

Ti.t, an Emanation of the Divine

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Abstract. This lexicological analysis aims to examine the term , *ti.t* (*Wb* V, 239, 1–240, 11), most frequently translated as “image,” “hieroglyphic sign,” “symbol” or “form.” Following a clarification of the probable etymon, which suggests that the original meaning of *ti.t* was “fragment,” this study will assess how this fundamental value may be actualized in relation to the various domains in which the term is applied. Beyond its specific meaning as a “hieroglyphic sign,” which emerges from the earliest occurrences of the term, we will explore the extent to which *ti.t* may more systematically be understood as an “emanation” originating from the realm of the gods. Consequently, we will also list the reasons that appear to justify abandoning the interpretation of *ti.t* as “image,” a meaning commonly accepted in the traditional rendering of the term.

Keywords. *ti.t*, lexicology, fragment, emanation, hieroglyphic sign, image.

1. Introduction

The vocabulary of Ancient Egyptian includes a rich lexicon relating to the fields of images, forms and signs.¹ While the study of these ancient terms naturally leads to a search for their equivalents within our modern vocabularies, a more systemic analysis of these different lexical fields proves, in many respects, more challenging. The difficulties associated with this comparative approach appear notably from the prominence of semantic divergences between these languages, which likely reflect fundamental differences in the ways of thinking from which they arise. For instance, to take one of the most frequently discussed examples in Egyptological literature, the inextricable semiotic

1 The breadth of these questions is reflected in the number of studies devoted to them, including works by scholars beyond the immediate field of Egyptology. Accordingly, we shall limit our references to the principal sources consulted in this study, without aiming for any form of exhaustiveness: Hornung 1967: 123–156; Aldred 1975: 793–795; Tefnin 1984: 55–71; Ockinga 1984; Traunecker 1991: 303–317; Assmann 1996: 55–81; Belting 2004; Eaton 2007: 15–25; Braun 2009: 103–114; Den Donker 2010: 79–89; Mougenot 2013: 66–67; Delvaux 2013: 68–73; Assmann 2015a: 173–206; Baines 2015: 1–21; Nyord 2020; Volokhine 2021: 215–231; Brémont 2023.

links between the domains of writing and imagery are characteristic of ancient Egyptian culture.² Consequently, these connections often cannot be easily aligned with the more loosely established associations found within the constructs of our modernity.

Despite these divergences, one might nonetheless suspect the existence of certain continuities within these specialized lexicons. Thus, when considering the specific question of the image, an examination of the different Egyptian terms associated with it reveals a form of continuity with the principal analytical frameworks proposed by the historian Hans Belting. Whether it involves the image's relationship to notions of "resemblance" or "presence,"³ or to the dichotomy between "inner image" and "outer image,"⁴ these conceptual distinctions appear to have already been operative within the thought of ancient Egypt.

This study offers an examination of the term *ti.t*,⁵ as the first phase in a research project focused on certain Egyptian terms within the lexical fields of images, forms and signs. Prior to addressing meanings of this term, our study will first pursue an investigation into its etymology. Subsequently, this research will examine the meaning of "writing sign" as conveyed by this term. The majority of our commentary will then be dedicated to the interpretation of "emanation," which we propose as the most fitting translation for the majority of occurrences of *ti.t*. Finally, we will question the interpretation of *ti.t* as "image," which Egyptological tradition overwhelmingly attributes to this term but which, in our view, fails to capture the fundamental meaning of the term *ti.t* with sufficient precision.

2. *Ti.t, in search of an etymology*

The term *ti.t* could be attested as early as the end of the Old Kingdom or the beginning of the First Intermediate Period,⁶ and it continues to be widely used during the Graeco-Roman era, notably on the walls of major temples of that period.⁷

The most common spellings of this word, particularly from the end of the Middle Kingdom, are as follows:     . There are also some more sporadic forms, such as   .⁸

2 Fischer 1977: 3–4; Tefnin 1984: 55–71; Fischer 1986: 24–50; Braun 2009: 103–114; Delvaux 2013: 68–73; Laboury 2022: 144–153; Brémont 2023.

3 Belting 1994.

4 Belting 2004: 31–32.

5 Wb V, 239, 1–240, 11.

6 In particular, the two spells of the *Coffin Texts* mentioned below (n. 12–13, figs. 8–10). According to some authors, P. Gardiner II (BM EA 10676) and P. Gardiner III (Chicago, OIM 14059 87) could date from this period: Allen 1950: 61; Gestermann 2003: 206; Mathieu 2004: 254.

7 For demotic versions *vy³*, *ty³* of the term, see Jasnow 2011: 304–305. The term is also found in Coptic in the form *roe*, "sign, mark, figure" (Westendorf 1965: 220; Černý 1976: 180). See also the shape  "emanation" (Westendorf 1965: 224).

8 *Urk.* IV, 157, 11.

—, ⁹ or even —. ¹⁰ It is worth noting that in what appear to be the earliest attestations of the term, found in two Spells of the *Coffin Texts*, ¹¹ it is not yet the ideogram/determinative representing the assembled lower parts of the *UDJAT EYE* (D17) that is used, but rather the determinative of the LOWER JAW OF A BOVID (F19), ¹² and, more rarely, that of the EGG (H8) or that of the SEATED DIVINITY (A40). ¹³ Further below, we will propose some points of reflection concerning these graphical variants.

Regarding the most commonly suggested translations for the term *ti.t*, the following meanings are listed: “image,” “figure,” “form,” “drawing,” “amulet,” “symbol,” “writing sign,” and “hieroglyph.” ¹⁴ It is notable that, beyond their apparent convergence around a broad formalistic notion, the lack of an effective etymological basis for *ti.t* precludes a more precise understanding of its foundations, boundaries and interrelations.

In an article titled “Ein Beitrag zum ‘Hieroglyphischen Denken’”, Tycho Quirinus Mrsich posits that the term *ti.t* originates from an ancient verb *ti*, examples of which can be found in Spells 88 and 111 of the *Pyramid Texts* (figs. 1 and 2). Mrsich proposes that this verb conveys the meaning “to strike” (“schlagen”), with an extended sense of “tracing the outline of a hieroglyph with a chisel and then striking it (*ti, titi*).” ¹⁵

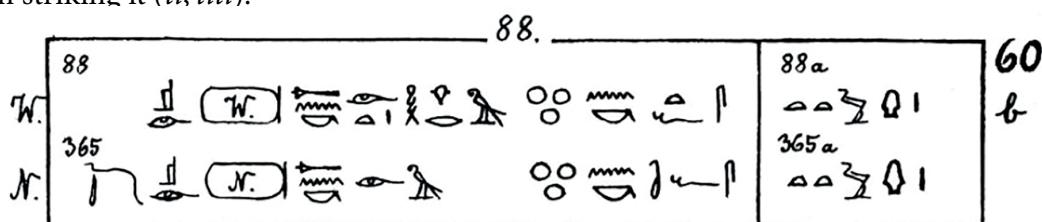


Fig. 1. Spell 88 of *PT* after Sethe 1908: 34

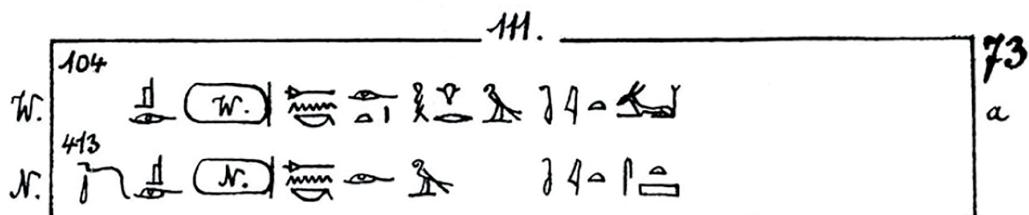


Fig. 2. Spell 111 of *PT* after Sethe 1908: 40

9 Rhind Mathematical Papyrus: Griffith 1898: pl. VIII, LV. 4, l. 50.

10 P. Carlsberg VII, 1: Iversen 1958: 13, pl. 32.

11 *Infra*, figs. 8–10.

12 CT VII, 204b [TS 992], versions P. Gardiner II and P. Gardiner III. See also *infra*, fig. 11 (Khnumhotep II).

13 *Infra*, fig. 10: CT VII, 222k [TS 1006].

14 Wb V, 239, 1–240, 11 (“Zeichen, Figur, Gestalt”); Faulkner 1962: 294 (“image, form, shape, figure, design, sign”); Meeks 1978: no. 78.4521 (“image, figure, signe d’écriture”); Wilson 1997: 1125 (“image, symbol, sign”); Grandet & Mathieu 2003: 788 (“image, signe d’écriture, hiéroglyphe, amulette [en forme de hiéroglyphe]”); TLA Lemma 169790 (“Zeichen; Figur; Gestalt; Fleck; Muster”) Projet Véga, ID 13705 (“signe, hiéroglyphe, figure, image, représentation, symbole, forme, dessin”) <https://app.vega-lexique.fr/?entries=w13705> (accessed 07.04.2025).

15 “[...] in dem Sinne abzuleiten zu sein, daß eine Hieroglyphe durch Meißelführung an der Umgrenzungslinie und Schlagen (*ti, titi*) herausgeholt wird”, Mrsich 1978: 121.

Furthermore, some authors have identified connections between this verb *ti* and the reduplicated verb *titi*, “to trample,”¹⁶ following a commentary by K. Sethe on these occurrences in the *Pyramid Texts*.¹⁷

In our view, however, this ancient verb *ti*, from which the noun *ti.t* seems to have derived, should rather be understood in terms of “fragmenting” or “fractioning.” Thus, we propose the following translations for the two passages from the *Pyramid Texts*:

(Doc. 1, fig. 1) (§ 60b [TP 88]).¹⁸ Words to pronounce: “Osiris Pepy, take for yourself the Eye of Horus and prevent him (=Seth) from **fragmenting** it!”¹⁹

(Doc. 2, fig. 2) (§ 73a [TP 111]).²⁰ Words to pronounce: “Osiris Pepy, take for yourself the Eye of Horus that Seth is **fragmenting**!”²¹

The choice of these meanings for the verb *ti* can be supported by two arguments, which we will now detail.

First, the mention of Horus offering his eye to his father Osiris, “so that he may see through it,”²² echoes the dramatic episode of the mutilation of this eye into six parts by Seth, an act of violence perpetrated in retaliation for Horus’s tearing off of Seth’s testicles. Among the *membra disiecta* of this mythical narrative, it is reported that this wound in the Eye of Horus is later healed by the god Thoth. The latter undertakes the restoration of the divine visual organ’s integrity, even supplying its final missing part (1/64th), so that the Eye becomes “*udjat*,” meaning “intact.” Some commentators have rightly pointed out that this narrative thread, centred around the dual process of fragmentation and reconstruction of the Eye of Horus, has a remarkable, and likely later, parallel with the story of the dismemberment of Osiris’s body by Seth, followed by its reconstruction by Isis.

Clearly, this incident involving the Eye of Horus stands as a central mytheme in the *Pyramid Texts*,²³ with no fewer than 315 occurrences of this phrase (*Ir.t-Hr*).²⁴ It is also worth noting that B. Mathieu has identified 19 distinct verbs related to the mutilation of the Eye of Horus in this

16 Faulkner 1969: 20, 24; Mathieu 2018: 65. See also *Wb* V, 244, 1–7 (“*niedertreten, zertreten*”).

17 Sethe 1928: 121.

18 This sequence is reiterated in a passage from the *Coffin Texts* on the inner sarcophagus of Djehutynakht (B2Bo version, El Bersheh), Allen 2006: 30.

19 *dd mdw Wsir Ppy m[i] n=k ՚l.t-Hr ՚hw n=k t[i]=f s(.y).*

20 The sequence is repeated in 25th Dynasty in the tomb of Padiamenope (TT 33); Dümichen 1884: pl. IX, col. 70.

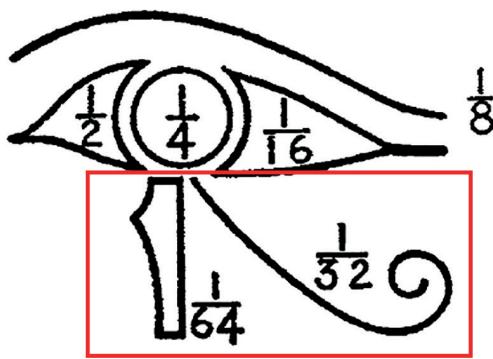
21 *dd mdw Wsir Ppy m[i] n=k ՚l.t-Hr t[i/w].t Stš.*

22 § 610a [TP 364].

23 Edwards 1995: 278.

24 Mathieu 2019: 1365.

corpus.²⁵ In this narrative context, translating the verb *ti* as “to fragment” or “to fraction” seems an appropriate choice, and one could even add that it appears alongside *in in*, “to mince,” *psš*, “to share,” *sd*, “to break,” as one of the most contextually relevant verbs associated with the act of tearing the Eye of Horus mentioned in this source.

This hypothesis concerning the translation of the verb *ti*, from which the term *ti.t* could be derived, is further supported by the emergence, during the Middle Kingdom, of the ideogram/determinative  (D17) to compose the term *ti.t*. It is accepted that this sign consists of two of the six fragments of the stylized representation of the Eye of Horus (fig. 3),²⁶ which the lower parts of this motif respectively valued at 1/32th (D15) and 1/64th (D16) of the complete eye (*udjat*).

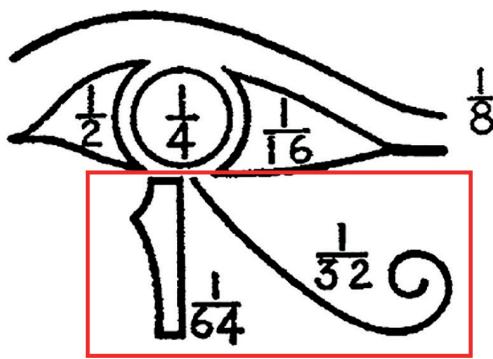
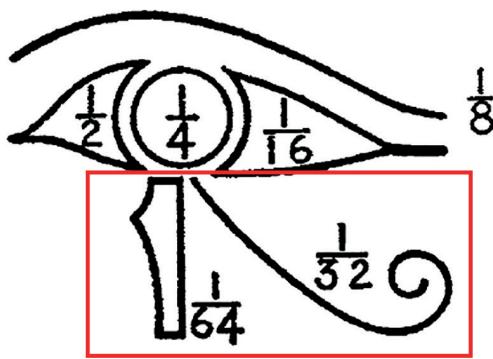
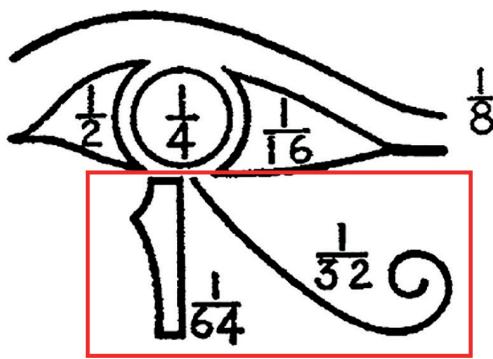


Fig. 3. The fractions of the Eye of Horus after Gardiner 1957: 197

This correspondence underscores the strong semiotic link between the sign  *ti.t* and the notion of fragmentation. Indeed, the fragmentation serves as an illustration of the “extreme moment”²⁷ in the narrative of the dismemberment of Horus’s Eye by Seth. Subsequently, the ideogram/determinative , which from the Middle Kingdom onwards would definitively constitute the core of the lexeme *ti.t*, represents a manifest reminder of its ties to the primordial act of the fragmentation of the Eye of Horus.

In the continuation of this investigation, it now seems necessary to consider the motivations underlying the choice of the LOWER JAW OF A BOVINE  (F19) as the determinative of the term *ti.t*,

25 Mathieu 2019: 1371, *ȝt*, “amputate,” *in in* “fragment,” *wȝt*, “slice,” *psš*, “share,” *nkn*, “mutilate,” *ȝik*, “sever,” *hsq*, “section,” *ȝd*, “destroy,” “pervert,” *ȝb*, “diminish,” *sȝd*, “section,” *sw*, “injure,” *sn*, “cut,” *sr*, “cut,” *sd*, “break,” *ȝs*, “slice,” *qn*, “damage,” “mutilate,” *dn*, “behead,” *ds*, “cut,” *dsr*, “separate.” The verb *ti*, translated “to trample” by the author, is mentioned later in the same entry (1374).

26 D. Meeks sees in this motif “la marque de maquillage apposée sous l’œil *oudjat*” (Meeks 2018: 147).

27 A moment in the narrative that critic G.E. Lessing contrasts with the concept of “pregnant moment” (Lessing 1763: chap. III).

a distinctive feature observable from its earliest occurrences.²⁸ Occasionally, the term is determined by two F19 signs (fig. 5), or, more exceptionally, by three signs, as in a Middle Kingdom example from a mastaba at Lisht (fig. 4).



Fig. 4. Biographical details of Intef (?)
after Arnold 2008: pl. 33

It is likely that we should dismiss the idea of a simple confusion between signs  and  on the part of scribes, as these two characters most often display an opposing orientation in their profile, both in their hieroglyphic and hieratic versions.²⁹ However, it may be posited that the choice of the sign (F19) as the determinative for the term *ti.t* was also motivated by the analogy between the bovine mandible and the notion of fragmentation,³⁰ as suggested by Spell 37 of the *Pyramid Texts* (fig. 5):

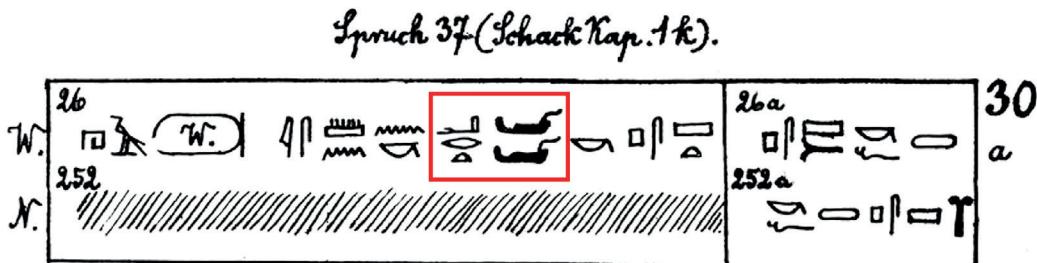


Fig. 5. Spell 37 of *PT* after Sethe 1908: 20

28 Cf. *supra*, n. 12. This determinative seems to have disappeared definitively during 18th Dynasty, when it was generally replaced by the sign for the lower part of the *udjat* eye, which has been attested since the Middle Kingdom as the ideogram-determinative *ti.t*.

29 For the hieratic sign D17, Möller 1909: vol. I/3, 7; vol. II/3, 7 and for the hieratic sign of F19, Verhoeven 2001: 128–129.

30 D. Meeks 2018: 147 explains the presence of the jawbone sign with teeth symbol by its presumed connection to “*la morsure, ou plus exactement la trace que cette morsure peut laisser*.” He extends this interpretation as follows: “*la même mâchoire peut servir de déterminatif au mot tit employé dans le sens plus large d’« image, réplique », etc. C’est donc que les images tit, comme les hiéroglyphes, sont des empreintes qui rendent visible quelque chose qui émane du monde divin*.” If, as we shall elaborate further, *ti.t* indeed systematically represents a fragment emanating from the gods, its principal determinatives—namely, “the lower part of the *udjat* eye” and “the lower jaw of a bovine”—are more accurately associated with the notion of “fragmentation.” Accordingly, we propose that the jaw symbol, in this context, bears no relation to the idea of an imprint resulting from a bite.

(Doc. 3) (§ 30a [TP 37]) Oh Unas, your jaw has been restored for you when it was dislocated!³¹

It can therefore be assumed that among the various phases related to the post-mortem disintegration of the body, the Egyptians particularly noted the disjunction of the jaw from the rest of the skull, following the disintegration of the temporo-mandibular joint.³² In the context of the fragmentation/recomposition of the Osirian body, this jawbone thus became emblematic of the body's decomposition process, against which funerary practices and rituals sought to act.³³ This analogical connection can still be observed, occasionally in its antithetical form, evoking the solidity of the jaw as a symbol of vital strength,³⁴ in a number of sources.³⁵ This symbolism relating to the jaw remained enduring, as it later found expression in Greco-roman sources, notably in the texts of one of the Osirian chapels at Dendara:

(Doc. 4) (Nekhbet of the Latopolite nome addresses Osiris): "I come to you, Osiris, take for yourself the jaws (*wgw.ty* ) for your face, separated to (from) your mouth, (so that) you may eat fruits [in order to] rejuvenate your body. I bring you your jaws ('*r.ty* ) (I) place them within your face, the jaws (*shr.wy* ) are put back in their place, the two halves separated in [their] middle [...]." ³⁶

These examples seem to confirm the idea that the bovine jaw sign, like that of the lower part of the *udjat* eye, aligns with the cardinal notion of fragmentation. This question lies, in our view, at the

31 *h³ Wnis i.smn n=k 'r.t=k psš=t[i].*

32 Depending on the general characteristics of the environment, experimental taphonomy on large mammal carcasses indicates that the mandible is most often stripped of skin, fat and tissue and detached from the skull during stage 1 (0 to 3 years), Behrensmeyer 1978: 150–162.

33 It should be noted that, in most cases, the bovine jaw symbol includes teeth and, at times, even the tongue (as in the example from the White Chapel discussed below, fig. 17). One might therefore infer that, beyond its role as an emblem of the deceased's bodily dislocation, the depiction of teeth and tongue on the jaw alludes to the principal powers of action of the living—powers the deceased no longer possesses. Specifically, these are the power of nourishment, symbolized by the teeth, and the power of speech, symbolized by the tongue.

34 This latter point likely explains why, in the account of the protection of his father Osiris, Horus shatters the jaws of his adversaries (CT Spell 783 and *Book of the Dead* Spell 178). Although the context of this account may seem somewhat removed from our primary focus, it is difficult to overlook the symbolic potency attributed to the jaw, particularly that of the donkey with which Samson slew a thousand Philistines (*The Book of Judges*, 15, 14–16).

35 Thus, in the *Coffin Texts* (Spell 162, 783, 1012), in the *Book of the Dead* (Spell 178), or later, in the Papyrus of Imuthes, Son of Psintaes (pNew York MMA 35.9.21 [19, 15]), or in a magical papyrus from Cologne (pKoeln aegypt. 3547 [3, 3]).

36 Osirian chapel east no. 2, east side, east wall, first register (Dendara X/1, 73–74). Translation after S. Cauville (in French) (Cauville 1997: 41). Note the presence in this sequence of various terms relating to the "jaw" and the "mandible."

heart of the semantic field of the term *ti.t*, forming the foundation of the powerful analogical links that these two signs could create within this context.

Having examined the first argument relating to the meanings “to fragment,” “to fraction” for the old verb *ti* and, consequently, to its status as a verbal root from which the term *ti.t* could derive, we will now examine a second argument relating to these same hypotheses.

The narrative motif of the fragmentation of the Eye of Horus, followed by its reconstitution, is frequently paralleled—at times to the point of suggesting an etiological connection—with the cycle of lunar waxing and waning. As the Eye of Horus became a lunar symbol, its fragmentation into six parts was specifically associated with the *senut* festival, a lunar ritual held on the sixth day celebrating the moon’s reformation from its first quarter.³⁷ Beyond the importance of the number “six,” associated with the parts resulting from the fragmentation of the Eye of Horus, each part corresponds mathematically to a fraction in a numerical sequence of six terms, ranging from $1/2$ and $1/64$ (fig. 3). It is also highly likely that this series of fractions later formed, from the New Kingdom onwards, the basis of the grain capacity measurement system.³⁸ This correspondence between the various parts of the Eye of Horus and each term in a numerical series naturally implicates the sign *ti.t*, since, as noted earlier, it comprises the combination of parts of the Eye of Horus valued respectively as the fractions $1/32$ and $1/64$. Consequently, it is unsurprising an entry for “fraction” (*Bruch*) for the term *ti.t* in the great Berlin dictionary.³⁹

Two mathematical papyri provide occurrences of this semantic orientation. In the oldest of these, the Kahun Papyrus, dated to the Middle Kingdom, we find the sequence *hb.t w’(t) ti.t*, meaning “subtraction of a fraction (or “part”?).”⁴⁰ In the Rhind Mathematical Papyrus, dated to the 19th Dynasty, problem 61b, as numbered by its editor, includes the following formulation (fig. 6):⁴¹



Fig. 6. Rhind Mathematical Papyrus, problem 61b
after Peet 1923: pl. R

37 Junker 1910: 101–106; Derchain 1962: 23–31; Aufrère 2015: 31–48.

38 Miatello 2015: 67–83. This equivalence system has been contested on a number of occasions, Ritter 2003: 297–323.

39 *Wb* V, 238, 6–7.

40 Griffith 1898: 18 (vol. Text), pl. VIII (vol. Plates).

41 Peet 1923: 104 and pl. R. More recently, Michel 2014: 81–84.

(Doc. 5) To make 2/3 of a *ti.t gb(w).t*. If you are asked: “What is 2/3 of 1/5?” You will have to do its double (its “twice”) and its six times. That is then its 2/3.⁴²

The expression *ti.t gb(w).t*, which in the syntactic sequence in this example corresponds to the fraction 1/5, has been interpreted in various ways. T.E. Peet translates this expression as “aliquot part”⁴³ while B. Gunn prefers “uneven fraction,”⁴⁴ reasoning that the verb *gb*i** means “to be weak.”⁴⁵ For our part, we follow the latter interpretation.

Finally, in problem 70 of the same papyrus, which deals with calculating flour measurements for bread-making, we find another instance of the term *ti.t* in the following sequence (fig. 7):

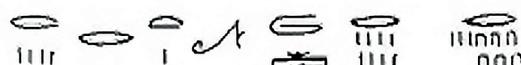


Fig. 7. Rhind Mathematical Papyrus, problem 70
after Peet 1923: pl. U

(Doc. 6) 1/63 (*heqat* of flour) is equivalent to 1/8 (of bread). Double the fraction (*ti.t*) for 1/4 (of a loaf).⁴⁶

These examples seem to support the idea that the term *ti.t* should be consistently associated with the notion of “fragmentation” or “fraction,” with the latter meaning taken in its most literal sense within the context of mathematical documentation.

After examining the various arguments regarding the etymological links between the noun *ti.t* and the verb *ti*, it seems appropriate to conclude, first, on the validity of the meanings “to fragment,” “to fraction” for this verb and, second, on the fact that the noun *ti.t* appears to be well-defined by this etymon. Consequently, as we shall see, regardless of the context in which the noun *ti.t* is employed and of the meaning it assumes, the notion of “fragmentation” constitutes the nuclear seme of this word,⁴⁷ or “the elements of meaning that a word brings to any context.”⁴⁸ Grammatically, the noun

42 *{r} ir.t r{b}.wy n{y} ti.t gb{w}.t mi dd{=tw} n=k pt{i} r{b}.wy n{y} r{b}-5 ir{w}~br=k sp=f 2 sp=f 6 r{b}.wy=f pw.*

43 Peet 1923: 18.

44 Gunn 1926: 134.

45 Wb V, 161, 8–162, 5.

46 *r{b}-63 r{b}-8 q{b} ti.t r r{b}-4.*

47 Christophe Thiers has pointed out to me the presence of what appears to be a *hapax* of a term *ti.t* in the inscriptions on the southern jamb of the gate of Amun on the second pylon of Karnak. Endowed with determinatives linked to the notions of “earth” and “terrain,” this attestation also seems to imply the notion of “fragment,” which forms the basis of the semantic field of the term *ti.t*. Consequently, this term could be understood as a “parcel of land.” The editors of the text, perceiving an assimilation of *ti.t* with the term *dni.t* (Wb V, 465, 9–466, 2) achieve at a similar result in the field of meaning (Broze & Preys 2021: 78 and n. 117).

48 “Les éléments de signification qu’un mot apporte à tout contexte” (Picoche 1992: 72).

ti.t can therefore be understood as a *nomen patientis*, a substantivized perfective passive participle derived from the verbal root *ti*, to be taken literally as “that which has been fragmented.”

We will now examine the main domains in which the noun *ti.t* is applied. Among the earliest of these, we will begin by considering the meaning of “writing sign,” which appears as one of the most notable and oldest senses of this term.

3. *Ti.t* as “writing sign”

In his work largely dedicated to the vocabulary of the image, Boyo Ockinga asserts that the meanings “Zeichen” and “Hieroglyph” constitute the “fundamental meanings” (*Grundbedeutung*) of the term *ti.t*. He further elaborates with the widely accepted idea that, since writing and images could not be distinguished in ancient Egypt, the noun *ti.t* can also generally mean “image” (*Bild*).⁴⁹

On this latter point, we find it necessary to raise several substantive objections. Thus, upon examining the various attestations of the term *ti.t* which we have compiled in this study,⁵⁰ it appears that the distinction proposed by B. Ockinga is not entirely applicable, even in the earliest occurrences of the term.

In the passage from Spell 992 of the *Coffin Texts*, the meaning of *ti.t* as “writing sign” is indeed evident, despite substantial lacunae found in both versions—P. Gardiner II and P. Gardiner III (fig. 8):

(Doc. 7) (CT VII, 204a–b) I am [...] Re-Atum. It is in order to examine the **signs** of these documents that I have come [...].⁵¹

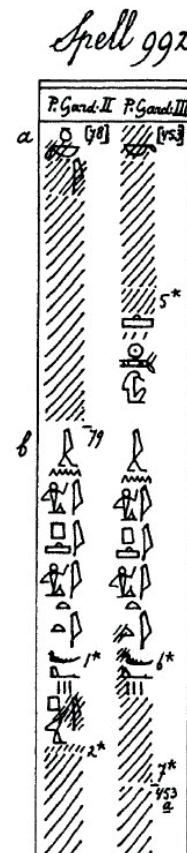


Fig. 8. Spell 992 of CT
after De Buck 1961: 204

49 Ockinga 1984: 101.

50 136 attestations to date.

51 *ink* [...] R¹-Tm(w) i~n=i ip=i ti.(w)t ' .w ipw.

The sequence , according to A. de Buck's transcription for both versions of this passage from Spell 992 (figs. 8, 9), seems to have posed considerable challenges for translators, particularly due to the presence of the final quadrat .⁵² To our knowledge, D. Meeks was the first scholar to propose the reading “the signs of these documents” for this phrase,⁵³ a translation consistent with the title of this Spell, “Becoming Thoth’s assistant and opening his briefcase.”



Fig. 9. Detail of the phrase *ti.wt ‘.w* in the version P. Gardiner II of Spell 992 of *CT* after https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y_EA10676-8

However, in the example from Spell 1006 of the same corpus (fig. 10), we will see below to what extent the meaning of “emanation” seems preferable for rendering the term *ti.t*, while “image” appears less precise:

(Doc. 8) (CT VII, 222 hk) (Hail to you Re-Atum) I am Sia who is in the middle of your eye. It is out of the question that you would deliver me to Beret (Seth?), and it is out of the question that Khameset should hold power over me, for I am your **emanation** within your sanctuary.⁵⁴

Spell 1006

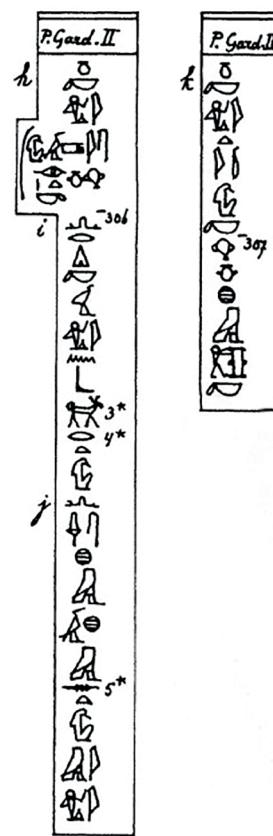


Fig. 10. Spell 1006 of *CT* after De Buck 1961: 222

52 “Je suis venu afin de compter ces signes (?)” (Barguet 1986: 542); “Si je suis venu, c'est (afin) que je puisse compter ces amulettes de bras (?)” (Carrier 2004: 2111).

53 Meeks 2018: 146.

54 *ink Si³ hry-ib ir.t=k n rd{w}=k wi n Br.t n H³ms.t im=i ink ti(.t)=k hry-ib hm=k.*

Apart from this example of the sign/emanation divide for the term *ti.t* in the *Coffin Texts*, an analysis of the sources shows that the meaning of “writing sign” is the most frequent one in the first occurrences of the term.

Thus, a passage from the autobiographical inscription of Khnumhotep II, found in his tomb at Beni Hassan. Dating back to the 12th Dynasty, it provides another of the earliest examples of the term *ti.t* with the clear meaning of “writing sign” (fig. 11):



Fig. 11. Col. 161–169 from the autobiographical inscription of Khnumhotep II at Beni Hassan after Newberry 1893: pl. 26

(Doc. 9) (Col. 161169) I have perpetuated the name of my ancestors (lit. “fathers”) which I found in a lacuna on the doors, (now) identifiable thanks to the **signs** (*ti.wt*), precise for reading, without substituting one for another. For a loyal⁵⁵ son restores the name of his predecessors. The son of Neheri, Khnumhotep, true of voice and possessor of *imakh*.⁵⁶

As we have explained elsewhere,⁵⁷ the sequence “I have perpetuated the name of my ancestors” here implies that the son, Khnumhotep, son of Neheri, restored inscriptions bearing the names of his ancestors. In this example, it is highly likely that these were the inscriptions carved in their tombs, specifically on that of his maternal grandfather Khnumhotep I (tomb no. 14), located about 150 meters south of Khnumhotep’s own hypogeum, and that of his maternal uncle Nakht (tomb no. 21), situated 60 meters further south.⁵⁸ Since Khnumhotep declares he has preserved the names of his ancestors, “identifiable thanks to the *ti.wt*,” it seems clear that the plural *ti.wt* here refers to the various hieroglyphic signs composing their names.

55 Meeks 1977: no. 77.1742, s.v. “*mnḥ*”.

56 *s'nb~n=i rn n(y) it.w=i gm~n=i ws hr sb.w rḥ m ti.wt mt(y) m šdt nn rd.t ky m 'b ky ist s' pw mnḥ srwd rn n(y) tp̄w- Nḥri s' bnmw-htp m'c-hrw nb im'ḥ(w).*

57 Rizzo 2024: 147.

58 Newberry 1893: pl. II.

This meaning of the term *ti.t* as “writing sign” demonstrates a remarkable longevity, as it appears even in the Canopus Decree,⁵⁹ a trilingual inscription—in hieroglyphic, demotic and Greek—dating to the 9th year of Ptolemy Evergetes’ reign, or 238 BCE. In line 32 of the hieroglyphic text, which mentions the creation of a cult statue for Queen Berenice, it specifies: “[...] the spelling of Berenice’s name, according to *ti.wt=f* found within the writings of the House of Life.”⁶⁰ In equivalence to the term *ti.wt*, the Greek version uses the plural *επίσημα* which can also be rendered as “signs.”⁶¹ However, given the masculine possessive suffix *=f* accompanying *ti.wt*, which refers not to Berenice but to her “name” (*rn*), due to its masculine gender, it seems more accurate to translate the sequence *ti.wt=f* as “its signs (of the name).” This example is notable as it confirms the concept introduced in the previous example, where the plural *ti.wt* can denote a lexical unit, as an assemblage of multiple juxtaposed “signs.”

While attestations of the term *ti.t* with this specific meaning of “writing sign” are confidently documented from the beginning of the First Intermediate Period up to the Greco-roman period,⁶² examination of the sources shows that the majority of these instances originate from the 18th Dynasty.

A particularly remarkable example is found in the colophon of the *Book of the Dead* of the funerary papyrus of Yuya (fig. 12),⁶³ father of Queen Tiye and father-in-law of Amenhotep III:

(Doc. 10) (col. 971) (Document) completed⁶⁴ from beginning to end as it appears (in) the (original) writing: copied, collated (col. 972), verified and corrected **sign by sign** (for) the divine father Yuya, true of voice.⁶⁵

It is acknowledged that colophons from the 18th Dynasty can sometimes present innovative developments.⁶⁶ The colophon in the *Book*

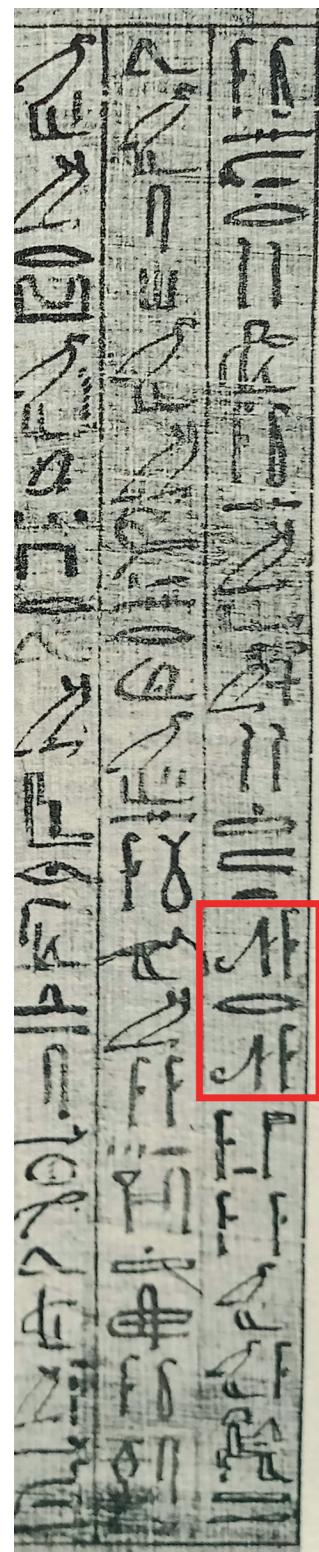


Fig. 12. Colophon of *BD* of Yuya (after Chapt. 149) – Cairo CG 51189 after Davis 1908: pl. XXXIII

59 Pfeiffer 2004.

60 ‘š hr rn n[y] Brnygjt hr *ti.wt=f* m ss.w n[y.w] Pr·nb (Urk. II, 149, 3–4).

61 Daumas 1952: 225.

62 Cf. *infra*, doc. 14.

63 P. Cairo CGC 51189, Davis 1908: pl. XXXIII.

64 Litt. “It came”. On this question, see Lenzo Marchese 2004: 359–376.

65 *iw=s pw m-h³.t=s r ph.wi=s mi gmyt ss[.w] spbr=t i shsf=t i smtr=t i smh³=t i ti.t r ti.t [n] it-ntr Ywi³ m³c hrw.*

66 Lenzo Marchese 2004: 369.

of the *Book of the Dead* of the divine father Yuya is one of the few that specifies the technical process of textual collation with such detail. Moreover, the expression *ti.t r ti.t*, “sign by sign” (fig. 12, red frame), remains a particularly original formula. According to G. Lenzo Marchese, this meticulous care on the part of the scribe continued into the Ramesside period, using the more classic closing phrase, *iw=s pw nfr m htp* “it has come (to an end) perfectly in order.”⁶⁷

However, one of the most original attestations of *ti.wt* as “signs” appears on four block-statues depicting Senenmut seated alongside Princess Neferure, the eldest daughter of Hatshepsut and Thutmose II.⁶⁸ Surrounding the princess’s head, emerging from the “cube,” several columns of text are arranged on the flat upper surface (fig. 13). While the two central columns are devoted to the relationship between Princess Neferure and her “great paternal tutor” Senenmut (col. 1–2), the outer columns (col. 3–5) present a remarkable declaration by this singular figure:

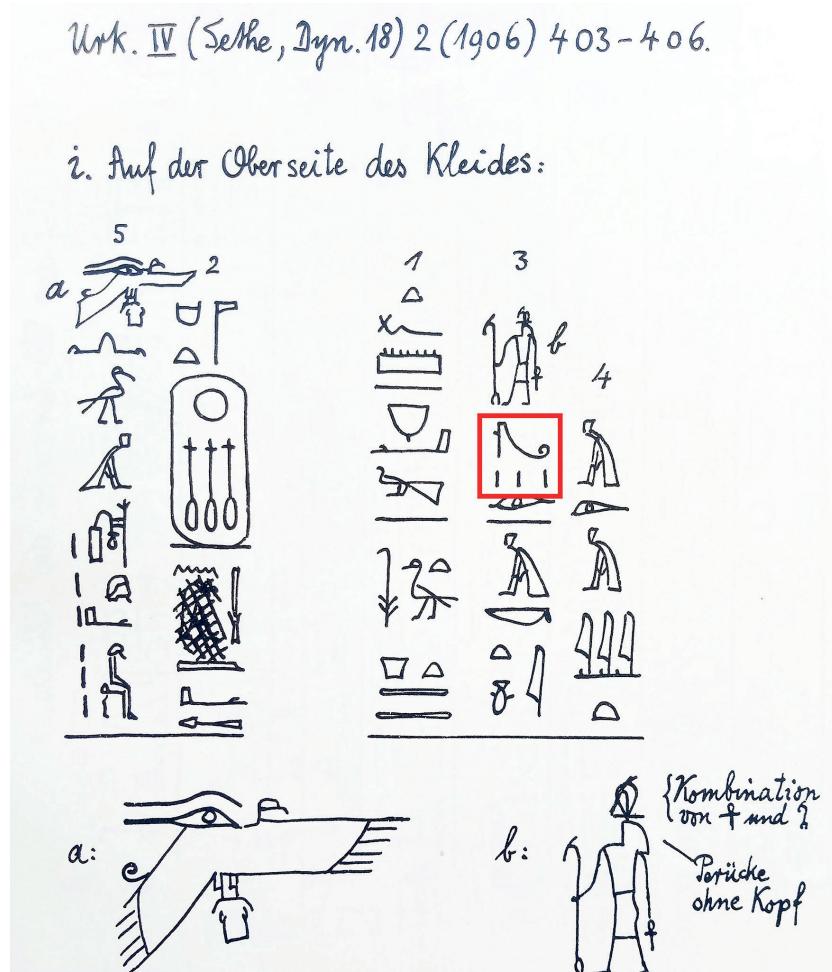


Fig. 13. Inscriptions on the upper part of the Senenmut statue-cube, Berlin 2296 after Roeder 1924: 35

67 Lenzo Marchese 2004: 364.

68 In addition to that of Berlin (2296) discussed here, three other Senenmut statues have an identical inscription on the top of the “cube:” the Cairo block-statue CGC 42114, another one found at Karnak, “en avant de la face sud du IX^e pylône”, Pillet 1922: 262–265, and the one discovered at Karnak-North, Jacquet-Gordon 1972: 139–150.

(Doc. 11) (3) *Ti.wt* which I have created thanks to what my mind conceives (4), cultivating the unexplored fields (5) of the writing (*ss*) of predecessors (lit. “writing that the predecessors did not discover”).⁶⁹

Beyond the evident literary quality of this passage, the innovations that Senenmut claims⁷⁰ concern mainly these famous *ti.wt*, which he asserts were conceived “by means of [his] mind (*ib*)”, in a clear break with scriptural tradition.

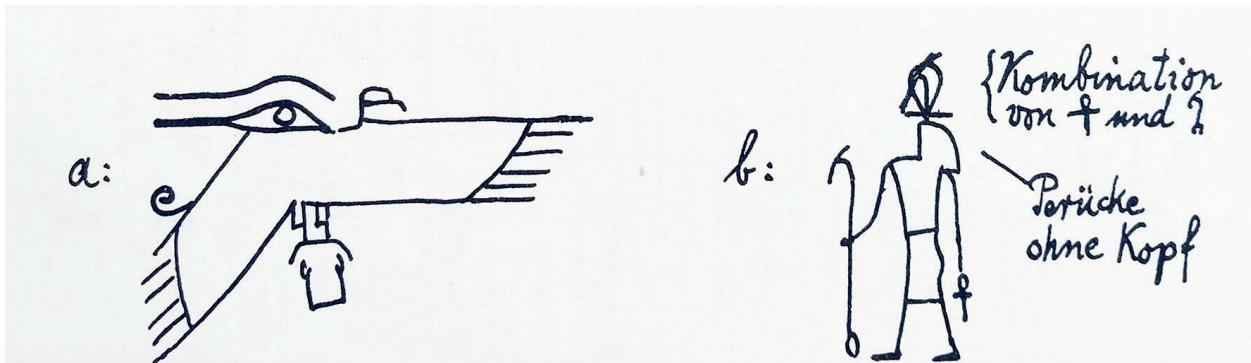


Fig. 14. Detail of fig. 13

Each of these two *ti.wt* is represented in the upper part of each column group (fig. 14). Regarding the left *ti.t* (a), it depicts the vulture goddess Nekhbet in flight, with an *udjat* eye resting on her folded wing and her claws embracing a *ka* sign. As for the right *ti.t* (b), the assembly is even more enigmatic, as it seems to show a likely divine figure holding a *was* scepter in the right hand and an *ankh* cross in the left. A wig is depicted in a headless space, above which are intertwined the upper parts of *was* and *ankh* signs.

Although in his declaration Senenmut openly associates his hybrid compositions *ti.wt* with the field of writing (*ss*), they should likely be distinguished from more traditional composite hieroglyphic signs—which primarily consist of signs formed by combining two simple signs—compositions probably known before the Old Kingdom.⁷¹ Furthermore, one cannot help but draw a parallel between these hybrid signs created by Senenmut and certain three-dimensional “rebus-images” seen within the general repertoire of Egyptian artistic works, such as the First Dynasty libation dish

69 *ti.wt ir(w.t)~n(=i) m k(?)t ib=i m ir(w) m sb.t n gm(w.t) m ss.w tp(y).w-*. I would like to thank Marc Gabolde for sharing with me this fine literary translation (in French) of his own, which I have included in these lines.

70 Vernus 1995: 116; Winand 2005: 79–104 (in particular 96); Stauder 2013: 77–125 (in particular 118, n. 322–323).

71 Collombert 2022: 131.

held at the Metropolitan Museum (no. 19.2.16.) or the statue of Ramses II as a child housed in the Cairo Museum (CGC 6245).⁷²

This likely lack of distinction by the Egyptians in attributing the category of *ti.t* manifestations to either the domain of writing or to that of plastic creations is explicitly conveyed in a statement by Rekhmire, vizier of Thutmose III. In the long autobiographical inscription that adorns the walls of his tomb (TT 100), he clarifies his relationship with the *ti.wt* signs:

(Doc. 12) There is absolutely no **sign** (*ti.t*) whose usage (*b:k=s*) I do not know, whether it be completed drawings (*qd.wt tm.wt*), complex writings (*sš.w hpš.w*) or ancient rubrics (*tms.w isw.w*), for I am well-versed in each of them.⁷³

As evidenced in this proclamation, it appears that for the ancient Egyptians, the term *ti.t* seemingly encompassed both the sphere of writing (*sš*) and that of plastic forms (*qd.wt*) indiscriminately. In connection with the broad semantic range of the term *ti.t*, this autobiographical sequence from Rekhmire clearly indicates his ability to master all fields of application related to these “signs,” whether artistic, scriptural, intellectual, or even magical in nature.

Thus, one observes again this amalgamation of plastic and scriptural expressions characteristic of the *ti.t* sign within the context of magical incantations. In a magical papyrus discovered at Deir el-Medina (no. 1),⁷⁴ a formula provides some clarification regarding this specific use of a *ti.t*:

(Doc. 13) (This formula) is to be recited into the ears of a man (= the patient) who is under the influence of the dead, and you shall make a *ti.t* for yourself by drawing it on a fresh sheet of papyrus.

As noted by H.W. Fischer-Elfert,⁷⁵ this *ti.t* is depicted on the document in the form of a dwarf, a figure sketched in black ink (fig. 15, red frame). This incomplete motif faces the two lines of hieratic writing in red ink that constitute the incantatory text.



Fig. 15. Detail of a magical hieratic papyrus from Deir el-Medina after Fischer-Elfert 2022: 277, fig. 173

72 Brémont, 2023: fig. 5a and 5b.

73 *n[n] ti.t r-sy hm~n=i b:k=s qd.wt tm.wt sš.w hpš.w tms.w isw.w hmw=kwi bnty=sn* (Urk. IV, 1082, 2–3). On this sequence, Hornung 1994: 179.

74 Černý 1978: 9–11 and pl. 13–13a. According to G. Posener, this papyrus dates from the 19th Dynasty (Merenptah–Sethy II), whereas Černý seems to favour the 20th Dynasty (Černý 1978: 2).

75 Fischer-Elfert 2022: 276–277.

In this example, it also appears challenging to determine the precise nature of the *ti.t* mentioned in this magic formula. Indeed, the referent of this *ti.t* is represented by a stylized depiction of a dwarf, closely resembling the hieroglyphic sign representing a  (A282).⁷⁶ Thus, once again, if the term *ti.t* is understood to mean “sign,” it appears likely that associating it specifically with either the sphere of writing or that of plastic creation would be in vain. As H.G. Fischer expressed with regard to the probable subordination of the artistic domain to that of writing, “Egyptian art is entirely ‘hieroglyphic’”⁷⁷

Furthermore, regarding the intentions guiding the composition of these hybrid *ti.wt*, certain authors have suggested that Senenmut employed the codes of “cryptographic writing,”⁷⁸ also known as “enigmatic writing.” Whatever interpretation may be derived from his “chimeric” creations, the precise choice of words used by Senenmut in the sequence seems to indicate that, above all, he sought to demonstrate the excellence of his erudition through these compositions.⁷⁹ This motivation is especially evident in the portion of his discourse where Senenmut declares that his *ti.wt* were “crafted by what my mind (*ib*) conceives,” using expressions previously reserved for royal phrasing before later entering the public domain.⁸⁰ More generally, Senenmut’s literary pursuit appears akin to that of certain scribes, such as the *wab*-priest Khâkheperre-seneb, who boasted of engaging in an original intellectual endeavour aimed at composing words, phrases, and verses hitherto unknown.⁸¹

The beginning of a dictionary likely dating from the first century CE (P. Carlsberg VII) highlights how the use of writing signs (*ti.wt*) entails more than mere technical mastery or an intellectual exercise, as this practice brings the scribe into contact with the hidden and obscure world of the gods:

(Doc. 14) Explanation of the use (*b³k*) of **signs** (*ti.wt*), explanation of difficulties, revelation of what is hidden, clarification of obscurities... elucidation of what emanates ( ) from the august ancestor gods.⁸²

76 A passage in the magical papyrus Leiden I 347 contains an analogous device: the term *ti.t*, occurring in a magical formula, is associated with the sign of the jackal of Wepwawet standing on a standard (E 18); see Beck 2023: 116 and pl. XII, 9.

77 Fischer 1986: 24–25.

78 In this regard, Canon É. Drioton, a specialist in deciphering this so-called “cryptographic” writing, proposed an interpretation of these “chimeric” signs of Senenmut, in which he read the *prenomen* of Queen Hatshepsut (Maatkare) and, with somewhat greater boldness, her *nomen*, Hatshepsut (Drioton 1938: 231–246, with very good photographs of the signs analysed in pl. XXXI).

79 Werning 2022: 205–206.

80 Vernus 1995: 115.

81 Vernus 1995: 1–24. For a somewhat different perspective on the motivations of this individual, Mathieu 2023: 375–386.

82 P. Carlsberg VII, 1–2 (Iversen 1958: 13, 32 [pl.]). This translation follows the one proposed by D. Meeks (Meeks 2018: 147).

It is notable in this text the presence of the rare term *gš/g(β)š* (𓁃 𓁃),⁸³ which E. Iversen translates here as “emanate.”⁸⁴ Although this interpretation of the word is the subject to discussion,⁸⁵ it seems to us entirely appropriate in this context, insofar as, as we shall elaborate further, the term *ti.t* must systematically be associated with various types of “emanations” originating from the world of the gods. Consequently, the expertise of scholars lies not only in composing and deciphering the *ti.wt* signs but, more importantly, in uncovering the “*latences à révéler*” they contain.⁸⁶ In this context, we may understand that the signs *ti.wt* constitute one of the various manifestations stemming from divine emanations and, as P. Vernus notes, the literati thus become the mediators of the gods.⁸⁷

To conclude this section devoted to the meaning of “writing sign” as it pertains to the term *ti.t*, one might now ask in what way this correspondence is determined by the notion of “fragment,” which we previously suggested as the etymon of the term *ti.t*?

This question raises several points for consideration. First, it is generally accepted that most hieroglyphic signs transcribe a visible or even tangible reality and that, through their continual creation over time, the ancient Egyptians established “*un système ouvert, doté d’un répertoire de signes qui est en théorie presque indéfiniment extensible*.”⁸⁸ Beyond the obvious formal and scriptural characteristics of hieroglyphic signs, it is worth noting that each one might, for the ancient Egyptians, represent an “atom” of Creation.⁸⁹

In the temple of Edfu, several inscriptions specify how certain gods—most notably Thoth, the “master of writing,” but also Khonsu, “who created writing” (*ir[w] sš*)—“invented the signs of writing (*šš[w] ti.wt*) while they were not yet formed.”⁹⁰ Moreover, in the third western chamber of the same sanctuary, it is said of Thoth:

(Doc. 15) Venerable god in Behdet, master of writing (*nb sš*), who adjudicates speech (*wd[w] md.t*), who invented the signs of writing (*šš[w] ti.wt*), who established the magic rituals, (in short) he who created everything that exists on earth (*qm³[w] wnn m t³*).

83 Wb V, 156, 5–6 (s.v. *gšš*, “wegschütten, ausgießen”); TLA, Lemma 858492 (“schütten, wegschütten, to pour, verser”); Meeks 1977, no. 77.4616 (“verser”); Erichsen 1954: 594 (“ausgießen”). We observe a fairly uniform semantic field for this term, with the meanings of “to pour, to pour out, to empty.” For example, a magical papyrus from the 21th Dynasty (Caire CG 58039) mentions “pouring (*gšš*) milk into the mouth” and, at Edfu, in a hippopotamus sacrifice scene, the king is seen pouring (*gšš*) grain-*tehthet* into the mouth of a goose (Naville 1870: pl. XI, l. 15).

84 Iversen 1958: 14, 15, n. 3.

85 Meeks 2018: 264, n. 23. If, in our example, it is indeed the same verb *gš*, *g(β)š*, one can readily discern the shift from the primary meaning, “to pour, to pour out, to empty” to a more metaphorical sense, “to flow, to emanate.”

86 Vernus 1995: 111, § 24 (expression quoted by Meeks 2018: 149).

87 Vernus 1995: 120.

88 Collombert 2022: 126.

89 This use of the term “atom” borrows from the atomist vision of the universe first established by Leucippus and Democritus in the 5th century BCE (Salem 1997).

90 Edfou II, 68, 1.

This latter example seems to indicate that the ancient Egyptians indeed regarded the signs of writing, *ti.wt*, as parts of the world created by their gods. This fragmentation of the world, which serves its representation and of which the system of the signs—*ti.wt* is a testament, remains evident in the specific uses assigned to each of these signs. The scribe Senenmut reminds us of this principle in a composition that highlights the scriptural powers of the king:

(Doc. 16) He precisely allocates the sign *ti.t* according to its uses (*b³k.w=s*), as the deity has determined and carried out.⁹¹

As D. Meeks points out, “*Le hiéroglyphe n'est pas un simple signe d'écriture, mais renvoie, à travers ce qu'il représente, à un élément de la création et, par extension, à sa dimension cultuelle et culturelle.*”⁹² From these initial observations, one may deduce that, for the ancient Egyptians, each *ti.t* sign corresponds to a symbolic “fragment” of the created world.⁹³

Regarding the expression *mdw.w-ntr*, literally “divine words,” it would appear to more likely evoke the totality of the writing system created by the gods.⁹⁴ Developed from its oral transmission to its graphic form, in the capacity of “*hiéroglyphes-paroles*” according to D. Meeks,⁹⁵ the literal meaning of the expression *mdw.w-ntr* implies that this symbolic universe was progressively revealed to humans by the gods. On a more structural level, if the expression *mdw.w-ntr* designates the writing system in its entirety, the one intended to describe all of Creation, then the *ti.wt* would more specifically denote its various “fragments.”⁹⁶

A second line of inquiry can still be sketched regarding the fundamental nature of the sign *ti.t* as a “fragment.”

In the use of the plural *ti.wt* found in the examples cited earlier, notably in the inscription of Khnumhotep II (fig. 11) and in a passage from the Canopus Decree (see above), it was noted that this plural marker is linked to the mention of proper nouns. Following the interpretation proposed by Canon Drioton concerning the *ti.wt* compositions created by Senenmut, it can be suggested that these hybrid compositions represent the *prenomen* and the *nomen* of Queen Hatshepsut, whose connections with the figures represent on the block-statue have been recalled.⁹⁷ From these occur-

91 šbšb=f *ti.t* r *b³k.w=s* *mi ntr š³ st ir st* (*Urk. IV*, 1074, 8–9).

92 “The hieroglyph is not merely a writing sign; rather, through what it represents, it refers to an element of creation and, by extension, to its cultic and cultural dimension” (Meeks 2018: 147).

93 Plotinus, born in Egypt in the 3rd century AD, perpetuated a similar principle. In the eighth book of his Fifth Ennead, he states that “The wise men of Egypt [...] did not use the letters that express words and propositions, that represent sounds and statements, but *they represented objects by hieroglyphs* (ἀγάλματα) and symbolically designated each of them by a particular emblem in their mysteries.”

94 Lastly, on this matter: Allon 2023.

95 Meeks 2018: 143.

96 Meeks 2018: 145–147. However, this idea must be regarded as highly deductive, since, to the best of our knowledge, the two terms—*mdw-ntr* and *ti.t* in its sense of “sign”—do not appear simultaneously in the same source.

97 See above.

rences, one might deduce that each *ti.t* sign is potentially meant to group with others to form words. Consequently, in this perspective, the *ti.t* signs appear virtually as fragments of a broader lexical unit or, more specifically, as in the example of Senenmut's hybrid compositions, as the components of a more complex construction.

Earlier, we mentioned how the “writing signs” (*ti.wt*) are fundamentally perceived as “emanations” from the realm of the gods. Building on this, we will now examine the extent to which the term *ti.t* can more generally signify “emanation.” This meaning, which can be understood as a dynamic expression of the notion of “fragment,” thus seems particularly apt for conveying the term *ti.t* insofar as, regardless of the form of its manifestation, this “emanation” is initially projected by the gods into the earthly world. It therefore seems important to emphasise that the *ti.wt* writing signs, taken as a whole, constitute only one facet of the more general phenomenon that we shall now examine, namely the genesis and dissemination of the *ti.wt* emanations throughout all the states of the world brought into being by the gods.

4. *Ti.t* as an “emanation” of the divine

The emanatist doctrine appears to have an Eastern origin. It is said that Pythagoras, in the 6th century BCE, studied it in Hindustan before imparting its precepts to his disciplines upon his return to Croton. Subsequently, this cosmogonic system influenced various “schools”: the hermetic tradition, Plotinus and later Proclus among the Neoplatonists, the latter teaching the principles of this doctrine in Egypt. Manichaeism, in turn, regarded as the “fourth school” of Emanatism, was also taught throughout the East. Without delving into excessive details, we might conclude this brief overview by noting that Emanatism later spread intensely across the Arab-Muslim and Western worlds, from the Middle Ages until the end of the 19th century.⁹⁸

As for the foundational principles of Emanatism, Narciso Muñiz defines them in the following terms:

(Doc. 17) The First Cause, as conceived by Emanatism, the efficient cause of all life, is a luminous nucleus or focus situated at the core of the Universe; from this center emanate all immaterial elements, like effluences comparable to the irradiations of sunlight [...] Cosmic life, according to Emanatism, is Panentheism; every agent is divine. The world is full of Gods: πάντα πλήρη θεῶν. God is everywhere by his essence, by his presence and by his power; he gives his own being to all things [...] The effluences of his essence (God) engender universal life, and God sees everything within himself, because it is in himself that everything occurring in his emanations takes place.⁹⁹

98 Muñiz 1914: 295–331.

99 Muñiz 1914: 297–299 (here translated from French).

It is not, however, a question here of subjecting *ti.t* and its “emanations” to a singular function as mere agents of an original Emanatism, for which ancient Egyptian civilisation would constitute the sole source.¹⁰⁰ Nevertheless, certain insights derived from the analysis of the term *ti.t* seem to resonate with this ancient doctrine, which appears to have laid its foundations in the Oriental world and with which the principles of the cosmogonic model of creation *ex nihilo* would later come into rivalry.

The connections between the term *ti.t* and the various processes of emanation referenced in certain Egyptian sources¹⁰¹ seem to emerge more explicitly in several attestations of the term *ti.t*, which we shall address further below.

First and foremost, it must be emphasised that the manifestations of *ti.t*, regardless of the nature or form they may take, systematically originate from the divine realm, even if, in most cases, their “receivers” may be human in nature.¹⁰² This cardinal principle of the divine origin of *ti.t* is notably highlighted in Spell 1006 of the *Coffin Texts* (see fig. 10), where the term is determined by the sign for the “seated deity”  (A40).

Furthermore, our investigation into the origin of *ti.t* has led us to associate its probable etymon with the notion of fragmentation. Thus, according to this hypothesis, the term *ti.t* would, by definition, be considered a “fragment” proceeding from the divine. However, this sense of “fragment” seems to confine the term to its “resultative” phase in the process of transmitting the divine flow with which *ti.t* is associated. According to our hypothesis, rendering *ti.t* as “fragment,” while apparently more consistent with its etymology, perhaps places undue emphasis on the more “inert” aspect of the process to which this term pertains. For these reasons, in the majority of its usages, we propose translating *ti.t* as “emanation,”¹⁰³ an interpretation that more accurately reflects the dynamic nature of the process with which *ti.t* is inextricably linked.¹⁰⁴

100 Certain Egyptologists of the 19th century appear to have drawn upon principles illuminated by the emanatist school of thought to interpret the cosmogonic models attested in the sources of ancient Egypt (e.g., Wilkinson 1837: 454–455, 473, n. 2, 480–481, 500; De Rougé 1860: 76, 78–79). This approach seems to have undergone some refinement among more recent scholars (Assmann 1990: 172; 2015b). For instance, in her work largely dedicated to Egyptian cosmogony, S. Bickel describes the “intransitive model” defined by J. Assmann in the following terms: “[It] represents the autogenous evolution of the world, which differentiates itself from a primordial energy—a single deity who becomes self-aware, materializes, and creates other constituents by emanating from its own substance” (Bickel 1994: 127 [in french]). For further considerations on this topic in the same work, see 86–87, 127–128, 257, 278).

101 Cf. *supra*, n. 99.

102 As suggested by the preceding example attributed to Senenmut (doc. 11), certain eminent scholars appear to have been empowered to create (*ir*) their own *ti.wt* signs.

103 Breasted is, as far as we know, one of the only scholars to have attributed the meaning of “emanation” to the term *ti.t*, in the expression *ti.t Tm(w)* found in the *Memphite Theology* (Breasted 1901: 50).

104 This fundamentally “animated” nature of the *ti.wt*, in all their manifestations, can be observed in a passage from the *Book of Thoth* (Col. 10, Line 7), in which the hieroglyphic signs (*ti.wt*) are regarded as “living entities” with whom their creator may engage in dialogue. Cf. Jasnow & Zauzich 2005: 260–262, 265 (Line 7); Pries 2016: 457–458.

Indeed, the term “emanation,” which defines both “the act of emanating” and “the result of this act,”¹⁰⁵ can be understood in this context to bring into perspective these two phases of the process, with the term “emanation” implicitly raising the question of origin. Finally, in translating *ti.t* as “emanation,” it seems tempting to associate this term with the lexical category encompassing other secretions of the Egyptian gods, such as air, semen, sweat, egg, or spittle, to name the most frequently mentioned in the sources.¹⁰⁶ In several attestations provided as examples below (doc. 18–19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 26, 27, 30), we shall see how these predominantly physiological analogies can be articulated.

4.1. The king, the queen or a member of the royal family as the receptacle of the god’s “emanation” (*ti.t*)

The meaning of “emanation” associated with the term *ti.t* appears to be well illustrated in the inscriptions in the White Chapel, a monument dating from the reign of Senusret I, now displayed in the open-air museum of the Great Temple of Amun at Karnak.

In one of the bas-reliefs in this Chapel (fig. 16),¹⁰⁷ the scene depicts Pharaoh Senusret Kheperkare in the centre, accompanied by Montu, who places his hands on the king’s shoulders. Facing them, Amun-Re extends his right arm toward the king, presenting an *ankh* cross toward his face. Between the king and Amun, a vertical inscription reads:



Fig. 16. Bas-relief from the White Chapel (pillar 2.n, scene 10, KIU1107) after <http://sith.humanum.fr/karnak/1107>,
© Antoine Chéné

105 In French, see *CNRTL*, s.v. “emanation,” <https://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/%C3%A9manation> (accessed 07.04.2025).

106 Bickel 1994: 86–87, 127, 148, n. 89, 235–236.

107 I would like to thank Philippe Collombert for bringing to my attention this important attestation of the term *ti.t*.

(Doc. 18) Words to be spoken (by Amun-Re to the king): “I have given life and power to your nostril, *ti.t sn.t*.”¹⁰⁸

P. Lacau has provided three variants of this sequence from 18th Dynasty sources: the temple of Amada, the temple of Buhen and a reused block in the foundations of the temple of Khnum at Elephantine.¹⁰⁹ Despite these parallels, the conclusion of this god’s speech has raised certain interpretative challenges.

The rare word  that closes the god’s speech (fig. 17) is clearly spelled out in the variant from the temple of Amada  *sn.t*.¹¹⁰ Given the scene’s context, we propose interpreting this as the nominalized form of the verb *sn*, “to smell, to breathe,”¹¹¹ which we then render as “breath.”¹¹² The referent for the omitted suffix pronoun (=i) is illustrated by the god’s presence, could therefore suggest interpreting the phrase *sn.t(=i)* as “my breath.” As we indicated earlier, the general context of this bas-relief leads us to interpret the term *ti.t* as “emanation” and, accordingly, we propose reading the entire inscription as follows:

(Doc. 19) Words to be spoken (by Amun-Re to the king): “I have given life and power to your nostril, the **emanation of my breath**.”



Fig. 17. Detail of fig. 16,
© A. Chéné

If one accepts the principle of this translation, then Amun-Re’s gesture of presenting the *ankh* symbol to the king’s nostril can be understood as a metaphor for the process of transmitting to the king an “emanation” from this god. This vital flow is represented here by the “breath” of Amun-Re, transferred to the king through the medium of the *ankh* sign.¹¹³ In other examples, this action of

108 *dd mdw in d~n(=i) n=k ‘nḥ w̄s r šr.t=k ti.t sn.t(=i)*.

109 Lacau 1956: 76–77.

110 Gauthier 1913: 158 (the photograph of the bas-relief [pl. XXXVIA] is unfortunately of poor quality).

111 Wb IV, 153, 8–154, 7.

112 While the predominant meaning of the verb *sn* is “to smell,” closely aligned with the sense of “to inhale,” a verb *sn* also appears to be attested with the complementary meaning of “to exhale” (TLA Lemma 856219). In this example from the White Chapel, it seems that, beyond this technical distinction, the attestation of *sn.t* should be interpreted in the neutral sense of “breathing,” encompassing the full cycle of inhalation and exhalation. Indeed, the mechanism for the transmission of the “emanation” (*ti.t*) is systematically based on a “vertical” connection between the emitter and the receiver, as illustrated by the bas-relief. Here, *ti.t* appears as the result of the transmission of air “emanated” from the god toward the king’s nostril, a process facilitated through the medium of the *ankh* sign.

113 On the subject of the creation by “expiration” (*n̄b/nfw.t*) of the god, Bickel 1994: 78–83.

presentation by a deity of the *ankh* symbol, sometimes associated with the sign of the sail *t³w*,¹¹⁴ is said to enable the god to bestow his “breath of life” (*t³w n[y] ‘nḥ* or *swḥ.t n[y.t] ‘nḥ*).¹¹⁵ This benevolent action is typically performed by Amun, “god of air and wind,”¹¹⁶ though other deities may also be involved.¹¹⁷

This occurrence of the term *ti.t* within the inscriptions of the White Chapel is remarkable in several respects. Firstly, it illustrates how the “emanations” (*ti.wt*) should be understood as elements emerging from the “vital flow” originating in the divine realm, “emanations” that can manifest in a variety of forms, more or less tangible. Additionally, in principle, these divine “emanations” (*ti.wt*) can give rise to the countless “fragments” of Creation, as varied in form as the hieroglyphic signs that, as we have seen, serve as symbols of this diversity. However, as we shall observe later, the sources more commonly highlight the emergence of this “emanation” (*ti.t*) through various recurring manifestations such as deities, kings and private individuals, as well as formal representations of the gods in statues, reliefs, attributes or amulets.¹¹⁸ Finally, in certain cases, as exemplified by the White Chapel, the “emanation” (*ti.t*) can also manifest as immaterial expressions, such as the “ankh-life and *was*-power” granted to Senusret I, after inhaling the “emanation” (*ti.t*) transmitted via the breath of Amun-Re. The strength of these ethereal connections characterizing the “emanation” (*ti.t*) is sometimes likened to the generative power of the god’s seed (*mtw.t*), as reflected in the context of Hatshepsut’s divine birth:

(Doc. 20) (The gods address Amun) She is perfect (*twt*, lit. “complete”), your daughter from your **emanation** (*ti.t=k*), your potent seed (*mtw.t=k spd.t*), for you have imparted to her your *akh*-spirit, your *sekhem*-power, your *wash*-prestige, your *heka*-magic, your *weret*-crown, while she was (still) in her mother’s womb.¹¹⁹

While the physical bond formed through the intermediary of the “emanation” (*ti.t*) is sometimes equated to the efficacy of the *mtw.t* seed in the process of procreating the future queen, in other cases, this generative function is symbolized by the metaphor of the *swḥ.t* “egg”, as seen in the “rhetorical” stela of Ramses II at Abu Simbel:

(Doc. 21) (l. 2) [...] Ramesses, endowed with life, like Re, forever and ever, the perfect god, the egg of Re (*swḥ.t R*), the true **emanation** (*ti.t sb[?]q[.t]*) [...]¹²⁰

114 Thiers 2021: 541–562.

115 Sethe 1929: 90–102; Goyon 1972: 208–211; Klotz 2012: 61–62; Davies 2018: 128–129.

116 Thiers 2021: 552, n. 51.

117 Other deities, such as Re–Horakhty, Shu, Khnum, Khonsu, Harsomtus, Thoth and Osiris, may also be responsible for this same gesture, cf. Leitz 2002: vol. IV, 767–768.

118 Of course, this seemingly heterogeneous list can be completed by examining new sources.

119 *twt is s³.t=k n[y].t ti.t=k mtw.t spd.t rd~n=k n=s 3ḥ=k [s]ḥm=k w³ś=k ḥk³=k wr.t=k iw=s m b.t n[y.t] ms.wt=s* (Urk. IV, 244, 5–9).

120 *R³mss mry 1mn d[w] ‘nḥ mi R³ q.t nhḥ ntr nfr swḥ.t R³ ti.t sb[?]q[.t]*, (Cairo JE 66570: KRI II, 312, 6).

From the New Kingdom onwards, these intimate bonds between god and king (or queen) are frequently expressed in phrases such as “*ti.t (n[y.t]) + divine name*”. Among these, *ti.t (n[y.t]) R'*, “emanation of Re,”¹²¹ is by far the most common, but this syntactic structure is also attested with other deities such as Atum, Re-Horakhty, Amun, Harsiesis, Chepri, Horus, Tatenen, the Ennead, Nu and the Lord of All (*Nb-r-drw*).¹²²

One of the earliest attestations of the epithet *ti.t R'* appears on a stela dated to Year 25 of Thutmose III at Serabit el-Khadim.¹²³ At the beginning of the king's eulogy, it reads:

(Doc. 22) (Thutmose III) The perfect god, lord of joy, lord of crowns, who seized the white crown, who united the two mighties in life and power, **emanation of Re** (*ti.t R'*), his progeny (*mstyw=f*), to whom he has granted dominion over the Two Banks.¹²⁴

Once again, this example highlights the generative power ascribed to the “emanation” (*ti.t*), as the king is successively referred to as an “emanation of Re” (*ti.t R'*) and as his “progeny” (*mstyw=f*). Later, the same framework can be observed at Karnak, in a scene in the first hall of the Chapel of Osiris *Heqa-djet*, where the Divine Adoratrice of Amun Amenirdis I is simultaneously described as an “emanation of Re” and “issued from his flesh (of Re):”¹²⁵

(Doc. 23) [...] Amenirdis, alive, who has appeared with the white crown, **emanation of Re**, issued from his flesh (*m h'w=f*), who appeared on the throne of Tefnut.¹²⁶

After reviewing some occurrences of the term *ti.t* where the king or a member of the royal family benefits from the “emanations” from various gods, we shall now consider the specific case where the “emanation” (*ti.t*) originates precisely from the god Iunmutef and its effects are transmitted to the child-king or to certain priests.

121 In *Sinuhe* (B 216–217), the king is described as *ntr* ՚ and *mitti R'*, the latter epithet still being rare (Blumenthal 1970: 98).

122 Leitz 2002: vol. VII, 364–367.

123 Gardiner & Peet 1917: pl. LXIV, no. 196.

124 *ntr nfr nb ՚w.t-ib nb h'w.it(w).t nfr bnm(w) sbm.ty m 'nb w'is ti.t R' mstyw=f rd(w) n=f hq ՚ ldb.wy* (Urk. IV, 886, 16–887, 3).

125 Room 1, east wall, 2nd register, column on the left (KIU1403, <http://sith.huma-num.fr/karnak/1403> [accessed 07.04.2025]). However, this inscription should be linked to the bas-relief on the north wall, showing Amenirdis offering wine to Amun (KIU1430, <http://sith.huma-num.fr/karnak/1430> [accessed 07.04.2025]). On this concordance, Ayad 2009: 40.

126 [...] *Imn-ir-d-st 'nb=tii h'(w.t) m hd.t ti.t R' pr(w.t) m h'w=f h'=ti hr s.t Tfawt.*

4.2. The child-king and some priests presented as “emanation” (*ti.t*) of the god Iunmutef

Within the corpus of attestations of the term *ti.t*, a few examples are notable for their explicit association with the god Iunmutef.¹²⁷

Seemingly attested in sources from the 5th Dynasty and mentioned as late as the 3rd century CE, Iunmutef—literally “the pillar of his mother”—first appears as an epithet of the god Horus, son of Isis.¹²⁸ During the New Kingdom, the form Horus-Iunmutef is documented in sources. More broadly, Iunmutef is viewed as a personification of filial devotion or as an emblem of the royal heir. Some scholars even consider him “an anthropomorphisation of the abstract concept of kingship.”¹²⁹ Dressed in the leopard-skin robe, he most often wears the sidelock of childhood, indicating his identity as a child-god. With his consistently anthropomorphic appearance, Iunmutef is generally associated with the *sem*-priest, signifying his participation in funerary rituals and, especially, the Opening of the Mouth ritual.

A notable example of a phrase combining *ti.t* and *Iwn-mw.t=f* appears in the “Text of Youth” of Thutmose III, inscribed on the southern wall of the “Palace of Ma’at” in the Great Temple of Amun at Karnak.¹³⁰ Recalling elements of his early years with often metaphorical expressions, the future king recounts:

(Doc. 24) (l. 7) I was in the appearance of the *ti.t* of Iunmutef, like young Horus at Chemnis, standing in the northern *wadjyt* hall.¹³¹

In this example, many scholars have translated *ti.t* as “image,”¹³² its most commonly accepted sense, likely influenced by the juxtaposition with *qm³w*, meaning “form” or “appearance.” However, translating *qm³w ti.t [ny.t] Iwn-mw.t=f* as “appearance of the image of Iunmutef”—a chain of terms within the vocabulary of form—seems redundant. It appears more fitting to understand *ti.t* here in its primary sense of “emanation,” thereby rendering *ti.t Iwnmw.t=f* as “emanation of Iunmutef.” In this context, the future king seems to be expressing that, as a child, he adopted the appearance (*qm³w*) of one of the earthly manifestations of the child-god Iunmutef. As a result, we might imagine that the young prince embodied this “emanation” of the god Iunmutef by wearing the sidelock of youth, a feature that serves as a synecdoche of this divine representation. In our view, what the term “image” fails to capture precisely in this context is that the expression *ti.t Iwn-mw.t=f* is to be

127 On the matter, see essentially Rummel 2003 and 2010.

128 Corteggiani 2007: 234–235, s.v. “lounmoutef”.

129 Gregory 2013: 27.

130 *Urk.* IV 156, 13–175, 13 and KIU 944, <http://sith.huma-num.fr/karnak/944> (accessed 07.04.2025).

131 *īw=i m qm³w ti.t Iwn-mw.t=f mi nḥnw ḥr m ḥb-bit ḥ=kwi m w³dy.t mḥt.t.*

132 Some authors have rendered *ti.t* in this context as “in the capacity of” (Caminos 1978: 157 [Pl. 43, fig. 2]) or “in the role of” (Ockinga 1984: 101) or “Wesen” (Rummel 2010: 11–12).

understood as a formal manifestation brought into being by the god himself. In other words, we consider that the phrase *ti.t Iwn-mw.t=f*, the “emanation of Iunmutef,” refers to the various consubstantial forms of the god that are projected by the same deity onto the terrestrial plane.

During the New Kingdom, other examples of the expression “emanation of Iunmutef” (*ti.t Iwn-mw.t=f*) no longer apply to members of the royal family but to high-ranking individuals.¹³³ In the main examples from this period, it is noteworthy that this title is systematically included in the titulary of a High Priest of Ptah, who notably held the titles of “Greatest of the directors of craftsmen” (*wr hrp hmw.w*) and “*sem*-priest.” It is even suggested that the title “emanation of Iunmutef” could, in certain instances, replace that of *sem*-priest.¹³⁴

In the inscription that unfolds on the base of the statue of Ptahmes, now preserved in Florence,¹³⁵ after the enumeration of remarkable titles—prince, governor, chancellor of the king of Lower Egypt, sole friend, *sem*-priest, Greatest of the directors of craftsmen—of this high-ranking official serving during the reign of Amenhotep III, a few phrases from his speech can be read:

(Doc. 25) The perfect god (= the king) ordered me to take charge of prestigious functions, he entrusted me with the position of Greatest of the directors of craftsmen as well as that of **emanation of this Iunmutef** (*ti.t Iwn-mw.t=f pw*), for he knew my intentions and the excellence of my words.¹³⁶

First, this text attests to the fact that the title of *ti.t Iwn-mw.t=f* is regarded as a “prestigious function” (*i3.t mnḥ.t*), on the same level as that of Greatest of the directors of craftsmen. Furthermore, the presence of the demonstrative pronoun *pw*, “this”, in the sequence “[...] of this Iunmutef,” strengthens the connection between this title and that of the *sem*-priest. Indeed, in this example, the referent of this anaphoric pronoun designates the same statue of Ptahmes and, more specifically, certain elements related to its appearance. Thus, in this statue, this Great Chief of the craftsmen wears a leopard-skin cloak tied at the shoulders, a short beard and a sidelock falling on the right shoulder, attributes commonly associated with the god Iunmutef and the *sem*-priest.¹³⁷

Finally, it is only during the reign of Ramesses II that his fourth son, Khaemwaset, adopts the simple title of “Iunmutef,” or sometimes “Horus-Iunmutef,”¹³⁸ signifying his complete assimilation with the heir-god.¹³⁹ In contrast, the title of “emanation of Iunmutef,” held until this period by some

133 18th Dyn.: statue of Ptahmes (Florence 1790); naophore statue of Meryptah (Louvre N 61 = A 60, with variant *ti.t iqr Iwn-mw.t=f*); 19th Dyn.: door jamb of Ptahmes (London UC 14477); statue of Pahemnetcher (Cairo JE 89046).

134 Rummel 2003: 260.

135 Florence 1790; Schiaparelli 1887: 197–206 (no. 1505); Maystre 1992: 273–277.

136 *iw wd~n ntr nfr rd.t ir.yt i3.wt mnḥ.wt rd~n=f wi r wr hrp hmw.w r ti.t n[y].t Iwn-mw.t=f pw rb~n=f shr.w|e=i iqr md.wt|e=i*.

137 Schiaparelli 1887: 197–198.

138 Gomaà 1973: 23, 114, Abb. 14a.

139 Rummel 2003: 265.

High Priests of Ptah, seems to indicate that they embody only one of the manifestations of this deity on earth, probably under the priestly office of priest of Iunmutef.¹⁴⁰

4.3. The gods as “emanations” (*ti.wt*) of the creator god

In a number of sources, it is no longer the king, a member of the royal family or a high-ranking individual who embodies the “emanation” (*ti.t*) projected from the world of the gods, but rather a deity who appears as the emanation of a creator god. Consequently, these texts contain, to various extents, cosmogonic themes.¹⁴¹

Among these sources, one may mention the text known as the Shabaka Stone or the Memphite Theology. This dark stone,¹⁴² dated to the reign of Shabaka (25th Dynasty) and now preserved in the British Museum,¹⁴³ is considerably damaged, likely due to its probable transformation into a grinding stone.¹⁴⁴ In the second line inscribed at the top of the monument, it is stated that the king, during a visit to the “temple of his father Ptah-who-is-south-of-his-wall,” demanded that an inscription executed by the Ancients be reproduced, as it was then recorded on a papyrus deteriorated by worms. The context of this narrative may be understood as a sign of an archaizing process, intended to provide this source with the legitimacy of tradition.¹⁴⁵ Given the predominance of the creator role held by Ptah and his fusion with Tatenen in this text, some authors trace its composition back to the Ramesside period, when Ptah’s demiurgic role was paramount.¹⁴⁶

In the third section of the text,¹⁴⁷ mainly devoted to Ptah’s role in the creation of the Universe, we read:

(Doc. 26) (48) The gods who came into being through Ptah: (49a) Ptah who is on the great throne, (50a) Ptah-Nun, the father who [engendered] Atum, (51a) Ptah-Naunet, the mother who gave birth to Atum, (52a) Ptah-the-Great who is the heart (*h³ty*) and tongue (*ns*) of the Ennead, (49b) [Ptah] [...] who gave birth

140 In his study of the Chronicle of Prince Osorkon, R.A. Caminos translates the sequence *irw=f lwn-mwt=f*, by “in the capacity of Pillar-of-his-Mother priest”, assimilating in this context the term *irw* with *ti.t* present in the similar expression (Caminos 1958: 35 36, § 52, n. d). It seems to us that the meaning “form” generally given to the term *irw* remains relevant in this context and the phrase can be rendered as “in its form of Iunmutef.”

141 On this issue, see in particular: Assmann 1972: 115 and n. 27; Junge 1978: 87–108 (in particular 95–96); Hornung 1982: 170–172; Bickel 1994: 113–123.

142 Recent chemical analyses of the substrate revealed that it was “Green breccia” from Wâdi Hammâmat, Bodine 2009: 6.

143 BM EA 498: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y_EA498 (accessed 07.04.2025).

144 A. El-Hawary proposed an alternative solution, using the stone as the foundation for a column or a pillar (El-Hawary 2004: 569–570).

145 Payraudeau 2020: 193.

146 Bodine 2009: 10–11.

147 Columns 48–64, as numbered by Breasted (1901: 39–54, Taf. I–II).

to the gods, (50b) [Ptah] [...] who gave birth to the gods, (51b) [Ptah] [...], (52b) [Ptah] [...] [who brought forth Nefer]tum, at the nostril of Re each day.

(53) (The gods who came into being by means of Ptah) came into being through the heart (*h³ty*) which is an **emanation of Atum** (*m ti.t Tm[w]*) and of the tongue (*ns*) which is an **emanation of Atum**, for the greatest of the great is Ptah, who transmitted [his power to all the gods] and to their *ka* through this heart by which Horus came forth by means of Ptah and through this tongue by which Thoth came forth by means of Ptah.

According to this passage from the Memphite Theology, while Ptah embodies the creator god, his son Atum represents the demiurge,¹⁴⁸ that is, the “craftsman” (δημιουργός). Indeed, it is said that it is through the “tongue” (*ns*), a metaphor for the word personified by Thoth, and through the “heart” (*h³ty*), the will and thought¹⁴⁹ embodied by Horus, that the gods of the Ennead manifested themselves (*hpr=w*). The text specifies that the heart and the tongue, the organs that animated the creation of the gods, are “emanations” (*ti.wt*) of Atum. The process of creation described in the Memphite Theology, particularly the role of the emanations (*ti.wt*) of Atum, can thus be schematized as follows:

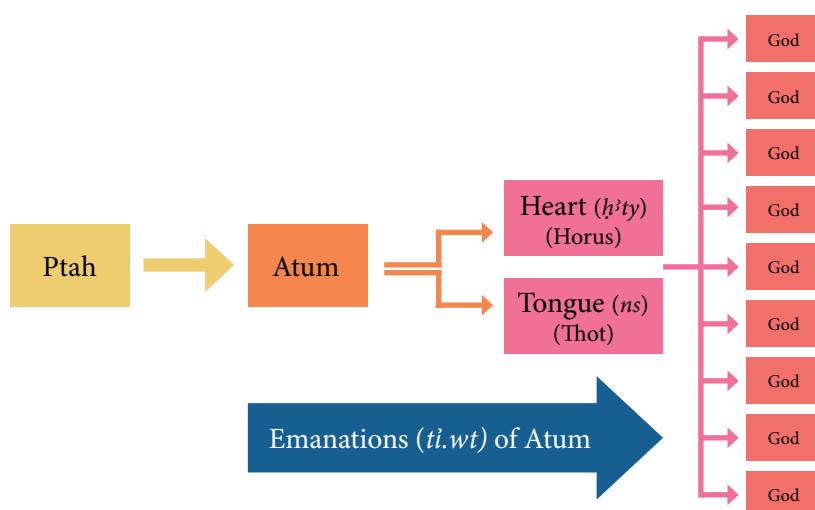


Fig. 18. Diagram showing the role of Atum's *ti.wt* in the creation of the gods, according to the *Memphite Theology* (BM EA 498, 25th Dyn.)

148 In Spell 647 of the *Coffin Texts* (CT VI, 267F-), Ptah is designated as the son of Atum.

149 Bilolo 1982: 7–14. On the question of the *h³tj*/*ib* distinction, B. Mathieu (2019 [unpublished]: 371) states, “En simplifiant le propos, le terme « *h³tj* » désigne le cœur en tant qu’organe, tandis que *ib* se réfère au siège de la conscience, du désir et de la volonté et, dans un contexte médical, à l’ensemble contenu dans le tronc ou ventre « *h.t* ». Cette différenciation posée, il est clair que *ib* devait se référer initialement, dans la protohistoire de la langue, comme le montre le hiéroglyphe, à l’organe lui-même, tandis que « *h³tj* » possède déjà, dans les TP, quelques-unes des acceptations abstraites qui deviendront usuelles dans la seconde phase de la langue (néo-égyptien, démotique, copte).”

This process of creating gods through the emanations (*ti.wt*) of the creator god is further reinterpreted in a passage from the Hymn to Amun from Leiden,¹⁵⁰ dated “*au plus tard de l’An 52 de Ramsès II*”:¹⁵¹

(Doc. 27) (IV, 1) (Amon) The Ennead is gathered within your body-*h’w*. All the gods gathered in your body-*d.t* are your **emanation**, for you revealed yourself first and inaugurated the beginning.¹⁵²

This passage is enlightening as it indicates how all the primordial gods are united within the creator’s body, here Amun, in the form of an “emanation” (*ti.t*). Although the source does not specify it, it is assumed that these gods would later be projected out of the body of this initial deity. In the Hymn to Ptah from Berlin, this second phase of the creation process of the primordial gods is mentioned several times:¹⁵³

(Doc. 28) (IV, 3 4) Hail to you! Before your primordial gods whom you created after coming forth as a divine body, the one whose body was self-fashioned!¹⁵⁴

(X, 8 9) Hail to you, Ptah! Hail to the gods who came into being from within your body! How great you are before your primordial gods!¹⁵⁵

In the tomb of Nebamun (TT 65, Sheikh Abd el-Gurnah), scribe of the Treasury who held office during the reign of Hatshepsut, but whose hypogeum was usurped by Imiseba during the reign of Ramesses IX, an inscription contains a hymn to Re-Harakhty in the northern section of the grand hall.¹⁵⁶ Re-Harakhty is identified as the creator god, and the text specifies that all gods are born from his “emanation” (*ti.t*):

(Doc. 29) (The deceased recites a litany to Re-Harakhty): Hail to you, the self-created one, primordial god (*p³wti*), who manifested alone [...] all the gods rejoice in his perfection, and none among them is deprived of his **emanation**.¹⁵⁷

While the most common manifestations involve the king embodying an “emanation” (*ti.t*) of a god or, as noted above, a creator god generating other deities through his own “emanation” (*ti.t*), there are rare instances where human beings appear not as initiators of this process but as intermediaries.

150 Zandee 1947: 66 and pl. IV; Barucq & Daumas 1980: 221.

151 Mathieu 1997: 109.

152 *Psqd.t dmd=ti m h’w=k ti.t=k ntr(.w) nb(.w) sm³=w m d.t=k bsy=k tpy ši=k dr-*.

153 P. Berlin 3048: Wolf 1929: 17–44 (french translation in Barucq & Daumas 1980: 389–407).

154 *ind-hr=k bft p³wty.w=k ir(w)~n=k m-bt bpr~n=k m ntr h’w qd(w) h’w=f ds=f*.

155 *ind-hr=k Pth ind-hr ntr.w bprw.w m h’w=k wrwy tw bft p³wy.w=k*.

156 PM I/1, 130 (8–9).

157 *ind-hr=k nbiw sw ds=f p³wti bprw w’ [...] ntr(.w) nb(.w) h“=sn m nfrw=f n w’ im=sn šw m ti.t=f* (Assmann 1983: 118–119 [Text 83]).

For instance, we previously examined the case of Senenmut, a high official admitted to the most intimate royal circle, who claimed to have devised original *ti.wt* through the workings of his conscience (*ib*). Given that the creation of *ti.wt* is fundamentally attributed to the primordial actions of the gods, does this imply that the creative genius of this exceptional intellectual elevated him to divine status?

On this matter, it may be more appropriate to consider P. Vernus's view, which argues extensively that, like Pharaohs, individuals can also partake in the unveiling of the “*latences à révéler*,”¹⁵⁸ by discovering extraordinary things that have been preordained by the divine. In such cases, the agent of this creation or invention, whether a king or an individual, acts more as a “revealer” of the divine works in the process of unfolding.

Regarding the various domains in which this process of revealing emanations (*ti.wt*) occurs, the Restoration Stela stands out. Initially inscribed under the reign of Tutankhamun and partially reinscribed under Horemheb,¹⁵⁹ this text primarily discusses the king's measures to restore Egypt from the desolation said to have resulted from the Amarna period. Among the initiatives intended to rekindle the interest of gods and goddesses in the Two Lands, the text mentions the restoration of ruined temples. The king then “consulted his conscience (*ib=f*)”¹⁶⁰ and “sought useful actions for his father Amun by fashioning (*hr ms.t*) his **noble emanation** (*ti.t šps.t*) in actual electrum”¹⁶¹ as well as “his **inaccessible emanation** (*ti.t dsr.t*)¹⁶² in pure electrum, lapis lazuli, [turquoise], and all manner of semiprecious stones”.¹⁶³ The inscription further states that two creations with similar names—“noble emanation” (*ti.t šps.t*) and “inaccessible emanation” (*ti.t dsr.t*)—were also crafted by the king for Ptah-who-is-south-of-his-wall.¹⁶⁴ Although nothing prevents the expressions *ti.t dsr.t* and *ti.t šps.t* from referring to the gods' attributes (scepter, crown, amulet)¹⁶⁵ or all or part of their processional barques,¹⁶⁶ in the majority of cases, these terms describe statues or reliefs intended for divine worship.¹⁶⁷ Within the context of the Restoration Stela, it seems plausible to identify two distinct cult statues created for the gods mentioned, namely Amun and Ptah. One might therefore assume that the first statue refers to the cult image hidden within its naos (*ti.t dsr.t*, “inaccessible

158 Cf. *supra*, n. 85.

159 On this document, see in particular the comments by M. Gabolde 2015: 126–131 with translation.

160 *w³w³ šḥ hn³ ib=f* (Urk. IV, 2028, 9).

161 *hr hh ³b.wt n it=f lmn hr ms.t ti.t šps.t m d'm(w) m³'* (Urk. IV, 2028, 11–12).

162 On the meaning “inaccessible” for *dsr/dsr.t*, see below.

163 *ti.t=f dsr.t m d'm(w) hsbd [mfk³.t] q³.wt nb(.w)t šps(.w)t* (Urk. IV, 2028, 15).

164 Urk. IV, 2028, 17–19.

165 Cf. *infra*, doc. 35.

166 Ockinga 1993: 77; Eaton 2007: 22–23.

167 Cf. *infra*, doc. 31, 32.

emanation”), while the other (*ti.t šps.t*, “noble emanation”) could represent another processional statue housed in a separate room of the temple.¹⁶⁸

Notably, the verb *msi*, literally “to give birth,” is consistently used in this inscription to describe the king’s commissioning of divine statues.¹⁶⁹ This metaphor has been documented since the 4th Dynasty, particularly within the context of the Opening of the Mouth ritual, during which the fashioning (*ms.t*) of divine or royal statues and their animation in the sacred workshop, called the “House of Gold” (*hw.t-nbw*), are described.¹⁷⁰ Although the ritual’s title does not explicitly reference its purpose, it is phrased as “Fashioning (*ms.t*) and opening the mouth in the House of Gold” (*ms.t wp.t r[3] m Hw.t-nbw*).¹⁷¹ This analogy, using obstetric vocabulary, persisted into the Greco-roman period,¹⁷² but remained particularly common during the New Kingdom. Thus, in the stela of the Chief Sculptor (*hry t'y-md'.t*) Hatiay,¹⁷³ he recounts how the king introduced him to the House of Gold “to fashion (*ms.t*) the cult statues (*sšm.w* and *'hm.w*) of all the gods”.¹⁷⁴

It is, therefore, worth noting the analogies raised in the passage from the Restoration Stela, wherein the statues for the cults of Amun and Ptah are described as “emanations” (*ti.wt*) of these gods. Now, the “birthing” (*ms.t*) of these “emanations” bears a strong resemblance to the generative power attributed to the divine *ti.t*, a genesis flow capable of engendering gods, kings and humankind, and, more broadly, the totality of Creation’s “fragments.”¹⁷⁵

Having examined the main categories of positive “emanation” (*ti.t*), we will now consider its few instances with a distinctly negative connotation.

4.4. Emanations (*ti.wt*) as manifestations of Darkness

Most occurrences of the term *ti.t* are characterized by their positive value, representing “fragments” of the divine that enable Creation to manifest and actualize within a continuous life flow, generating an uninterrupted chain of “emanations,” whose consubstantial nature is most often brought to light. We have observed that these “fragments” are revealed notably through a theoretically infinite of signs and characters within the writing system, which facilitates access to knowledge of both the visible and hidden worlds. More generally, this flow spreads through innumerable divine “emanations,” most often appearing as living beings,¹⁷⁶ but also as seemingly inanimate objects or even

168 On this hypothesis concerning two statues of the cult of Amun at Karnak, Gabolde 1995: in particular 255–256.

169 In other contexts, this verb *msi* is used more sporadically to describe the manufacture of processional boats *sšm-hw* (KRI II, 639, 10) or to describe the discovery of rock veins (Aufrère 1991: 73).

170 Otto 1960; Goyon 1972: 85–182; Schott 1978: in particular 132.

171 Otto 1960: 3 (Teil II).

172 For ex., Dendara X, 99, 6 (East Osirian chapel no. 2). See also Daumas 1980: 110–118.

173 Boeser 1913: pl. I (photo); Krutchén 1990: 192–193.

174 Line 9 (= KRI VII, 27, 13–14).

175 See above.

176 Cf. above, n. 104.

immaterial currents, with all these mediums contributing to the perpetuation of this primordial flow.

Some rarer uses of the word *ti.t* indicate that these “emanations” may occasionally take on a distinctly more malevolent form.

As we have previously noted,¹⁷⁷ it is striking to observe how many of the world’s creation processes, as described in Egyptian sources, resonate with various developments of the “emanatist” doctrine that emerged in the East during the first millennium BCE. According to the synthesis provided on this matter by Narciso Muñiz,¹⁷⁸ what he terms the “fourth school” of Emanatism is the doctrine of Manichaeism, taught from the 3rd century CE throughout the Roman Empire before spreading throughout during the Middle Ages across Europe and into China. Mani (or Manes), the founder of this doctrine, embraced the principle of a God situated at the center of the Universe, extending as Light to the furthest bounds of Creation. But he opposed to it a contrary force, a *Rex Tenebrarum*, “ennemi du Dieu de Lumière,”¹⁷⁹ whose “emanations encountered the emanations of the God of Darkness in Nature.”¹⁸⁰

Consequently, while Egyptian cosmogonic traditions also evoke a radical conflict between Light and Darkness,¹⁸¹ what could distinguish them from the “emanatist” model reinterpreted by Manichaeism is the likely absence of negative forces in the initial forms of Creation.¹⁸² However, as M. Kemboly aptly summarises in his monograph on the subject, Egyptologists appear to be divided on this matter. According to some scholars, in Ancient Egypt, the forces of evil are thought to predate Creation¹⁸³ and manifest themselves in a secondary phase.¹⁸⁴ While this is not the place to delve into the numerous complexities of this substantial issue, we will attempt to examine to what extent certain occurrences of the term *ti.t* nevertheless lead us to explore one of its facets.

From the Middle Kingdom onward, several sources mention hostile actions carried out by an entity named *Nbd*,¹⁸⁵ often used as an epithet of the god Seth or the serpent Apopis. In the *Coffin Texts*, the term *Nbd* designates Seth, followed by his affiliates, known as the *Nbd.w*,¹⁸⁶ who particularly threaten the deceased Osiris. The entities protecting the embalming chamber are addressed

177 See above.

178 Muñiz 1914: 313–316.

179 Muñiz 1914: 314.

180 Muñiz 1914: 315.

181 Hornung 1956; Hornung 1965: 78; Guermeur 2016.

182 Guilhou 1986: 361–371, in particular 367.

183 Kemboly 2010: 1–35.

184 Guilhou 1986: 369.

185 Wb II, 247, 6–8; Meeks 1978: no. 78.2074; Wilson 1997: 508–509; Leitz 2002: vol. IV, 199–201; Vernus 1978: 206 (n. o with bibliography).

186 For ex.: CT I, 216c, Spell 49; CT II, 55c, Spell 89; CT II, 84b, Spell 96.

as follows: “Seize the *Nbd* who is in the darkness and harm his followers.”¹⁸⁷ In the *Book of Amduat*, it is Apopis, the eternal enemy of the solar god on his journey through the nocturnal zones,¹⁸⁸ who appears as the Rebel (*Sbi*), Nehaher, also found in the “gathered darkness” (*kkw sm³w*).¹⁸⁹ As we can see, in the Egyptian tradition, hostile forces are often originated from the dark regions of Creation, relegated to the borders of the Nun, which itself sometimes called the “Lord of Darkness” (*Nb kkw*).¹⁹⁰

In various Greco-roman sources depicting scenes of animal sacrifices,¹⁹¹ the expression *ti.t Nbd*¹⁹² appears. Since meat offerings are predominantly designated as manifestations of Seth,¹⁹³ given the preceding remarks, we propose to interpret *ti.t Nbd* as “emanation of the Dark One.” In one of the crypts at Dendara, a tableau shows the king facing Hathor (fig. 19). According to the scene’s title “placing the chosen pieces on the fire,”¹⁹⁴ Pharaoh is shown placing pieces of meat—considered as so many fragments (*ti.wt*)—in contact with the flame of a fire altar.¹⁹⁵ In the columns separating the king from the goddess, it reads:

(Doc. 30) Words to say: “The chosen pieces from the Rebel (*Sbi* = Seth) are cut up by my hand, as the Eye of Horus that he (= Seth) dismembered when it was whole. The pieces of meat inside (= the cuts) have been perfectly prepared. They are the **emanations of the Dark One**, the adversary (= Seth) of Your Majesty (*ti.[w]t Nbd pw hfty n[y] hm.t=t*).”¹⁹⁶

Ultimately, within the cosmogonic opposition between the forces of Light and those of Darkness, we may consider the phrase *ti.t Nbd*, the “emanation of the Dark One”, as directly opposing the previously discussed expression *ti.t R*, or the “emanation of Re”.

187 *ndr Nbd imy kkw ir nkn n sm³wty=f*, CT I, 220f–g, Spell 49.

188 In the Bremner-Rhind Papyrus (BM EA 10188, col. XXXII, 25), Apopis is described as “He of Darkness” (*Knmy*): Carrier 2017: 51.

189 Hornung 1963: 175 (Teil I). On this subject, see also: Kees 1924: 69–70.

190 Bickel 1994: 26.

191 Edfou VII, 82, 2–3; 125, 3; 213, 2–3; Dendara VI, 133, 5.

192 Leitz 2002: vol. VII, 364.

193 Bouanich 2015: 37–54, in particular 39. On the question of meat sacrifices: Bouanich 2001: 149–162.

194 *rd.t stp.w hr ht*. On the meaning of the term *stp.w*, “selected pieces,” Bouanich 2015: 45.

195 On this stylised form: Quaegebeur 1991: in particular 338–339 and pl. Vb.

196 *dd mdw stp.w n(y.)w Sbi stp=t(w) m-‘=i ir.t Hr ‘d~n(=f) sk ‘d=tw h³w im=sn m ir(w) nfr ti.(w)t Nbd pw hfty n(y) hm.t=t* (Dendara VI, 133, 3–6).



Fig. 19. Dendara, east wall of western crypt no. 2
after Chassinat 1931: 133 and pl. DLXIII (left)

5. Is it pertinent to render the term *ti.t* as “image?”

In the section of this study dedicated to *ti.t* as a “writing sign,”¹⁹⁷ it was initially assumed that for the ancient Egyptians, this specific manifestation of the term *ti.t* could equally denote a “sign” or an “image.” Given that the signs from the hieroglyphic system were perceived by the ancient Egyptians above all as fragments (*ti.wt*) of Creation conveyed to mankind by the gods, they could be understood from both a semiotic and an iconic perspective. In the background of these “fragments” manifesting as hieroglyphic signs, it could be imagined that the process of their formation was originally motivated by mimetic constraints, thereby relegating hieroglyphs to the realm of images of the world. However, since these hieroglyphic signs often exceed their merely iconic value, it seems preferable to extend their interpretation primarily to the domain of writing.

197 See above.

The question of this semantic divide between sign and image in relation to the term *ti.t* must be re-examined, particularly in numerous cases where this term no longer strictly applies to the domain of language and signs, but to that of manifestations of life, whether a deity, the king, a member of the royal circle, or an ordinary individual.

As we observed earlier, in a number of examples cited in this study, it is mentioned that the transmission of *ti.wt* by the gods to other gods, or more often to human beings, occurs through “emanations” originating from the bodies of the deities—body-*d.t*, flesh-*h.w*, breath-*sn.t*, seed-*mtw.t*, heart-*h³ty*, tongue-*ns*, etc.—These examples of *ti.wt* generated through the organs or secretions of the gods appear to contradict the notion that such *ti.wt* might manifest as “images.” It would appear that the relationship between the “source” of *ti.t* and its manifestations serves to reveal its consubstantial dimension.

Consequently, we shall now continue this evaluation of the various reasons that might lead to refraining from adopting the term “image” to interpret the majority of occurrences of the term *ti.t*.

As mentioned earlier, the general principle emerging from the analysis of the occurrences of the term *ti.t* is that this term consistently appears as the expression of a “fragment” emanating from the divine. Therefore, the study of occurrences of the term *ti.t* requires consideration of not only the nature and characteristics of these “emanations” but also the origin of the divine flow that generated or, more generally, propagated them.

For instance, in the example from the White Chapel (doc. 19), it is stated that the “emanation” (*ti.t*) translates into the manifestations of “life” (*nh*) and “power” (*w³s*) that benefit the king. The text further states that this life force originates in the breath (*sn.t*) of the god Amun-Re, a vital flow he transmits to the king via this medium. Consequently, in this context, to explain the process associated with the term *ti.t*, the meaning of “emanation” seems clearly appropriate, while “image” appears highly unsuitable.

Moreover, in numerous examples where the god’s “emanation” (*ti.t*) is more distinctly linked to a physiological drive or even to a generative process (doc. 20–23, 26, 27), it is then specified that these manifestations propagate through a divine effluvium that eventually takes form in other divinities or, more often, in the royal person. In this category of attestations of the term, it remains to be determined, as Christian Cannuyer question, whether this incarnation of the god in the king leads to the formation of a “similarity of essence” (*Wesensähnlichkeit*) or merely an “iconic identity” (*Ebenbildlichkeit*).¹⁹⁸ To illustrate this with a frequently occurring expression from the New Kingdom, what is signified by the royal epithet *ti.t R*? Does it merely denote a formal resemblance between the god and the king, notably due to the links between *ti.t* and the god’s seed (*mtw.t*)?

198 Cannuyer 2006: 79–80.

While it is possible that the formal resemblance between the god and the king constitutes in some cases a contingent aspect of the semantic field of the expression *ti.t R*,¹⁹⁹ does this remain the case when this epithet applies to a female member of the royal circle? For example, what is being conveyed about the connections established between the god Amun-Re and Amenirdis I, when she is designated *ti.t R* in a relief from her Chapel at Karnak, where she stands facing Amun-Re (doc. 23)?

This example seems to indicate that the links between the god and the king, or a royal circle member as expressed through the term *ti.t* cannot be reduced to a mere “*sublime identité iconique*,”²⁰⁰ which could reasonably be rendered with the meaning “image,” at least in the sense conveyed by the Greek term *εἰκόνη*. It seems perhaps more accurate, in principle, to view this connection from the perspective of a “similarity of essence” (*Wesensähnlichkeit*)²⁰¹ or even that of “consubstantiality.” For this primary reason, it appears more fitting, in all these occurrences, to translate *ti.t* by “emanation” whose meaning is more precise and better suited to this context than that of “image,” unmarked term whose lexical scope appears overly broad. As suggested by a number of scholars,²⁰² in the vocabulary of ancient Egypt, the term *twt* is likely the one that most faithfully corresponds to the lexical scope of our term “image.”

As noted earlier (doc. 8, 26, 27, 29), the generative process related to the term *ti.t* sometimes exclusively involves the world of the gods. It is then frequently stated that deities are engendered by the action of a primordial god. Here again, it seems more precise to render the term *ti.t* as “emanation” rather than “image.” Indeed, the latter meaning would tend to direct the effects of this engendering towards the manifestation of a formal resemblance among the gods, producing an “*air de famille*” effect, an assumption consistently contradicted by iconographic sources. Once again, the point that the term *ti.t* seems to emphasise in this context is the physical bonds that unite the “emitting” god with the “receptive” deities who embody this emanation, rather than the formation of an image whose contours are, more often than not, difficult to discern.

199 See the remarks to this effect in Cannuyer 2006: 84–87. However, of the examples taken, although the facial features of Atum and the king are very similar on the south face of the pillar from the temple of Amun at Karnak (fig. 1), there is no mention of the term *ti.t* in this relief (for more complete documentation on this pillar, see Gabolde 1998: 90–91 and pl. XXVIII XXIX). As for the second example (fig. 2), the statuary group probably originally depicting the god Amun protecting King Tutankhamun with a wave of his hand (Luxor Museum), although there is a certain resemblance between the two figures, the inscription on the back bears the expression *ti.t R*, so there is no direct connection with the iconography of the relief (on this document, see El-Saghir 1991: 65–68). This dichotomy between “resemblance” and “identity” is also addressed by E. Otto, in his study of the image of the god, by comparing the notions of “*Gottesebenbildlichkeit*” and “*Gottesähnlichkeit*” (Otto 1971: 342–346).

200 Cannuyer 2006: 87.

201 This semantic orientation is the one adopted by B. Ockinga 1984: 115.

202 Hornung 1967: 144–145; Ockinga 1984: 5; Eaton 2007: 24–25.

In other cases, the *ti.t* of a deity is more distinctly materialized by a specific medium, such as a statue or a relief depicting this same deity or even an associated attribute. Translators typically choose to render these occurrences as “image,” “form” or “amulet.” While seemingly legitimate given the materiality of these *ti.t* manifestations, it appears that all these interpretations tend to emphasize only the formalism of these objects, to the detriment of their origin and the process that brought them into being.

On one of the four inscribed faces of a free-standing stela from the reign of Ramses II, belonging to the royal scribe Tjia,²⁰³ the latter is depicted in adoration before Re-Harakhty. The eight-line text beneath begins with the following sequence:

(Doc. 31) Worship Re by means of his *ti.t dsr.t*, by the Osiris, the royal scribe, he of useful intentions, the Superior of the Treasury, Tjia, true of voice.²⁰⁴

Regarding the term *dsr* in the expression *ti.t dsr.t*, D. Meeks provides compelling arguments on J.K. Hoffmeier’s monograph²⁰⁵ suggesting that this word should not be understood as an expression of the “sacred”—primarily because its antonym “profane” does not appear to exist in the of ancient Egyptian vocabulary.²⁰⁶ However, we will retain the generic meanings of “separate” and “segregate” as defined by the latter in his study,²⁰⁷ in an effort to provide a more precise interpretation in the attestations presented here. This quality has been previously noted in the case of the *ti.t dsr.t* cult statues of Amun and Ptah mentioned in the Restoration Stela. The expression *ti.t dsr.t*, which generally refers to the “emanation” of a deity—whether it manifests through another god, a king, an individual or a symbolic object linked to these entities—likely underscores, through the descriptor *dsr*, the inaccessible nature of these divine manifestations to common mortals. In the case of Tjia’s stela, a commentator suggests that this monument was originally located within a temple’s *temenos*.²⁰⁸

Thus, we propose translating *ti.t dsr.t* not as “sacred image”, as traditionally rendered, but as “inaccessible emanation”, to convey both the “distant” (*dsr*) character of this divine manifestation and the responsibility of the god in the diffusion his own “emanation” (*ti.t*).

The functioning of the sometimes complex process by which the deity disseminates its own “emanations” is notably elucidated in a scene from the Temple of Opet at Karnak. On the south wall

203 El-Hamid Zayed 1964: 193–201 and pl. 7–8.

204 *dw³ R⁴ m ti.t dsr.t in Wsir ss n(y)-sw.t h(w) m ib (i)m(y)-r⁵) Pr-hd Ti⁶ m⁷ hrw.*

205 Hoffmeier 1985.

206 For this review, see Meeks 1991: 199–202.

207 Hoffmeier 1985: 79–89.

208 El-Hamid Zayed 1964: 201. This “inaccessible” aspect associated with *ti.t dsr.t* could be confirmed by the various attestations of this epithet given to Amonemipet de Djeme, “god veiled in his shrine,” during his decadal processional navigation (Doresse 1973: in particular 125–126 [doc. E1 and H]).

of the sanctuary, Thoth, followed by Shu, Tefnut and King Ptolemy VIII Evergetes II, are all shown in adoration before a depiction of Amun on his throne.²⁰⁹ The column in front of Thoth reads:

(Doc. 32) Words to be spoken by Thoth: “I adore **your inaccessible emanation** (*ti.t=k dsr.t*), which brings forth your creations (*shpr.w(t) k³.wt=k*), for you are the breath that emerged at the beginning (*ntk t³w pr[w] m h³.t*).”²¹⁰

In this passage, it is plausible that this representation of Amun is not described as a simple “image” of the god serving as a focus for his cult, but more distinctly as an “emanation” of the god, an intermediary medium through which the god’s creative breath perpetuates itself by means of his creations (*k³.wt*). This sequence in the propagation process of the “emanation” (*ti.t*) can also be seen in the Theban tomb of Amenhotep, known as Huy, the Viceroy of Kush, when he addresses Tutankhamun with a lapidary sentence:

(Doc. 33) You are Re, his emanation is your emanation!²¹¹

Finally, primarily in later sources, the phrase *ti.t nfr.t*²¹² appears, which is generally translated by authors as “beautiful image” or “perfect image,” but which we think is better rendered as “perfect emanation.” This expression is notably attested in the inscriptions of the Temple of Dendera and is consequently most often associated with Hathor.

Thus, on the wall of the temple’s mysterious corridor, a scene depicts the king likely offering bouquets to Hathor. In the columns that tower above the goddess, one can read:

(Doc. 34) Words to be spoken by Hathor, Mistress of Iounet, the Eye of Re, <her> father, it is Re [...] She who exists as She-Who-Created-the-Infinity-of-Infinity, who rose in the Place-of-Re as the **perfect emanation**, the beloved of Re.²¹³

In this example, several clues suggest that *ti.t* in the expression *ti.t nfr.t* should not be rendered as “image” but rather as “emanation”.

First of all, here again, the term *ti.t* must here be understood as a manifestation of the intimate bonds connecting Hathor to Re, who is explicitly identified as the goddess’s father.

209 De Wit 1962: pl. 7 (bottom panel, top reg.); KIU1868, <http://www.cfeetk.cnrs.fr/archives/?n=176075> (accessed 07.04.2025).

210 *dd mdw in Dhwty dw³=i ti.t=k dsr.t shpr[w.t] k³.wt=k ntk t³w pr[w] m-h³.t.*

211 *ntk R³ ti.t=k ti.t=f* (*Urk.* IV, 2069, 16).

212 The earliest probable attestation of this expression appears as an epithet of Sekhmet on one of the many statues of the deity originating from the precinct of Mut at Karnak (*Urk.* IV, 1767, 11). The phrase “perfect emanation” is very likely to be linked to Re, as Sekhmet is often referred to as the “Eye of Re” (Corteggiani 2007: 492–495, s.v. “Sekhmet”).

213 *dd-mdw jn Hw.t- Hr, nb(t.) lwn.t, lR.t R³ it[s] R³ pw (...) wnn ir[w.t]-hhw-hr-hhw wbn[w.t] m S.t-R³ m ti.t nfr.t mr(t.) R³* (Dendera II, 39, 3–4).

Secondly, the biological dimension inherent in this occurrence of the term *ti.t*  is also indicated by the presence of the “egg” sign  (H8)²¹⁴ as a determinative.²¹⁵ Consequently, *ti.t* in this context refers not to a mere “image” of the goddess but more precisely to an evocation of the physical bonds linking her to the solar god. As for the adjective *nfr.t* (“perfect”), it is reasonable to assume that it reflects the entirety of the solar characteristics the goddess has acquired in common with “her father Re.”

In other instances, this “biologic” transmission no longer flows from an ancestor to its progeny but rather from a deity to one of its attributes, this latter appearing as its own emanation.

As in the example of the White Chapel (docs 18–19), where the transmission of the “emanation” (*ti.t*) occurs via an *ankh* sign presented by the god to the king’s nostril, various sources describe the role of amulets and divine attributes in this process of propagating or receiving the “emanation” (*ti.t*). In another relief located in the enigmatic corridor of the Temple of Dendara, the king is depicted offering a *sesheshet*-sistrum to Hathor, in alignment with the scene’s title, “Making the *sesheshet*-sistrum appear” (*sh’ ss̄.t*). In the divine marginal column (*Randzeile*), it reads:²¹⁶

(Doc. 35) (Hathor) She of the Horizon in the sky, she whose **perfect emanation** is
on (her) chest (*ti.t nfr.t hry.t šnb.t*) and whom the gods love to see.²¹⁷

Given the details of the scene figured in this bas-relief and the terms of its title, it appears that the sequence “she whose perfect emanation is on her chest”, an epithet of Hathor,²¹⁸ establishes a connection between the *sesheshet*-sistrum and the Hathor’s “perfect emanation” (*ti.t nfr.t*). This “perfect emanation” should then be understood as a manifestation of the goddess in the form of an amulet or a necklace hanging from her neck, similar to the pectoral topped with four *sesheshet*-sistums depicted in a relief from the southern crypt of Dendara.²¹⁹

Here again, the meaning of “emanation” is more appropriate than that of “image” to account for the transfer mechanism of the goddess within this symbol, which forms an incarnation of her.²²⁰ Lastly, it is likely that the adjective *nfr*, “perfect,” in this expression as in the previous examples

214 No doubt already evoked in the feminine mark  present in certain divine names and epithets, this analogy is also discernible in the ideogrammatic value of the sign  in *s³* (“son”) (Wb III, 408), *s³.t* (“daughter”) (Wb III, 411), and *swḥ.t* (“fetus, embryo”) (Wb IV, 73, 10).

215 This determinative for *ti.t* appears on multiple occasions, not only in the attestations from the Temple of Dendera (D. II, 12, 2; 171, 14; D. III, 133, 9; 148, 18) but also at Kom Ombo (275, 9).

216 Dendara II, 45, 5–15; pl. XC VIII (3rd reg. left, 1st table).

217 *šbty.t m p.t ti.t nfr.t hry.t šnb.t mr nfr.w m³³=s* (Dendara II, 45, 14–15).

218 On the epithet *ti.t nfr.t*, Leitz 2002: vol. VII, 364–365.

219 Dendara V, pl. CCCCXXVIII. This “perfect emanation” of Hathor could also be identified with the *menat*-necklace that the goddess also wears around her neck (Dendara V, pl. CCCCXXV). On this question, see also Hickman 1954: 99–102; Daumas 1970: 63–78, especially 69–70.

220 Daumas 1970: 72.

attests to the “perfect” alignment between the goddess and her “emanation,” between the model and its attribute.

Another rather unique example of the expression *ti.t nfr.t* once again demonstrates its ability to evoke the profound symbolic connection between a deity and its attributes.

In a scene engraved on the eastern wall of the hypostyle hall at Kom Ombo, the king is depicted offering a *iy.t* knife  (M18) to the warrior god Haroeris.²²¹ This relief is accompanied by a hymn dedicated to this weapon, within which it is referred to by the expression *ti.t nfr.t*:

(Doc. 36) May Haroeris penetrate his enemies, for you (= *iy.t*) are a **perfect emanation**, beautiful to behold in this name of *iy.t*. You are the master of carnage, who delights in slaughter, in this your name of Sekhmet.²²²

In this example, the entire phrase  appears to be determined by the “egg” sign, emphasizing that the *iy.t* knife, more than an ordinary weapon, is a tool symbolically engendered by the god Haroeris and, as indicated by the term *nfr.t*, possesses all the warrior virtues of the god. Here again, it is clear that the traditional translation of the expression *ti.t nfr.t* as “perfect image” seems inadequate to convey the various aspects of this intimate physiological process.

Ultimately, the analysis concerning the value of the term “image” to render the term *ti.t* reveals the weakness of its relevance. As Dimitri Meeks states:

*lorsque l'on traduit de façon un peu conventionnelle « tit » par « image », s'agissant d'un dieu ou d'un roi, on ne restitue pas exactement et complètement ce qui est exprimé.*²²³

On our part, we allow ourselves to radicalize this point of view since, as we have noted throughout this survey, in the majority of its occurrences, translating *ti.t* as “image” significantly alter its general meaning.

Moreover, we observed that the term “image” tends to give a static character to the *ti.t* manifestation, focusing on the result of the process that generated it. Although, *ti.t* fundamentally represents a “fragment” of Creation generated by the gods, the sources often suggest the principle of its propagation enacted by the gods themselves.

For all these reasons, outside of the realm of writing, where *ti.t* retains its sense of “sign,” we believe that the term “image” should systematically be replaced by “emanation,” a term more closely aligned with the dynamic process associated with *ti.t*.

221 Kom Ombo (De Morgan): 275–276. On the motif of the *iy.t* knife, see most recently Abdelhalim Ali 2013.

222 ‘q Hr-wr r sbi.w=f mtw=k ti.t nfr.t nfr m³³ m rn pfy n(y) 'ly.t nb bry.t htp hr š.t n rn pfy Shm.t (Kom Ombo, 275, 9).

223 “When one conventionally translates *tit* as ‘image,’ in reference to a god or a king, one does not fully or precisely convey the meaning expressed.” (Meeks 2018: 148).

6. Conclusion

This investigation into the term *ti.t* has gathered a considerable amount of information that will undoubtedly contribute, in our view, to a better understanding of its meaning and usage.

Firstly, this study has uncovered what we believe to be the etymon of the term *ti.t*, namely the verb *ti*, which appears in the *Pyramid Texts* with meanings “to fragment” and “to fraction.” The noun *ti.t* could thus literally signify “that which has been fragmented,” and it appears fundamentally linked to the notion of “fragment.” This principle likely underlies the meaning of *ti.t* as “writing sign,” a usage seen as early as the beginning of the First Intermediate Period or even the end of the Old Kingdom. Consequently, one might infer that for the ancient Egyptians, “writing signs” (*ti.wt*) represent, on an ontological level, the innumerable “fragments” of Creation. Linguistically, the *ti.t*-“sign” can also appear as a “fragment” joined with other “fragments,” allowing for the formation of an autonomous lexical unit. As observed, several examples in the documentary corpus show the plural *ti.wt* used to designate a proper name or, as in the example presented by Senenmut, a kind of enigmatic riddle.

To outline the primary semantic orientations of this term, it seems essential to establish a second principle: all “fragments” *ti.wt* originate systematically from the world of the gods. Whatever their fields of application, they should be perceived as manifestations infused by the deities. Consequently, even though certain translations may appear closely linked to the lexical field of *ti.t*, terms like “form” or “image” tends to obscure the inherent dynamism of *ti.t*. If *ti.t* is indeed a “fragment” of Creation brought forth by the vital flow of the primordial god, it can only become manifest when projected by this god’s action or that of a mediator. Thus, in the vast majority of its uses, we suggest translating *ti.t* as “emanation” in order to reflect its connection with the vital flow that generated it.

At times, as observed, these divine “emanations” may be transmitted by other deities, or even by human beings such as kings, members of the royal family or high-ranking individuals. While cosmogonic sources indicate that the gods themselves can become manifest as “emanations” (*ti.wt*) of the primordial god, it is also common for the royal person to be referred to as *ti.t R'*, “emanation of Re,” or *ti.t Imn*, “emanation of Amun,” epithets indicating that the king was conceived in a theogamic context. The sources also reveal that divine “emanations” may operate through statues, bas-reliefs, symbols or attributes, which act as divine substitutes. Notably, these mediums do not merely serve as receptacles for divine “emanations” but can themselves become mediators, intended to propagate the life force of the creator god. In this respect, the hieroglyphic writing system as a whole, designated by the expression *mdw.wntr*, literally “divine words”, might be seen as the emanation of a virtually infinite semiotic matrix, gradually revealed to mankind through the mediation of the gods as countless signs *ti.wt*. Some sources specify that the use of these signs allows the “initiates” to access the hidden world of the gods.

It is also remarkable to note that the texts bear witness to “emanations” (*ti.wt*) originating from the world of Darkness, represented primarily by the god Seth. Particularly expressed by the phrase

ti.t Nbd, or “emanation of the Dark One,” this phrase likely forms an expression diametrically opposed to *ti.t R*, “emanation of Re,” a metaphor for the enduring conflict between the forces of Light and Darkness.

Finally, this study calls into question the traditional translation of *ti.t* as “image.”

While this interpretation might initially seem appealing, given that *emanations* (*ti.wt*) most often become manifest in tangible forms, several key elements undermine this analogy. Firstly, in numerous instances, the context in which the *emanation* (*ti.t*) appears does not emphasize the formal resemblance of this manifestation to its source. What’s more, in certain examples, the *emanation* (*ti.t*) is conveyed through intangible expressions. Subsequently, the term “image,” by its inherently “resultative” nature, tends to obscure the deeply dynamic relationships that the concept of *emanation* maintains both with its original source and with the effects of its propagation. Moreover, due to its broad semantic scope, the term “image” proves ill-suited to accurately account for the “substantial” dimension that underpins the transmission process of *ti.t*. Ultimately, although most often concerned with questions of formalism, the relationships that *ti.t* maintains with its own expressions appear to be consubstantial rather than mimetic in nature. At a deeper level, in consideration of the term *ti.t*, the ancient Egyptians seem to have been more attuned to the origin of its manifestations—fragments of the world created by the gods—than to the mere diversity of its forms.

Thus, for all these reasons, we are compelled to abandon the translation of *ti.t* as “image” and to favor the interpretation “emanation” in the vast majority of its usages.

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