.

¹³⁴ A. de Buck 1949, 87.

¹³⁵ A. de Buck 1949, 88-89.

¹³⁶ H. Willems 2001, 370 and ff.

¹³⁷ A. de Buck 1949.

¹³⁸ B6bo, B4c and the Book of the Dead version show here the idiomatic expression *Dsr wat*, “clear the road”. Other sources, instead, show only the verb *zDr*: B6c *dsr=k*; T1c *dsr=k hr=i*; D1c *dsr=k n=i*. Remarkably *dsr* is the same verb used to describe the seclusion of the sem priest in OMR scene 9 (see section 3.1).

¹³⁹ The circumambulation (*dbn, phr*) of cities walls, monuments, or tombs was a characterising trait of several Egyptians rituals, especially those performed in front of a larger public, such as the Heb-Sed, or some ceremonies linked to royal coronation. See: R. Ritner 1992, 55-58; R. A. Gillam, 2005, 150-153. See also section 3.3.1.

and exalt my Ba! |69b| May you spread fear of me |69c| and may you command awe of me.

As already pointed out, in order to inherit and succeed a deceased's son had to perform the role of main ritualist during the funerals and, although the text is not explicit in this regard, from some passages it is clear that Horus's rights to the throne are questioned by Seth (CT IV 69g-70b). One has also to keep in mind that, according to the myth, Osiris would have died even before conceiving Horus, and it is therefore easy to understand why the legitimacy of the latter could be contested.

The only solution is to reach the netherworld so that Osiris can talk to Horus proclaiming him the legitimate heir. However, embarking on such a journey is too dangerous. Horus must stay among the living – being a manifestation of Osiris himself – so that he will generate a new heir to perpetuate the dynastic line and the mortuary cult associated to it (CT IV 71c-72f):

|Horus says to Osiris: |71e| *See your own form (irw), |f| let your Ba free to move¹⁴⁰ |72a| and cause him to go forth and to have power over his legs, |b| that he may stride and copulate among men; and |c| you shall be there as the Lord of All. |d| The gods of the Duat fear you, |e| and the gates beware of you. |f| You move along with those who move along, |g| (while) I remain on your mound like the Lord of Life.*

Horus however devises a plan, a supernatural being, denominated *ṯr.w-Ḥr* in the text, will act as a messenger and will reach the realm of the dead to meet Osiris. The actual nature of this divine messenger is hard to understand. It is probably to be interpreted as a manifestation of Horus himself. What we can deduct from the text is that this divine being shows the same physical appearance of Horus and is endowed with his very Ba:

¹⁴⁰ For the verb *skdi* determined with the sign of a boat see Wb 4, 308.7-309.8. It literally means “to travel by boat”. A similar interpretation of this verb was already suggested by A. de Buck 1949, 93 and note 3. The sentence should be explained in the fact that Horus is the living Ba of Osiris. See. H. Willems 2001, 370 and ff.

|74 a| [*Horus says:*] *I have made his form as my form, his gait as my gait, |74 b| that he may go and come to Djedu, being ennobled (*s^h*) with my Ba, |74c| so that he will tell you my affairs.*

On the other hand, once the messenger enters the scene, he delivers a monologue, claiming to be an ancestral being, created before Horus himself was born. The *ʿIr.w-Ḥr* thus describe himself as an *ḥ* spirit who dwell in the sun:

|74g| [*ʿIr.w-Ḥr says:*] *I am one who dwell in the light of the sun. |74h| I am an Akh (*ḥ*) spirit who came into being and was created from the flesh of a god. |75a| I am one of the gods and one of the Akh-spirits who dwell in the light of the sun, |75b| whom Atum created from his own flesh, |75c| whom came into existence from the root of his eye; |75d| whom Atum created and transfigured into an Akh-spirit (*s^h*).*

Subsequently,¹⁴¹ the divine messenger begins his journey but, along the way, he runs into an obstacle, the god Ruti stops him:

|78d-e-f-g| “*Repeat¹⁴² to me what Horus has told you, in the form of the things his father said in the place where one lies on the days of the burial – said Ruti to me – and I will give you the Nemes crown. |78h| so that you may go and come through the ways of the sky.*”

The messenger is able to answer the question and, once received the Nemes crown, proceeds on his journey. After various vicissitudes – such as his transformation into a falcon to destroy the enemies of Horus¹⁴³ – the messenger accomplishes his missions, and conveys the message to Osiris. Horus is

¹⁴¹ D1C, CT IV 77b-79h; B6C 77d-79h.

¹⁴² As stressed by A. de Buck (1943 p. 93 and note 1), *di(w)=k wdb (pr.t) m r^c=k / d wdb pr(w).t m r³=k*, is a difficult phrase: *di(w)=k* is the main sentence (“may you grant that /grant); *pr.t m r^c=k* (“what came out of your mouth”) is the subject of the subordinate sentence; the verb *wdb* (Wb 1, 408.3-15) literally means “to turn back”. So: “may you (Osiris) grant that what came out of your mouth can turn back”. From the context it is clear that “turn back” here means “to be repeated”.

¹⁴³ See CT IV, 76h; 82b-82-n.

finally proclaimed as the legitimate ruler of Egypt, while his deceased father will rule over the netherworld.

Comment

Although at first glance the facts narrated in CT 312 may appear somewhat unusual, the spell shows several themes typical of the ancient Egyptian religious texts.

The topic of the son who refuse to physically join his deceased father in the netherworld and is identified with the living *Ba* of the latter on earth is attested also in CT I 162f [38].¹⁴⁴ Moreover, CT 312 finds several similarities with CT 149, one of the spells classified by H. Willems as “without mythology”.¹⁴⁵ The rubrics of both texts, in the witnesses where they are attested,¹⁴⁶ state that they served for the transformation of the deceased into a divine falcon. In CT 149, this transformation occurs in the context of a ritualised judgment of the dead, performed at the entrance of a tomb. Here the deceased father is summoned to help his living relatives settle a legal dispute against a rival family, which includes both living and dead individuals.¹⁴⁷ This is a theme often encountered in several Letters to the Dead, and, significantly, CT 149 was certainly involved in the ritual deposition of these documents.¹⁴⁸

One of the main characters of CT 312, the divine messenger of Horus (*Ir.w-Hr*), is said to have been subjected to the *s3h.w*-rites (CT IV 74g-76h). These were the same rituals used to transmute the deceased into an *s3h*, a spirit endowed with special powers and therefore able to affect both the realms of the living and that of the dead. Indeed, the messenger of Horus is able to reach the netherworld also because of the special status acquired thanks to these rituals, an element that can be considered as a parallel between CT 312 and PT 364, since in the latter utterance it is stated that Horus has manifested himself to Osiris in the form of an *s3h*.¹⁴⁹

More generally, as mentioned above, the possibility of communicating with the dead through a special medium shows strong affinities with *The Contendings of Horus and Seth* narrated in P. Chester Beatty I. This document tells how Horus, in order to be proclaimed legitimate heir to the throne, had to find

passages like 76h; 8

passages like 76h; 8

¹⁴⁴ *Mr-n=k b3=k im=i tp t3* (Love your Ba on earth which I am!); the sentence is to be intended a speech by the living son /Horus to his deceased father/Osiris. See also: H. Willems, 2001, 370-372.

¹⁴⁵ H. Willems 2014, 149-150.

¹⁴⁶ Coffin Text spell 312: CT IV 80h.

¹⁴⁷ H. Willems 2014, 149-150; E.F. Wente 2017.

¹⁴⁸ See section 4.1.

¹⁴⁹ See chapter 3, section 3.2.a.

a way to communicate with his deceased father, Osiris. But, in this case the communication is made possible thanks to an exchange of letters.¹⁵⁰

Finally, the Egyptian denomination of the supernatural messenger created by Horus, *Irw Hr*, is worthy of analysis. The term *irw*, literally “form”, is to be intended as “manifestation”, thus the text imply that the divine messenger is none other than a manifestation of Horus himself. Also, it has been underlined how in religious texts the word *irw* appears to be something similar to the Ba and remarkably, in several sources both the Ba and the *irw* appears to be strictly connected.¹⁵¹ Finally one could interpret the term *Irw-Hr* as a wordplay referring to the Eye of Horus, in Egyptian *ir.t Hr*.

This interpretation is confirmed by several passages in the longer version of CT 312 copied on B6C. In CT IV 79a, for example, it is said that Horus has lost his eye, and in CT IV 83c, Horus is called “The Eyeless”. The main role played in this spell by The Eye of Horus has been already highlighted by Helmut Brunner. However, according to his interpretation, the central theme of the text would be Horus’ refusal of taking care of the post-mortem destiny of Osiris in order to heal his wounded eye; the Eye of Horus would thus symbolise the royal power menaced by social disorders, a theme reflecting the climate of uncertainty typical of the First Intermediate Period and the consequent crisis of traditional values.¹⁵² Even though the central role played by the Eye of Horus in this text is undeniable H. Brunner’s view of the First Intermediate Period is no longer acceptable.¹⁵³ Rather, in the light of the aforementioned assonance between the name of the divine messenger of Horus (*Irw Hr*) and one of the Egyptian terms used to indicate the Eye of Horus (*ir.t Hr*), the divine messenger must be identified with a manifestation of Horus which substantially coincides with his Ba and, at the same time, with his eye. This interpretation appears particularly well founded if one considers other religious texts where it is possible to find a certain connection between the Eye of Horus and the Ba of Osiris and/or Horus. For example, in Pyr. 578c-579a it is possible to read that Horus has rescued his own eye from his enemy and gives it to Osiris, so that the latter can become a Ba. Furthermore, the mythical theme of a deity sending his own eye as a messenger is quite recurrent in the Egyptian mythology. This is the case of the Eye of Ra sent to destroy humanity,¹⁵⁴ or the eye of Atum sent to find Shu and Tefnut.¹⁵⁵ It is also noteworthy that the mythical narrations concerning the Eye of Horus testify how the latter has gone through a series of vicissitudes quite similar to those experienced by

¹⁵⁰ It was also suggested that this episode may have been the mythical paradigm behind the practice of the so-called Letters to the Dead. See: S. Donnat Beauquier 2014, 208-219.

¹⁵¹ A. Landborg 2014, 215-219.

¹⁵² H. Brunner 1961, 443-445.

¹⁵³ H.M. Hays 2011, 115 - 130,; M. Smith 2009; M. Smith 2017, 167 and ff.

¹⁵⁴ J.-P. Corteggiani 2007, 381-382.

¹⁵⁵ J. Assmann 2009, 168.

Osiris himself: it was “killed” and dismembered by Seth in several parts and subsequently recomposed and healed by a god, Thoth or Hathor.¹⁵⁶ This element actually makes the Eye of Horus the most suitable supernatural being when it comes to interacting with Osiris, since both went through an analogous experience which assimilates them.¹⁵⁷

The idea of an eye able to travel and reach the netherworld perfectly matches with the Egyptian conception of dreams as a medium to interact with the dead. The action of sleeping was strictly associated to death, and the dreams were perceived as a liminal space – the dream zone – which overlapped certain regions of the netherworld where the sleepers could see the dead.¹⁵⁸ Under this point of view, the journey of the *Ir.w-Hr* to reach Osiris can be intended as a metaphor of a ritual sleep and an oneiric vision experienced by Horus. In other words, something not that different from the ritual sleep enacted by the *sem* priest in OMR scenes 9 and 10 to seek the “vision of his deceased father in all his forms”. In this regard, it is remarkable that one of the words used as a ritual remark in OMR scene 10 explicitly mention “the messenger of Horus” (*wnw-Hr*) or “the sleeping messenger of Horus” (*wnw-Hr sdr*), and that OMR scene 7 – which is to be understood as strictly connected to OMR scenes 9 and 10, as evidenced by the sequence of the ritual attested in TT 100 – concerns the offering of the Eye of Horus as a gift for the deceased.¹⁵⁹ In another excerpt from the Pyramid Texts, Pyr. 535a, is also mentioned a messenger of Horus (*inw/wnw*) which has bought his eye to the deceased king/Osiris.

It can therefore be stated that the OMR scenes 9 and 10, the ritual of the sleeping Tekenu, the Middle Kingdom ritual sleep celebrated within the Mysteries of Osiris at Abydos, and the dreams asked to seek contact with a deceased relative described in the Letters to the Dead all stemmed from this mythical episode: a communication established between the deceased father/Osiris and his living son Horus through an oneiric experience. This mythical theme was reformulated several times throughout Egyptian history and used as a background in diverse dramatic rituals specifically meant to solve certain kinds of existential crisis linked to the death of a family chief and his succession.

¹⁵⁶ J.-P. Corteggiani 2007, 384-385.

¹⁵⁷ This could be interpreted in the light of the heuristic concept of “sympathetic magic”. See: P. Rozin and C. Nemeroff 2002, 201-216.

¹⁵⁸ K. Szpakowska 2003, 33 and ff.

¹⁵⁹ See chapter 3, section 3.1.a.

Indeed, three important keywords of CT spell 312 are *hw*,¹⁶⁰ *sꜥh*,¹⁶¹ and *nms*.¹⁶² The first term is usually translated with “word”, “utterance”,¹⁶³ but its meaning is much more complex; *hw* indeed indicated the creative power of the word,¹⁶⁴ and in the specific context of CT spell 312 it refers to the words of Osiris, which have the power of legitimising the succession of Horus.¹⁶⁵ The word *sꜥh* referred instead to the legitimate acquisition of a new status acquired by the Image of Horus, while the *nemes* crown, symbolised the legitimisation of the social status acquired by Horus,¹⁶⁶ and under this point of view it can be considered parallel to the *tw.t / wrr.t* crown PT 364 (Pyr. 613b), which symbolised the leadership acquired by Osiris over the realm of the dead.¹⁶⁷

The original function of Coffin Texts spell 312 was probably that of a dramatic ritual pertaining to the founding myth for the coronation ritual, in a context where the succession of the hereditary prince was ideologically intertwined with the establishment of the mortuary cult for the deceased king. Yet, in the tradition of the Coffin Texts spells the text was reworked to assume new meanings. The version of the spell in which the *dramatis personae* are not explicitly identified with the deceased, such as D1C, the original function linked to inheritance, succession and establishment of the mortuary cult was simply reshaped in the context of the elite sphere.¹⁶⁸ Instead, the version of the spell where the deceased is assimilated to Osiris, Horus and the Image of Horus – such as B6C – testifies a further shifting in the function of the text. The journey into the afterlife performed by the Image of Horus and his initiation into the *sꜥh.w* rites, was probably perceived as paradigmatic for the deceased who had to reach the realm of the dead.¹⁶⁹ Likewise, the new status gained by both Horus as the new king of Egypt and Osiris as the ruler of the netherworld were considered an ideal model for the transfiguration of the deceased into a supernatural being. Yet, if one considers that the supernatural status reached by deceased and the establishment of his mortuary cult was an essential prerequisite to legitimise the social status of his living descendants, it cannot be excluded that also this version of the text was somewhat aimed at ratifying the social position of the legitimate heir.

Finally, several elements of CT 312 strongly recall the captions concerning the Tekenu ritual. CT 312 concerns the voyage of the messenger of Horus to reach a celestial version of a Lower Egypt holy

¹⁶⁰ CT IV 85j.

¹⁶¹ CT IV 74b, 76i, 81k, 82k, 85i.

¹⁶² CT IV 74g-76i.

¹⁶³ Wb 3, 44.8-10.

¹⁶⁴ J. Zandee 1964, 65-66.

¹⁶⁵ Cf. CT 312, 84 I and 86 s-t.

¹⁶⁶ K. Goebis 1995.

¹⁶⁷ See chapter 3, section 3.1.a.

¹⁶⁸ Under this point of view, the observations made by H. Willems that CT spell 312 belongs to the same religious milieu of CT spell 30-41 is quite reasonable.

¹⁶⁹ H. Willems 2014, 191.

city, Djedu (Busiris), while the Tekenu ritual describes the procession of the Tekenu from the Embalming Place to the tomb of the deceased. Furthermore, several Tekenu depictions allude to the sacred landscape of the Delta. See, for example, the people of Pe and Dep and the *s³-Srḳ.t*, a ritualist associated to religious centre of Qedem; moreover, the depictions of the Tekenu are often flanked by scenes of pilgrimages to holy cities connected to the Osiris myth, especially the cities located in the North, such as Sais, or Djedu itself.¹⁷⁰ Finally, both the Tekenu and the divine messenger of Horus have a verbal encounter with the god Ruti. One may wonder if the Tekenu itself might be identified with the divine messenger of Horus that has to reach the tomb of Osiris in Djedu. Yet, however suggestive this hypothesis may appear, it certainly needs further studies and analysis to be definitively validated.¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ See table 1.

¹⁷¹ See also section 3.2.3.

3.2.2 Why the Tekenu ritual is not attested in royal tombs? Muovere questa parte nelle conclusion del tekenu

As demonstrated by the analysis of the documents, the Tekenu ritual is not attested in the context of the royal funerary rituals. This, probably because, within royal tombs, there was a certain reticence in showing the body of the deceased or other kinds of scenes depicting the transportation of the mummy or other phases of the funerary procession.¹⁷² Not by chance, the OMR scenes attested in royal tombs always pertains to the statue of the deceased (and not the mummified body) or, as in the case of queen Tausret – a woman who ruled Egypt as a king – on her royal cartouche.¹⁷³ The only exception can be identified in Tutankhamun's tomb but, as stressed by D. Laboury, it constitutes an unique, atypical case.¹⁷⁴

We have also to keep in mind that, when it comes to themes like inheritance and succession, the procedures were much more complex within the royal sphere since the succession of the new king substantially came to coincide with his coronation.¹⁷⁵ One could thus prudently posit that the same kind of ritual actions characterising the Tekenu ceremony in the elite funerary rituals played a certain role in some phases of the coronation ritual.¹⁷⁶ It is suggestive that C. Campbell refers to the presence of a figure recumbent on a sledge – in his opinion quite similar to the Tekenu – within the Birth Chamber of the Luxor Temple,¹⁷⁷ which was strictly linked to another chamber of the same temple dedicated to the coronation of Amenhotep III.¹⁷⁸ However, as suggestive as it is, Campbell's theory does not seem supported by concrete evidence. For example, a sketch made by A. Gayet portrays the same figure as a trussed bovine on a sledge¹⁷⁹ and, as stressed by G. West, the current poor state of preservation of the scene does not allow a more detailed analysis.¹⁸⁰

Another hypothesis to explain the absence of the Tekenu within royal tombs might be identified in the fact that this kind of ritual was aimed at sanctioning the special status reached by a restricted number of elite families because of royal concession. In other words, a privilege – that could be

¹⁷² D. Laboury 2020, 44-45.

¹⁷³ S. Bjerke 1965, 204.

¹⁷⁴ D. Laboury 2020, 44.

¹⁷⁵ For general remarks on coronation ritual see: W. Barta 1980, 33-35.

¹⁷⁶ Suggestive is that in a passage of CT 213 – CT IV 80 j – the coronation of Horus is described as “the birth of a great god”. See J. Assmann 1989, 144-145.

¹⁷⁷ C. Campbell 1912, 73-74.

¹⁷⁸ B. E. Shafer, D. Arnold 1998, 156.

¹⁷⁹ A. Gayet 1894, Pl. LXXII, fig. 208.

¹⁸⁰ G. West 2019, 159-160.

passed from father to son – granted only to the highest elite to reinforce their alliance with the royal power.¹⁸¹

3.2.3 Was the Tekenu a human being or an object?

Given the strong similarity between the sleeping Tekenu and the OMR scenes 9 and 10, it has been hypothesised that the Tekenu could be identified as a human being performing a ritual.¹⁸² Indeed, the anthropomorphic representations of the Tekenu – especially the ones of the standing Tekenu in connection with the removal of the *msk3*-skin – seem to point towards this interpretation and the action described by the verb *sḏr* is more suited to a ritual operator, than to an object.

On the other hand, a depiction in TT20 seems to suggest that the *msk3*-skin covering the Tekenu was buried in a pit located in the vicinity of the tomb¹⁸³ and, as already mentioned, archaeological excavations have revealed the existence of pits located within the necropolises and used as deposits for the waste of the mummification process,¹⁸⁴ an element that could be understood as an argument in favour of the theory that sees the Tekenu as an object made of embalming residues.

Indeed, one has to keep in mind that the Tekenu ritual was quite articulated and – as the analysis of the captions has shown – it included several diverse actions enacted within diverse phases of the funerary rituals. One has also to consider that, over the centuries, the ritual was certainly subjected to changes, even if these are difficult to discern in the light of the available data. In this regard, significant is that the New Kingdom scenes concerning the ritual sleep of the Tekenu always show the latter in a white cover, a colour usually applied for the garments of the ritualists, while in the scenes concerning the dragging of the Tekenu, other colours are used, such as black or dark brown.¹⁸⁵ This particularity shouldn't be underestimated, since it could imply that some phases of the ritual involved an object, likely made of the waste from the mummification process, while the ritual sleep was performed by a ritualist who identified himself with the Tekenu.

It is important to underline that in several Egyptian rituals, especially those to whom CT spells without mythology 30-41 and in CT 312 referred, show a peculiar change of roles. While the ritualist/son is performing the role of Horus on earth in order to enact the funerary or the mortuary ritual for the deceased father/Osiris, the latter, telescoped in the supernatural sphere, is identified with

¹⁸¹ This aspect is further developed in section 3.3.4.

¹⁸² A. Moret 1922, 46-55; J. G. Griffiths 1958, 115-118; G. Reeder 1994, 59; H. Willems 1996, 111-114. See also section 2.4.b.

¹⁸³ Cf. Fig. 2.

¹⁸⁴ C. Knoblauch, 2016, 329.

¹⁸⁵ G. West 2019, 191-192.

Horus as well, and has to revive Osiris in the netherworld.¹⁸⁶ It can be posited that something similar happened during the enactment of Tekenu ritual: the ritualist/son performed the sleeping Tekenu role, while a manifestation of him, which was the very embalming residues of the deceased, had to reach his tomb and, therefore, Osiris who dwell the netherworld.

3.2.4 The Tekenu ritual: summary and conclusion

The word *tknw* derives etymologically from the verb *tkn*, “to approach”. Other theories that link this term to the name of foreign toponyms or ethnic groups are not based on solid elements. One of the main arguments against the etymological derivation of the term *tknw* from the verb *tkn* – the absence of the determinative – turned out to be unfounded, since the semantic area covered by the verb *tkn* involves a meaning that can take on a specific religious value, such as “to approach” a god or a supernatural deceased.

The scenes depicting the Tekenu describe an articulated pre-burial ritual which had a clear liminal function: the passage from the real of the living to that of the dead. This is also shown by the fact the Tekenu is often depicted in the context of an articulated iconographic theme denominated “Butic Burial” or “Sacred Temenos” which represented a sacred area set up between the embalming place and the tomb of the deceased, which also functioned as a liminal space between the realm of the living and that of the dead where the nocturnal rituals preceding the burial were enacted.

The analysis of the captions pertaining to the Tekenu made it possible to identify three main phases of the ritual, whose exact order it is hard to establish: the ritual sleep performed by a ritualist identified with the Tekenu, the dragging of the Tekenu from the embalming place to the tomb, the removal of the *msk3*-skin. One has also to consider that ritual was certainly subject to changes over time. All the scenes depicting the removal of the *msk3*-skin and the sleeping Tekenu date back to the beginning of the New Kingdom, yet it is reasonable to assume that they testify to a reformulation of more ancient rituals.

Also, through an analysis of the analogies between the representation of the Tekenu scenes depicted in elite tombs and some Coffin Texts spells used as liturgies during both the mortuary and the funerary rituals (CT spells 30-41 and CT 312), it was possible to hypothesise that the dragging of the Tekenu probably concerned a ritual object made of waste from the mummification process, while the scenes

¹⁸⁶ H. Willems 2001, 368-372.

of the sleeping Tekenu referred to a ritual sleep enacted by a ritualist, perhaps the eldest son of the deceased, as attested for the OMR scenes 9 and 10.

A depiction in tomb TT 20 seems to imply that the Tekenu ceremony also entailed a ritualised killing of enemies (actual or fictitious), which can be considered as an execration ritual. However, the theory which has identified the Tekenu with the very victim of the sacrifice is not based on adequate arguments.

The captions preserved in elite tombs do not explicitly identify the Tekenu as a divine being. The only exceptions are the inscription found in TT 389 and TT 17, where the word *tknw* is determined with the sign  (A40) which is used to indicate supernatural entities. On the other hand, the analysis of CT 312 has suggested that, perhaps, the Tekenu could cautiously be identified with a supernatural being called *Irw-Ḥr*, who was a manifestation of Horus' Ba. In addition, the *Irw-Ḥr* can be identified with the very Eye of Horus (*ir.t-Ḥr*) and, at the same time, with the messenger of this latter god (*inw/wnw Ḥr*) mentioned in a ritual remark occurring in some versions of OMR scene 10.¹⁸⁷

Finally, it has been posited that the journey of this divine messenger/eye might be understood as the mythological background of the ritual sleep mentioned in several religious texts, such as that of the *sem* priest in OMR scenes 9 and 10, the sleeping Tekenu, the dreams described in two First Intermediate Letters to the Dead, and the *sdr.t/sdry.t* performed during the Middle Kingdom Mysteries of Osiris celebrated at Abydos. Indeed, a journey to the realm of the dead to meet Osiris, which is undertaken by an eye, might be interpreted as a metaphor referring to the ritual sleep and that special oneiric vision which allows a form of interaction between the living and the dead.

¹⁸⁷ See chapter 3, section 3.1.a.

3.3 The Haker feast

In the following section the main textual sources currently known concerning the Haker feast have been collected and analysed. The data were collected through the *Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae*, the *Coffin Texts Word Index*,¹⁸⁸ and the recent monograph published by Z. Végh.¹⁸⁹ Two main types of documents have been identified:

1. Epigraphic sources;
2. Coffin Text spells and Book of the Dead chapters.

3.3.1 Epigraphic sources

The table below lists all the epigraphic sources currently known in which the term *h3kr* appears.¹⁹⁰

Table 4

	Object	Dating and provenience	Titles	References to the Haker feast
1	Letter to the dead, "Louvre bowl" (Louvre E 6134)	11 th /12 th dyn.; Abydos (?)	-	<i>Tr-tw h3kr ir-tw n=k w3g</i> The Haker feast is celebrated; the Wag feast is celebrated for you
2	Stele of Abkau (Louvre C 15)	Second half 11 th dynasty; Abydos	overseer of horned animals	<i>[lw iri-n=i] [m3h]t tn r rw.t n.t šsp 3w.t iri-t-n=(l) m T3-wr 3bdw t3-dsr (m) 3h.t imn.ty W3r.t-3.t-hmhm.t šhpt.t ib.w 3h.w r r3 n sb3 [n] [h3kr]</i> I have built this cenotaph at the gate of receiving offerings, which I made in the sacred land of Abydos, in the Thinite nome, (in) the Western horizon of the Waret-aat-hemhemet, which makes the hearts of the Akhw- spirits content at the entrance of the gate during the Haker feast.
3	Stele of Antef (Cairo CG 20024)	Amenemhet I. - Sesostris I; Abydos.	overseer of priests, the great chief of the Panopolite Nome	<i>s3m(w)=f hnw m r3 n T3-wr h3<k>rt{k} grh sdr.t</i> May he hear jubilation at the gate of the Thinite nome during the Haker feast, the night of the ritual sleep
4	Stele of Shensetji (Los Angeles 50.33.31)	Sesostris I Abydos	overseer of sculptors	<i>h3kr.w sdr.t Pkr tnw.t</i> During the Haker feast, the ritual sleep in Poqer, (during) the festivals of numbering.
5	Stele of Mery (Louvre C 3 = AE 3)	Sesostris I Abydos	assistant seal-bearer	<i>s3m(w)=f hnw m r3 n T3-wr h3kr n grh n sdr.t <m> sdr.t n.t-Hr-Šn</i> May he hear jubilation at the gate of the Thinite nome on the Haker feast, during the night of the ritual sleep, the ritual sleep of Horus-Shen.
6	Stele of Montuhotep (Cairo CG 20539)	Sesostris I Abydos	the hereditary noble and local prince, sealer of the king of Lower Egypt, sole friend, overseer of the treasury, one who is really close (<i>tknw</i>), who knows (one's) desire, overseer of the double house of silver and double house of gold, overseer of sealed things.	<i>iw iri-n=i s3-mr(.y)=f m [s3m] [n] [hw.t-nbw] m s3[t3] n nb 3bdw iw hrp-n=i k3.t m n3m.t msi-n=(i) ini=s iri-n=i h3kr n nb=f pr.t Wpi-w3.wt</i> I performed the function of "his beloved son" (<i>s3-mri = f</i> -priest) in the management of the golden house (and) in the mystery of the Lord of Abydos, I supervised the work on the Neschemet bark, (and) I made their ropes, I have celebrated the Haker feast and the procession of Wepwawet for his lord.
7	Stele of Sebeki (München Gl. WAF 31)	Sesostris I – Amenemhet II; Abydos	overseer of the army	<i>s3m(w)=f hb nw m r3 n T3-wr h3kr grh n sdr.t</i> May he hear the jubilation at the gate of the Thinite nome, (during) the Haker feast, on the night of the ritual sleep.
8	Stele of Wepwawetaa (München Gl. WAF 35)	Amenemhet II; Abydos	count and overseer of priests; great chamberlain in Abydos; foremost of offices in the temple; overseer of priests	Reference 1 <i>m w3g Dhwty h3kr pr.t-tp.it pr.t-3.t wp.t-rnp.t d3.t-n3r rk3 tp.i-rnp.t 3bd smd.t h(3)b-Skr s3d pr.t-mnw sdr.t Pkr tnw.t</i> During the Wag festival, the Thot festival, the Haker feast, the first procession, the great procession, the opening of the year,

¹⁸⁸ D. van der Plas and J. F. Borghouts 1998.

¹⁸⁹ Z. Végh 2021, 312-336.

¹⁹⁰ For the bibliographic references concerning the documents collected in Table n. 4 see the special section of the bibliography.

				the boat journey of the god, the burning festival, the first day of the year festival, the monthly festival and the half-monthly festival, the festival of Sokar and the Sadj festival, the procession of Min, on the ritual sleep festival of Poqer, the numbering festival. Reference 2 <i>sdm(w)=f hnw m r^c n T³-wr h³kr grh n sdr.t m sdr.yt-n.t-Hr-Šn</i> May he hear jubilation at the gate of the Thinite nome, during the Haker feast, during the night of the ritual sleep, the ritual sleep of Horus Shen
9	Stele of Ameny (Louvre C 35)	Amenemhet II; Abydos	sealer of the king of Lower Egypt, the highest-ranking of all generals,	<i>rdi.t i³.w n Wsir hnti-imm.tiw nb-šbdw m pr.t-³.t m³³ nfr=f m w³g hr W^r.t-rdd.t-htp.t r r^c n sb³ n h³kr prr =f hr =f r h³b =f n d.t</i> Giving praise to Osiris Khentiamenti, Lord of Abydos, during the Great Procession; seeing his perfection during the Wag-feast in Waret-redjet-hetepet, at the entrance of the Great Gate during the Haker feast, from which he comes out to his festivals, for the eternity
10	Stele of Amenemhet (Cairo CG 20040)	Amenemhet II; Abydos	overseer of the šn ^c	<i>sdm=i hnw snik sbi m pri.t sm</i> <i>šh.t(w)=i m-m šh.w grh n h³kr m³³.w Hrw-mh.t</i> <i>šms=i sw m Hr-rs.i dw³(.w) Nw.t wr.t ir.t-R^c m³³.w m wr.t iħ</i> May I hear their jubilation as the rebel is punished at the procession of the <i>sem</i> priest. May I become an Akh among the Akhu-spirits during the night of the Haker feast, when Northern Horus is seen. May I follow him as Southern Horus, when Nut, the Great, is adored, seen as the Greatest of Cows
11	Stele of Amenemhet (BM EA 567)	Amenemhet II; Abydos	overseer of the šn ^c	<i>sdm(w)=f hnw m r^c n t³-wr h³kr grh n sdr.t m sdr.yt-n.t-Hr-Šn</i> May he hear the jubilation at the gate of the Thinite nome, (during) the Haker feast: the night of the ritual sleep (during) the festival of the ritual sleep performed by Horus-Shen
12	Stele of Sobeknakht (London UC 14385)	12 th dyn; Abydos	the item is damaged and the title is lost	<i>Tri-n=i gr.t m³h^c.t in m T³-wr šbd.w t³-dsr šh.t imm.t [W^r.t-t-<i>hm</i>]hm.t šup(.t) ib.w šh.w r r^c n sb³ n h³kr</i> I have built this cenotaph in Abydos in the Thinite nome, the sacred land, the western horizon, in Waret-aat-hemhemet, which satisfies the hearts of the blessed spirits at the entrance of the gate during the Haker feast
13	Stele of Djaa (BM EA 573)	Sesostris II; Abydos	hall keeper	<i>Šdm(w)=i hn.w m r^c n T³-wr h³kr grh n sdr.t sdr.yt-n.t{šn} Hrw- <šn></i> May I hear the jubilation at the gate of the Thinite nome, during the Haker feast, (during) the night of the ritual sleep, the ritual sleep performed by Horus Shen
14	Stele of Inhernacht (BM EA 575)	Sesostris III; Abydos	steward of reckoning barley	<i>sdm(w)=i hnw m r^c n t³-wr grh nfr (n) h³kr</i> May I hear the jubilation at the gate of the Thinite nome during the beautiful night of the Haker feast
15	Stele of Sehetibra (CG 20538)	Sesostris III; Abydos	hereditary prince; nomarch; deputy of the overseer of sealers	<i>iw iri.n =i s³-mri=f m sšm n hw.t-nbw m sšt n nb-šbdw iw hrp.n=i k³.t m nšm.t msi-n =i in.w=s iri-n=i h³kr n nb =f pr.t Wpi-w³.t</i> I performed the function of "his beloved son" (<i>s³-mri = f</i>-priest) in the management of the golden house (and) in the mystery of the Lord of Abydos, I supervised the work on the Neschemet bark, (and) I made their ropes. I have celebrated the Haker feast and the procession of Wepwawet for his lord.
16	Stele of Djab (Chicago OIM 6897)	13 th dynasty, second half; Abydos	hereditary prince; nomarch; privy to the secrets of the two goddesses	<i>[i] tp.iw-t³ hm-nfr nb šh³.w nb hr-hb nb w^cb nb sw³.ti=sn h³k{t} <r> m h³b nb n hr.t-ntr</i> Oh, living people who are on earth! every priest, every scribe, every lector priest, (and) every wab-priest who will enter the Haker feast and every other Festival of the necropolis

Remarkably, all the documents collected in table 4 come from Abydos and date back to a narrow window of time between the 11th and the 13th dynasty. Among these sixteen epigraphic sources, only one is a Letter to the Dead written on a bowl (doc.1); the other fifteen documents, instead, are stelae dedicated to adult men belonging to the elite.

The analysis of the inscriptions highlights that the Haker feast is mainly associated with the following ritual actions:

- *sdr.t/sdr.yt/ sdr.yt n.t-Hrw-Šn/Šn-Hr* (cf. docs. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 13), “the ritual sleep” and “the ritual sleep by *Hrw-Šn* /in *Šn-Hr*”

As mentioned in section 2.6 both the nouns *sdr.t* and *sdr.yt* derived from the verb *sdr* that within the context of the religious beliefs taken into consideration in the present thesis – such as OMR scenes 9 and 10 and the sleeping Tekenu – indicates a special ritual action through which the living could interact with the dead. The epigraphic sources highlight that, during the Haker feast, this kind of ritual action, conventionally translated here as “ritual sleep”, was enacted during the night, as clearly shown by the expressions *grḥ nfr n h3kr*, *grḥ sdr.t* (cf. docs. 5,7,8,10,13,14). Moreover, this ritual sleep appears to be connected to an expression, *Hr-Šn/ Šn-Hr* (cf. docs. 5, 8, 11, 13), whose exact meaning is currently the subject of debate. Most scholars consider *Hr-Šn* as a special form of Horus – Horus Shen – even though there is no agreement about what the epithet would actually indicate. According to W. Helck, it could be translated as “Horus the Fighter”,¹⁹¹ other proposed “Horus who is able to conjure with magic”,¹⁹² “Horus who encloses”,¹⁹³ or, as recently posited by H. Altenmüller, “Horus who is wrapped (in the bandages)”, which should be intended as a reference to the peculiar garment worn by the *sem* priest in OMR scenes 9 and 10.¹⁹⁴ On the other hand, Z. Végh has recently sustained that this expression would refer to a toponym rather than a theonym and it should thus be transliterated as *Šn-Hr*. In support of her position, she cites a restricted number of textual sources in which the god Wepwawet is mentioned as “The lord of *Šn-Hr*” (*Wp-w3.wt nb Šn-Hr*),¹⁹⁵ and the fact that in Louvre C3 (doc. 5) this expression shows a determinative, more appropriate for a toponym than for a divine name.¹⁹⁶ Specifically, according to Végh, *Šn-Hr* was probably indicated the sacred areas surrounding tomb/cenotaph (*mḥ.t*) of Osiris, in other words, the same location that, starting from the XII dynasty, was denominated *Pkr/Poqer*.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹¹ W. Helck 1952, 74.

¹⁹² C. Leitz 2002, 292b.

¹⁹³ W. Barta 1968, 64.

¹⁹⁴ H. Altenmüller 2013, 21-22.

¹⁹⁵ This expression is indeed attested in two VI dynasty stelae from Abydos (Cairo CG 1575, CG 1615), and recurs three times in two el-Hagarsa tombs. Z. Végh 2021, 135.

¹⁹⁶ Z. Végh 2021, 137.

¹⁹⁷ Z. Végh 2021, 138.

Even accepting such a hypothesis, one may wonder if the very etymology of *Šn-Ḥr* as an archaic term denoting the area surrounding Osiris' cenotaph should be linked to a specific mythical episode, and therefore, the term must still be connected to a particular form of Horus. As mentioned above, noteworthy is that some scholars who identified *Ḥr-Šn* as a theonym have rendered the epithet *Šn* as "the one who encloses" or "surrounds", linking it to the verb *šni* (Wb 4, 491.6-493.7; FCD 268). This verb encompasses a broad range of meanings, referring to the action of surrounding something or someone – almost like an embrace or an enclosure around an object or a person – from which, a more specific meaning of "protection" derived.¹⁹⁸ Not by chance, in several passages from both Pyramid and Coffin Texts, this verb is often used to describe certain actions carried out by Horus to defend Osiris.¹⁹⁹ *Šni* also bears some semantic affinity to other verbs, such as *dbn* or *pḥr*, which were used to denote the circumambulation of city walls, monuments, and tombs, typical of several ancient Egyptian rituals, such as the Heb-Sed, or certain phases of the coronation ceremony.²⁰⁰ See also the incipit of CT 312, where Horus is explicitly asked to enact the ritual circumambulation (*dbn*) around Osiris' tomb,²⁰¹ or the circumambulation of the tomb described the Ramesseum Papyrus E.²⁰²

In the light of these data, even if Vegh's interpretation of *Šn-Ḥr* as a toponym was correct, it still would not preclude a mythological paradigm behind this expression, and one could hypothesise that the term denoted the sacred area around the tomb of Osiris because of a mythical episode in which Horus had to circumambulate his deceased father's tomb. It seems therefore reasonable to posit that the ritual sleep performed within the Haker feast – exactly like the ritual sleep of the *sem* priest in OMR scenes 9 and 10, or the sleeping Tekenu – referred to mythical episode where Horus was able to establish a form of communication with his deceased father, such as *The Contending of Horus and Seth* narrated in P. Chester Beatty I, recto, 14,6-15,8, or the more ancient narration of the divine messenger of Horus described in CT 312. Moreover, as highlighted in section 3.2.1.c, since the divine messenger (*Ḥr.w-Ḥr*) sent by Horus to convey his message to Osiris could be identified with the very Eye of Horus (*ḥr.t-Ḥr*), his journey to the realm of the dead might be interpreted as a kind of oneiric vision

¹⁹⁸ R. Anthes 1961.

¹⁹⁹ See: PT 221; PT 593; PT 560; CT I, 191c.

²⁰⁰ R. Ritner 1992, 55-58; R. A. Gillam, 2005, 150-153.

²⁰¹ See section 3.2.1.c

²⁰² R.A. Gillam 2005, 52-53.

which allowed a special form of interaction between the living and the dead.²⁰³ Also, the reference to Horus the Northern in Cairo CG 20040 (doc. 10) in connection with the nocturnal rituals enacted during the Haker feast might be cautiously interpreted as another reference to the mythical episode narrated in CT 312, whose events are set in Djedu/Busiris. The Lower Egypt setting would also recall the iconographic theme of the Butic Burial which was closely connected to the scenes depicting the sleeping Tekenu.

- $\beta h / \beta h.t$ (Cf. docs. 2 and 10)

The celebration of the Haker feast appears to be somewhat linked to the βh -spirits and the $s\beta h.w$ rituals which involved the transformation of the deceased into an βh .²⁰⁴ Especially the stele Cairo CG 20040 states the wish by the owner of the monument of becoming an Akh among the Akh-spirits during the night of the Haker feast, when Horus the Northerner is seen ($\beta h.t(w)=i m-m \beta h.w grh n h\beta kr m\beta\beta.w Hr w-mh.t$). One may cautiously interpret this text as a reference to the mythological episode described in PT 364, where Horus manifest in front of Osiris in the form of an βh ,²⁰⁵ and CT 312 where it is narrated how the divine messenger of Horus was transmuted into an βh to convey his message to Osiris.²⁰⁶

- $R r^c n sb\beta n h\beta kr$ (docs. 3, 9, 12); $s\beta m hn w m r^c n t\beta-wr$ (docs. 3, 5, 8, 11, 13, 14)

The expression $r r^c n sb\beta n h\beta kr$ – and its slightly different variation occurring in Louvre C 35, $r r^c n sb\beta \beta n h\beta kr$ – have been here translated as “at the entrance of the (great) gate during the Haker feast”. For the meaning of r^c as “door”, “entrance”, see: Wb 2, 390.10-391.13. The preposition “n” has temporal value (Wb 2, 194.7). This translation is not too dissimilar from those already proposed by other scholars,²⁰⁷ the sentence suggesting that the Haker feast was performed at the entrance of a sacred building.

The other sentence may be translated as follows: “to hear the jubilation (hnw) at the gate (r^c) of the Thinite nome”. We have already underlined how the term r^c can be translated as “door”.

Yet, in this very specific case, scholars have shown divergent opinions. Another possible

²⁰³ See section 3.2.1.c.

²⁰⁴ J.M. Iskander 2011.

²⁰⁵ See section 3.1.a.

²⁰⁶ See section 3.2.1.c.

²⁰⁷ Spiegel 1973, 145–150; Z. Végh 2021, 189.

translation could be the following: “to hear the jubilation (*hnw*) from the mouth (*r*^c) of the Thinite nome”, suggesting that the dead wishes to hear the jubilations from the mouth of the inhabitants of the Thinite nome, *Ta-wer*, the 8th Upper Egyptian nome where Abydos was located.²⁰⁸ As for the word *hnw*, here translated as “jubilation”, it actually had a more complex meaning, implying not only a gesture or a type of dance, but also a specific recitation technique practiced by ritualists.²⁰⁹ It is also important to underline that the *hnw*-jubilation often occurs within the Pyramid Texts as an act strictly linked to the status of *m*³^c-*hrw* reached by the deceased king.²¹⁰ As stressed by Anthes, since the original meaning of *m*³^c-*hrw* was that of being declared victorious in a legal judgment, with a reference to the mythological episode in which Horus wins the legal dispute against Seth for his paternal legacy, one may wonder if the *hnw*-jubilation,²¹¹ within this context, must be understood in the light of a certain judgment of the dead that certainly occurred within the Haker-feast (the *tnw.t* mentioned in docs. 4 and 8).²¹² This interpretation would be an element in favour of the rendering of the term *r*^c as “gate”, since it is well attested that one of the main places in which ancient Egyptian justice was administrated was at the entrance of the sacred building or in the courtyard in front of the temples.²¹³

The emphasis on “hearing” (*sḏm*) could indicate that this part of the ceremony had an esoteric connotation: the most of the participants could not directly attend the performance of the ritual, but they were allowed to hear the words spoken by the ritualists in a special public, accessible space outside the temple.²¹⁴

- *tnw.t* (cf. docs. 4, 8)

The term *tnw.t*, and other similar words belonging to the semantic sphere of “numbering” or “counting” – such as *hsb* or *ip* – had a specific juridical meaning, and was used in religious texts to indicate a judgment involving the dead.²¹⁵

²⁰⁸ For an overview of the possible translations of this sentence see: Z. Végh 2021, 327-328.

²⁰⁹ O.E. Kaper 2008, 7; G. Zaki 2016, 129.

²¹⁰ R. Anthes 1954, 31; Z. Végh 2021, 327.

²¹¹ R. Anthes 1954, 51.

²¹² See section 3.3.3.

²¹³ A. Loktionov 2019, 57 and 78-80.

²¹⁴ This hypothesis proposed by in a paper of her (Z. Végh 2015, 268) was subsequently partially rejected by the author (V. Zégh 2021, 327-3289. Yet, in the light of the other data analysed in the present thesis the idea of a ritual with a certain legalistic function officially recognised and performed in front of the gates of sacred buildings, which were the most accessible areas of an ancient Egyptian temple seems quite plausible.

²¹⁵ R. Grieshammer 1970, 30-51; see also section 3.3.3.

3.3.2 Coffin Texts and the Book of the Dead

The term *h3kr* is not attested within the Pyramid Texts and it occurs only in a restricted number of Coffin Texts spells and Book of the Dead chapters.²¹⁶ The following section is aimed at analysing these textual sources.

Currently, only two Coffin Texts spells in which the term *h3kr* occurs are known: CT spell 338 (CT IV 336 e) and 339 (CT IV 338 g). Both these the texts concern the justification of the deceased in front of a divine trial through the help of the god Thot, who is invoked as *sm3.w hrw*, “the one who makes (the deceased, or Osiris) justified”.²¹⁷ Another significant element that unites the two spells is that both basically consist of a list of holy places – such as Busiris, Heliopolis, Abydos – where a judgment of the dead is enacted. CT spells 338 and 339 are not the only religious texts showing these features, CT spell 337 is characterised by a similar structure too, and it has been posited that all three spells would derive from a ritual text, probably a hymn, which had to be chanted by the ritualists during the celebration of the Mysteries at Abydos.²¹⁸ Also, CT spell 338 enjoyed a certain favour over centuries, and diverse variants of it have been re-edited in the chapters 18-20 of the Book of the Dead.²¹⁹

According to A. de Buck, spell 338 is known from four sources:

- M8C (Cairo CG 28038), coffin of *Wsr=s-nfr*– Meir, reign of Senusret II/Senusret III.²²⁰
- M7C (Cairo CG 28037), coffin of *Wsr=s-nfr* – Meir, reign of Senusret II/Senusret III.²²¹
- T1BE (Berlin 9) outer coffin of *Mntw-htp* – Thebes, late 12th dynasty.²²²
- T2BE (Berlin 10) inner coffin of *Mntw-htp* – Thebes, late 12th dynasty.²²³

However, the Haker feast is attested only in the version of the spell copied on T2BE (CT IV 336 e).²²⁴

²¹⁶ Z. Végh 2021, 334-336.

²¹⁷ R. Anthes 1954, 25.

²¹⁸ Z. Végh 2017, 520-521.

²¹⁹ Z. Végh 2017, 520-521; Z. Végh 2021, 334-336.

²²⁰ Both coffin M8C and M7C probably belonged to the same individual. Cf. L. Díaz-Iglesias 2017, 38 and note 126; H. Willems 1988, 25, and 100; H. Willems 2014, 266–267.

²²¹ See previous note.

²²² Both coffin T1BE and T2BE belonged to the same individual. Cf. L. Díaz-Iglesias 2017, 84 and note 276; H. Willems 2014, p. 172 and note 159.

²²³ See previous note.

²²⁴ T1BE, which belonged to the same owner of owner of T2BE, probably mentioned the Haker feast as well, but due a lacuna it is impossible to verify this.

Spell 338 according to T2Be

[335 a] *i Dḥwty smꜣ.w {f} ḥrw Wsir r ḥfty.w [...] =f i Wsir N {s} |b| smꜣ.w=f ḥrw=f r ḥfty.w=f |d| m dꜣdꜣ.t ꜣ.t imy.wt Ddw |e| grḥ pf n n sḥꜣ dd.wy m ꜣbdw |f| m dꜣdꜣ.t ꜣ.t imy.wt Twnw grḥ pf n ḥꜣ n šḥr.t sbyw [=f] |336 a| m dꜣdꜣ.t ꜣ.t imy.wt Hm grḥ pf n iḥ.t ḥꜣwi |b| m dꜣdꜣ.t ꜣ.t imy.wt Dp grḥ pf n smn.t iwꜣ.t n Hr m ḥ.t it=f |e| m dꜣdꜣ.t ꜣ.t imy.wt ꜣbdw grḥ pf n ir.t ḥꜣkr m Twnw ḥsb mwt ꜣḥ |337 a| wꜣ.wt mwt.w grḥ pf n ir.t sip.t m iwty sw |b| ḥbs tꜣ ꜣ |c| Nꜣ-ir=f*

[335 a] Oh Thot, The one who has made **(1)** Osiris true of voice¹ against his enemies [...] Oh Osiris N |b| May he declare true his voice against his enemies: |d| in the great court which is in Busiris (Djedu); |e| on that night of erecting the two Djed-pillars at Abydos; |f| in the great tribunal which is in On (Heliopolis), on that night of fighting and felling the rebels; |336 a| in the great tribunal which is in Khem (Letopolis) on that night of the evening meal **(2)**; |b| in the great tribunal which is in Dep, on that night of confirming the inheritance of Horus for the possession of his father **(3)**; |e| in the great tribunal which is in Abydos, on that night of enacting the Haker feast at On (Heliopolis), the festival of numbering the dead and the Akhu-spirits; **(4)** |337 a| the paths of the dead, on that night of making the counting of those who have nothing **(5)**; |b| the great hacking of the land **(6)** |c| of Naref.

Notes

1. The verb *smꜣ ḥrw* is a causative from *mꜣ ḥrw*; the whole sentence should be understood as the fact that Toth causes that Osiris (and therefore the deceased) is justified in front of his enemies. Originally, the meaning of the term *mꜣ ḥrw*, was that of being declared right in front a legal court. See: R. Anthes 1954, 22, 25, and 50.
2. The designation *iḥ.t-ḥꜣwi* (Wb 1, 125.5) literally means “night offering”. First attestations occur during the 5th dynasty in elite Old Kingdom mastabas and subsequently in the Pyramid Texts. It probably designed a temple ritual performed every evening. This celebration did not occur just in Letopolis, other sources testify that it was also enacted in Abydos (Z. Végh 2017, 531-532).
3. The other testimonies mention both Pe and Dep. Probably, a scribal error occurred.

4. The presence of Heliopolis in this passage could be due to a scribal error. Currently there are no other sources testifying the celebration of the Haker feast at Heliopolis (Z. Végh 2017, 539).
5. The other testimonies contain a different version: $\underline{d}^3\underline{d}^3.t \text{ } \dot{im}y.t \text{ } w^3.wt \text{ } mwt.w \text{ } grh \text{ } pfn \text{ } ir.t \text{ } sipty \text{ } m \text{ } \dot{i}wty.w \text{ } sw$, “The tribunal which is in the paths of the dead on that night of making the counting of those who have nothing.
6. T2b2 differs significantly from the other testimonies and contains the following sentences: |337a| $\underline{d}^3\underline{d}^3.t \text{ } \dot{im}y.t \text{ } hbs \text{ } t^3$, “The tribunal which is in the great hacking of the land”; |337 b| $\underline{d}^3\underline{d}^3.t \text{ } \dot{im}y.t \text{ } N^3-ir=f$, “the tribunal which is in Naref”. With regard to $hbs \text{ } t^3$, “hacking up the earth”, this expression is already attested within the Pyramid Texts (cf. PT 398). It has been stated that this term referred to an agricultural ritual linked to the god Osiris and his burial. However, the expression $hbs-t^3$ is often associated also to the offerings of slaughtered animals, which were identified with the enemies of Osiris defeated by Horus; it is probably for this reason that the ritual is also associated to the judgment of the dead, as in the text analysed here. The $hbs \text{ } t^3$ -ritual was probably celebrated in different holy cities, such as Heliopolis or Herakleopolis. It was also linked to the Sokar-festival (J. Assmann 2005, 281-284;). With regard to Naref, this was a sacred place, perhaps located in Herakleopolis, where certain relics of Osiris were kept. According to Díaz-Iglesias Llamas, Naref must be eminently understood as a mythical toponym linked to different episodes of the Osiris myth, such as the god’s burial, the safeguarding of his corpse or relics, his justification, and the restoration of his royal power (Z. Végh 2017, 543-545; Díaz-Iglesias Llamas 2017, 181).

Spell 339 according to B5c

According to A. de Buck Coffin Texts edition, spell 339 is known only from one source, B5c (Cairo CG 28083/ JE 37566). This is an inner coffin from Deir el-Bersha belonging to a man called *Dḥwty-ḥtp*, who lived between the reigns of Senusret II and Senusret III.²²⁵

[338 a] *I Dḥwty sm³(̎.w) ḥrw Wsir ḥft(y).w=f m d³d³.t n.t* |b| *Iwnw ḥrw pw n iw̎ ns.wt idb.wy n Gb nb iri* |c| *Ddw ḥrw pw n rd.t wd³.t n nb=s* |d| *P Dpw ḥrw pw ny ḥ̎k i³kb.wt* |e| *Hm ḥrw pw n ih̎.t ḥ³wi m Hm* |f| *R̎-st³.w ḥrw pw n ip̎ ṣ̎³.wt s̎ḥ̎ sn.wy* |g| *³bdw ḥrw pw n ḥ³kr m šr tnw.t mwt.w m ip̎ iwty.w sw* |h| *Nn-n-sw.t ḥrw pw n ḥbs t³ n sšt³ t³ N³{r}-r=f* |i| *ist̎ ḥrw Hr m³(̎=f itr.ty ḥtp.ty ḥr=s* |j| *Wsir ib=f ndm(̎.w)* |k| *in hm Dḥwty sm³w=f ḥrw=i r ḥfty.w=i m-m d³d³.t n.t Wsir* |l| *ir rhw nn iw=f ir=f ḥpr.w m bik s³ R̎* |m| [*ir*] [*r*]ḥw nb nn tpy [...] =f n ḥtm-n=f b³=f r nh̎h |339 a| ḥtmw ḥfty ipw iw=f wnmw t m pr Wsir |b| iw=f ṣ̎=f r ḥw.t ntr n.t [...] mnḥ |c| iw [...] ³w.t [...] |d| n wnm-n=f ḥs.t [...]

[338 a] O Thot, the one who has made **(1)** Osiris true of voice against his enemies in the court **(2)** of: |b| On (Heliopolis), on the day of inheriting the thrones of the two banks from Geb, (who is) the lord over it **(3)**; |c| Djedu (Busiris), on the day of “presenting the Wedjat-eye to its lord” **(4)**; |d| Pe and Dep, on the day of “the shaving of the female mourners” **(5)**; |e| Khem (Letopolis), on the day of the evening meal in Khem **(6)**; |f| Rosetau, on the day of counting the multitudes and erecting the two poles **(7)**; |g| Abydos, on the day of “the Haker feast at the pool” and “the numbering of the dead and the reckoning those who have nothing **(8)**” |h| Ninsu (Herakleopolis Magna), on the day of hacking the earth and making secret the earth in Naref **(9)** |i| Behold the voice of Horus! it is true (and) the two conclaves are satisfied about it. |j| (As for) Osiris, his hearth is glad! |k| Thoth is indeed the one who will vindicate me against my enemies in front of the tribunal of Osiris |l| As for the one who knows this, he will be able to transform (himself) into a falcon, the son of Ra. |m| As for whoever knows this [...], neither him or his Ba will ever be destroyed. |339 a| His enemies will disappear, while he will eat bread in the house of Osiris. |b| He will enter the temple of [...] capable |c| [...] offerings [...] |d| He does not eat faeces.

²²⁵ L. Díaz-Iglesias 2017, 56; H. Willems 1988, 20, and 77–78; H. Willems 2014, 246–247.

Notes

1. cf. note n. 1 CT spell 338.
2. Horus inheriting the throne of Geb is a recurrent theme in the Egyptian mythology and it is strongly connected with the topic of Horus who vindicates his father against Seth. See: H. Frankfort 1984, 181-183.
3. This can be a reference to the mythical episode narrated in PT 364, which shows significant common traits with OMR scene 10. Here it is said that Horus gave his eye to Osiris in order to make latter powerful against his enemies. As mentioned above, this mythical theme also plays a role within CT spell 312, since the messenger sent by Horus to reach Osiris in the netherworld could be considered as a manifestation of the Eye of Horus. See section 3.2.1.c.
4. The female mourners could be identified with Isis and Nephthys. The action of cutting the hair to donate some locks to the deceased was a ritual action enacted by the two professional female mourners who played the role of Isis and Nephthys within the funerary rites. See: G. Robins 1999, 67-68.
5. For the “evening meal in Letopolis” cf. note n. 2, CT spell 338.
6. The Rosetau is to be identified with the Saqqara’s necropolis or with a specific area of the latter. cf. A. el-Kholy 1999, 45-50. Remarkably, it seems that the action of “counting the dead” characterising the Haker festival was enacted also within this site.
7. As already observed, the action of counting/numbering/reckoning the dead is a characteristic feature of Haker feast and other similar ceremonies (cf. previous note). The action of “counting” within this context is to be understood as a synonym for “judging”. See: R. Grieshammer 1970, 30-51.
8. The expression *sšt3 t3* may refer to the embalming ritual performing for the god Osiris. (cf. L. Díaz-Iglesias Llanos 2017, 57-59). Regarding Naref and the *hbs-t3* ritual see note n. 6 under CT spell 338.

Book of the Dead Chapters 18-20 and 145

As mentioned above, CT spell 338 was reshaped and re-edited in the Book of the Dead chapters 18-20.²²⁶ For the purpose of the present work, this group of spells does not add further information concerning the Haker feast. A partial exception is constituted by BD chapter 18, which is characterised by a series of glosses aimed at explaining the mythological background of the rituals mentioned, and the identity of the gods who were part of the various *d3d3.t* mentioned in the text. Therefore, only the passage in which the term *h3kr* occurs within chapter 18, gloss included, will be analysed. Specifically, the source considered here is BD chapter 18 according to P. London BM EA 10477 ²²⁷ (Papyrus Nu):

[17] *I Dḥwti sm3(.w) ḥrw Wsir r ḥfti.w=f sm3ᶜ ḥrw NN m3ᶜ ḥrw* [18] *r ḥfti.w=f m d3d3.t 3.t im.t 3bd.w grḥ pw [n] [h]3kr m tni.t [mt].w* [19] *m ip 3h.w m ḥpr ib(3)w m tni ir d3d3.t 3.t imi.t (3bdw) Wsir* [20] *pw 3s.t pw Wpi-w3.wt pw*

[17] Oh Thot! The one who makes Osiris true of voice against his enemies, make this deceased true of voice [18] against his enemies in the great court which is in Abydos, in that night of the Haker feast, during the numbering of the dead [19] and the counting of the Akhu-spirits, while the ibau-dance occurs at Thinis. As for (the members of) (1) the great court in Abydos, they are Osiris, [20] Isis and Wepwawet.

Notes

1. The term *d3d3.t* is usually translated as “court” or “tribunal”. Yet, recent studies have shown that the term indicated the group of persons belonging to the council, rather than the physical place where the court met. See A. Philippe-Stephan 2008, pp. 9-11.

²²⁶ Z. Végh 2017, 521.

²²⁷ G. Lapp 1997, Pl. 9-11.

As mentioned above, the Haker feast is also attested within BD 145 and a shorter variation of the latter, BD 146. These two chapters consist of a list of demons' secret names, which the deceased is required to know in order to cross the twenty-one portals of the netherworld. Specifically, the Haker feast appears in the long name of a female demonic entity, as attested in BD 145 according to P. London BM EA 10477²²⁸ (Papyrus Nu):

[58] *nb.t dndn hbi.t hr dšr.w irr.w<t> n=s h³{i}kr hrw n sdm* [59] *iw rn=t*

[58] "The Mistress of Wrath, the one who dances on the blood, and for whom the Haker feast is held on the day of the hearing the complaints" is your name.

3.3.3 Which kind of judgment of the dead?

The analysis of the sources has shown that the Haker feast was characterised by a ritual action denominated "the counting (*ip*, *sip*, *hsb*, *tn*) of the dead". As highlighted by previous studies, the terms belonging to the semantic sphere of "counting", or "numbering" had a specific juridical meaning in the ancient Egyptian language and can be synonymous with "judging".²²⁹ Although the ritual of "counting the dead" was certainly a foremost event of the Haker feast, it must be underlined that the same ritual action also occurred in other similar ceremonies. In one of the texts analysed above, CT IV 338f [spell 339] it is said that a ritual focused on "the counting of the multitude" (*ip š³.wt s*) was performed at the necropolis of Saqqara (Rosetau), while in CT IV 337 e [spell 338] a similar ritual is said to be held in Naref. Moreover, the verb *ip* is often used within the Pyramid Texts with a rather similar meaning;²³⁰ especially in PT 535 (Pyr. 1287) it is said that Anubis is "the one who count the hearts", in a context where the term clearly indicates a judgment (and a punishment) of the followers of Seth who hindered the ascension to the throne of Horus.

When one speaks about the judgment of the dead in Ancient Egypt, the first image that comes to mind is the so-called *psychostasia* described in chapter 125 of Book of the Dead, where the heart of the deceased is weighted on a scale to verify if he had a correct conduct in life. Yet, it must be said that ancient Egyptian sources also testify to another kind of judgment involving the dead, probably of

²²⁸ G. Lapp 1997, Pl. 73.

²²⁹ R. Grieshammer 1970, 30-51

²³⁰ PT 218, Pyr. 161b; PT 217, Pyr.157 b-v; PT 215, Pyr. 155 b-c.

much older origin.²³¹ The latter was structured as a ritual action during which both the deceased and the living could communicate with each other. According to the Appeals to the Living, for example, the dead can threaten their descendants if they did not behave correctly, and drag them into a court to be judged in front of the Great God.²³² For example, an inscription from the chapel of Ankhmahor at Saqqara²³³ (dating to the reigns of Teti and Pepi I) reads:

[4][*ir rmt*] *nb ʿk.ti=sn r is pn m ʿbw=sn wnm=sn bww.t* [5]*[bwi.t n ʒh ikr n wʿb =sn n<=i> mi wʿb=sn n ʒh ikr irr hss.t nb=f* [5]*iw=i r iṯi.t ts=f mi ʒpd <w>dy <=i> snd=sn n ʒh ikr irr hss.t nb=f* [6]*[iw(=i) r iṯi.t tʒs]=f mi ʒpd wdi<=i> snd<=i> im=f r mʒʒ ʒh.w tpiw-tʒ snd=sn n ʒh ikr* [7] *iw(=i) r wdʿ hnʿ=f m dʒdʒ.t tf šps.t n.t ntr ʒ ir swt s nb ʿk.ti=f* [8] *r is pn wʿb.w htp(=i) hr=f iw<=i> r wnn m hʿi=f m hr.t-ntr m dʒdʒ.t n.t ntr ʒ.*

[4]Concerning all the people who shall enter into this tomb with their impurity, and who have eaten the abominations [5] [that] an Akh Iqer abominates and who have not purified themselves for me as they have to purify themselves for an Akh Iqer who habitually do what his lord praises, [6] [I will grab] his[neck] like a bird, striking fear of me into him in order that the Akhu and those who are upon earth might see and might fear an Akh Iqer. [7] [I will be] judged with him in that noble court of the great god. However, concerning the man who shall enter [8] [into this tomb] purified and I will be satisfied because of him, I will be his defender in the necropolis in the court of the great god.

Similar beliefs are also attested in the Coffin Texts.²³⁴ Especially H. Willems highlighted how one of the spells denominated by him “without mythology, CT 149 (which show several similarities with the aforementioned CT 312), describes the resolution of a legal dispute between two rival kin-groups, in which the deceased family members plays a foremost role.²³⁵ CT 149 not only resembles certain excerpts from the so-called Letters to the Dead – where the deceased recipient is asked to settle a legal dispute – but it can also be posited that this spell was actually meant to be part of the liturgy used during the ritual deposition of these documents.²³⁶ In this regard, E.F. Wente has pointed out that the original function of CT spell 149 was probably that of being used by a living person to ask

²³¹ H. Willems 1988, 148; J. Assmann 2005, 73 and ff.

²³² S.B. Shubert 2007, documents: OK 2; OK 5a; OK 9; OK 18; OK 19; OK 31; MK 12.

²³³ A.H. Gardiner and K. H. Sethe 1928, Pl. X.

²³⁴ H. Willems 2014, 186-187.

²³⁵ H. Willems 2001, 353-354; H. Willems 2014, 186.

²³⁶ H. Willems 2001, 353-354; I. Regulski 2020, 330-331. See also chapter 4, section 4.1.

for the supernatural help of his deceased father in the context of an actual legal procedure.²³⁷ Even more interesting is that a passage from CT 149 explicitly mention a ritual sleep (*sdr-n=i*) performed within the necropolis in connection with this legal settlement involving both the living and the dead.²³⁸

Several sources seem to suggest that a judgment was actually enacted during the funerals. In a 12th dynasty tomb, TT 60, the captions related to a scene depicting a pilgrimage to an Holy City, perhaps Sais, refer to a ritual called *hsb.t ȝꜥ.w*, “the counting of the surplus”, enacted at the entrance of a sacred place called *wr.yt*, probably to be identified with the embalming place.²³⁹ In this regard, an analysis conducted by Harco Willems on the occurrence of the expression *hsb.t ȝꜥ.w* within the Coffin Texts has shown that this ritual was indeed performed immediately after the conclusion of the embalming process, during the night preceding the procession of the deceased to his tomb.²⁴⁰ The actual enactment of this ritualised judgment of the dead within the funerals is also attested during later historical phases. According to Elsa Oréal, the ceremony was certainly performed during the New Kingdom, while Joachim Quack has found explicit reference to it in P. Insinger, datable to the 2nd century CE.²⁴¹ A ritualised judgment of the dead is also described by Diodorus of Sicily, who records that – after the embalming rites, but before the burial – the mummy was subjected to a public judgment in front of forty-nine judges, and that during this trial, the participants were allowed to come forward and accuse the deceased.²⁴²

In BD 145, the Haker feast is associated with another ritual action, *hrw n sdm iw*. The rendering of the word *iw* within this sentence poses some problems. Several scholars, based on an interpretation given by J.J. Clère, translated the term as “sin”, “fault”.²⁴³ The phrase would thus testify to a practice similar to the remission of sins typical of some Christian traditions, “the day of hearing the sins”. On the other hand, in a recent analysis made by Z. Végh,²⁴⁴ it has been highlighted how the word *iw* may be intended in a different way. The term appears to be linked to a verb (Wb I, 48) whose meaning is

²³⁷ E.F. Wente 2017.

²³⁸ CT II, 233c–234a [149]. See also: Z. Végh 2021, 336.

²³⁹ No. de Garis Davies, A. H. Gardiner, Ni. De Garis Davies 1920, Pl. XVIII ; H. Willems 1988, 147-148.

²⁴⁰ H. Willems 1998, 148-149.

²⁴¹ J.F. Quack 1999, 27-38.

²⁴² Diodorus of Sicily, *The Library of History* I, 92. For the English translation see: E. Murphy 1990, 313-317.

²⁴³ J.J. Clère 1930, 447 and ff.

²⁴⁴ Z. Végh 2015, 270-271; Z. Végh 2021, 333.

“to complain”. The noun *iw*, therefore, would not indicate a moral evil, but an effective problem, a complaint or an outcry about something that ails someone.

This phrase occurs also in other documents, remarkably always in connection with the Mysteries of Abydos. In a stele belonging to a general called Antef,²⁴⁵ dated to the reign of Montuhotep II, the sentence is associated with a celebration of a *hsb.t 3.w* occurring during the Mysteries, which can therefore be identified as a different name to indicate the “counting of the dead” or a rather similar ritual:

Lines 6-7 *hrw=f m3^c m hsb.t 3.w dd=k iw=k dr-tw=f n=k m dd.t nb.t*

May his voice be found true at the reckoning of the surplus. Tell what is ailing you (*dd=k iw=k*) and it will be removed from you, with all you will say.

H. Willems identified a very similar sentence within Coffin Text spell 37,²⁴⁶ yet the translation he proposed might be revisited in the light of the different meaning of the word *iw* posited by both me and Z. Végh:

CT I, 147g-148a [37]:

dd=k iw=k i-dr.tw=f iri.tw h.t htf dd.t=k nb.t

May you tell what is ailing you (*dd=k iw=k*) and it will be removed from you. This will be done in accordance with all you will say.

From the textual sources analysed here one can infer that the deceased were able to voice certain problems that plagued them in the context of a ritualised judgment, which was denominated “the counting of the dead”, or “the counting of the surplus”. This ritualised judgment was also enacted within elite funerary rites, being performed the night preceding the inhumation of the deceased. The mythical paradigm behind this ceremony is to be identified in the dispute between Horus and Seth

²⁴⁵ Copenhagen AEIN 963; J. J. Clère 1930, 447; L. Manniche 2004, 77-80, and fig. 29; H. Willems 2001, 323.

²⁴⁶ H. Willems 2001, 323.

for the throne of Egypt, which according to the myth was solved by a divine court decision in favour of Horus.²⁴⁷

In the context of elite funerals this ritualised judgment had the specific function of restoring the social role of the deceased in the post-mortem sphere ²⁴⁸ and, consequently, to validate the current social position of his legitimate heir according to the mythical model of the vindication of Horus against Seth. On the other hand, the reshaping of this ritual in the context of the Mysteries, a festival patronised by the crown, reasonably entailed a more complex purpose, which has to be understood in the light of royal ideology.

3.3.4 What did it mean to be a ritualist for the funeral of a god?

Given that the celebration of the Mysteries was conceived as a funeral for the god Osiris, it is not surprising to find a number of affinities between this festival and the elite funerary rituals. In this regard, it is interesting that in one of the Middle Kingdom stelae mentioning the Haker feast twice, München Gl. WAF 35 (doc. 8), dedicated to a man called Wepwawet-aa, another ritual action – not necessarily linked to the Haker feast but certainly part of the Mysteries of Osiris in Abydos – concerning some *msk*³.*w*-skins is described:

shnti(.w) hms.t =i nb.t |19| *r it.w =i hpr(.w) hr-h³.t di.n hm =f sft =i iw³.w m*
hw.t-ntr n.t |20| *Wsir-hnti-imn.tiw m t³-wr ³bd.w* |21| *pr-n n-hr<=i> msk³.w*
ir m ³.t n |22| *hss wi hm =f r h³.ti-^c nb hpr im* |23| *=s dr p³w.t=s*

All my ranks have been advanced |19| over (those of) my ancestors who had been before. His majesty granted me to slaughter oxen in the temple of |20| Osiris Khentiamenti at Abydos, in the Thinite nome |21| and (their) skins (placed) over me come forth (in procession), because |22| so greatly his majesty favoured me over every count who had been there |23| since its beginning.

In the sentence of line 21, *pr-n n-hr<=i> msk³.w*, the verb *pr-n* has been considered by K. Sethe as a “unpersönliche *sdm=f*” and the meaning he attributed to the sentence would be that Wepwawet-aa

²⁴⁷ H. Willems 1988, 148.

²⁴⁸ J. Assmann 2005, 282-283.

has benefited economically from the *msk*³-skins.²⁴⁹ Hence the translations proposed by M. Lichtheim – “There accrued to me (income) from their hides” – and R. Landgráfová – “and (income) came to me from their skins”.²⁵⁰ On the other hand, since this sentence shows a certain resemblance to some of the Tekenu captions previously analysed,²⁵¹ another rendering would be possible: to consider *pr-n* as a *sḏm-n=f*, the subject being *msk*³.*w*. In this case the translation would be “and the *msk*³-skins over me come forth”. Indeed, if one analyses the whole passage, the text seems more focused on the validation of the social status (see lines 18-19: *shnti(.w) ḥms.t=i nb.t r it.w=i*), rather than on economic issues. Noteworthy is, in this regard, that a term certainly derived from the verb *tkn* is sometimes attested as a title to indicate the privilege possessed by certain elite members of being “near the king”.²⁵²

As has been detailed in the previous sections, acting as a ritualist within the context of certain funerary or mortuary rituals – such as the OMR or the Tekenu ceremony – was something that entailed the possibility to succeed the deceased in his social role. In other words, it was a way to officially validate the new legitimate social role reached by the heir. The question to ask therefore is: what was involved in taking on the role of ritualist during a funerary rite enacted for the god Osiris? In two of the stelae listed in table 4, the persons to whom the monuments are dedicated report to have performed the role of *s*³-*mr=f* during the Mysteries:

Montuhotep stele CG 20539 (II, b, 6 -II, b, 7):²⁵³

*ir-n=i gr.t m^ch^c.t tn s³h.ti smnh(.w) s.t=s rdi-n=i ḥtm.wt ḏb³.w n ḥm.w-ntr n
³bḏw ḥrp-n=i k³.t m ḥw.t-ntr tn ḥws.t m in(r) n ^cnw iw iri-n i s³-mr(.y)=f m
 [sšm] [n] [ḥw.t-nbw] m sš[t³] n nb-³bḏw iw ḥrp-n=i k³.t m nšm.t msi-n=(i)
 ini.w=s iri-n=i h³kr n nb=f pr.t Wp-w³.wt*

I fully consecrated this cenotaph and its site has been embellished. Then, I
 have made contracts for the compensations of the priests in Abydos. I directed

²⁴⁹ K. H. Sethe 1927, 113.

²⁵⁰ M. Lichtheim 1988, 79-80; R. Landgráfová 2011, 165-166.

²⁵¹ See in particular the caption in TT 11: mzkA n-Hr=f zfx (chapter 3, section 3.2.1.b, document 18).

²⁵² See for example: Stele of Antef (MMA 57.95) lines 6-7 (R. Landgráfová 2011, 28-31); Stele of Nes-montu (Louvre C1), line A5 (R. Landgráfová 2011, 107-111).

²⁵³ R. Landgráfová 2011, 167-179.

the work in this temple, (which was) built of the stone of Turah. I acted as “his beloved son” (*s³-mri=f*-priest) in the management of the House of Gold (and) in the Mysteries for the Lord of Abydos, I supervised the work on the Neshemet-bark, (and) I made its ropes, I have celebrated the Haker feast and the procession of Wepwawet for his lord.

A rather similar text also occurs in the stele of Sehetepibra CG 20538 (lines II, C, 2 - II C, 5):²⁵⁴

*ir-n=i gr.t mḥ̣.t tn s³h.ti smnh(.w) s.t=s rdi-n=i htm.t db³.w n hm.w-ntr n
 ³bdw iw iri.n =i s³-mri=f m sšm n hw.t-nbw m sšt³ n nb-³bdw iw hrp-n=i k³.t
 m nšm.t msi-n=i ini.w=s iri-n=i h³kr n nb=f pr.wt Wpi-w³.wt ir-n=f h(³)b.yt
 nb.t šdi(.t) n hm.w-ntr*

I fully consecrated this cenotaph and its site has been embellished. Then, I made contracts for the compensation of the priests in Abydos. I acted as “his beloved son” in the management of the House of Gold and in the Mysteries for the Lord of Abydos. I supervised the work for the Neshemet-bark, and I made its ropes. I celebrated the Haker feast for his Lord and the procession of Wepwawet: every offering ritual has been celebrated for him and recited by the priests.

The same sentence is also attested in another Middle Kingdom monument from Abydos, The stele of Ikhnofret, Berlin 1204 (11-14):²⁵⁵

*iw ir-n=i s³-mri=f n Wsir-hnt.i-imn.tiw smnh-n =i wiḥ̣=f(?) wr n nhḥ hṇ̣̣ ḍ.t
 ir-n=i n=f kni.w wts-nfr.w-hnti-imn.tiw m nbw hḏ hsbḏ hsmn ssndm mrw
 ms(.w) ntr.w im.iw-ḥt=f ir(.w) k³r.w=s n m-m³w.t*

²⁵⁴ R. Landgráfová 2011, 219-225.

²⁵⁵ M. Lichtheim 1988, 98-100; R. - R. Landgráfová 2011, 204-207.

I acted as his beloved son ($s^3\text{-}mr=f$) for Osiris Khentiamenti. I provided his great image²⁵⁶ with eternity and everlastingness. I made for him the “palanquin which carries the beauty of Khentiamenti” in gold, silver, lapis lazuli, bronze, amethyst, tamarisk and Lebanese cedar wood. The gods who follow him were fashioned and their shrines were made anew.

Before analysing the three documents, it is necessary to dwell on the exact function held by the $s^3\text{-}mr=f$ ritualist. Based on New Kingdom and later sources pertaining to the OMR, the $s^3\text{-}mr=f$ seems to have had a function similar to that of the *sem* priest, and it is quite plausible that both the roles were held by the same person.²⁵⁷ The expression $s^3\text{-}mr=f$ can be literally translated with “his beloved son” and – as can be easily deduced from some excerpts of the Pyramid Texts²⁵⁸ – it is a reference to the role played by Horus in the Osiris myth.

The most ancient sources in which this expression is clearly used as a title to indicate a kind of ritualist are the three documents analysed here.²⁵⁹ Given that all the individuals to whom the three stelae are dedicated declare that they were involved in work constructions to embellish Abydos, it has also been hypothesised that, during the Middle Kingdom, the title $s^3\text{-}mr=f$ indicated a specific office pertaining to both the direction of the works for the construction of the sacred buildings, and the direction of the sacred ceremonies enacted in the House of Gold located in certain holy cities, like Abydos.²⁶⁰ In the scientific literature it is generally accepted that the pharaoh was virtually considered as the only human being capable of mediating between the human and divine spheres²⁶¹ but it has also been pointed out how this commonly accepted axiom can be challenged and it is more articulated than it might seem at first sight.²⁶² Nonetheless, it is well attested that prominent members of the elite could assume religious offices²⁶³ and, indeed, the texts analysed here clearly show how a prominent individual could be endowed by the king with special powers which enabled him to act as one of the main ritualists within the context of the Mysteries of Abydos. Yet, in view of the religious facts taken into account in the present work, this custom can be interpreted within a broader framework.

²⁵⁶ “Sethe's restoration $wi3.f\text{ }wr$, “his great bark”, was rightly questioned by Anthes, [...] The illegible noun must have been a word for the cult statue of Osiris”. See. M. Lichtheim 1988, 100 and note 3.

²⁵⁷ E. Otto 1960, Vol. II, 13; M. Smith 1993, 15.

²⁵⁸ PT 510 and PT 540.

²⁵⁹ E. Schott 1984, 269 and ff.

²⁶⁰ E. Schott 1984, 269 and ff.

²⁶¹ H. M. Hays 2009, 15-30.

²⁶² J. Baines 2021, 73-97; J. Troche 2021, 47 and ff.

²⁶³ T. Hare 1999, 39-40; J. Baines 2021, 73-97.

As mentioned above, taking care of the burial and the mortuary cult of the deceased was an essential perquisite not only to claim the inheritance, but also to succeed in the social role of the late person. Within the context of elite funerary and mortuary rites this meant that the designed heir effectively became the new chief of the extended family, whose duty was also that of managing the family assets. In this regard, it is certainly remarkable that Montuhotep, Sehetibra, and Ikhnofret held the same office, that of *imy-rꜥ-htm.t*, literally “overseer of the sealed things”, but usually translated as “overseer of the treasury”; furthermore, both Montuhotep and Ikhnofret were also “overseers of the double house of silver and gold (*imy-rꜥ pr.wy nbw, im.i-rꜥ-pr.wy ḥd*). Since these kinds of offices pertained to the administration of state assets,²⁶⁴ it could be posited a parallel between the funerary rituals and the celebration of the Mysteries. While acting as a main ritualist during the funerals of an elite member was a way to be officially recognised as the legitimate heir of the deceased, being the main ritualist during the enactment of the Mysteries of Osiris was a way through which the royal crown formally recognised the social role of certain elite members as state officials.²⁶⁵

Several Middle Kingdom documents from Abydos highlight how this peculiar mechanic not only was used to formalise the relationship between the king and his high dignitaries, but also the relationship between the high dignitaries and their subordinates. Indeed, on a number of stelae the subordinates of the overseers of treasures are often depicted while acting as the *sem* priest of the latter.²⁶⁶ It can therefore be stated that the typical mechanics of the Egyptian ancestor worship, based on the divine paradigm of the relationship between Horus and Osiris, were used as a model to reinforce and justify the most significant social relationships within the Egyptian state.

3.3.5 The Haker feast: summary and conclusions

The Mysteries of Osiris at Abydos were an annual celebration during which the death, the burial and the restoration to life of the god Osiris were performed, by re-enacting the main phases of an elite funerary ritual.

Based on the sources analysed here, the Haker feast was a nocturnal ceremony, characterised by:

- A ritual sleep, *sdr.yt/sdr.t*, a ceremony that shows strong resemblances to both OMR scenes 9 and 10 and the ritual of the sleeping Tekenu;

²⁶⁴ S. Desplancques 2003, 27; S. Desplancques 2001, 128.

²⁶⁵ D. Franke 2003, 70-73; E. Frood 2003, 73-75.

²⁶⁶ D. Franke 2003, 73-75.

- A judgment of the dead – called “the counting of the dead” – during which the deceased were able to voice certain problems that plagued them. This ceremony finds a parallel in a similar ritual performed during elite funerals denominated *ḥsb.t* ³⁵.w;

Also, interesting is that during the Mysteries of Osiris another ceremony involving some *msk3*-skins, which shows some affinities with the removal of the hide from the Tekenu, was probably enacted. The oldest attestation pertaining to the Haker feast dates back to the final part of the 11th dynasty. If we take into account that the Haker occurred within the Mysteries of Osiris celebrated at Abydos, this fact is not surprising. Even though this site played a foremost religious role from the Archaic Period onwards, the first reliable sources regarding the celebrations of the Mysteries date back to the end of the First Intermediate Period, when, during the 11th dynasty, the site was restored and a predynastic tomb of king, probably Djer, was identified as the tomb of Osiris himself.²⁶⁷

The rise of Abydos as a foremost cultic centre during the Middle Kingdom has to be interpreted within a wider framework. Ancestor worship played a foremost role in legitimating the nomarchal families at the head of the various local potentates.²⁶⁸ It is not surprising therefore that during the violent battles characterising the final part of the First Intermediate Period certain necropolises or religious centres – especially those located in the Middle Egyptian area, such as Thinis/Naga ed-Deir– suffered from the excesses of soldiers.²⁶⁹ On the other hand, after the restoration of the monarchy, certain sanctuaries devoted to the mortuary cults of local rulers, such as the one of Heqaib at Elephantine, experienced a renewed prosperity.²⁷⁰ The crown not only used to promote these pre-existent cultic places, but even founded new similar shrines, such as the one of Djefai-Hapy in Asiut.²⁷¹

If framed in this light, the rise of the celebration of the Mysteries at Abydos can be interpreted as a means to reinforce royal ideology and strengthen the alliance between the crown and the elite members. In other words, its main aim was that of reshaping specific features of the elite mortuary rituals in order to legitimate the social role of foremost elite members as state officials patronised by the crown. On the other hand, as highlighted for the OMR scenes 9 and 10, it is hard to distinguish what actually belonged to an old tradition and what was an innovative element. It is highly likely that this kind of mechanic to reinforce the connection between the royal power and the elites, strictly

²⁶⁷ M. Smith 2017, 233.

²⁶⁸ M. Fitzenreiter 2018, 60-61; H. Willems 2014, 207-208; A. Dorn 2015, 121-122; D. Raue 2014, 1-3; J. Troche 2021, 144.

²⁶⁹ R.A. Gillam 2005, 56; E. Brovarski 1985, 310.

²⁷⁰ D. Raue 2014, 3-4.

²⁷¹ M. El-Khadragy 2007, 41-55.

rooted on the beliefs and practices concerning ancestor worship, already existed during the early Old Kingdom if not even before.²⁷² Yet, that does not preclude that this ancient practice was reformulated once again at the beginning of the Middle Kingdom to meet new specific needs concerning the restoration of the royal power.

One has finally to consider that Abydos was not the only place where these types of ceremonies were performed. The Coffin Texts spells and the Book of the Dead chapters analysed in the present section highlight how similar festivals were enacted in diverse religious centres. Especially Djedu (Busiris), located in the Delta, was another holy city linked to the cult of Osiris.²⁷³ The smaller number of archaeological and epigraphic sources concerning this ancient holy city probably depends on the fact that certain conditions characterising Lower Egypt did not present the optimal environment for the conservation of archaeological sites.

²⁷² M.H. Gauthier 1930, 178-180; A.M. Roveri Donadoni 1969, 122-123; see also: chapter 2, section 2.6, First argumentation.

²⁷³ M. Smith 2017, 234-235; J. Troche 2021, 140.

3.4 Results

Death is certainly the most radical transformation a human being can experience, and this change is so powerful that it affects not only the deceased, but also the community to which the late person belonged.²⁷⁴ This fact, that in some way we can consider as a “universal”, acquires a more concrete and even tragic value within certain kinds of societies, like the ancient Egyptian one, which were strictly rooted in the institution of the extended family.²⁷⁵ The death of a family chief, especially the death of the head of a powerful elite family, entailed the instauration of a new *pater familias*. This delicate moment of transition was certainly perceived as highly critical, since the whole existence of the extended family as a social group could be questioned and menaced by both internal disagreements and external enemies.

Funerary rites, therefore, were not just a means to ratify the passage of the deceased from life to death, but also a moment during which a new order had to be established. A younger family member, traditionally the eldest son, had to succeed the deceased person by assuming the social role of his father, within both the extended family and the whole society.

The textual and epigraphic sources that have been analysed here concern this delicate moment of transition, which could be considered as a “double rite of passage”: the deceased father had to reach the realm of the dead and become a benevolent ancestor, while the eldest son who acted as a main ritualist during the funerary rituals had to become the new chief of the extended family.

As the analysis of the documents has shown, OMR scenes 9 and 10 and, probably also the sleeping Tekenu, were dramatic rituals which re-enacted salient passages of the Osiris myth. In particular, OMR scene 10 has shown strong affinities with PT 364.²⁷⁶ Another important religious text to understand the religious facts taken herein into consideration is CT 312, whose oldest attestation dates back to the First Intermediate Period and can be considered as the mythological background of the rituals involving a form of communication between the living and the dead.²⁷⁷ It is even possible to posit that both these texts refer to the same episode of the Osiris myth.

²⁷⁴ A. van Gennep 1960, 146-165.

²⁷⁵ J. C. Moreno García 2012.

²⁷⁶ See chapter 3, section 3.1.a.

²⁷⁷ See chapter 3, section 3.2.1.c.

Indeed, PT 364 tells how Osiris was installed as a ruler of the netherworld thanks to the intervention of Horus. The main elements allowing this process are: the re-composition of Osiris' body;²⁷⁸ Horus giving his eye (*Ir.t-hr*) to Osiris;²⁷⁹ Horus crowning Osiris with the *wrr.t* crown.²⁸⁰

Table 5: parallels between PT 364 and CT 312

	PT 364	CT 312
Mythical episode	Osiris is installed as a ruler of the netherworld	Horus is crowned as the legitimate ruler of Egypt
Aim	Installation of the mortuary cult for the deceased	Legitimation of the heir of the deceased
Symbolisms involved	The Eye of Horus as a gift given to Osiris by Horus in order to protect and awake him (by opening his eye and his mouth), so that the god can listen to Horus The <i>tw.t</i> /<i>wrr.t</i> crown as a symbol of rulership in the netherworld and acquisition of eternal life	The Eye of Horus as a messenger sent by Horus to establish a form of communication with his deceased father The <i>nemes</i> crown as a symbol of legitimation of the social status (<i>s'h</i>) earned by the heir.

The fact that this mythological episode has been reshaped within OMR 10, a text aimed at the vivification of the cultic image portraying the deceased, clearly indicates that this theme played a foremost role as a founding myth for the installation of the mortuary cults.

CT 312, instead, concerns the installation of Horus as the new ruler of Egypt thanks to the intervention of Osiris. Since the latter is dead and resides in the netherworld, Horus has to find a way to

²⁷⁸ PT 364, 610c: "Isis and Nephthys have healed you.

²⁷⁹ PT 364, 609c-610a: "Horus has loved you; he has equipped you. Horus has placed on you his eye for your advantage. Horus has opened your eye so that you can see through it!" Also, see chapter 3, section 3.1.a.

²⁸⁰ PT 364, 613b: "Horus has placed you at the head of the gods; he has caused thee to take the *wrr.t*-crown. Within the occurrence of the *wrr.t* crown within the Pyramid Texts, it can be inferred that the symbolism pertaining this crown was strongly linked to the mortuary cults celebrated for the pharaoh. Cf. H. M. Hays 2012, Vol. I, 298 and note 1046.

communicate with him, thanks to a divine messenger, *Irw-Hr*, which can be identified with the very eye of this god (*Ir.t-Hr*).²⁸¹ This divine messenger has to reach the netherworld in order to transmit the message of Horus to Osiris. To accomplish this feat, he has to obtain the *nemes* crown, which symbolises the social status of Horus as a legitimate heir. Once the *Irw-Hr* is able to establish a communication between the deceased Osiris and his living heir Horus, the latter is crowned as the new ruler.

The meaning and the function associated with this mythical episode must have been of fundamental importance for the ancient Egyptians, since these themes were reshaped several times over millennia, and formed the ideological basis for diverse kinds of rituals. The most striking example in this regard is given by the Middle Kingdom Mysteries of Osiris celebrated at Abydos. This festival was meant as a great funerary ritual periodically celebrated for the god Osiris. The analysis of the data pertaining to the Haker feast has shown that the same mechanics used to ratify the father-son succession during the celebration of elite funerals, were also used by the crown to assign state offices, in particular that of Royal Treasurer.²⁸²

The analysis of the sources has also highlighted diverse possible means of communication between the living and the dead enacted in the form of dramatic (or quasi dramatic) performances in the course of collective rituals, such as the ritual sleep *sdr/sdry.t* and the dreams experienced during this special state.²⁸³ It was also possible to identify the specific moments and sacred areas in which these necromantic practices were allowed. The pre-burial rituals enacted in the night preceding the inhumation at the embalming place and the rituals performed on the journey that led from the embalming place to the grave – which partially coincides with the figurative theme of the Butic Burial identified within several elite tombs – were indeed considered the ideal occasion to interact with the dead. The documents have also highlighted the existence of a ceremony, the *hsb.t 3w*, “the counting of the surplus”, which was celebrated immediately after the conclusion of the embalming process, during the night preceding the procession leading the mummy to the tomb. This ceremony – which strongly recalls the counting of the dead celebrated within the Mysteries of Osiris at Abydos – took the form of a ritualised judgment of the dead. Yet, this has not to be confused with the judgment concerning the moral conduct of the deceased described in the Book of the Dead, but with a ritual

²⁸¹ See chapter 3, section 3.2.1.c.

²⁸² See chapter 3, section 3.3.4.

²⁸³ See chapter 3, section 3.1.b; 3.2.1.b (documents 20 and 21); and, section 3.3.1.

action during which the living and the dead could interact with each other and settle a legal dispute concerning the legacy of the deceased.²⁸⁴

²⁸⁴ See chapter 3, section 3.3.3.