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Tꜣ.t, an Emanation of the Divine

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Abstract. This lexicological analysis aims to examine the term ⌐⌐, *tꜣ.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 *tꜣ.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 *tꜣ.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 *tꜣ.t* as "image," a meaning commonly accepted in the traditional rendering of the term.

Keywords. *tꜣ.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

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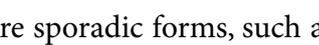
links between the domains of writing and imagery are characteristic of ancient Egyptian culture.[2] Consequently, these connections often cannot be easily aligned with the more loosely established associations found within the constructs of our modernity.

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: ⌐𓏲𓇌𓂋, 𓇌𓂋, 𓂋, 𓂋. There are also some more sporadic forms, such as 𓏭𓇌𓂋,[8]

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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 *vyꜣ*, *tyꜣ* of the term, see Jasnow 2011: 304–305. The term is also found in Coptic in the form ⲧⲟⲉ, "sign, mark, figure" (Westendorf 1965: 220; Černý 1976: 180). See also the shape ⳨ⲏ, "emanation" (Westendorf 1965: 224).

8   *Urk.* IV, 157,11.

⌐𓅱𓆓𓏤𓃾,[9] or even ⌐𓅱𓆓𓃿.[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 𓂀 (D17) that is used, but rather the determinative of the LOWER JAW OF A BOVID 𓄎 (F19),[12] and, more rarely, that of the EGG 𓆰 (H8) or that of the SEATED DIVINITY 𓀭 (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]
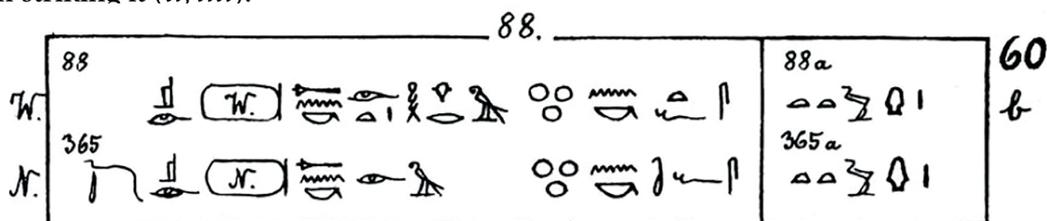
Fig. 1. Spell 88 of *PT* after Sethe 1908: 34
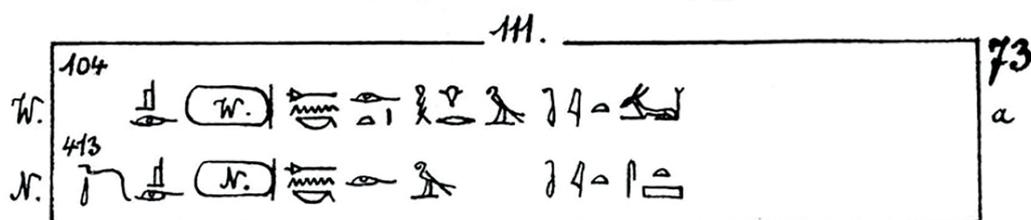
Fig. 2. Spell 111 of *PT* after Sethe 1908: 40

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, dessein*") 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 Umgrezungslinie 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 disjecta* 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 (*ꞌIr.t-Ḥr*).[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

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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   *ḏd mdw Wsir Ppy m(i) n=k ꞌIr.t-Ḥr ḫw 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   *ḏd mdw Wsir Ppy m(i) n=k ꞌIr.t-Ḥr ti(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 *inin*, "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 ᴥ (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*).
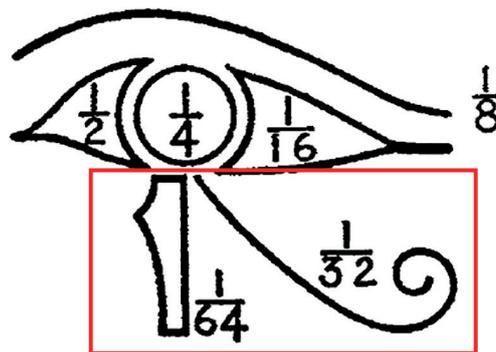
Fig. 3. The fractions of the Eye of Horus after Gardiner 1957: 197

This correspondence underscores the strong semiotic link between the sign ᴥ *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 ᴥ, 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 ᴗ (F19) as the determinative of the term *ti.t*,

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25   Mathieu 2019: 1371, *iȝt*, "amputate," *inin* "fragment," *wdˁ*, "slice," *psš*, "share," *nkn*, "mutilate," *ḥȝk*, "sever," *ḥsq*, "section," *ḥd*, "destroy," "pervert," *ḫb*, "diminish," *sȝd*, "section," *sw*, "injure," *sn*, "cut," *sr*, "cut," *sd*, "break," *šˁ*, "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):
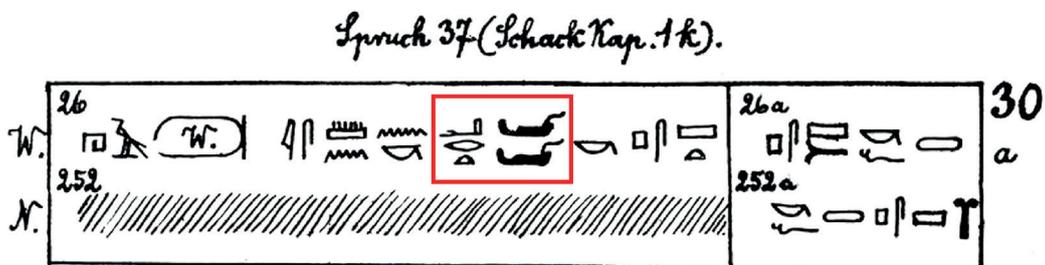
Fig. 5. Spell 37 of *PT* after Sethe 1908: 20

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* ⟨signs⟩) 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 (*ꜥr.ty* ⟨signs⟩), (I) place them within your face, the jaws (*sḫr.wy* ⟨signs⟩) 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

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31   *ḥꜣ Wnis i.smn n≈k ꜥr.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 *ḫb.t wʿ(.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

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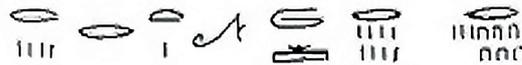
Fig. 7. Rhind Mathematical Papyrus, problem 70
after Peet 1923: pl. U

> (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

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42   *(r) ir.t r(ꜣ).wy n(y) ti.t gb(w).t mi ḏd(=tw) n=k pti r(ꜣ).wy n(y) r(ꜣ)-5 ir(w)~ḫr=k sp=f 2 sp=f 6 r(ꜣ).wy=f pw.*

43   Peet 1923: 18.

44   Gunn 1926: 134.

45   *Wb* V, 161, 8–162, 5.

46   *r(ꜣ)-63 r(ꜣ)-8 qꜣb ti.t r r(ꜣ)-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.   *Ṯi.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

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49   Ockinga 1984: 101.

50   136 attestations to date.

51   *ink […] Rꜥ-Tm(w) i~n≠i ip≠i ṯi.(w)t ꜥ.w ipw.*

The sequence 𓇳𓏏𓏥, 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 𓏏𓏥.[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 ʿ.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]
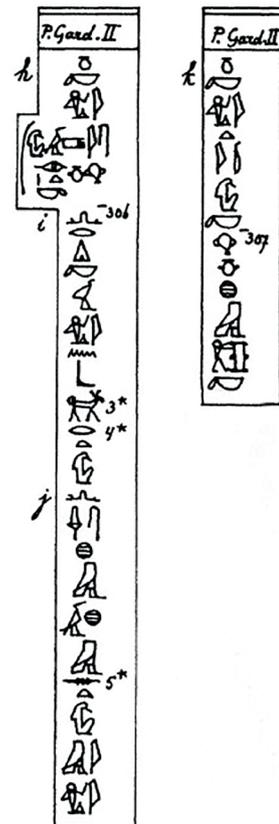
Fig. 10. Spell 1006 of *CT*
after De Buck 1961: 222

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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 Siꜣ ḥry-ib ir.t=k n rd(w)=k wi n Br.t n Ḫꜣms.t im=i ink ti(.t)=k ḥry-ib ḫm=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 loyal[55] 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.

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55   Meeks 1977: no. 77.1742, s.v. "mnḫ".

56   sꜥnḫ~n≈i rn n(y) it.w≈i gm~n≈i wš ḫr sbꜣ.w rḫ m ti.wt mt(y) m šdt nn rd.t ky m ꜥb ky ist sꜣ pw mnḫ srwd rn n(y) tpiw-ꜥ Nḥri
      sꜣ ḫnmw-ḥtp mꜣꜣ-ḫrw nb imꜣḫ(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) completed[64] 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   *ꜥš ḥr rn n(y) Brnygꜣt ḫr ti.wt=f m sš.w n(y.w) Pr-ꜥnḫ* (*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-ḥꜣt=s r pḥ.wi=s mi gmyt sš(.w) spḫr=ti sḫsf=ti smtr=ti smḫꜣ=ti ti.t r ti.t (n) it-nṯr Ywiꜣ mꜣꜥ ḫrw.*

66   Lenzo Marchese 2004: 369.

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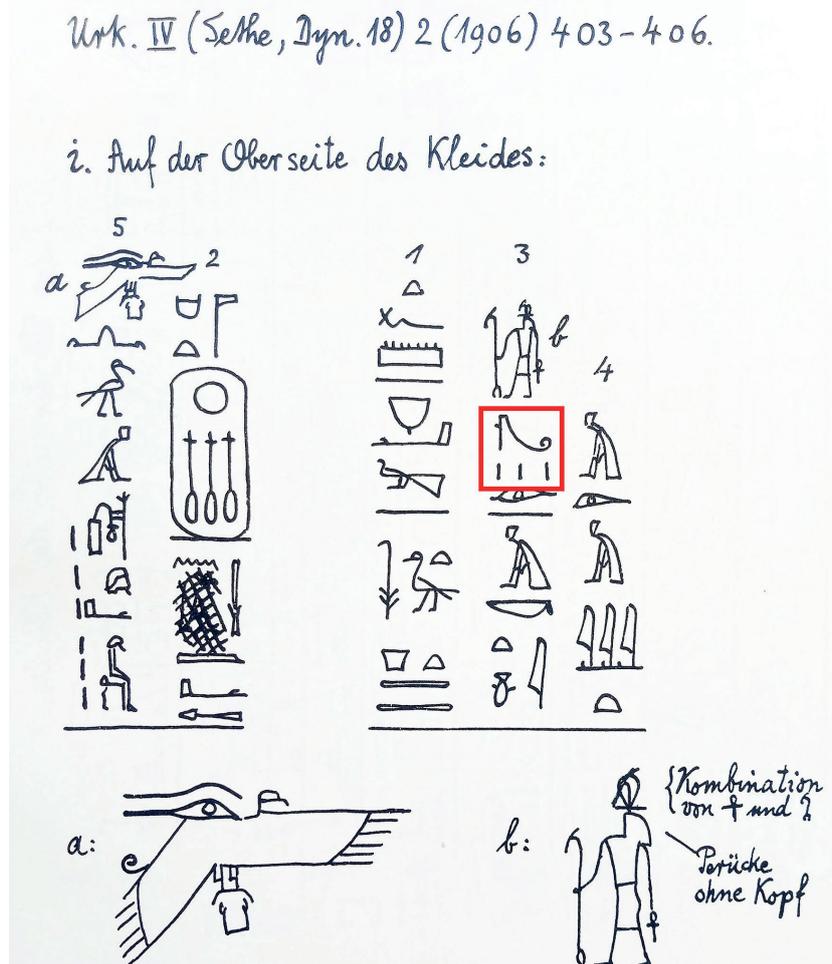
Fig. 13. Inscriptions on the upper part of the Senenmout statue-cube, Berlin 2296 after Roeder 1924: 35

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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 IXe 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 (*sš*) of predecessors (lit. "writing that the predecessors did not discover").[69]

Beyond the evident literary quality of this passage, the innovations that Senenmut claims[70] concern mainly these famous *ti.wt*, which he asserts were conceived "by means of [his] mind (*ib*)", in a clear break with scriptural tradition.
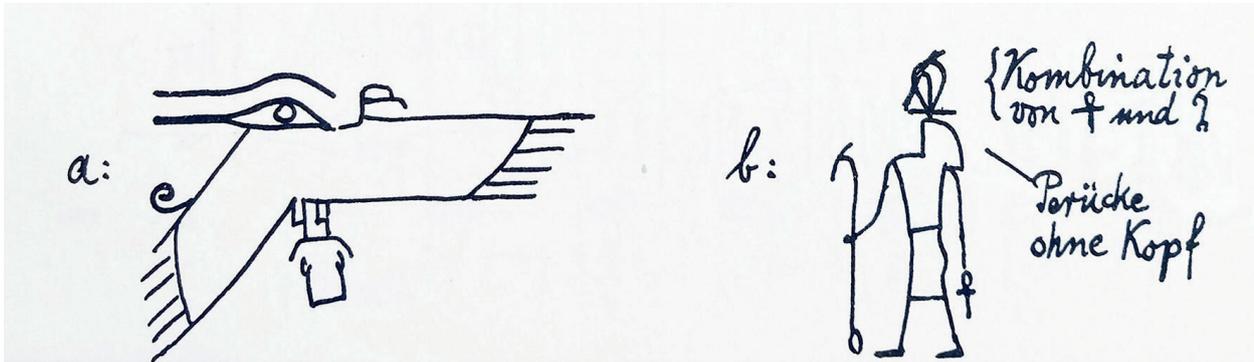
Fig. 14. Detail of fig. 13

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 (*sš*), 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

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69   *ti.wt ir(w.t)~n(=i) m k(ꜣꜣ)t ib=i m ir(w) m sḫ.t n gm(w.t) m sš.w tp(y).w–ꜥ*. 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 (*bꜣk=s*) I do not know,
> whether it be completed drawings (*qd.wt tm.wt*), complex writings (*sš.w ḫpš.w*) or
> ancient rubrics (*ṯms.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-Medinâ after Fischer-Elfert 2022: 277, fig. 173

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72   Brémont, 2023: fig. 5a and 5b.

73   *n[n] ti.t r–sy ḫm~n=i bꜣk=s qd.wt tm.wt sš.w ḫpš.w ṯms.w isw.w ḥmw=kwi ḫnty=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 𓀴 (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 (𓎟 𓀁) from the august ancestor gods.[82]

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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(ꜣ)š* (),[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 *tꜣ.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 *tꜣ.wt* signs but, more importantly, in uncovering the "*latences à révéler*" they contain.[86] In this context, we may understand that the signs *tꜣ.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 *tꜣ.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 *tꜣ.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 (*šꜣꜥ[w] tꜣ.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 (*wḏꜥ[w] md.t*), who invented the signs of writing (*šꜣꜥ[w] tꜣ.wt*), who established the magic rituals, (in short) he who created everything that exists on earth (*qmꜣ[w] wnn m tꜣ*).

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83   *Wb* V, 156, 5–6 (s.v. *gꜣš*, "*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 (*gꜣšꜣ*) milk into the mouth" and, at Edfu, in a hippopotamus sacrifice scene, the king is seen pouring (*gš*) grain-*tehteh* 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(ꜣ)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 (*bꜣk.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-nṯr*, 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-nṯr* implies that this symbolic universe was progressively revealed to humans by the gods. On a more structural level, if the expression *mdw.w-nṯr* 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-

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91   *šbšb=f ti.t r bꜣk.w=s mi nṯr šꜣ 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-nṯr* 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]

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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 sources[101] 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" 𓀭 (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]

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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.huma-num.fr/karnak/1107, © Antoine Chéné

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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 ⟨hieroglyphs⟩ that closes the god's speech (fig. 17) is clearly spelled out in the variant from the temple of Amada ⟨hieroglyphs⟩, *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

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108   *ḏd mdw in ḏ~n(=i) n=k ꜥnḫ wꜣs 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" *(nfꜣ/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 *ṯꜣw*,[114] is said to enable the god to bestow his "breath of life" (*ṯꜣw n[y] ꜥnḫ* or *swḥ.t n[y.t] ꜥnḫ*).[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 Rꜥ*), the true **emanation** (*ti.t sb[ꜣ]q[.t]*) […][120]

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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 sꜣ.t꞊k n(y).t ti.t꞊k mtw.t spd.t rd~n꞊k n꞊s ꜣḫ꞊k [s]ḫm꞊k wꜣš꞊k ḥkꜣ꞊k wr.t꞊k iw꞊s m ẖ.t n(y.t) ms.wt꞊s* (*Urk.* IV, 244, 5–9).

120   *Rꜥmss mry Ɪmn d(w) ꜥnḫ mi Rꜥ ḏ.t nḥḥ nṯr nfr swḥ.t Rꜥ ti.t sb[ꜣ]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]) Rˁ*, "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-ḏrw*).[122]

One of the earliest attestations of the epithet *ti.t Rˁ* 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 Rˁ*), 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 Rˁ*) 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 ḥˁw=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.

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121   In *Sinuhe* (B 216–217), the king is described as *nṯr ˁꜣ* and *miti Rˁ*, 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   *nṯr nfr nb ꜣw.t–ib nb ḫˁ.w iṯ(w).t nfr ḫnm(w) sḫm.ty m ˁnḫ wꜣs ti.t Rˁ mstyw=f rd(w) n=f ḥqꜣ ꜣdb.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   [...] *ꜣImn–ir–d–st ˁnḫ=ti ḫˁ(w.t) m ḥḏ.t ti.t Rˁ pr(w.t) m ḥˁw=f ḫˁ=ti ḥr s.t Tfnwt.*

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

Within the corpus of attestations of the term *tỉ.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 *tỉ.t* and *ʾIwn-mw.t=f* appears in the "Text of Youth" of Thutmose III, inscribed on the southern wall of the "Palace of Maʾat" 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 *tỉ.t* of Iunmutef, like young Horus at
> Chemnis, standing in the northern *wadjyt* hall.[131]

In this example, many scholars have translated *tỉ.t* as "image,"[132] its most commonly accepted sense, likely influenced by the juxtaposition with *qmꜣw*, meaning "form" or "appearance." However, translating *qmꜣw tỉ.t [ny.t] ʾIwn-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 *tỉ.t* here in its primary sense of "emanation," thereby rendering *tỉ.t ʾIwnmw.t=f* as "emanation of Iunmutef." In this context, the future king seems to be expressing that, as a child, he adopted the appearance (*qmꜣw*) 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 Iumutef 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 *tỉ.t ʾIwn-mw.t=f* is to be

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

128   Corteggiani 2007: 234–235, *s.v.* "Iounmoutef".

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   *iw=ỉ m qmꜣw tỉ.t ʾIwn-mw.t=f mỉ nḫnw Ḥr m ꜣḫ-bỉt ꜥḥꜥ=kwỉ m wꜣḏy.t mḥt.t.*

132   Some authors have rendered *tỉ.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 ʾIwn-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 ʾIwn-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 ḫrp ḥmw.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 ʾIwn-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 ʾIwn-mw.t=f* is regarded as a "prestigious function" (*iꜣ.t mnḫ.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

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133   18th Dyn.: statue of Ptahmes (Florence 1790); naophore statue of Meryptah (Louvre N 61 = A 60, with variant *ti.t iqr ʾIwn-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 wḏ~n nṯr nfr rd.t ir.yt iꜣ.wt mnḫ.wt rd~n=f wi r wr ḫrp ḥmw.w r ti.t n[y].t ʾIwn-mw.t=f pw rḫ~n=f sḫr.w(=i) iqr md.wt(=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, on 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 archaising 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 (*ḥ3ty*) and tongue (*ns*) of the Ennead, (49b) [Ptah] […] who gave birth

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140   In his study of the Chronicle of Prince Osorkon, R.A. Caminos translates the sequence *irw=f ʾiwn-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 (*ḥ³ty*) 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" (*ḥ³ty*), the will and thought[149] embodied by Horus, that the gods of the Ennead manifested themselves (*ḫpr=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:
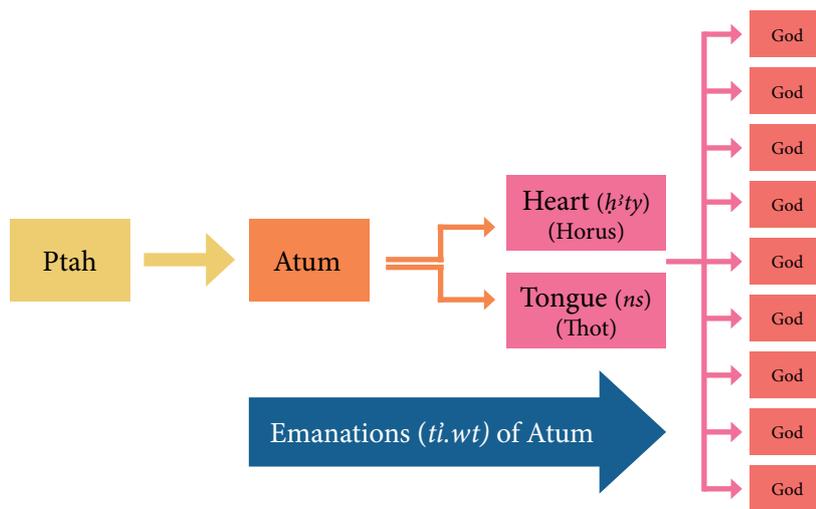
Fig. 18. Diagram showing the role of Atum's *ti.wt* in the creation of the gods, according to the *Memphite Theology* (BM EA 498, 25th Dyn.)

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

149   Bilolo 1982: 7–14. On the question of the *ḥ³ty/ib* distinction, B. Mathieu (2019 [unpublished]: 371) states, "*En simplifiant le propos, le terme « ḥ³tj » 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 « ẖ.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 « ḥ³tj » possède déjà, dans les TP, quelques-unes des acceptions 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 rein-terpreted 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-*ḥ'w*. All the
> gods gathered in your body-*ḏ.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 cre-ator'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-Horakhty 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-Horakhty): 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.

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

151   Mathieu 1997: 109.

152   *Psḏ.t dmḏ=ti m ḥ'w=k ti.t=k nṯr(.w) nb(.w) sm³=w m ḏ.t=k bsy=k tpy š³'=k ḏr-'.*

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

154   *ind-ḥr=k ḫft p³wty.w=k ir(w)~n=k m-ḫt ḫpr~n=k m nṯr ḥ'w qd(w) ḥ'w=f ds=f.*

155   *ind-ḥr=k Ptḥ ind-ḥr nṯr.w ḫprw.w m ḥ'w=k wrwy tw ḫft p³wy.w=k.*

156   PM I/1, 130 (8–9).

157   *ind–ḥr=k nbiw sw ḏs=f p³wti ḫprw w' […] nṯr(.w) nb(.w) ḥ''=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 (*ḥr ms.t*) his **noble emanation** (*ti.t šps.t*) in actual electrum"[161] as well as "his **inaccessible emanation** (*ti.t ḏsr.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 ḏsr.t*)—were also crafted by the king for Ptah-who-is-south-of-his-wall.[164] Although nothing prevents the expressions *ti.t ḏsr.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 ḏsr.t*, "inaccessible

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158   Cf. *supra*, n. 85.

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

160   *w³w³ sḥ ḥnꜥ ib=f* (*Urk.* IV, 2028, 9).

161   *ḥr ḥḥ ³ḫ.wt n it=f ꞌImn ḥr ms.t ti.t šps.t m ḏꜥm(w) m³ꜥ* (*Urk.* IV, 2028, 11–12).

162   On the meaning "inaccessible" for *ḏsr/ḏsr.t*, see below.

163   *ti.t=f ḏsr.t m ḏꜥm(w) ḫsbd [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" (*ḥw.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[ꜣ] m Ḥw.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 (*ḥry ṯ y-mdꜣ.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 *ʿḥm.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 human-kind, and, more broadly, the totally 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 "emana-tions," most often appearing as living beings,[176] but also as seemingly inanimate objects or even

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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-ḫw* (K*RI* 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); Krutchen 1990: 192–193.

174   Line 9 (= K*RI* 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 Creation[183] 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 *Nbḏ*,[185] often used as an epithet of the god Seth or the serpent Apopis. In the *Coffin Texts*, the term *Nbḏ* designates Seth, followed by his affiliates, known as the *Nbḏ.w*,[186] who particularly threaten the deceased Osiris. The entities protecting the embalming chamber are addressed

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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 *Nbḏ* 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 smȝw*). [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 Nbḏ* [192] appears. Since meat offerings are predominantly designated as manifestations of Seth, [193] given the preceding remarks, we propose to interpret *ti.t Nbḏ* 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 Nbḏ pw ḫfty n[y] ḥm.t=t*)." [196]

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

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187   *nḏr Nbḏ imy kkw ir nkn n smȝwty=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" (*Knmty*): 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 ḥr ḫt*. 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   *ḏd mdw stp.w n(y.)w Sbi stp=t(w) m-ˁ=i ir.t Ḥr ˁd~n(=f) sk ˁd=tw ḫȝw im=sn m ir(w) nfr ti.(w)t Nbḏ pw ḫfty n(y) ḥm.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 *ti̓.t* as "image?"

In the section of this study dedicated to *ti̓.t* as a "writing sign,"[197] it was initially assumed that for the ancient Egyptians, this specific manifestation of the term *ti̓.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 (*ti̓.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-*ḏ.t*, flesh-*ḥʿ.w*, breath-*sn.t*, seed-*mtw.t*, heart-*ḥꜣ ty*, 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" (*ʿnḫ*) and "power" (*wꜣs*) 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 Rʿ*? 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*)?

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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 Rꜥ*,[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 Rꜥ* 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 εἰκών. 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.

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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 Rꜥ*, 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 ḏsr.t***, by the Osiris, the royal scribe, he of
> useful intentions, the Superior of the Treasury, Tjia, true of voice.[204]

Regarding the term *ḏsr* in the expression *ti.t ḏsr.t*, D. Meeks provides compelling arguments on J.K. Hoffmeier's monograph[205] 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 ḏsr.t* cult statues of Amun and Ptah mentioned in the Restoration Stela. The expression *ti.t ḏsr.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 *ḏsr*, 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 ḏsr.t* not as "sacred image", as traditionally rendered, but as "inaccessible emanation", to convey both the "distant" (*ḏsr*) 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

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

204   *dwꜣ Rꜥ m ti.t ḏsr.t in Wsir sš n(y)-sw.t ꜣẖ(w) m ib (i)m(y)-r(ꜣ) Pr-ḥḏ Tiꜣ mꜣꜥ ẖrw.*

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 ḏsr.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 ḏsr.t*), which brings forth your creations (*sḫpr.w(t) k³.wt=k*), for you are the breath that emerged at the beginning (*ntk ṯ³w pr[w] m ḥ³.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.

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

210 *ḏd mdw in Ḏḥwty dw³=i ti.t=k ḏsr.t sḫpr(w.t) k³.wt=k ntk ṯ³w pr(w) m-ḥ³.t.*

211 *ntk R' 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 *ḏd-mdw jn Ḥw.t- Ḥr, nb(.t) 'Iwn.t, 'Ir.t R' it(=s) R' pw (…) wnn ir(w.t)-ḥḥw-ḥr-ḥḥw wbn(w.t) m S.t-R' m ti.t nfr.t mr(.t) R'* (Dendara 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" (*shˁ sšš.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 ḥry.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*-sistrums 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

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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 *sꜣ* ("son") (*Wb* III, 408), *sꜣ.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. XCVIII (3rd reg. left, 1st table).

217　*ꜣḫty.t m p.t ti.t nfr.t ḥry.t šnb.t mr nṯr.w mꜣꜣ≠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 *ꜥq Ḥr-wr r sbi.w=f mtw=k ti.t nfr.t nfr mꜣꜣ m rn pfy n(y) ꜣy.t nb ẖry.t ḥtp ḥr šꜥ.t n rn pfy Sḫm.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 Rꜥ*, "emanation of Re," or *ti.t ꜣImn*, "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.wnṯr*, 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

ti̓.t Nbḏ, or "emanation of the Dark One," this phrase likely forms an expression diametrically opposed to *ti̓.t Rʿ*, "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 *ti̓.t* as "image."

While this interpretation might initially seem appealing, given that *emanations* (*ti̓.wt*) most often become manifest in tangible forms, several key elements undermine this analogy. Firstly, in numerous instances, the context in which the *emanation* (*ti̓.t*) appears does not emphasize the formal resemblance of this manifestation to its source. What's more, in certain examples, the *emanation* (*ti̓.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 *ti̓.t*. Ultimately, although most often concerned with questions of formalism, the relationships that *ti̓.t* maintains with its own expressions appear to be consubstantial rather than mimetic in nature. At a deeper level, in consideration of the term *ti̓.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 *ti̓.t* as "image" and to favor the interpretation "emanation" in the vast majority of its usages.

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Not so Black and White

Use of Colour in Eighteenth Dynasty Funerary Manuscripts[1]

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Abstract. Studies of hieroglyphic palaeography have often focused on the morphology of each token, less so on the use of colour as a determinant feature in their design. The current paper relates some preliminary observations on the author's latest project, which revolves around the visual impact the use of colour has on defining a certain graphic register (in the sense of Albert & Ragazzoli 2025) in the case of New Kingdom manuscripts. One particular instance is that of the rare presence of polychrome text in Book of the Dead manuscripts, as polychrome hieroglyphs are commonly connected to a monumental, not to a manuscript context. Through a visual analysis of both morphology *and* colour use in writings of the name and an epithet of Osiris, it will become evident that scribes had at their disposal a broad spectrum of options for bringing certain inscriptions closer to their monumental counterparts. The study will thus expand the understanding of graphic registers used in funerary manuscripts, including the diversity of colour use, and challenge the understanding of these writing media as intrinsically connected to "cursive" or "linear" script varieties.

Keywords. hieroglyphic palaeography; colour; funerary manuscripts; graphic registers; monumentality.

1. Graphic registers in New Kingdom manuscripts

This paper presents some preliminary results of a broader study on the use of colour in New Kingdom funerary manuscripts, with a specific focus on the unusual presence of polychrome hieroglyphs in Book of the Dead (BD) manuscripts.[2]

A general Egyptological understanding is that "[w]ith few exceptions, the lapidary sphere is associated with the more iconic hieroglyphic variety of the script […], contrasting with the non-lapidary sphere, which is associated with the more cursive varieties, linear hieroglyphs, hieratic and Demotic on portable writing surfaces."[3] However, studies on graphic registers have shown that a document's script is connected more intrinsically to its intended sphere of action than to its supporting medium.[4] For example, the use of hieratic indexicalises texts as belonging to the personal religious sphere[5] or to the world of scribes.[6] Nevertheless, even within hieratic texts, certain parts are often written in (linear) hieroglyphs, such as *ḥtp-dỉ-nsw* formulae.[7] Such a custom may suggest not only a wish to monumentalize specific passages, but perhaps also the attachment of the text itself to a specific graphic register: for example, hieratic for visitor's graffiti, underscoring the writer's belonging to the *monde des scribes*, and hieroglyphs for religious formulae, even when written in a secondary epigraphic context.[8]

While scholars have focused on the presence of hieratic or linear hieroglyphs in monumental context,[9] the use of polychrome hieroglyphs in funerary manuscripts is a *transfuge graphique*[10] in the opposite direction: here, monumental culture seems to have influenced an otherwise linear or cursive text. Studies on graphic registers in BD manuscripts mostly distinguish between hieratic and linear/cursive hieroglyphic copies,[11] despite noticing that more than one script can be found in a single document and that a more comprehensive investigation on the graphic varieties used would

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3   Stauder-Porchet & Stauder 2020: 71. Cf. Dorman 2017: 38 for the BD. As emerged in conversation with Joel Sams, the use of the term "lapidary" to refer only to monumental architecture and other prestige self-presentation objects can seem unintuitive considering that ostraca, typically less formal writing media, may nonetheless be made of stone. This underscores how tricky the distinction between formal and informal materials can be. As the present study aims at demonstrating, it is not necessarily the medium, but how the inscription is written, which gives monumental attributes to a text.

4   The term "graphic registers" has been introduced by Chloé Ragazzoli and Florence Albert in the context of the research program "Écritures", carried out at the Institut francais d'archéologie orientale (Ragazzoli & Albert 2025). It refers to the connection between a certain script and a specific sphere of action. Cf. Goelet 2003: 4 and n. 6.

5   Donnat Beauquier 2014.

6   Ragazzoli 2019.

7   See Ragazzoli 2017: 36; cf. "monumentalized signatures" in Ragazzoli forthcoming. See also below on monumentalisation. Monumentalisation of the *ḥtp-dỉ-nsw* formula in full hieroglyphs goes back to at least the Middle Kingdom, e.g. in the coffin of Seni (BM EA 30842, see Taylor 2010: 65; cf. Díaz-Iglesias Llanos 2023: 5), where the captions to the object frieze and the spells are instead painted in linear hieroglyphs. This fact confirms that certain texts had to be, or were customarily, written in a specific graphic register independently of the medium.

8   Cf. Ragazzoli 2017: 36, 43; Díaz-Iglesias Llanos 2023: 5, Verhoeven 2020: I, 306–308.

9   For an overview, see Díaz-Iglesias Llanos 2023: 5–6; for graffiti, cf. Ragazzoli 2018 and forthcoming; for other inscriptions, see Kahl 2022.

10   Ragazzoli & Albert 2025: 11 define as "*transfuges graphiques*" "*les écrits dans lequels un script est employé là ou un autre script est dominant.*"

11   e.g. Cole 2017; Albert 2022; Verhoeven 2023.

be needed.[12] Finally, publications of funerary manuscripts and overviews of BD graphic registers rarely mention colour changes aside from the use of red for certain passages.[13] A few exceptionally mention the presence of polychrome hieroglyphs[14] and of passages written in white;[15] none, however, seem to have mentioned the existence of sections written in blue (e.g. BD Kha, Turin Museo Egizio Suppl. 8316/03 = Suppl. 8438, fig. 1).[16]

Fig. 1. Contrast between the caption to Osiris, written in blue-filled hieroglyphs, and the rest of the text, written in black linear hieroglyphs, in BD Kha (Turin Museo Egizio Suppl. 8316/03 = Suppl. 8438). CC0 1.0, by Museo Egizio di Torino (adapted by author)

12   Verhoeven 2023: 170.

13   This is the case for BD Yuya, published in Davis & Naville 1908, and BD Qenna, published in Leemans 1840, two of the manuscripts featuring polychrome text. Modern overviews are Munro 1988: 195; Lucarelli 2010: 270 discusses in a dedicated paragraph colour use in the BD, without mentioning either blue or polychrome inscriptions; cf. also Lucarelli 2020; Albert 2022; Goelet 2003 and 2023; Verhoeven 2023.

14   Parkinson & Quirke 1995: 24; Parkinson 2011; Díaz-Iglesias Llanos 2023.

15   Taylor 2010: 31 mentions again only black and red, except when discussing the use of white pigment in the manuscript REDMG 1998.29.1. Taylor 2010: 47, cat. 15 comments: "The text was first inscribed in red ink and then overwritten using a white pigment made from magnesium silicate. The name of the serpent Apep was left in red." He further proposes a comparison with tombs: "When spells are written on the walls of tombs or on coffins, blue is the preferred colour for the signs." This observation however does not seem to reflect the copies of BD spells found in New Kingdom Theban tombs, where black is preferred. This is the case for all the burial chambers of the Eighteenth Dynasty featuring BD spells (TT 11, TT 61, TT 82, and TT 87, for which see Díaz-Iglesias Llanos 2022; and TT 96, Eggebrecht 1988), as well as for TT 1 and other Ramesside tombs in Deir el-Medina (cf. Haring 2006).

16   See also BD Tjenena (Paris Louvre N.3074, Cenival 1992: 8, 70, 88), and BD Wenherptah (Bologna Museo Civico KS3167, Curto et al. 1990: 179, under study by the present author).

However, this intermedial shift (or "reference," Rajewsky 2005: 52, Wolf 2005: 254), that is, the imitation of features conventional for a different medium,[17] notably underscores the scribes' deliberate choices in adapting colour and script, and highlights how colour bridges these spheres.[18] Such intermediality seems to work in both directions: monumental models may influence portable writing surfaces as well.[19] An in-depth investigation on the use of colour in all its variety in funerary manuscripts is therefore still needed. The current project aims to bring attention to colour as an essential feature of ancient Egyptian writing, and to shed light on its indexicality in the normally monochrome, linear context of funerary manuscripts and initially focussed specifically on text sections written in polychrome hieroglyphs. Currently, only five manuscripts are known to survive featuring polychrome passages.[20] Most were published more than a century ago, and even only partially: BD Nakht A (London BM EA 10473),[21] BD Yuya (Cairo Egyptian Museum CG 51189, see below 3.2),[22] BD Qenna (Leiden RMO Leemans T2),[23] BD Meryt (Kha) (Paris BnF Luynes 826),[24] and BD Seramun (Paris BnF Luynes 825).[25] All date to the (later) Eighteenth Dynasty except BD

17   "Intermediality" is an umbrella term to describe several different phenomena connected to the interplay of different media (Wolf 2005); in the case of the transmission of different motifs and thematic variation being present across media, Wolf 2005: 253 also talks of "transmediality."

18   Munro 1988: 13–63. has already extensively compared iconographic details in manuscripts and tomb decoration. The comparability between tombs and BD manuscripts is also well examined in Goelet 2003 (especially p. 17), Dorman 2019, and Díaz-Iglesias Llanos 2025.

19   Goelet 2003: 18.

20   Any information on further manuscripts will be greatly appreciated. These manuscripts will be described in detail in a more extensive publication resulting from the completion of the project.

21   BD Nakht A (BM EA 10473) is generally dated to the early post-Amarna period (Quirke 2013: xxi, Glanville 1927). It is one of the rarer manuscripts made of skin membrane, and belonged to the scribe of the army and general Nakht, who owned also a second BD manuscript (BD Nakht B, BM EA 10471). It is not possible at this moment to establish with certainty, but it is likely that the two manuscripts were joined in antiquity to create one artefact. It was acquired by Budge in 1888 in Luxor and it is therefore likely of Theban origin. I thank Barbara Wills and Lucy Skinner from the British Museum for their insights on the materiality, and Patricia Usick for the information on the acquisition.

22   BD Yuya is one of the longest surviving BD manuscripts, just short of 20m, and it belonged to the divine father Yuya, famous courtier under (and father-in-law of) Amenhotep III. It was found in Yuya's and his wife Tuya's tomb in the Valley of the Kings (KV 46) in 1905 by Quibell (Davies, Maspero, Newberry 1907; the papyrus was published in Davis & Naville 1908).

23   BD Qenna was published in Leemans 1840 and is a peculiar manuscript in more than one sense: it has the longest polychrome text section, comprising unusual versions of two sun-hymns (sheet 1–5; Quirke 2013: 32–37), while belonging not to a high courtier or priest, but to a simple "trader." Acquired by the RMO in 1836, it is dated to the late Eighteenth or early Nineteenth Dynasty and it is likely of Theban origin (I thank Daniel Soliman for the helpful insights on the matter).

24   BD Meryt (= BnF 53.2) was almost certainly originally produced for her husband Kha, overseer of the works under Amenhotep II to Amenhotep III, since his name sometimes still features where one would expect the owner's name. It has now been published by Peis 2021.

25   The papyrus (= BnF 53.1b) belonged to a member of the clergy of Amun and was discussed and translated in Ledrain 1880. Joubert 2025: 234–237 also discusses the different *transfuges graphiques* in Seramun's burial equipment: see

Seramun, which dates to the Twenty-First. As the paper will illustrate, the unusual decision to use polychromy allowed scribes to "monumentalize" the manuscript and the text itself, even when the morphology of these polychrome signs closely resembles that of linear hieroglyphs. However, the study soon revealed that this was but one of the strategies adopted by the manuscript designers to emulate monumental visuality, and that use of colour in manuscript is much more varied than previously assumed. Further options include the mentioned use of costly blue paint, filling signs in one paint as to resemble captions in tomb decoration (such as in BD Amenhotep: see below, 3.3), or even adding inner extensive inner details in black within the otherwise blank silhouette of signs (e.g. BD Nebseni, see below 3.4).

Overviews of graphic registers abound, especially on the linear hieroglyphs often found in funerary manuscripts.[26] A basic distinction is usually drawn between the hieratic and hieroglyphic registers of script, even though the latter register by itself displays much variation. The choice of one of these registers over the other is consistently associated with several paratextual and graphic features, as Dorman has demonstrated:[27] he terms these two clusters of features "scribal format" and "monumental format."

"Scribal format" BD manuscripts are characterized by text written in hieratic and thus mostly in a horizontal layout[28] from right to left,[29] and in black ink.[30] Such manuscripts also feature a limited number of vignettes, and a limited use of colour for the vignettes themselves.[31] According to Hassan, the fact that the oldest extant BD manuscripts are written in hieratic[32] and laid out in a "scribal format" may explain the presence of hieratograms in later linear hieroglyphic palaeography.[33]

in particular fig. 1 on page 245 for a colour photo. Like BD Qenna, BD Seramun's polychrome inscription features an almost complete colour palette.

26   Goelet 2003: 10–13; Cole 2017; Dorman 2019; Lucarelli 2020; Albert 2022; Hassan 2022a; Munro 2023: 41ff. (specifically on the Eighteenth Dynasty); Verhoeven 2023: 170–175.

27   Dorman 2019.

28   However, most earlier BD manuscripts written in hieratic are (or contain text) laid out in vertical columns: see Dorman 2019; Hassan 2022a: 136. Among these is BD Ahmose (Louvre E. 11085): see Munro 1995.

29   This does not exclude the possibility of retrograde writing, as attested in BD Ahmose for the subtitle to the vignette of spell 136B. Hassan (2022a: 136) suggests that the text might have been copied from hieroglyphic models.

30   Although rubrics may still be present: see the hieratic portion of BD Sobekmose (O'Rourke 2016).

31   Further examples can be found in Hassan 2022a; cf. BD Hatnofer (Cairo TR 25.1.55.6) in Hassan 2022b: 298.

32   This format may derive from Middle Kingdom columnar hieratic copies of Coffin Texts (CT) spells kept on papyrus (e.g. P. Gardiner II; P. Gardiner III [Dorman 2017: 32–33, and fig. 2.3]). However, hieratic for CT spells is rare (see Lucarelli 2020: 579): they are most often written in linear hieroglyphs (cf. Cole 2017, Konrad 2022; see Taylor 2010: 65, cat. 20 for an example). Hieratic BD manuscripts, such as BD Nebimes (Hassan 2022a, Dorman 2019: 34), may have been used as exemplars for linear hieroglyphic BD manuscripts.

33   Hassan 2022a. Other reasons are listed in Díaz-Iglesias Llanos 2022: 135–136, with reference to further literature. For hieratograms in linear hieroglyphic texts, see further Díaz-Iglesias Llanos 2022: 138–140 (with reference to Lucarelli 2020: 582–584). According to the scholar, hieratograms belong mainly to the categories of birds, trees and plants,

The graphic register considered typical of funerary manuscripts, and particularly of BD manuscripts, is linear hieroglyphs: indeed, BD manuscripts are so intimately correlated with this script that the name "*Totenbuchkursive*" has long been use in Egyptological literature.[34] This script variety is graphically strongly linked to monumental hieroglyphic forms and outlines, without being fully painted;[35] yet it often displays a high level of detail (see below). Given that it follows the same writing conventions and arrangement as fully painted hieroglyphs, and especially since it lacks ligatures, it should hardly be described as a cursive form of hieroglyphs.[36]

Linear hieroglyphs, in all their varieties, characterize what Dorman defines as the "monumental format," which within the *Book of the Dead* tradition became dominant by the reign of Thutmose III. Hieroglyphic BD manuscripts present a much more complex layout than their hieratic counterparts. Their text is organized mostly in vertical columns, a direction connected generally to monumental inscriptions, and to religious texts and temple libraries.[37] However, horizonal captions also feature frequently, as do tables, and polychrome vignettes with vertical or horizontal captions.[38] In addition, the writing direction can vary: typically, the spells are written in retrograde writing,[39] although manuscripts in prograde or mixed direction are attested.[40]

The reasons behind the transition from hieratic to (linear) hieroglyphs have yet to be understood.[41] Goelet proposes as a possible explanation that hieroglyphs were seen as more formal and prestigious, and more connected to *arcana*, i.e. hidden knowledge: Considering that only a small percentage of the population may have been highly literate, and an even smaller one familiar with hieroglyphs, such a choice would give the text a more restricted, mysterious aura.[42] Hassan, however, refuses the idea that (linear) hieroglyphs were considered inherently more prestigious than

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sky earth and water, men and their occupations. Further study may reveal whether these graphic conventions have parallels in the inscription of Middle Kingdom Coffin Texts.

34   The script has also been called "semi-cursive"/*Semi-kursive*, "book-writing"/*Buchhieroglyphen* or *Buchschrift*. An extensive discussion on the topic, with bibliography, is Díaz-Iglesias Llanos 2022: 128, n. 7–8.

35   Haring 2006: 8, cf. Lucarelli 2020: *579*: "In some cases, the richness in detail of cursive hieroglyphs, for instance, in central compositions in scrolls, such as the final judgment of the dead, would raise the question if, in many cases, the *Totenbuchkursive* should not just be considered a form of monumental hieroglyphs, only painted with a reed pen instead of carved or painted on the wall and with a more or less frequent insertion of hieratic signs."

36   For a full overview on the topic, see Díaz-Iglesias Llanos 2023.

37   Parkinson & Quirke 1995. It is also possible that this direction was more directly influenced by the layout of the CT: see Goelet 2003: 12. In one exceptional case, on a linen shroud (NMR.92, Nicholson Museum, University of Sydney TM 133810), belonging to Tany and dated to Thutmose III, the text is written in long horizontal lines of linear hieroglyphs, possibly inspired by the layout of stelae, see Cole 2017: 42, and 44 fig. 3.4.

38   Dorman 2019; Verhoeven 2023.

39   Cf. Niwinski 1989: 15–17; Goelet 2003: 12.

40   BD Nakht and BD Qenna are prominent examples.

41   Dorman 2019; Hassan 2022a and 2022b.

42   Parkinson & Quirke 1995: 24, 26; Goelet 2003.

hieratic and that this influenced the abandonment of hieratic.[43] He instead proposes that the abandonment of hieratic was connected to the aesthetic and magical importance of the vignettes.[44] This interpretation supports the essential relation of hieroglyphic BD manuscripts to monumental inscriptions, and implies that these were conceptually distinct from hieratic BD manuscripts, even when the latter were accompanied by illustrations.[45] In addition, some BD owners carried priestly titles, and ones specifically linked to writing, copying, and drawing:[46] such individuals were thus themselves likely trained in the designs and conventions of monumental hieroglyphic writing.[47] Nonetheless, a declining familiarity with hieroglyphs might have been at the root of switching again to hieratic in the Twenty-First Dynasty.[48]

Within one document not only can several hands coexist,[49] but also multiple graphic registers (hieratic/hieroglyphic) and their varieties.[50] Rarely, manuscripts even exhibit both hieroglyphic and hieratic text sections, such as BD Sobekmose (Brooklyn Museum of Art 37.1777, rto vs. vso)[51] and BD Mesemnetjer (Paris Louvre E. 21324.)[52] In BD Ani (London BM EA 10470) the beginning and the end of the scroll are written in a variety of linear hieroglyphs displaying more detail than the rest of the text.[53] In fact, it is common to find more elegant hieroglyphs at the beginnings of

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43   Hassan 2022b: 282. In fact, hieratic is generally also connected to the funerary sphere: see the letters to the dead (Donnat Beauquier 2014).

44   Hassan 2022a: 135; Hassan 2022b: 282 and n. 30.

45   Cf. Stauder-Porchet & Stauder 2020: 71, underscoring the connection of hieroglyphic writing with illustrations in the monumental sphere: "Hieroglyphic writing in the lapidary sphere […] is often closely associated with pictorial representations of various sorts."

46   Kockelmann 2017: 72, likely referring mostly to the Late Period. BD Nebseni, see below, is the most prominent example from the Eighteenth Dynasty.

47   See also below and Dorman 2017: 39. Cf. Lucarelli 2010: 27: "even when not directly involved in the writing process, the owner of the papyrus, who would often have been literate, may have played a role in the selection of the spells and vignettes."

48   Lenzo 2007: 1118. A similar trend towards less monumental writing is seen in Theban tombs: see Sartori forthcoming, and below.

49   As often seems the case for the name and titles of the owner (Kockelmann 2017: 72), one perfect example being once more BD Nakht: see Glanville 1927.

50   Dorman 2017: 6 and 2019; Díaz-Iglesias Llanos 2022 and 2023.

51   The manuscript, more than seven metres long, belonged to the goldworker of Amun Sobekmose and it is one of the few surviving manuscripts likely coming from Saqqara. It dates to the Eighteenth Dynasty and was published in O'Rourke 2016.

52   Mesemnetjer was a member of the clergy of Amun (therefore likely based in Thebes) and a scribe during the Eighteenth Dynasty. His papyrus, like BD Sobekmose, is surprisingly written both on the recto and on the verso (Quirke 2013: xviii). It has yet to be fully published, but photos can be found on https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl010003442 (accessed 03.11.2025).

53   Leach & Parkinson 2010: 40 and n. 5. The papyrus is one of the most complete compilations of funerary spells and vignettes. It belonged to the accountant of temple estates of all the gods of Thebes Ani, and it dates to the early

funerary manuscripts and in the presence of vignettes showing the adoration of divinities, not only in the New Kingdom but also later.[54]

Similarly, the use of graphic registers in private tombs changes over time, and an evolution can be seen from the Eighteenth Dynasty to the Ramesside period, with a progressive reduction in the use of monumental hieroglyphs in favour of more linear ones.[55] Generally, Theban chapels from the early New Kingdom feature mostly highly detailed hieroglyphs, be they polychrome or monochrome.[56] However, tombs can also be designed in a way that recalls papyri:[57] such is the case for the use of linear hieroglyphs to write funerary compositions on burial chamber walls, in both royal[58] and private[59] contexts. In the latter context, once more, monumental hieroglyphs alternated with linear ones in specific situations, such as in the formulae accompanying large-scale illustrations.[60] This underscores the connection between pictorial scenes and a higher level of monumentality and confirms the intrinsic connection between certain text genres and certain graphic registers. Scholars have remarked on the connection between tomb decoration and funerary manuscripts (and possibly the influence of the latter on the former) in Deir el-Medina, both in the design of vignettes[61] and in the use of retrograde writing.[62] Hassan remarks that one of the reasons behind the abandonment of hieratic in favour of linear hieroglyphs may have been the wish to design the manuscript in a way similar to a tomb wall.[63] In fact, as Dorman describes:

> The major vignettes generally follow the rules of monumental art, where the text is written in the clear rather than in retrograde format, and captions attached to individual figures strictly follow the orientation of those figures. The resultant funerary scroll is often a spectacular product of draftsmen's handiwork and can be described for the purposes of this article as having been produced in accordance

Nineteenth Dynasty. Acquired by Budge together with BD Nakht in 1888, it was published several times, most recently by Goelet et al. 2015. As Leach & Parkinson 2010 have shown, the papyrus was composed of several sections joined together after having been painted.

54   Munro 1988: 195.

55   Sartori forthcoming.

56   The most stunning examples are likely the tombs TT 100, TT 93, etc. For a collection of hieroglyphs, see Davies 1958.

57   Already in the Middle Kingdom tomb of Senet, TT 60, certain texts are written in linear hieroglyphs to give the impression of reproducing a papyrus (Lucarelli 2020: 579–580).

58   Famously KV 34, the tomb of Thutmose III: see Hornung et al. 2005; cf. Goelet 2003: 17–18.

59   Díaz-Iglesias Llanos 2022: 133: "The walls of the underground burial chambers in TT 11, 61, 82, and 87 […] contain monumental or three-dimensional materialisation of texts and images, many of which were more frequently committed to mobile carriers such as shrouds and leather or papyrus rolls."

60   Díaz-Iglesias Llanos 2022: 133.

61   Tawfiq 2023: 369.

62   For the tomb of Sennedjem, TT 1, see Haring 2006: 7–10.

63   Hassan 2022b: 282, n. 30.

> with a "monumental" compositional format that embodies textual and decorative standards entirely suitable for the adornment of tomb walls or inscribed objects prepared in anticipation of the interment of royal and private individuals.[64]

This is particularly true for the opening vignettes of such manuscripts, which usually illustrate either the adoration of Osiris or a hymn to Osiris or Ra. Similar "opening vignettes" are found either on focal walls or near the entrance in Theban tombs: indeed, it appears that this textual genre developed originally in this context.[65] This visual connection to tombs suggests that such openings of BD manuscripts may originally have been intended to act as substitutes for personal rock-cut chapels for BD owners unable to afford their construction and/or decoration.[66] Illustrations of the Adoration of Osiris, of the Opening of the Mouth ritual, and of the funeral procession in papyri thus mirror some of the most important depictions found in Eighteenth Dynasty tombs[67]—most cases featuring text in monumental hieroglyphs with varying degrees of iconicity.

Interestingly, when scribes copied BD texts from manuscripts onto the walls of burial chambers, not only did they retain the graphic registers that characterized funerary manuscripts,[68] but they used the same writing conventions, such as painting certain signs in a greater size than the rest.[69] Lastly, the importance of tailoring one's writing to fit the context in which it is to appear is also confirmed by graffiti practices.[70]

2. Monumentality and use of colour in manuscripts

As previously remarked, different graphic registers may mingle in a single document (or artefact).[71] On the level of the individual sign, hieratograms feature in linear hieroglyphic palaeography at

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64   Dorman 2019: 21; Goelet 2003: 17. Kockelmann 2017: 69 points out also the relation with monumental temple decoration, on the basis of the use of multiple red and yellow upper and lower borderlines, which are, however, also found in private tombs, cf. again Goelet 2003: 17.

65   Assmann 1983.

66   Goelet 2003: 17.

67   Goelet 2003: 17.

68   One major exception being the burial chamber belonging to Sennefer, TT 96B (pictures in Eggebrecht 1988), cf. Díaz-Iglesias Llanos in preparation. In the opposite direction, Kahl 2022 shows that the genre of a contract was so intrinsically linked to the graphic register of hieratic that it was copied on a monument without being transcribed into hieroglyphs.

69   Díaz-Iglesias Llanos 2025. She points out two major differences: the larger scale of the signs in burial chambers, to enhance their visibility on such a bigger surface; and the absence of framing devices (except once more in Sennefer, see above).

70   Van Pelt & Staring 2019: 143: in Saqqara, "[a]lthough scribes generally would have been more familiar with hieratic, many of the graffitists in the New Kingdom tombs appear to have adapted their script to 'fit' the monumental hieroglyphs used in funerary contexts […] The use of the hieroglyphic script may reflect an immersion of the graffiti in the 'divine' world of the deceased […]."

71   Díaz-Iglesias Llanos 2023: 5.

varying frequencies,[72] even though linear scripts as a whole seem to be a variety of hieroglyphic writing, and were not derived from hieratic.[73] At the same time, a broad spectrum of forms for the same hieroglyph is often attested within individual BD manuscripts, ranging from more to less iconic.[74] In particular, certain signs are often monumentalized: this is the case for 🪲 (scarab, Gard. L1) and 🦩 (ibis-on-a-standard, Gard. G26), which even in linear contexts are often written larger and with more detail than other signs.[75] The name of the owner as well was often graphically enhanced.[76] The wish to imitate monumental hieroglyphs by adding inner details to linear forms persists in copies from the Third Intermediate and Late Periods.[77]

Captions to vignettes can appear in cursive hieroglyphs even in older hieratic BD manuscripts, employing horizontal linear hieroglyphs for their solitary vignette.[78] Similarly, within linear hieroglyphic sources, captions to vignettes can feature more detailed hieroglyphs than the rest of the text.[79] This fact underscores the intrinsic link between illustrations and the monumental hieroglyphic register.[80] It may even be that the same prototypes in linear hieroglyphs were used for both manuscripts and tombs.[81] Specific passages, especially those accompanying opening or judgement scenes, were often written in a more elegant hand or even polychrome hieroglyphs, bringing the text and the corresponding vignette still closer to monumental prototypes.[82] Such links between

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72   Díaz-Iglesias Llanos 2022: 140–147. Furthermore, it seems that hieratic influence on linear hieroglyphic texts "is visible in three aspects: the ductus; the closeness displayed by signs with similar forms that correspond to dissimilar hieroglyphic signs; and the addition of diacritic strokes." Conversely, more hieroglyphic forms can intrude in hieratic texts, as is the case for the 𓁷 "human head" hieroglyph, Gard. D1 (Hassan 2022a: 139).

73   Graefe 2015.

74   Graefe 2015: 122–123. Some of these have no correspondence either in hieratic or in hieroglyphs and have thus been dubbed "hybrid graphemes:" see Díaz-Iglesias Llanos 2022: 134, cf. Ali 2020's "cursive hybrid script."

75   Graefe 2015, confirming, on a different medium, conventions found also on tomb walls, see Haring 2006: 7 for TT 1.

76   Cf. Díaz-Iglesias Llanos 2022: 146, quoting Ali 2001: 20.

77   Munro 1988: 195, Lucarelli 2020.

78   For an overview of these manuscripts, see Hassan 2022a. In particular, Hassan 2022a: 138 mentions that "The signs in the hieratic columns were larger than the much-abbreviated signs in the horizontal copies" and that certain signs were written abbreviated in horizontal manuscripts but display a more detailed form when written in columnar manuscripts, again showing that the monumental layout (columns) influences the level of monumentality of the script.

79   Dorman 2019: 21.

80   Hieratic documents do not usually feature illustrations, hence the need of the scribe to refer to monumental models. Hassan 2022a: 134 confirms: "From an aesthetic and formal point of view, the design and layout of the hieratic examples display a poor appearance compared with the hieroglyphs and cursive hieroglyphs versions. The spells were organized without a specific format, especially in the versions written in horizontal lines. In contrast, the examples written in cursive hieroglyphs displayed the interest of the scribes and artists in the manuscript."

81   Hassan 2022a: 137 and 2022b: 282–283; Munro 2017: 49. Cf. the similarity of script on the ostraca from TT 87, see Lüscher 2013.

82   Munro 1988: 195; Parkinson & Quirke 1995: 24. Díaz-Iglesias Llanos 2023: 5 remarks that this practice goes back to hieratic documents of the Old Kingdom, and indeed is confirmed by the aforementioned hieratic BD copies where

certain depictions (e.g. the Adoration of Osiris and the Judgement of the Dead) and monumental hieroglyphs is stable through time and media even after the Eighteenth Dynasty.[83] In fact, even manuscripts from the Third Intermediate up until the Roman period, written horizontally in hieratic or demotic, feature captions to the opening vignette written in columns of more or less elegant hieroglyphic forms.[84] Retaining this graphic convention had its roots in the highly-regarded pictoriality of the hieroglyphic script and likely the prestigious connection of the vignettes to monumental contexts.[85] Captions to vignettes at the beginnings of scrolls are especially likely to be fully painted in "solid" hieroglyphs, in some cases even in blue, suggesting a wish to raise the prestige of a particularly visible part of the scroll by using expensive paint. At other times, even though the morphology of the signs is not particularly elegant or detailed, the use of a different paint makes the text stand out. Here again, the use of labour-intensive blue raises the visual appeal of selected scenes.

General overviews on the use of script and colour in BD manuscripts often only mention black for the main text and red ink used for spell titles, special instructions, or names of dangerous beings ("rubrics").[86] More in-depth analysis reveals that, within a rubric, names or words might be underscored by reverting to black,[87] or even changing to blue ink: a rather expensive colour and difficult to produce. Similarly, while studies have observed that certain graphemes are always written in hieroglyphs and often appear more detailed than the signs that surround them,[88] few have noted that some of these same hieroglyphs are often also filled with solid black. It seems that scribes actually played with colour much more than has previously been acknowledged. Within the black text, some signs can exhibit different coloured areas and be partially filled with solid black. This introduces a colour alternation that brings them closer to their monumental counterparts by making their inner details more prominent. Whereas signs such as 𓆣 (scarab, Gard. L1) are consistently painted fully in black,[89] others may be fully painted or simply outlined at the discretion of the

the vignette with hieroglyphic captions is positioned at the beginning of the scroll (Hassan 2022a: 137, Lucarelli 2010: 267).

83   Munro 1988: 195. Cf. for example the tomb of Karakhamun, TT 223, dated to the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty, where the captions to the Judgement scene were painted in monumental hieroglyphs (Molinero Polo & Rodriguez Valls 2018).

84   Lenzo 2023.

85   Cole 2017: 43; Parkinson & Quirke 1995: 24. These vignettes are often "scaled to full page size" (Kockelmann 2017: 70).

86   The writers of some graffiti similarly used red ink to index danger and apotropaic power, and to give their text "*une puissance d'action efficace*" from the ritual point of view (Ragazzoli 2018: 401, referring to Donnat Beauquier 2014: 216–217).

87   Verhoeven 2023: 168.

88   Graefe 2015, cf. Díaz-Iglesias Llanos 2022: 140, who observes that even among signs of Gardiner's Sign List's A group, mostly written as hieratograms, more complex human figures can feature a higher degree of detail.

89   For 𓆣 (scarab, Gard. L1), see Haring 2006: 8 for tomb palaeography: no extensive study has yet been carried out on manuscript sources. This is one of the axes of the author's project: see below.

painter (see 🦃, crested ibis, Gard. G25 in fig. 2).[90] In exceptional cases, even the scarab beetle can display a silhouette design with inner linear details (fig. 3a–b).[91]

Fig. 2. Diverse writing of the glyph 🦃 (crested ibis, Gard. G25) in neighbouring colours, from BD Nebseni (London BM EA 9900,17).
Eighteenth Dynasty, likely from Saqqara.
© The Trustees of the British Museum

Fig. 3a–b. Exceptional writing of 🪲 (scarab beetle, Gard. L1) in the name of the god Khepri as silhouette with inner details, from BD Nebseni London BM EA 9900,6 (left) and as solid black hieroglyph, from BD Nebseni London BM EA 9900,22 (right). Eighteenth Dynasty, likely from Saqqara.
© The Trustees of the British Museum

Scholars generally agree that "[c]ursives were more ornate and time-consuming to draw than hieratic […], thus making cursives inherently more prestigious and expensive to produce than hieratic texts."[92] Looking further at the presence of captions and text sections written in polychrome hieroglyphs, we see that "[a]s a rule, elaborately painted or sculpted hieroglyphs such as those found in the elite tombs of the Eighteenth Dynasty were at the top of the hierarchy of scripts. These signs

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90   Considering that usually BD scribes have exceptional control over their brushstrokes, I cannot imagine such variation arising by accident. The alternation of outlined/solid versions of the hieroglyph is attested through the whole manuscript, see for other examples on a same sheet BM EA 9900,14, and the rest of BM EA 9900,17 in Lapp 2004: pl. 40–41, 49–51.

91   Lapp 2004: pl. 16, 64.

92   Goelet 2023: 191. Cf. Parkinson & Quirke 1995: 24: "cursive hieroglyphs were slower to write than hieratic and were thus more prestigious."

were obviously quite time-consuming and therefore expensive to produce."[93] If we therefore define "monumentality" by the energetics, meaning the time of labour as well as the cost and amount of resources needed to create a certain product,[94] as well as by the elaboration in the design,[95] we can easily imagine that painting the text at the beginning of the scroll in polychrome, just as in an elite tomb, would have elicited a degree of awe and admiration in those who viewed it. This approach to monumentality as a "heightened ability to impress the viewer" is similar to the use of long inscriptions in elegant and detailed polychrome hieroglyphs in elite tombs of the Eighteenth Dynasty.[96] Regarding the layout, the sheer amount of text, and the "tapestry" of the beautifully painted and extremely detailed hieroglyphs, Stauder remarks that "[m]onumentality, here, is not just a matter of size but an embodied, immersive experience."[97] Taking all these observations into consideration, we could therefore agree with Dorman that the creators of these manuscripts must have been highly trained draftsmen and artists familiar with monumental iconography and writing.[98]

Scribes had several ways of using colour to monumentalize linear hieroglyphs. The most impressive and rare is, however, polychromy: the use of multiple colours within single signs. Each of the manuscripts in the dataset features a particular colour palette, ranging from an almost full range of colours (including blue, various types of yellow, white, black, and red), to more limited ones (in BD Yuya, blue is often replaced by black; in BD Meryt [Kha], only black and red are used for the main part of the signs, which may exhibit a white filling).[99]

In BD Nakht and BD Qenna, not all polychrome signs display a monumental morphology, but even in these cases, as with BD Meryt (Kha), scribes gave them a more elaborate design by filling the signs' open spaces with a different paint, either bright yellow or white. Again, this argues for the idea that polychromy evokes a monumental context. As in elite tombs, we can assume that the commissioner as well as the possible viewers of the manuscript would have been "fascinated by the

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93   Goelet 2010: 126 and n. 34, referring to Fischer 1976: 39–44. A full colour palette would include blue and green, the oldest artificial pigments developed by humanity: these were rather difficult to produce and thus costly.

94   Levenson 2019.

95   Trigger 1990: 119 regarding "monumental" architecture: "its principal defining feature is that its scale and elaboration exceed the requirements of any practical functions that a building is intended to perform."

96   Stauder 2024: 270, 274–275, cf. Díaz-Iglesias Llanos 2025. For a similar description of monumentality outside Egyptology, see Osborne 2014: 14: "Monumentality lies in the meaning created by the relationship that is negotiated between object and person, and between object and the surrounding constellation of values and symbols in a culture." According to Smoak & Mandell 2019, other defining parameters for an inscription are scale, space, spectatorship, graphic design and materiality.

97   Stauder 2024: 275.

98   Dorman 2017: 39–40.

99   Picture available on the website of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, https://medaillesetantiques.bnf.fr/ (accessed 03.11.2025).

individual, colourful and internally detailed signs […] and drawn into the shimmering tapestry of the overall, bidimensional surfaces of the inscriptions."[100]

A first survey of the material has thus shown that colour plays a major role in the monumentalisation of a manuscript and of specific passages within it. A text's monumentality does not, therefore, necessarily depend on its physical context, but on the more or less elaborate use of coloured paints.

3.   Case study: The writing of Osiris and his epithet *nṯr ꜥꜣ* "great god"

The most common start to a BD manuscript was the illustration of the adoration of Osiris. This was likely an important element in terms of providing the deceased and his family with the protection of the god, and ensuring a successful passage into and through the Netherworld.[101] Analysis revealed that captions to this vignette tend to show the greatest graphic variety, ranging from polychrome hieroglyphs to highly detailed linear hieroglyphs, and they were therefore chosen to illustrate the different options available to scribes and their relation to monumental writing. These legends are also quite varied in text, the only constant element being the name of the god Osiris, accompanied by often-changing combinations of epithets, among which a common one is that of *nṯr ꜥꜣ*.[102] These two elements were chosen because they permitted a detailed examination of a broad spectrum of graphic renditions of the same signs across manuscripts. Rather surprisingly, it was difficult to find similar ways of writing the name of the god and the corresponding epithet, at least in the extant Eighteenth Dynasty sources,[103] variation being instead more common. As the rest of the caption as well varied greatly across the analysed sources, only the signs present in all of them were closely examined here.

3.1. Tomb palaeography: TT 69

The tomb-chapel belonging to the overseer of the fields of Amun Menna (TT 69) has been chosen as a point of comparison due to its dating and extremely good state of preservation. It dates within the reigns of Thutmose IV and Amenhotep III and is located in Sheikh Abd el-Qurna. Its decoration is incomplete and shows evidence of reworking in different phases.[104] Its finished sections are, however, extremely detailed. In the tomb, inscriptions are written mostly in polychrome and monochrome monumental hieroglyphs. On various walls, drafts of the text exhibit different stages

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100   Stauder 2024: 275.

101   Munro 2017: 55.

102   Cf. *LGG* IV, 395–398. The hieroglyphs belonging to the phrase *ḏd-mdw in,* or other common phrases, do not seem to ever appear in polychrome, but only as rubrics, so that there would be little scope for comparison.

103   Munro 1988: 188 and 247–251 has previously observed the great variety in writing the name of the god.

104   Hartwig 2013.

of completion, as is the case for an only-partially coloured inscription in the entrance thickness. In the corridor, red drafts still visible below the black text demonstrate the changes in the design of single hieroglyphs.

The hieroglyphs selected as a case study appear in the scene depicting Menna and his wife adoring Osiris in a kiosk, on the southern wall of the corridor (fig. 4a–b).[105] The full inscription reads *wsir wn-nfr nb tꜣ ḏsr.t nṯr ꜥꜣ nb nḥḥ* "Osiris Wenefer, Lord of the Sacred Land, Great God, Lord of Eternity." The original draft in red is still partially visible below the polychrome signs. All hieroglyphs are fully painted on the yellow background, so that even an open sign such as the eye is filled with white paint. Details and outlines are rendered with red or black paint; fully blue or red (parts of) signs do not seem to need outlines.

The name of the god is written with the hieroglyphs ⚬ (human eye, Gard. D4), 𓊨 (throne, Gard. Q1), and 𓀭 (seated god, Gard. A40). The first two present a very common colour palette: the human eye has a black outline and pupil, and white filling; the throne is painted completely blue. The glyph 𓀭 (seated god, Gard. A40), has a white body, blue wig and beard, red face, and a black and white eye perfectly comparable with the Gard. D4 just described. While the colours used to paint such a complex sign can vary, the design of this example from TT 69 fits the most common colour palette of the Eighteenth Dynasty.

The epithet "great god" is written with the glyphs 𓋿 (divine standard, Gard. R8) and 𓊪 (wooden column, Gard. O29). Once more, the painter chose the most common of the available colour palettes: red for the wooden column (notice however the absence of a red outline, present in other cases) and yellow and blue for the divine standard, a sign which in other tombs has at least five colour variants.[106]

Fig. 4a–b. Vector reproduction of the writing of the name of Osiris and his epithet
"great god," from the southern wall of the corridor of TT 69.
Illustration by O. Bruderer after photo by M. Sartori

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105   For a photo, see Hartwig 2013: 69. The same epithet is also found on the southern wall of the transverse hall, but the hieroglyphs are placed differently (Hartwig 2013: 36).

106   Sartori 2021.

3.2. BD Yuya (Cairo Egyptian Museum CG 51189)

Among the rare manuscripts featuring polychrome text is the funerary papyrus belonging to Yuya, found in his tomb in the Valley of the Kings (KV 46).[107] The papyrus is complete and reaches impressive dimensions, just short of twenty meters. The text is written in retrograde, except for the polychrome inscription in the opening scene, the adoration of Osiris, which is prograde. Naville published the papyrus in 1908. In his description, he commented on the quality of the script:

> It is written, like all the copies of the *Book of the Dead* of that time, in linear hieroglyphics, which are not perfect, but which are a transition towards hieratic… the text might be more or less neglected, since probably a few only of the people who saw it could read it; besides, the scribes knew that it was to be hidden in a tomb, where only the ka would look at it.[108]

In the description of the adoration of Osiris vignette, however, he translated only the caption without commenting on the presence of a polychrome inscription.[109]

Fig. 5. Vector reproduction of the writing of the name of Osiris and his
epithet "great god," from BD Yuya (Cairo Egyptian Museum CG 51189).
Illustration by O. Bruderer after photo by M. Sartori

The caption to the god carries his name and epithets: *wsir ḫnty [imntyw] nṯr ꜥꜣ nb tꜣ […] wn-nfr nb ꜣbḏw*. As the other epithets do not feature on all the sources analysed in this paper, only the name of the god and again the epithet *nṯr ꜥꜣ* are discussed here. The hieroglyphs composing these words are

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107 The tomb was discovered by James Quibell in 1905 and published in Naville 1908. At the time of writing, the papyrus is exhibited in the Egyptian Museum in Tahrir Square, Cairo. A photo of the complete manuscript may be found here https://www.ushabtis.com/papyrus-yuya/ (accessed 03.11.2025).

108 Naville 1908: 1.

109 Naville 1908: 8.

precisely executed and have both outlines and inner details (fig. 5). The outlines and inner details are painted either black or red. The choice of one colour over the other usually reflects the main colour used for the whole sign, such as red for ⌐ (divine standard, Gard. R8). Complex hieroglyphs, however, are more flexible and detailed, as shown by the hieroglyph 𓀭 (seated god, Gard. A40). The inner filling of the hieroglyphs is yellow (⌐, Gard. R8) or white (𓀭, Gard. A40, ◡, Gard. D4), whereas signs or sign parts without outlines can be painted either all in red or in black, even when in tomb decoration they may have been painted blue (𓊖, Gard. Q1). Similarly, black column lines replace the blue ones more common for polychrome inscriptions in Eighteenth Dynasty tombs (see above). The use of blue paint is generally limited in text,[110] and green seems never to be used. Finally, unlike tomb decoration, the inscription in BD Yuya does not seem to depend on underlying drafts, possibly indicating that the scribe felt very comfortable even when dealing with polychrome inscriptions. This would imply their thorough familiarity with monumental hieroglyphic palaeography, unlike the scribe who added the names and titles to the opening scene of BD Nakht.[111] The presence or absence of preliminary drafts, however, may simply point towards the coexistence of different writing techniques and stages, as they feature extensively in BD Qenna, where the polychrome text is very carefully written, even if not perfectly overlapping the original drafts.[112] The general design of the single hieroglyphs on BD Yuya is in fact perfectly comparable to that found on tomb walls, as seen in the examples from TT 69.

3.3. BD Amenhotep (Trieste Museo Civico 12089 a)

In other cases, the monumentalisation of text adoring Osiris is carried out not through the use of multiple paints but simply by using solid hieroglyphs, i.e. signs fully filled with a single paint.[113] These can be either painted fully black or more rarely, blue.[114] An example is the papyrus of the scribe Amenhotep, now held in the Museo Civico di Trieste, and dated to the reign of Amenhotep II.[115] The full caption reads *wsir nṯr ꜥꜣ / wsir ḥqꜣ ḏ.t / wsir nb ḏdw nṯr ꜥꜣ nb / ꜣbḏw*. Even though the sign for ꜥꜣ (𓊠, Gard. O29) might here seem slightly reminiscent of 𓊽 (Gard. Aa27), the ⌐ ꜥ (arm, Gard. D36)

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110   BD Qenna and BD Nakht A feature hieroglyphs written in blue paint; P. Bologna Museo Archeologico KS3167 displays a rare occurrence of long blue text (Curto et al. 1990: 227.)

111   Glanville 1927: 55.

112   The topic is being currently investigated in more detail by the author together with conservator Eliza Jacobi of the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden in Leiden.

113   Goelet 2010: 128 introduced the term "solid forms" for this type of fully-painted hieroglyphs. However, contrary to Goelet, I would not categorize all solid forms as necessarily "cursive" (or even linear) but would rather assess case by case whether solid hieroglyphic inscriptions are better defined as linear or monumental.

114   e.g. BD Kha (Ferraris 2018: 71–88).

115   Crevatin & Vidulli Torlo 2013: 127–128. Photographs can also be found online: https://beniculturali.comune.trieste.it/reperto-archeologico/?s_id=350685 (accessed 03.11.2025).

and ▱ papyrus roll determinative (Gard. Y1) following them confirm the reading as wooden column (fig. 6). These two additional signs however are rare as part of the Osiris caption and absent from the other instances discussed here, and they were therefore excluded from the analysis since there was no scope in comparing their graphic execution.

All the signs are filled in with paint, and no inner details are visible, the only exception being the pupil in the hieroglyph depicting the human eye (fig. 7). In this case, empty parts of hieroglyphs have not been filled with a neutral paint. The inscription is written once more in vertical columns, as is the case for all the analysed instances, but, as in tombs, monochrome black text is usually framed by red guidelines, instead of blue ones typical for polychrome inscriptions.

Fig. 6. JSesh transcription of the name of Osiris and his epithet "great god" from BD Amenhotep (Trieste Museo Civico 12089a)

Fig. 7. Vector reproduction of the writing of the name of Osiris and the main signs writing his epithet "great god," from BD Amenhotep (Trieste Museo Civico 12089a).
Illustration by O. Bruderer after photo by M. Sartori

3.4. BD Nebseni (London BM EA 9900) 116

Unlike the other sources previously mentioned, the Eighteenth-Dynasty papyrus of Nebseni comes allegedly from Saqqara, and is peculiar from several points of view. Firstly, the manuscript has a general bichrome palette, with only black and red used, even for the vignettes. This fact has contributed to the idea that it may have been produced by Nebseni himself, as he bore the title of *zẖꜣw-qd.wt* (scribe of forms; painter; artist).[117] The example shown here comes from within the body of the manuscript, because the opening adoration vignette has suffered damage, and the name of the god is lost. However, the writing of the epithet *nṯr ꜥꜣ* is comparable with the one discussed here.[118] The

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116   Published in Lapp 2004. Photographs are also available on https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y_EA9900-10 (accessed 03.11.2025).

117   Lapp 2004: 57.

118   Lapp 2004: pl. 2 (BM EA 9900,1) vs. 28 (BM EA 9900,10.)

general graphic register of the manuscript is linear hieroglyphs once again in columnar format, yet, as discussed above, the scribe adopted different varieties of signs in different parts of the text.

The papyrus illustrates how scribes could play with the use of colour and paint within a strictly monochrome linear inscription. In a linear hieroglyphic context, in fact, whereas usually most signs are written as outlines (in this case, 𓏞, Gard. Q1, and 𓀗, Gard. A40),[119] others may be fully painted (𓊪, Gard. O29), and yet others feature inner details executed through lines or blocks of colour (𓁹, Gard. D4, and 𓊪, Gard. R8). Such an alternation between empty (unpainted) and fully-painted forms may almost count visually as a form of bichromy, as the contrast between the black-filled areas and the unpainted (white or blank) spaces creates a bichrome-like effect, even if technically relying on a single pigment. The level of detail can vary greatly from manuscript to manuscript: the example from BD Nebseni shown here even exhibits a dot within the pupil where there is no paint (fig. 8). This example confirms that linear hieroglyphs are closely related to, and aspire to refer to, the monumental script: even when monochrome, their design and proportions are closely reminiscent of contemporary private monumental inscriptions, such as the discussed example found in TT 69.

Fig. 8. Vector reproduction of the writing of the name of Osiris and his epithet "great god," from BD Nebseni (London BM EA 9900,10). Illustration by O. Bruderer. © The Trustees of the British Museum

4.   Concluding remarks

After turning away from hieratic, funerary manuscripts from the Eighteenth Dynasty are written mostly in often detailed linear hieroglyphs, hinting at the importance of giving aesthetic and ritual value to the text itself. Within these documents, however, certain passages, such as the hymns and adoration scenes generally found at their beginnings, and captions to the major vignettes, originally found in monumental tomb decoration, often display a more detailed graphic rendition. Such a practice confirms that the genre of the inscription influenced the choice of certain graphic registers, as is especially the case for the scene of the Osiris kiosk, which seems to automatically carry the need for a more monumental script type. These "*transfuges graphiques*" highlight the intense inter-play of different media in the New Kingdom.

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119   These nonetheless display a higher level of detail than in other parts of the manuscript, e.g. BM EA 9900,25, in Lapp 2004: 75.

As most manuscripts were written using black ink, monumentalisation was most commonly achieved through a more elaborate glyph design, in which empty spaces coexist alongside fully painted details. This is the case for BD Nebseni, which features more elegant hieroglyphs not only in its opening scene, but also in the body of the scroll, in a second Osiris adoration scene. However, certain manuscripts show different ways of raising the prestige of particular text sections, such as in BD Amenhotep, where the caption to Osiris is fully painted in solid black. Rarely, solid blue hieroglyphs were used for the god's name, as in BD Kha (Turin Museo Egizio S. 8316/03), while the text referring to Kha himself was written in linear black hieroglyphs, elegantly designed and often alternating empty spaces with fully-painted areas (fig. 1). In other cases, the colour of the glyphs alone (especially costly blue), rather than their opaque design or additional inner details, contributed to monumentalising the scene.[120] Manuscripts with polychrome inscriptions—which always appear at the beginning of the scroll, usually in scenes of adoration of Osiris, but also in hymns—may exhibit a more or less full colour palette. Blue paint is present in BD Nakht and BD Qenna, whereas in BD Yuya, as presented here, this colour is instead replaced by black. It is furthermore noteworthy that whereas the morphology and colour of certain signs may remain mainly consistent across media (as is the case for the 𓀭 "seated god" glyph as found in TT 69 and BD Yuya), manuscript palaeography may display a different approach to others, such as the divine standard. Nonetheless, the use of polychrome hieroglyphs shows an intention to raise the prestige and visual efficacy not only of the artefact as a whole, but of the particular text to which polychromy has been applied. That such passages also appear in polychrome hieroglyphs in contemporaneous tomb decoration demonstrates the strong connection between tomb wall and manuscript for these scenes. To maintain this connection, scribes had at their disposal a range of possible options, a "monumentality spectrum," which could go from extremely detailed linear hieroglyphs to solid hieroglyphs, to various types of polychrome hieroglyphs, and which could exhibit characteristics of both linear and non-linear hieroglyphs. As no absolute boundaries exist between the different graphic varieties, the monumentality of a passage of text can obviously be assessed only in relative terms, both within the artefact itself and in relation to other artefacts, which need not all necessarily belong to the same object category. Further investigation will focus on comparisons between colour use and design of hieroglyphs on different media.

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120   BD Tjenena (Louvre N.3074), Barbotin 2007–2008: 42–51.

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A Note on "Hieroglyphic (Il)literacy" and Access to Inscriptions in Ancient Egypt

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Abstract. The present article discusses the extent to which literacy in ancient Egypt extended to the hieroglyphic script in particular. Special attention is paid to late New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period examples of apparently limited and non-existent understanding of the said script and its principles. It is argued that contact with hieroglyphs was not an everyday experience for the ancient Egyptians and that the rare examples of the script written by very inexperienced authors reflect the degree to which they have access to hieroglyphic texts generally. The discussion also touches upon the curiously neglected topic of access to cemeteries in Ancient Egypt.

Keywords. Ancient (il)literacy, Access to hieroglyphs, Pseudo-hieroglyphs, Coffins, Artisans' workshops, Deir el-Medina, Saqqara in the New Kingdom.

In recent discussions over literacy in Ancient Egypt there has been something of a paradigm shift from quantitative problems (basically the estimated levels or percentages of literacy during different periods)[1] to qualitative issues such as complete versus partial literacy and the ability of painters and sculptors decorating monuments to actually understand what they were inscribing.[2] It is now commonly accepted that in ancient Egypt literacy, and, indeed, illiteracy, were a matter of degree and came in various sorts.[3] For example, individuals characterisable as "literate" could perhaps read and write certain kinds of texts but lack the ability to compose freely, or they might be capable of reading and producing texts in the hieratic script but not necessarily equally well in hieroglyphs.[4]

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1   The seminal discussions here are Baines & Eyre 1982; Baines 1983, and Janssen 1992. Cf. also Lesko 1994: 134–135 and Parkinson 2002: 66–67.

2   e.g. Laboury 2016 and Zinn 2018: 87–92.

3   See Allon 2019: 9–10 for a concise summary and references to the debate.

4   e.g. Laboury 2022: 61–65.

As always, evidence from one source in particular has dominated these discussions, namely the New Kingdom workmen's community at Deir el-Medina. This site, however, was in many ways exceptional in terms of literary life and culture. Not only do literacy levels in the village seem to have been considerably higher than what was probably normative,[5] but the inhabitants were also exposed to writing much more than elsewhere. The reason for this was, of course, the special status of Deir el-Medina as a state institution and settlement for men who were all in various ways involved in building heavily inscribed royal tombs and surrounded by text-bearing monuments. Nevertheless, it is precisely the abundance of material from the site that has facilitated the more qualitatively nuanced image of ancient Egyptian literacy just noted, as well as raised questions of what may be called "script literacy" in general and hieroglyphic literacy in particular. As the form of writing intended for monumental use and usually (but not always) conspicuous display, hieroglyphs were not something that the Egyptian literate or "scribal" elite dealt with as part of their everyday business. Yet due to the special circumstances at Deir el-Medina, people with a defective understanding of writing would there still occasionally try their hand at producing hieroglyphic texts.

The workmen inhabiting the Deir el-Medina village had access to (state) resources that, during the later periods of the community's existence in particular, enabled them to build relatively sumptuous tombs for themselves and for each other. Here, as well as on stelae etc. left by the men, one sometimes finds hieroglyphic texts whose standards fall short of what spoiled Egyptologists are accustomed to find on elite or state monuments.[6] Examples cluster to the earlier (Eighteenth Dynasty) part of the community's existence when the levels of local literacy and artistic excellence prevalent later in the Ramesside Period had not yet been attained.[7] The eastern cemetery of the village has yielded coffins and other funerary paraphernalia with badly executed offering formulae.[8] Particularly interesting in this respect are the wall decorations in the Eighteenth Dynasty tomb of workman Amenemhat (TT 340).[9] The artist responsible for the work, Amenemhat's son Sennefer, was apparently not used to writing hieroglyphs. The texts that he added to the scenes abound in omissions and reversals of signs as well as display a tendency to spell words "alphabetically" using uni- rather than multiliteral signs (fig. 1).[10] The latter feature is not, properly speaking, necessarily

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5   Baines & Eyre 1983: 86–91; Janssen 1992; Haring 2003: 250.

6   A phenomenon related to this issue, but not considered here, is the system of early Deir el-Medina identity marks deciphered and extensively discussed by Haring (e.g. 2018; 2021; 2023: 36–44). See also e.g. Soliman 2015.

7   Haring 2023: 30–31. For the early Eighteenth Dynasty and writing in the village generally, see Haring 2006.

8   Näser 2001: 382, 384–87; Soliman 2015: 120–21; Haring 2023: 30–31.

9   Cherpion 1999: 3–55.

10   Kruchten 1999: 41–55; Laboury 2020: 88–90; 2022: 50–52; Haring 2023: 31–32. Conversely, Sennefer often used multiliteral logographic signs that had undergone phonological reduction for their contemporary rather than original values (thus e.g. ꜥš₃ [I1] for ꜥš and t₃ [N16] for t).

Fig. 1. Workman Sennefer and some of his texts in the Tomb of Amenemhat, TT 340

an indication of a limited ability to read and write just hieroglyphs seeing that analogous tendencies are observable also in some hieratic texts.[11] Nevertheless, it has been suggested that Sennefer did not have access to good-quality models and that "The little he knew about funerary phraseology may have come to his notice solely by means of short texts on stelae or wooden chests, instead of more elaborate inscriptions in tombs."[12] This is very probably so, although there may have been other factors at play as well. For the Deir el-Medina workmen, building and decorating a tomb often involved cooperation and pooling of communal talents,[13] but the most skilled people were probably not always equally available to everyone, perhaps due to lack of personal contacts, finances, or both. Nevertheless, Sennefer still appears to have had *some* access to hieroglyphic texts that he then used as a basis for his own compositions. He was, it seems, "practically incapable of designing an original iconographic program and *a fortiori* texts to complement it,"[14] but he was not *illiterate* in what pertains to the hieroglyphic script. He could "spell" and even compose, and the key to his

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11   For example, the author of the so-called "misplaced" letter to dead (most recently Hsieh 2022: 221–232) on Michael Carlos Museum stela 2014.033.001 "spelled" the words *jnk* "I," *wȝḫ* "to place," *grg* "establish," and *wḫȝ* "throw off" with the uniliteral sequences *j-n-k*, *w-ȝ-ḫ*, *g-r-g*, and *w-ḫ-ȝ*. In the case of the verbs he also did not employ any determinatives.

12   Haring 2023: 32; so too Kruchten 1999: 54–55 and Laboury 2016: 381–382; 2020: 89.

13   See Cooney 2006 for a general discussion and e.g. Keller 2001: 83–87 and Bács 2011 for examples.

14   Laboury 2020: 89.

skills, however limited, was access to texts. The latter may not as yet have been as extensive at Deir el-Medina as later on, but it was still enough to enable a mere necropolis workman to produce texts using the most prestigious of the scripts in which the Egyptian language was written.

To find evidence of an entirely different level of (un)familiarity with hieroglyphs, one must leave Deir el-Medina and move to the Memphite necropolis of Saqqara, where in 1985 a remarkable cache of intrusive Third Intermediate Period burials was discovered in the tomb of Iurudef, an official of the reign of Ramesses II.[15] Some of the wooden coffins recovered carried wholly or partly meaningless inscriptions (figs. 2–3) that, according to one of the excavators, included "the most debased ever to be found in Egypt."[16] They have been occasionally noted in discussions of literacy. For Kammerzell these "asemic" texts represented mere strings "of indexical signs which transport nothing but the message that the producer makes use of 'writing'."[17] According to Alexandra von Lieven, they illustrated a fall in standards induced by mass-production of low-quality goods to illiterate customers.[18] Kammerzell's view of the texts' *raison d'être* seems persuasive, but the mass-production hypothesis is arguably more open to question. The Iurudef cache contained around
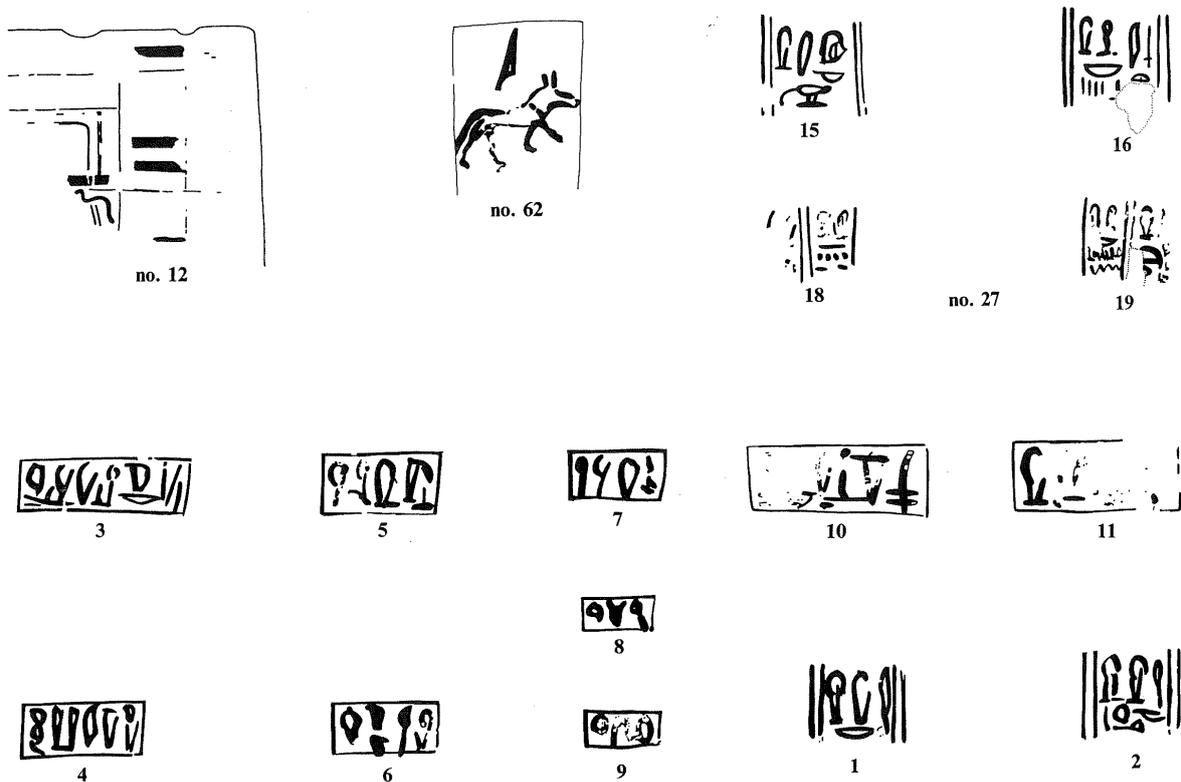

Fig. 2. Inscriptions from Iurudef coffins 12, 27, and 62

15   Martin, Raven, Aston 1986: 17–19; Aston, Raven, Taylor. 1991: 8–31; Raven et al. 1998.

16   Martin 1991: 144.

17   Kammerzell 2009: 299. Cf. Fitzenreiter 2015: 195–197; Jurman 2023: 168. For a comparative discussion of asemic and pseudo-scripts, see Houston 2018.
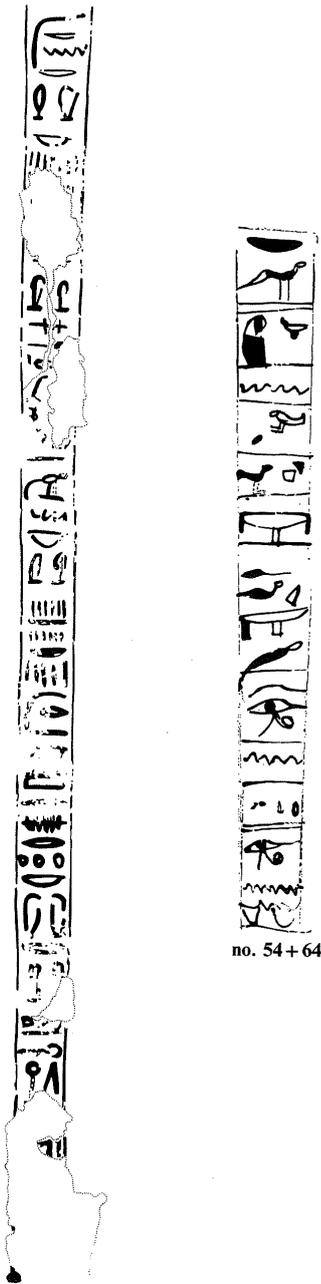
18   Von Lieven 2009: 104.

70 burials and 37 coffins of which 27 were anthropoid and ten rectangular/trapezoidal.[19] Only the former carried "texts" or decorations of any kind. Some of the anthropoid coffins too were entirely undecorated (particularly small ones for children and infants), but others were embellished to varying degrees of extent and finesse. These latter included some finely crafted and richly decorated specimens, one of which (no. 27) has subsequently adorned the cover and/or frontispiece of publications on the find and the New Kingdom archaeology at the Saqqara necropolis generally.[20] The coffins seem to be products of more than one workshop operating over a period of time and/or of different teams of craftsmen. Nevertheless, from the simplest of undecorated boxes to the most elaborate anthropoid creations, they form one continuous scale of cheaper and hence rougher and more expensive and thus better worked goods. That is, rather than mass-production, it is more probable that the Iurudef coffins simply reflect their buyers' relative wealth and investment capacity. Notably however, the inscriptions on the coffins are always bad, regardless of the quality of their workmanship: in fact, the "most debased" hieroglyphic text noted above derives exactly from coffin no. 27, the aesthetically most pleasing specimen in the entire assemblage. This raises the intriguing but, alas, unanswerable question of whether the people who inscribed the coffins were in fact the same ones as those responsible for the rest of their decoration. Whatever the case here, the artistic and linguistic skills of the craftsmen did not correlate.

The most interesting thing about the Iurudef "texts" is not that they are bad, but *how* bad they are, and in what ways. Poorly executed hieroglyphs produced by artisans who apparently did not understand the script are not altogether rare, but examples of wholly meaningless inscriptions derive mostly from small

Fig. 3. Inscriptions from Iurudef coffins 27 & 54 + 64

no. 54 + 64

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19   For what follows, see Aston, Raven, Taylor 1991: 8–13.

20   Raven 1991; Martin 1991.

objects that usually date to the Graeco-Roman Period.[21] The Iurudef coffins seem to be the earliest group of this kind of material, and even a cursory glance of them suffices to demonstrate beyond doubt that the individual(s) who inscribed the coffins had no idea of even the basics of hieroglyphic writing.[22] The mutual placement of the signs, insofar as they are identifiable at all, is definitely not based on the standard imaginary "square" that every undergraduate learns at their first encounter with the script.[23] Signs that are recognisable as depicting living things also do not face the same way.[24] What is perhaps most striking, however, is the almost complete absence of what one might call "paradigmatic" hieroglyphic signs. The modern folk idea of Egyptian hieroglyphs is that the script consists of small pictures of birds, snakes, human beings, and body parts—particularly eyes, hands, and feet. If asked to draw (note the nomenclature) hieroglyphs, people with no real knowledge of them usually produce strings of pictures depicting precisely these things. The producers of the Iurudef "texts," however, mostly did not do even this. Except for one or two poorly executed bird-like creatures and *wḏꜣ.t*-eyes (D10), their "script" consisted mostly of dashes, lines, ovals, and loops that even non-Egyptologist modern viewers would hardly regard as "hieroglyphs." Only in one case, a coffin numbered 40 by the excavators, the craftsman (or -men?) managed to produce a passable approximation of the standard *ḥtp-dj-nsw* offering formula (fig. 4).[25] It consists of genuine and relatively well-executed hieroglyphs, and the inscription is immediately recognisable for what it is, but closer scrutiny reveals a good number of corruptions that again speak of very imperfect understanding. This text is also unique in that it contains the name of the deceased, but the writing of this seems muddled save for—interestingly enough—the name of god Ptah that, of course, is written using uniliteral signs only. Similar specimens have been found

Fig. 4. Inscription from Iurudef coffin 40

no. 40

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21   See von Lieven 2009 for examples. The Ptolemaic and later Horus-stelae discussed by Sternberg-El Hotabi 1994 are the most extensive and widely cited category of such material. Besides badly inscribed shabtis etc., a particularly interesting category of early evidence of this sort are the Second Intermediate Period Canaanite scarabs inscribed by foreigners (Ben-Tor 2009). See also n. 40 below. However, the question of what is a "meaningful" hieroglyphic text is complicated by e.g. the phenomenon of "textual tokens" on Middle Kingdom coffins discussed by Landborg 2019.

22   Against what follows, the argument that "It is out of the question that the craftsmen responsible for creating these inscriptions lacked a proper understanding of the sign repertoire and graphemic rules of the hieroglyphic writing system then in use" in Jurman 2023: 168–169 seems disputable.

23   *Locus classicus* Gardiner 1957: § 16. More recently e.g. Vernus 2020: 20–23.

24   Note also the upwards pointing ends of the sign ⎯ *n* (water-ripple, N35).

25   There is another example within the corpus of what appears to have been the same formula (coffin no. 59), but the text is badly damaged and seems to have been considerably more garbled than that on no. 40.

elsewhere; for example, the offering formulae recorded by Petrie on Twentieth Dynasty and later coffins from Illahun are quite reminiscent of the text on Iurudef coffin no. 40.[26]

The reason for this level of ineptitude is probably again to be sought in access and exposure to hieroglyphs. It is not known where the Iurudef coffins were produced, but it is a fair guess that they are products of workshops located not too far away from the necropolis where they were ultimately found. Some of the craftsmen were no mean artists (if properly paid), but they apparently had no hieroglyphic texts at their disposal that they could have used as models.[27] This raises a whole range of issues worth considering. In seeking to fix a date for the coffins, the excavators were faced with the dearth of comparative material from the Memphite area.[28] Consequently, they compared them with the much more abundant Theban burials and found that the overall decorative programme of the coffins was closely paralleled by late Twentieth and Twenty-First Dynasty data from Thebes.[29] This is interesting seeing that the Iurudef craftsmen almost certainly had no access to Theban coffins, and it is equally unlikely that they had seen genuine examples of them either. However, although the already noted lack of comparative data makes discussion hazardous, it is likely that what is called the Theban traditions set something of a current standard in coffin decoration more broadly. Artistic (as well as architectural etc.) trends are concepts that travel wide and far even when the actual products do not. It often suffices for a few to have witnessed something to introduce it to the many, and the Iurudef artisans probably need not have ventured far to have seen specimens that could pass for "Theban" coffins. The transfer of texts, however, relies on the existence and ready availability of written *Vorlagen*, and it is these that the Iurudef craftsmen—who either were the same people as the artists or not—were arguably lacking. They were apparently wholly illiterate, did not know the principles of the hieroglyphic script, and had no access to models to aid them in preparing the so-called inscriptions, which they nevertheless went on to write on the pieces ordered from them. The person who inscribed coffin no. 40 may have had a model to work with, but more probably he had simply memorised the *ḥtp-dj-nsw* formula—the most common of all Egyptian funerary litanies—to a sufficient extent to be able to reproduce a broadly readable version of it. Nevertheless, he too was apparently first and foremost a craftsman, and probably almost completely illiterate at that. Rather like his earlier colleague Sennefer of Deir el-Medina, he could create

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26   Petrie 1890: pl. XXV.

27   That said, Martin 1991: 144 believed that the craftsmen were working from models, which over the years had worn out so badly that "the painters, unable in any case to understand the hieroglyphic script, would have been reduced to the expedient of making up their own signs as they went along!"

28   Aston, Raven, Taylor 1991: 17–23. See also Raven et al. 1998 for a detailed defence of the date proposed, based also on associated finds of Twentieth-to-Twenty-First Dynasty pottery.

29   More particularly, of the commonest iconographic details on the coffins, the yellow face, the lotus headband, the floral collar, the winged central goddess surrounded by smaller figures in compartments, and the divine figures on the sides are all common in the late Twentieth and Twenty-First Dynasty Thebes (Aston, Raven, Taylor 1991: 19, 21).

decent-looking hieroglyphs and appears even to have possessed a limited ability to write common words consisting of uniliteral signs independently. Otherwise, however, he did not recognise when he made a mistake in the process, and, given that his client was almost certainly equally incapable of understanding hieroglyphic texts, probably did not care.

There is an additional issue involved here that makes an interesting comparison with Deir el-Medina. The modern popular image of Ancient Egypt is that of a society where hieroglyphic texts were visible everywhere. This, however, was not the reality. Outside (particularly later) Deir el-Medina and, perhaps, the sphere of the elite living and working in and near state religious buildings, seeing hieroglyphs was not an everyday experience to the majority of ancient Egyptians, who lived in rural village communities and mostly stayed there all their lives. Memphis was a large context where access to models and resources available to workshops producing e.g. funerary equipment must have varied considerably. Yet also the craftsmen who produced the Iurudef coffins probably lived and practised their craft in a non-urban environment bereft of monuments with hieroglyphic inscriptions on display.[30] Assuming that this lay relatively close to the Saqqara necropolis, they might, in theory, have ventured thither to study models of such texts. This, however, they did not and probably could not do. The question of access to necropoleis in Ancient Egypt is a remarkably neglected topic, and the following brief remarks should be seen as strictly preliminary. Egyptian cemeteries have often been envisaged as busy places that were much frequented by the living.[31] This, however, need not have applied to the population as a whole. Wealthy ancient Egyptians, whose relatives were buried in rich tombs and who themselves possessed or would possess similar sepulchres, had more reasons to make the proverbial "visit to the necropolis in a carrying chair" than those who had no illustrious forefathers buried there and who could not aspire to build a monument crowning the Memphis skyline. Yet more importantly, given the prevalence of tomb robbery and vandalism, it is likely that *hoi polloi* approaching elite cemeteries would have been viewed with intense suspicion. Necropolis guards, however incompetent or corrupt they may have been, were there for a reason, and at least officially access to areas with elite tombs was probably much more restricted than what is usually imagined.[32] Written memorials such as visitors' graffiti and Letters to Dead are products of the literary elite, and also the subject matter of the latter, which usually revolves

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30 In major cities such as Memphis or Thebes, large cult temples with inscriptions will have been a ubiquitous feature, but the history of the monumentalisation of Egyptian religion is simultaneously the history of their increasing social exclusiveness and barring of access (Bussmann 2017: 77–85).

31 Most recently Almonsa-Villatoro 2015: 741, 743.

32 So too e.g. Redford 2000: 156. "Official" security and monitoring of necropoleis is a problematic area where much of the evidence (e.g. the paths around the workers' village and tomb construction sites at Amarna, perhaps interpretable as evidence of state surveillance) is circumstantial. Notable exceptions to this are the evidence from the Giza necropolis— for which see below—and the *medjay* security corps associated with the Theban necropolis in general and the Valley of the Kings in particular (Černý 1973: 261–264 and more recently Vogel 2016: 438–441).

around property, domestic servants, and large estates, serves to show that their authors were, as a rule, high society. They do not provide evidence of non-elite access to cemeteries.[33] Secondary burials such as the Iurudef cache itself or small pit graves surrounding larger elite tombs obviously do exactly that, and it is true that e.g. in Third Intermediate Period Thebes reuse of older sepulchres had become something of a norm.[34] Nevertheless, it remains unclear whether or to what extent this reflects officially approved practises, particularly in periods of more centralised government than during the Third Intermediate Period.[35] In the Old Kingdom large numbers of non-elite people were used as corvée labour in royal cemeteries, but they were then housed in closely guarded, purpose-built settlements set physically apart from the areas where the tombs of the royalty and officialdom lay. The topography of the Giza necropolis is a case of point here: access to the area was closely monitored, and workers accommodated near the pyramid construction sites were strictly restricted to their own living quarters.[36] They did not roam free among the monuments and hence were not exposed to hieroglyphic inscriptions even in such short-term and special circumstances. Briefly put, those with a low social status had little incentive to visit cemeteries with which they had no personal links and where they were probably not welcome anyway.

As noted in the beginning, "literacy" is, *ipso facto*, a scalar notion, and opinions will always differ over what actually ranks as such.[37] Nevertheless, although the issue obviously warrants a much more systematic discussion, one could argue that in Ancient Egypt, "hieroglyphic (il)literacy" was similarly a continuum along which several groupings and nodes are identifiable.[38] At one end of the scale, there were the most highly educated individuals of the society who were trained in all the scripts used to write the Egyptian language, including hieroglyphs. Aside these there were the true "scribes" running the administration whose skills were restricted mainly or solely to the hieratic rather than hieroglyphic script. Outside this "elite" there were those like workman Sennefer of Deir el-Medina, who had had some exposure to hieroglyphs and had consequently acquired a

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33   Contra Almansa-Villatoro 2025: 743.

34   Kaczanowicz 2020: 168 and *passim*.

35   Kaczanowicz 2020: 168–173. The ancient Egyptians' attitude towards desecration of tombs is well-known, but their views on reuse thereof is more difficult to gauge. At least insofar as dismantling or removal of architectural elements was considered, their stance was fundamentally negative (e.g. Merikara E 78–79).

36   Lehner & Tavares 2010: 173–174, 213. The authors add that the same seems to have held with the pyramid field at Abusir.

37   Thus, within Egyptology some scholars would apply the term "functionally literate" to people knowledgeable of individual signs or groups thereof (cf. e.g. der Manuelian 1999) whereas for others "The ability to recognize particular marks or written words in context does not add up to a real (or even meaningful partial) literacy" (Eyre 2018: 4).

38   Or, as formulated by Almansa-Villatoro 2025: 741, "literacy exists along a continuum, and […] various forms of literacy were cultivated based on practical needs, shaped by exposure and functional requirements." Cf. also the diagram provided by Laboury 2022: 64 making much of the same point.

basic understanding of the script that enabled him to produce clumsy but decipherable texts.[39] Far below him in terms of skills there were those like the craftsman who produced the *ḥtp-dj-nsw* formula on the Iurudef coffin no. 40. Whether or not he had recourse to a model of this most basic of funerary texts, he nevertheless seems to have had a broad idea of what he was inscribing and how it should be done. Nevertheless, the level of his actual "literacy" was evidently very low. At the bottom or other end of this scale there were people like the producers of most of the Iurudef "texts" whose access and exposure to hieroglyphs was extremely limited and who, as a consequence, neither knew the principles of the script nor could produce convincing imitations of it. This last group must have represented the vast majority of the population. In scalar systems it is often the middle ground that is the largest and most ubiquitous, but this is not the case with the continuum of ancient Egyptian "hieroglyphic (il)literacy." Individuals such as Sennefer and the Iurudef artisans are difficult to detect in the surviving evidence for the simple reason that they were few in number and seldom produced anything written. As noted by Laboury, the training of an artist and a draughtsman at Deir el-Medina appears to have included an introduction to at least the aesthetic principles of hieroglyphs.[40] Yet adventurous autodidacts like Sennefer or incompetents such as the Iurudef artisans were always rare, and surviving works by them are rarer still.

Before concluding, one might perhaps set up still a further type of "hieroglyphic illiteracy" that is hardly attested in ancient Egypt before Graeco-Roman times but which is, paradoxically, its most common *modern* form.[41] Figure 5 provides an image of part of the decoration on an "Egyptian" souvenir (a tea mug) from the infamous Luxor Hotel and Casino at Las Vegas. The "artist" who designed the item clearly used genuine ancient Egyptian artwork as a model. The most "paradigmatic" hieroglyphs—eyes, snakes, birds, etc.—are present and reasonably well copied, but the same does not hold with rarer signs or ones with which it is not immediately clear what they depict. The arrangement of the signs is awkward, many are randomly reversed, and some are turned upside-down. This farrago is obviously a product of someone who had ready access to hieroglyphic inscriptions as a model—no doubt thanks to the internet—but who nevertheless understood nothing of the script. It is somewhat ironic that modern means of unlimited access to Egyptian hieroglyphs should have encouraged a type of inability to deal with them that the ancient Egyptians themselves could scarcely have imagined.

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39 The label "elite" is here used in the loosest of terms. According to an anonymous reviewer to the present article, one might also consider Sennefer as an "elite" craftsman since he had access to materials, techniques, and models.

40 Laboury 2020: 90. For an overview of the varying evidence of artists' literacy, see Laboury 2016; 2022.

41 See von Lieven 2009: 102–104 for examples of texts cobbled together from genuine models and displaying reversals of signs, meaningful sections interspersed with gibberish, etc.

Fig. 5. "Hieroglyphs" on a modern "Egyptian" souvenir

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Walk Like a *Wsr*

Tracing a Hieroglyph through Times and Scripts

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Abstract. This essay offers a short discussion of the sign 𓀉 (F78), a variant of 𓄤 (F12). The known attestations are collected and are presented in an appendix.

Keywords. Gardiner F78; Walking *wsr*; Hyksos; jackal-headed figure.

1.   Introduction

Our knowledge of the corpus of hieroglyphic signs and their variants is constantly growing. Variations of hieroglyphs[1] may be overlooked or not considered in typeset texts because they are functionally interchangeable. Nevertheless, despite their semantic synonymity, these variations provide valuable insight into the possibilities and limitations of variation in the hieroglyphic script.[2]

An interesting example of overlooked signs is 𓀉 (F78), which is often associated with the Hyksos, rulers of the 15th Dynasty.[3] The following essay presents a collection of attestations of this variant, examines its origin and transformation, and investigates any restrictions on its usage.

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1   On this topic, see *inter alia* Polis 2020: 554.

2   e.g. the usage of a human ear 𓂋 (D18) instead of the cow's ear 𓄹 (F 21) in the title *sḏm-ꜥš* (Ragab 2024). On the use of composite hieroglyphs, see most lately Seyr 2023.

3   *Inter alia* Gauthier 1912: 136 [n. 2]; Ben-Tor 2007: 106; Quirke 2016: 345.

2.   The Sign 𓅨 (F78)

The sign 𓅨 (F78)[4] was early on understood as a graphical variation of 𓏏 (F12). Recently, it has been described as a synecdoche (most likely of 𓁢; C25)[5] and classified as an anthropomorphic variant of 𓏏 (F12).[6]

Before the Second Intermediate Period, 𓅨 (F78) is only attested written with ink. The earliest attestation is found in the hieratic text on P. Berlin P. 9010[7] purchased by L. Borchardt in 1896 at Elephantine.[8] Written in a clearly legible Old Hieratic script, this text was dated palaeographically to the 6th Dynasty.[9] The text itself deals with a dispute over property and an estate. Among the individuals mentioned is *Wsr*, written thrice as 𓊪𓏭𓅨𓀭.[10] The complementary writing confirms the phonetic value of 𓅨 (F78) as *wsr* in the earliest known attestation. One wonders whether the addition of a supplementary stroke to 𓏏 (F12) in the hieratic script paved the way for the later creation of the walking *wsr* 𓅨 (F78).[11] However, while a later case from the Middle Kingdom (ex. 4 in the appendix) clearly shows the sign 𓅨 (F78), the examples from the Old Kingdom (ex. 1–3) may also depict a seated hieratic version of a canide headed deity such as 𓁡 (C6).[12] Nevertheless, the reading *wsr* is also verified in these cases due to the complementary writing in the attested name *Wsr*.

Other signs that might fit the traces in the Old Kingdom attestations are not known with the reading *wsr* and it fits the usage of this sign in the attestation from the Middle Kingdom (𓅨𓏭𓀭, cf. fig. 1).

Fig. 1. Detail of CG 20364 (© J. Posch)

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4   Following the *Thot Sign List*, 𓅨 (F78) can be identified as a composite hieroglyph between 𓄙 (F69) and 𓂻 (D54); Sign TSL_1_3159 <http://thotsignlist.org/mysign?id=3159>, in Thot Sign List, edited by Université de Liège and Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften [last accessed: 24.09.2025].

5   Roberson 2020: 40.

6   Roberson 2020: 82 [F78].

7   Gardiner & Möller 1911: pl. I–Ia. See also Pillon 2021: 222–223.

8   <https://elephantine.smb.museum/objects/object.php?o=400008> [last accessed: 15.09.2025].

9   Cf. Sethe 1926: 67–68.

10   The sign itself is written as 𓀭 (col. 3), 𓀭 (col. 5), and 𓀭 (col. 8); cf. Gardiner & Möller 1911: pl. I. The short stroke of the second leg distinguishes it from other examples of seated deities (with a canine head), e.g. 𓀭 (Qau-bowl outside col. 3; Gardiner & Sethe 1928: pl. III). On the interpretation of the last as a seated Seth, see McDonald 2002: 284–285. However, the legs of other hieratic signs such as 𓀀 (A1) and 𓀁 (A2) are similar if not identical in their appearance, offering a valuable reading option.

11   On the addition of legs to hieroglyphs, see furthermore Meeks 2023: 370–373. Based on the example *iꜣb* and *ꜣb*, he highlights the possible influences of hieratic signs on hieroglyphic writing and *vice versa*, as well as later (re)interpretations of signs. See also fn. 23 below.

12   Cf. the shape of the hieratic rendering of this sign on a letter to the dead from the First Intermediate Period (pHearst 1282; Szpakowska 1999: 163).

As other signs that might fit the traces in the Old Kingdom attestations are not known with the reading *wsr*, this leaves 𓀴 (F 78) as the best reading also in these first instances.

According to R. Anthes, a dipinto at Hatnub (Gr. 1; tab. 1 [a]),[13] dated to the reign of Teti, contains the sign 𓀴 (F78).[14] The preserved traces resemble the only other known example of this sign from the Old Kingdom (cf. tab. 1). However, the available space to its left is damaged, but would only allow for the reading of the sign 𓏪 (S29) or similar. 𓀴 (F78) is otherwise only found in anthroponyms (see the attestations in tab. 1 below) and the dipinto in Hatnub would be the only instance in which it is written outside of an anthroponym. One may therefore question this reading and hypothesize that the visible traces are part of the sign 𓃥 (E17), which not only fits the remaining traces but also the available space. This allows to read the passage as 𓊍𓊹𓏪𓏤𓀴𓏲𓏏𓃥𓏲𓀴𓇳𓏏𓉐𓏥 *'rf m mr.w(t) 'Inpw m ḥw.wt m3(w.t)* "wrapping up in the sanctuaries[15] of Anubis within the new temples."[16]

Early on, 𓀴 (F78) was primarily associated with both the Second Intermediate Period and the reign of Ramesses (II).[17] However, 𓀴 (F78) is known from both the Old Kingdom as well as the early Middle Kingdom, contradicting the idea that this sign was unique to a specific region and/or time period during the Second Intermediate Period[18] and a short revival during the reign of Seti (I) and Ramesses (II).[19]

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13   Anthes 1928: pl. 9–9a [Gr. 1].

14   Anthes 1928: 19. He was followed in this reading by Möller 1935: 2 [149].

15   Erman 1928: 108.9–10; TLA WCN 800018.

16   I would like to thank Roman Gundacker, Johannes Jüngling, and Philipp Seyr for their helpful suggestions and discussions concerning this passage.

17   Gauthier 1912: 136 [n. 2]. Contrary to H. Gauthier's statement that the sign 𓀴 (F78) may only be found among the names of *S.wsr-n-R'w* (II) *Ḫ~jj~3~n*, *'3-wsr-R'w 'Ippj* (III), and Ramesses (II), he depicts this very sign in the name of at least one other king of the Second Intermediate Period; cf. Gauthier 1912: 146.

18   See fn. 1 above. This even led to a chronological hypothesis: As some inscriptions from Gebelein with the names of *S.wsr-n-R'w* (II) *Ḫ~jj~3~n* or *'3-wsr-R'w 'Ippj* (III) spell their prenomina with 𓀴 (F78), Vandersleyen 1995: 173–175 proposed that the appearance of this sign in the prenomen *'3-wsr-R'w* may have coincided with this ruler's territorial dominance over parts of Upper Egypt. This was early on questioned by Schneider 1998: 73, who stressed the possibility that the prenomen *'3-wsr-R'w* was used during the majority of *'3-wsr-R'w 'Ippj's* (III) reign. On the find context of the inscriptions of *S.wsr-n-R'w* (II) *Ḫ~jj~3~n* or *'3-wsr-R'w 'Ippj* (III), see also the discussion in Polz 2006. However, as this ruler most likely never changed his prenomen (as highlighted by Ilin-Tomich 2023: 104, there is no reason to assume that *'3-wsr-R'w 'Ippj* (III) changed his prenomen twice during his reign; the only prenomen that can be linked with this ruler with any certainty is *'3-wsr-R'w*, which he most likely wore from the beginning), any chronological implication linked with such a change cannot be upheld. Cf. also Siesse 2019: 114.

19   See also Hagen 2025: 7–9, 19–20, and passim.

3. Discussion

The sign 𓄜 (F78) belongs to a rare type of composite hieroglyphs that are first attested in the hieratic script and later became part of the hieroglyphic corpus.[20] All verified usages of the sign 𓄜 (F78) are observed within anthroponyms. The earliest two examples are known from private individuals both named *Wsr*; however, after the Middle Kingdom, it was exclusively used for rulers. Its reappearance in royal names during the reigns of Seti (I) and the early part of Ramesses (II) are best explained as a revival drawing on the late Second Intermediate Period,[21] perhaps due to the close proximity of Piramesse to the former power centre of the 15th Dynasty, Avaris.

Besides a royal commission, there is no clear connection between the use of this sign and its context (cf. tab. 1). During the Second Intermediate Period, the sign appears on scarabs, jar lids, statues, columns, and a door lintel. Later, during the New Kingdom, the sign is known from a door lintel, a column, and wall decorations in the outer and innermost temple areas, as well as on a statue, and from a graffito in the Wadi Hammamat. As there are currently no attestations known from tombs or more profane contexts such as administrative texts during the New Kingdom, it can be tentatively concluded that this sign is mainly found in temple contexts (cf. tab. 1 [Ramesside Period]). However, any specific significance of this sign compared to 𓄂 (F12) must, at least at the moment, remain unknown.

3.1. Excursus: Depictions of a jackal-headed guardian or god

Jackal-headed figures with walking legs appear in the rows of deities on amulets[22] and *apotropaia*. They are very similar to the hieroglyphic sign 𓄜 (F78), but may be supplemented by a knife in their paw and snakes coming out of their mouths (fig. 2).[23] Later on, this knife disappears and they are more similar to instances of 𓄜 (F78) (fig. 3). Whereas the examples of birth tusks depict this figure with paws, the much later case of amulet Louvre N 3233b depicts this similar figure with human legs.

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20 On this phenomenon, see Fischer 1977: 17–18 [fn. 156]. Similarly also Seyr 2023: 156 with fn. 33 and 169–170, who suggests that many composite hieroglyphs originated as cursive ligatures and continued into hieroglyphic writing.

21 Cf. for example also the case of Seth from Avaris; Bietak 1990.

22 e.g. Louvre N 3233b from the Late Period; cf. Goyon 1977: 48–49 with n. 1 and pl. XV. Next to four lines of hieratic text is an oversized depiction of a jackal-headed figure with two legs.

23 Other examples only with two legs are MMA 08.200.19, Philadelphia UPM E 2914, and Cairo CG 9438 = JE 31046; cf. also Quirke 2016: 347.
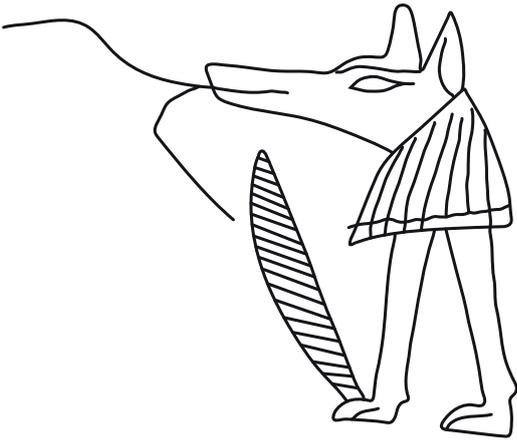
Fig. 2. Drawing of Walters Art Museum 71.510 after https://art.thewalters.org/object/71.510/ (© J. Posch)

Fig. 3. Drawing of Louvre N 3233b after https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010003253 (© J. Posch)

It is unclear whether these depictions in apotropaic contexts were influenced by the sign ⳡ (F78), or whether they developed independently.[24] The earliest hieroglyphic example of this sign (i.e. ex. [4], tab. 1)[25] is known from the early Middle Kingdom, predating the major phase of magic wands, i.e. birth tusks. However, as this is a singular attestation, it is hard to draw any major conclusions from it. Various combinations of legs with heads of animals,[26] or other symbols such as the sun[27] can be observed, especially on birth tusks, allowing for a potential independent development of the figure. These depictions of apotropaic figures with walking legs most likely serve to illustrate speed and agility, making them effective protectors and guardians. While these jackal-headed walking figures may represent Anubis or Upuaut,[28] they should not be read as the hieroglyphic

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24 One might wonder wether several mud seals from Tundaba in the Western Desert also depict this guardian/god instead of the hieroglyphic sign. The published example (Darnell 2013: 252 [fig. 32]) shows two lines of figures apparently following each other. In the first line, legs and part of a head are visible, which have been interpreted as belonging to the sign ⳡ (F78) that is standing in front of a tree. Below, two heads of the sign ⳡ (F12) are visible, seemingly walking one after the other. However, the shapes of the heads in both lines do not align with each other—while the upper illustration shows a broad nose, those of the lower figures are pointed—and as the lower line has only their heads preserved, they could very well be standing standards rather than walking figures. Based on the dating of other materials found at Tundaba (Darnell 2013: 250–257), these seals most likely date to the late Second Intermediate Period or the early New Kingdom.

25 The signs on this stela are inbetween different stages from clear hieroglyphs to cursive hieroglyphs, conforming to the examples 1, 2, and 3a in Te Velde 1988: 172. The scribe painted less common signs (e.g. ☌ [F63]) with greater detail, while frequent signs (e.g. 𓀎 [A1]) tend towards their hieratic appearance.

26 Quirke 2016: 349 [4.1.3.4].

27 Quirke 2016: 387 [4.1.12].

28 Altenmüller 1965: 165; Altenmüller 2023: 37. *Contra* Budge 1934: 88–89, who associates these figures with the Seth-animal.

sign 𓃥 (F78), *wsr*.[29] It is also possible that the appearance of jackal-headed walking figures on apotropaia during the 13th Dynasty influenced their reappearance in the royal names of the 14th and 15th Dynasties. Such an association necessitates some kind of link between the sign 𓃥 (F78) and these apotropaic figures, which might be simply visually. Anyhow, without clearer attestations this must remain speculative for the time being.

Aknowledgments

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29 *Contra* Morenz 2008: 246–247, who proposes to interpret it as a hieroglyph combining the two signs *inj* "to bring; to bring away; to buy" (Erman & Grapow 1926: 90.2–91.10; TLA WCN 26870) and *wsr* "powerful one" (Erman & Grapow 1926: 363.5–7; TLA WCN 49610). He thus reads: *inj wsr* "*(Herbei)Bringen von wsr.*" For a similar interpretation of the pictorial combination in the sign 𓎺 (W25), see Xú & Goldwasser 2024: 189. However, while the latter is presented as a combination of 𓏙 (W24) and 𓂻 (D54), the sign 𓃥 (F78) is better described as a compound of 𓄙 (F69) and 𓂧 (D45) (see also fn. 2), rather than 𓎺 (W 25) and 𓌙 (F12) as proposed by L. Morenz.

Appendix: Collection of attestations of (F78)

6th Dynasty	Early Middle Kingdom
(1) (2) (3)	(4)[30] *
Second Intermediate Period	

Ḫʿị̱-wsr-Rʿw; 14th Dynasty	Mrị̱-Wsr-Rʿw Jj~ḳ~b-hr; 14th Dynasty
(5) *	(6) * (7) (8) (9) (10) (11) (12) (13) (14) (15) (16) * (17) * (18) (19) (20) (21) *

S.wsr-n-Rʿw (II) Ḫ~jj~ʾ~n; 15th Dynasty	ʿʾ-wsr-Rʿw 'Ippj (III); 15th Dynasty
(22) (23) * (24) * (25) * (26) (27) *	(28) (29) (30) (31) (32) * (33) * (34) (35) (36) * (37) * (38) * (39) *

Ramesside Period		
Seti (I); 19th Dynasty	Ramesses (II); 19th Dynasty	Ramesses (IV); 20th Dynasty
(40) (41)	(42) * (43) (44) (45) (46) (47) * (48) (49) (50) (51) (52)	(53)

Uncertain attestations
(a)

Tab. 1. Overview of attestations with the sign F78.
Drawing of signs were made based on photographs (*) or redrawn based on published fac-simile.
The drawings are not in scale

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30   Such a date is indicated by the use of n *imʾḫjj* NN, which is not common after the early Middle Kingdom (Bennett 1941: 79; Rosati 1980: 270; Ilin-Tomich 2017: 31), and *pr.t-ḫrw* directly follows *ḥtp-ḏi-njsẉt* without a preceding *ḏi=f*, which is only rarely known after the mid of the 12th Dynasty (Bennett 1941: 77–78 [1]).

(1) Papyrus Berlin P. 9010: <https://aku-pal.uni-mainz.de/signs/18304> [last accessed: 15.09.2025])

(2) Papyrus Berlin P. 9010: <https://aku-pal.uni-mainz.de/signs/18305> [last accessed: 15.09.2025])

(3) Papyrus Berlin P. 9010: <https://aku-pal.uni-mainz.de/signs/18305> [last accessed: 15.09.2025])

(4) Stela Cairo CG 20364: Mariette 1880: 214 [No 735]; Lange & Schäfer 1902–1925: I, 369 [CG 20364]; IV, pl. XXVII

(5) Scarab London UC 11797: Tufnell 1984: pl. LIX [3345]

(6) Scarab BM EA 30500: Tufnell 1984: pl. LVII [3228]

(7) Scarab Aberdeen ABDUA: 81204: Petrie 1917: pl. XXI [15.4]

(8) Seal impression TD 8970: Zeger 2009: 68

(9) Seal impression TD 8971: Zeger 2009: 69

(10) Seal impression TD 8972: Zeger 2009: 70

(11) Seal impression TD 8973: Zeger 2009: 71

(12) Seal impression TD 8974: Zeger 2009: 72

(13) Seal impression TD 8974: Zeger 2009: 72

(14) Seal impression TD 9019: Zeger 2009: 109

(15) Scarab Basel cat. 143: Hornung & Staehelin 1976: 219 [cat. 143]

(16) Scarab Bet-Shemesh IAA 1995.5571: Keel 2013: 108–109 [31]

(17) Scarab Jerusalem IM 76.31.3977: <https://www.imj.org.il/en/collections/598518-0> [last accessed: 18.09.2025]

(18) Scarab Chicago OIM 18464: Tufnell 1984: pl. LVII [3224]

(19) Scarab Cairo JE 72863: Tufnell 1984: pl. LVII [3225]

(20) Scarab Berlin ÄM 8891: Tufnell 1984: pl. LVII [3226]

(21) Scarab BM EA 64759: Tufnell 1984: pl. LVII [3227]

(22) Scarab Chicago OIM 18461: Tufnell 1984: pl. LVI [3213]

(23) Scarab Berlin ÄM 18653: Tufnell 1984: pl. LXII [3459]; Ilin-Tomich 2023: 145 [fig. 94]

(24) Statue Cairo CG 389 = JE 28574 = GEM 1720: Borchardt 1925: 7–8 [CG 389]

(25) Column Cairo JE 30392: Polz 2006: 240 [fig. 1]

(26) Sphinx BM EA 987: Hall 1914: pl. 18

(27) Jar lid Heraklion, Archaeological Museum 263: Lilyquist 1995: 83 [fig. 12]

(28) Scarab Ashmolean AN1893.9: Tufnell 1984: pl. LXII [3439]

(29) Scarab London UC 11661: Tufnell 1984: pl. LXII [3462]

(30) Scarab BM EA 32331: Tufnell 1984: pl. LXII [3443]

(31) Scarab London UC 11663: Tufnell 1984: pl. LXII [3446]

(32) Scarab BM EA 24113: Tufnell 1984: pl. LXII [3458]

(33) Scarab London UC 11662: Tufnell 1984: pl. LXII [3442]

(34) Scarab London UC 11677: Tufnell 1984: pl. LXII [3446]

(35) Scarab Cairo JE 72859: Tufnell 1984: pl. LXII [3451]

(36) Scarab Berlin ÄM 32722: Ilin-Tomich 2023: 106 [fig. 67]

(37) Scarab BM EA 37663: Ilin-Tomich 2023: 106 [fig. 69]

(38) Scarab BM EA 66167: Ilin-Tomich 2023: 115 [fig. 74]

(39) Door lintel Cairo JE 29238: Polz 2006: 240 [fig. 1]

(40) Western wall of room 17 in the temple of Seti (I) in Abydos: Černy Notebook MSS 17.156: 30–31; Naville 1930: pl. II; Kitchen 1975: 193.14; Beckerath 1999: 150–151 [G1b]. The sign is used in the Golden Falcon name of this king (*Wḥm-ḫ'ị.w-Wsr-pḏ.wt-m-t³.w-nb.w*) on both, the northern and southern part of the western wall

(41) Western wall of room 17 in the temple of Seti (I) in Abydos: Naville 1930: pl. IV

(42) Statue D in Luxor temple: Kitchen 1979: 186.9. Drawing after a photograph of C. Jurman, whom I would like to thank here

(43) Ramses Abydos, chapel H.2: Iskander & Goelet 2015: 274–277 [pl. 4.1.3–6]

(44) Ramses Abydos, chapel L.3: Iskander & Goelet 2015: 356–357 [pl. 4.6.3–4]

(45) Ramses Abydos Pillar 53: Iskander and Goelet 2020: 428–429 [pl. 1.203]

(46) Ramses Abydos Chapel S Niche 18: Iskander & Goelet 2020: 530–531 [pl. 2.2.16]

(47) Relief, door lintel in room XXVIII (Porter & Moss 1972: plan XL [h–g]) in the temple of Seti (I) in Qurnah: Gauthier 1914: 55; Lepsius [1849–1859]: Blatt 132 [f]; the second appearance of this sign on the door jambs is too damage nowadays to be verified; Lepsius & Sethe 1900: 96; verified personally in the temple

(48) Relief, Hypostyle Hall in Karnak: Nelson 1981: pl. 63

(49) Relief, Hypostyle Hall in Karnak: Nelson 1981: pl. 71

(50) Relief, Hypostyle Hall in Karnak: Nelson 1981: pl. 81

(51) Relief, Hypostyle Hall in Karnak: Nelson 1981: pl. 83

(52) Relief, Hypostyle Hall in Amarah West: Kitchen 1979: 214.15; Spencer 2016: pl. 67 [b]

(53) Stela 238 in the Wadi Hammamat: Couyat & Montet 1912: 111 [No 238] and pl. XLV; Kitchen 1983: 16.1; Montet 1950: 26 fig. 4 [l. 6]. As part of a cryptographic writing of the name *Wsr-Mꜣ^ꜥ.t-Rꜥw*

(a) Dipinto Hatnub Gr. 1: Anthes 1928: pl. 9a [Gr. 1]. The majority of the inscription was written in hieroglyphs with few exceptions such as the hieratic ⟨⟩ (G17)

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Hieroglyphs-Extraordinary

A Vegetal Form of the djeser Hieroglyph in KV35 (Gardiner D45)

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Function
Logogram

Value
ḏsr [Sacred]

On a pillar in the tomb of Amenhotep II (KV 35), the hieroglyph *ḏsr* (Hoffmeier 1985: spec. 2–9) takes a vegetal form: the fist of a bent arm holds a branch that looks like a small tree. The central stem is reminiscent of a trunk, while the branching part is reminiscent of a tree-top, in the form of thirteen lateral branches around a central stem. The tree-like appearance of the sign, as well as the absence of a border delimiting its outline, distinguishes this hieroglyph from other known forms: a sceptre or staff, either long and thin (*mks*) or short and thicker (*nḥb.t*). On another pillar in the same tomb, *ḏsr* has a different appearance, that of a very short, thick sceptre with a pommel: (drawing based on De Luca's photo, 30629). This pommel is present elsewhere (OK: Fischer 1979:19; MK: Jéquier 1921: 185 (490); NK: Amenhotep I, Karnak, Musée de plein air).

In the New Kingdom, the short, thick sceptre seems to have been interpreted as a vegetal (?) element, identifiable thanks to the presence of internal details (Amenhotep I, Karnak, Musée de plein air; cf. Meresankh III *infra*), (Thutmose IV: Fischer 1979: 19) and/or green colouring (TSL_3_26364). A head of lettuce may have been recognised (Keimer 1924: 80, 167; Fischer 1979: 19), as in Siptah: (KV 47, Davies 1908: pl. VI). The ostensibly vegetal form of the *ḏsr* sign could be known as early as the Old Kingdom (Dynasty 4) in a more elongated form, coloured yellow with red details (Queen Meresankh III: Dunham & Simpson 1974: fig. 6; Digital Giza). The element may have been held by two arms as early as the Early Dynastic forms (Regulski 2010: 366), then in the Old Kingdom at Giza and Saqqara (Der Manuelian 2003: 2, 19, 23, 173, 174 [D253], 190, 191, 232, 233; Collombert 2010: 34 n. 3) or at Akhmim (Callender 2019: 57, 62–64) and very occasionally in the tomb of Padiamenope (TT 33): (room XIII-S, Book of Gates 8, mid. reg., col. 19). At Akhmim, a local idiosyncrasy interprets the top of the sign as an arrowhead (Callender 2019: 60–61, 63). Whatever form the sign assumes, the primary meaning of *ḏsr* would be to hold at a distance in order to singularise (Meeks 1991: 200).

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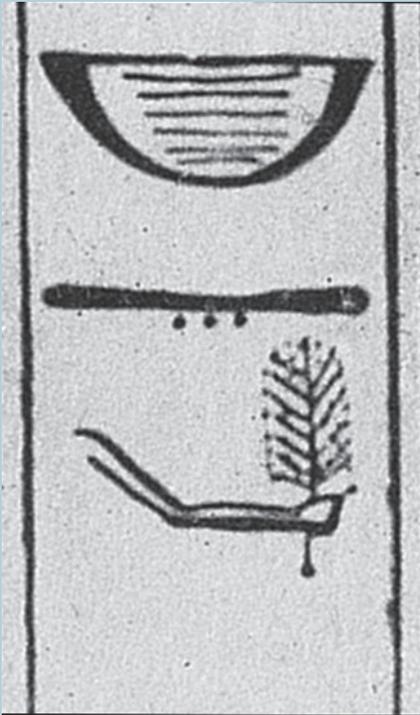
HIEROGLYPHS

Document: Tomb of Amenhotep II (KV 35)

Date: New Kingdom, Dynasty 18, reign of Amenhotep II (ca. 1427–1400 BCE)

Provenance: Thebes

Current location: *In situ*

Object type: Pillar in burial chamber

Material: Stone; black paint

Hieroglyphic source

MdC: V30-N16-D45

Transliteration: *nb tȝ-ḏsr*

Translation: Lord of the Sacred Land

Location: Burial Chamber (J), second pillar to the right of the entrance (left-hand side; Anubis scene)

HIEROGLYPHS

Atypical Attributes of B3 (Woman Giving Birth) Signs Created by Deir el-Medina Painters

Elizabeth Bettles

NINO, Leiden Universteit

Function
Classifier

Value
[Woman giving birth]

At Deir el-Medina, in the as yet unpublished tomb of Amenemopet (TT 265), a Royal Scribe in the Place of Truth under Seti I and Ramesses II, five black-painted B3 signs (woman giving birth) occur among the Book of the Dead spells painted on the burial chamber walls. These B3 signs display atypical features consisting of a prominent stomach, arms which curve outwards and downwards (features normally associated with an A7 [weary man] sign), and two lines projecting diagonally from the crown of her head (see photo and facsimile of a B3 example in Figure 1, on the left). This particular B3 functions as classifier in the word *ms.wt* (births) (Figure 2, below). Such uncommon features in a B3 sign are also observed in the tomb of Sennedjem (TT 1), a Servant in the Place of Truth who worked at Deir el-Medina contemporaneously with Amenemopet (; Haring 2006: § 21, p. 36, 161). Haring suggests the diagonal lines projecting from the top of the woman's head may denote hair or ribbons. This head attribute similarly appears among cursive hieroglyphs e.g. https://aku-pal.uni-mainz.de/signs/52673 as well as in hieratic, where the head projection takes the form of a long drooping extension e.g. https://aku-pal.uni-mainz.de/signs/3004, which describes the hairstyle as relating specifically to maternity. It is also reminiscent of the hairstyle of a breast-feeding woman seated in a birthing bower as painted on the Deir el-Medina ostracon Louvre E 25333. In addition, a B3 sign which displays a bulging stomach and 'weary' arms is attested in the tomb of Servant in the Place of Truth Irynefer (TT 290), another tomb dating to the early years of Ramesses II, although the projections from the top of the head are lacking in this case (Bruyère and Kuentz 2015: pl. 38 [2]) . Further examples of B3 signs with the attributes of two diagonal projections from the crown of the head and 'weary' arms also appear in the early 19th Dynasty tomb at Deir el-Medina of Neferhotep (I) and Nebnefer (TT 6) (Wild and Driaux 2022: p. 26–27, pls. 12–13) . However, in contrast to the bulging rendition of the stomach, these instances show the belly as being 'classically' slender and, unusually, with one knee raised, akin to the profile of an A1 (seated man). This B3 profile, carved in stone but whose draft outline would have been painted by a Deir el-Medina *sš-qd*, closely resembles a

HIEROGLYPHS

B3 hieroglyph which dates much later, to the late 19th Dynasty/ early 20th Dynasty royal tomb of Tausert/Setnakht (KV 14) ▨. To what extent this variability of B3 signs at Deir el-Medina reflects differences in handwriting training and styles among members of the two prominent painter families living in the workmen's village during this Dynasty (Menéndez 2023) is a topic under current investigation by the author.

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Document: Burial chamber of Royal Scribe Amenemopet (TT 265)

Date: Seti I/early Ramesses II, 19th Dynasty; ca. 1290–1274 BCE

Provenance: *In situ*

Current location: The western necropolis of Deir el-Medina

Object type: Rock-cut wall of burial chamber

Material: Stone wall covered by layers of mud and straw mouna, white plaster and a yellow wash

Hieroglyphic source

MdC: F31*S29:X1&G43:B3:Z2

Transliteration: *ms.wt*

Translation: births

Location: North wall, Register 2, Column 50

HIEROGLYPHS

The Shape of a God:
A Graphic Variant of Duau's Emblem

Vincent MOREL

Yale University

Function
Logogram

Value
Dwȝw [Duau]

The god Duau, a little-attested deity throughout Pharaonic history (LGG VII: 506), is primarily known as the patron of oculists (Grdseloff 1942; Leclant 1979: 294; Waugh 1995: 332–337). His name appears as early as the Old Kingdom, chiefly in titles (e.g., Jones 2000: 351, no. 1308, and 585, no. 2142), and then reappears in the Middle Kingdom (Ward 1982: 85, no. 710; Vachala 2015).

The god is typically identified by his emblem ⟨R60⟩ (R60), though the object depicted atop the standard remains uncertain. It has been proposed that the sign represents a sack (Waugh 1995: 332) or a piece of meat (Grdseloff 1942: 208)—the last hypothesis that should be clearly distinguished from the clavicle sign used for the Letopolite nome ⟨sign⟩ (*contra* Grdseloff 1942: 208). The distinction between the two signs is clearly illustrated in the tomb of Metjen, where they are explicitly differentiated—see, for instance, *ʿḏ mr Ḥm/Tp-ḫpš* (?) (Schäfer 1913: 79) versus *ẖrp wʿbw Dwȝw* (Schäfer 1913: 85). The emblem is generally shown with a slightly bulging contour, tapering subtly toward the base. In some instances, however, it adopts a more egg-like shape (LGG VII: 506; Collombert 2010: 128), possibly reflecting uncertainty about its original referent and a subsequent reinterpretation of the sign over time.

A particularly unusual variant of Duau's emblem appears in the inscription of vizier Amenemhat at Wadi Hammamat, dated to Dynasty 11 (Couyat & Montet 1912: 79–81, no. 113). The official's title *ḥm Dwȝw* ("servant of Duau") is archaizing and otherwise attested only once, in the Old Kingdom (Jones 2000: 594, no. 2177); the addition *m pḏ(t) šs* ("in stretching the cord"), referring to a ritual act related to the demarcation of sacred space, is unattested elsewhere in connection with this title. In this inscription, the divine standard is surmounted by a distinctive oblong, empty-filled sign that departs significantly from the conventional rendering. This variant appears to be without parallel in the known record.

This distinctive form may be connected to Duau's association with the city of 'Ayn, located in the Memphite region on the east bank of the Nile, in the vicinity of Turah (Montet 1957: 44–46). There, the god is attested as the city's tutelary deity (Grdseloff 1942: 210–211; Waugh 1995: 334), as evidenced by (a) a cylinder seal from the reign of Pepi I referring to the king as *mry Dwꜣw nt* [*sic*] *'nw*, "beloved of Duau of 'Ayn," and by (b) a Middle Kingdom coffin invoking *Dwꜣw nb 'nw*, "Duau, lord of 'Ayn." In both cases, the toponym *'nw* is written with an oblong-shaped sign ⬭—interpreted by Sethe (as reported by Gardiner 1947: 129) as a "piece of water"—enclosing either an eye ⬭ (a) or a fish ⬌ (b). One might wonder whether this toponym influenced the empty-filled oblong sign found in Amenemhat's inscription—perhaps as a visual echo of the place where the god was chiefly venerated.

Notably, the city of 'Ayn is also mentioned in a Wadi Hammamat inscription from the time of Darius I (Couyat & Montet 1912: 68, no. 93), where the architect Khnumibre is described as a "priest of the gods who are in 'Ayn (⬌⬭)." The occurrence of this otherwise rare toponym in an inscription located only a few meters away is particularly striking—especially given that earlier inscriptions at Wadi Hammamat were often consulted and drawn upon by later expeditions when composing their own commemorative texts (Morel in press)—and certainly merits attention.

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Document: Commemorative Inscription of Vizier Amenemhat

Date: Middle Kingdom, late Dynasty 11, reign of Mentuhotep IV (ca. 1981–1974 BCE)

Provenance: Wadi Hammamat quarries (Eastern Desert, Egypt)

Current location: *In situ*

Object type: Rock inscription

Material: Rock face (greywacke)

Hieroglyphic source

MdC: U36-R60-G17-T10:V6*Z1

Transliteration: *ḥm Dwȝw m pḏ(t) šs*

Translation: Servant of Duau in stretching the cord

Location: Line 7 of the inscription

A Unique Classifier of a Palm Frond

Mostafa Ismail TOLBA

Freie Universität Berlin

Function
Classifier

Value
[Slaughter, Evil]

The burial chamber of Tjaennahebu, located south of the Pyramid of Unas, is decorated with religious texts drawn from the *Pyramid Texts*, *Coffin Texts*, and the *Book of the Dead*. As in several other shaft tombs from the Saite-Persian Period, the inscriptions are characterised by a high level of detail, particularly in the internal elements of the hieroglyphic signs. In *Pyramid Text* Spell 77 (§ 53a), the noun *šꜥ.t*, 'slaughtering; terror' (Lemma ID 152300) is written with a distinctive classifier resembling a palm frond. The sign features a horizontal petiole or midrib, with its broad base oriented to the viewer's left and the pointed tip extending to the right. Spines or leaflets branch from both the upper and lower edges. This particular form is unparalleled in other Saite-Persian tombs, as well as in Old and Middle Kingdom versions of this spell. The Old Kingdom copies (see Allen, 2013) exhibit the sign ⵛ TSL1_7158 (cf. Gardiner 1951), depicting a bundle of stalks tied and sealed. The Middle Kingdom versions (see Allen, 2006) can be grouped as follows:

1. The first group comprises eight attestations using sign ⵛ T31, a knife sharpener.

2. The second group includes three attestations featuring sign ⵛ F41, a vertically written section of vertebrae.

3. One attestation contains sign ⵛ F37, a spine with four ribs.

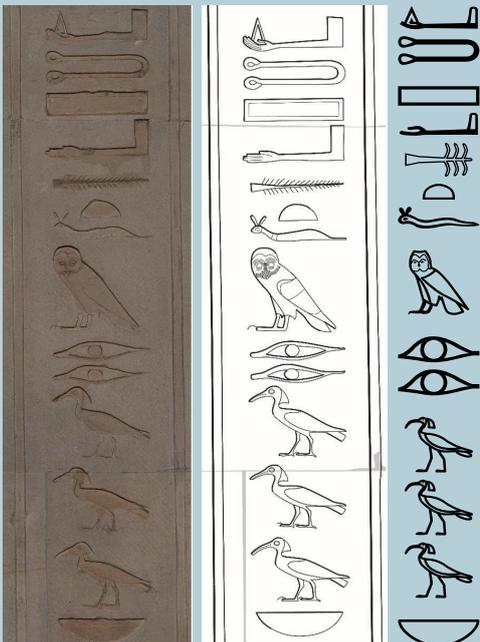4. One attestation employs the same classifier as in the Old Kingdom, i.e., ⵛ.

The Saite copies predominantly employ variants of sign F37, particularly the angled form ⵛ F37B. This is evident in the tombs of Amuntefnakht, Hur, and Padiniet at Saqqara (see Drioton 1952; Maspero 1901), as well as the recently discovered tomb of Djehutiemhat at Abusir. The tomb of Psamtik presents a variant of sign F41 (see Maspero 1900a), while Padienist's tomb displays another unique classifier for the same noun (see Maspero 1900b). In the case of Tjaennahebu's tomb (see Maspero 1900c), the artisan appears to have consciously reverted to the Old Kingdom conception of using a classifier derived from vegetal components, which is notably positioned before the feminine gender morpheme *-t*, as also attested in the copies of Unis, Teti, and Pepi I. Nevertheless, the classifier employed does not constitute a direct replication of Old Kingdom prototypes; rather, it reflects a further adaptation consistent with the predominant Saite Period copies—specifically, a single palm midrib with projecting spines, in contrast to the earlier rendering of multiple stalks bound and sealed. This palm frond

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form appears to have been intended to evoke the likeness of a backbone with ribs, as exemplified in the F37B variant, thereby transforming the classifer from a mammalian-based image into a vegetal one (cf. Engsheden 2014), while preserving its underlying conceptual significance.

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https://cegu.ff.cuni.cz/en/discovery-of-the-tomb-of-a-royal-scribe-in-abusir/, fig. 3 (accessed 20.07.2025).

Document: Burial Chamber of Tjaennahebu

Date: Late Period, Dynasty 26 (ca. 664–525 BCE)
Provenance: Saqqara
Current location: *In Situ*
Object type: Wall in the Burial Chamber
Material: Limestone

Hieroglyphic source

MdC: D37:V13-N37:D36:M54\R90:X1:I9-G17-D4:D4-G25:G25:G25-V30

Transliteration: dỉ.ṭ š't.f m ỉrty 'ḫw nb

Translation: You shall place his terror in the eyes of all Akhs

Location: 20th Column, North Wall

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A Dancing Hoof: A Peculiar Writing of F25

Umberto VERDURA

Columbia University / The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Function
Logogram

Value
wḥm [Repeat]

The canonical form of Gardiner F25, described by Gardiner as the "leg and hoof of an ox" (Gardiner 1957[3]:464), depicts the anatomical structure with relative realism: a robust upper segment tapering into a more slender, slightly flexed lower portion terminating in a hoof-like projection. Despite early debate around the zoological referent of the sign, the identification with the leg of a member of the *Bovidae* seems certain (cf. Keimer 1944 and Callender 2019:112 § 168). Moreover, the usual bent ending of the sign is a constant in the palaeography of this sign (cf. Moje 2007, Regulski 2010, Servajean 2011, and Callender 2019). The stela of Userhat presents, on the contrary, a straight line and rendering of the leg that lacks the characteristic bend at the hoof, producing a linear extension more reminiscent of an outstretched limb, as if the ox had straightened the hoof in a ballet move. As a result, the indentation one typically sees on the back of the sign serves here as the main element to identify it. The possibility of confusion is even more likely given what follows the sign, a plant in a bundle with one flower and two buds (M2B). This hieroglyph may be used in funerary contexts following A52 or B1, especially from the 18th Dynasty on (cf. Geßler-Löhr 1990), to write the epithet *mȝʿ ḫrw*, and it is possible to find it in combination with Aa11 (fig. 1; from the doorway to the inner room of T9 of Mahu, from de Garis Davies 1906 pl. XVIII), with which F25 of Userhat's stela may be confused. However, the same sequence of signs appears elsewhere in the stela (fig. 2)—where F25 is written more clearly—and in the tomb of Nakhtamun (TT 335). As Servajean notes, the sequence F25-M2B could be read as writing *wḥm ʿnḫ*, but its meaning calls for further investigation (Verdura forthcoming).

Fig. 1   Fig. 2

HIEROGLYPHS

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Document: Votive Stela of Userhat

Date: New Kingdom, Late 18th Dynasty (ca. 1327–1295 BCE)

Provenance: Excavated by the Egypt Exploration Fund in the area of the temple of Mentuhotep II at Deir el-Bahri. Donated to the Museum by the EEF, 1905.

Current location: New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Egypt Exploration Fund, 1905 (05.4.2).

Object type: Stela

Material: Painted limestone

Hieroglyphic source

MdC: M17*(N35:Y3\)-F12*S29-!-F4-X1*Z1-A52*F25-M2B\R270

Transliteration: *jn zḫꜣ.w Wsr-ḫꜣ.t wḥm(.w) ꜥnḫ*

Translation: By the scribe Userhat, repeating life

Location: Vertical text, 11th–12th columns, above Userhat's head

HIEROGLYPHS

The "Dressed" Child,
an Unintentional Variant of the Naked Child Sign

Daniel GONZÁLEZ LEÓN

Yale University

Function
Classifier

Value
[Child and/or Young]

The Coptos Decree R shows this example and two additional instances of the child hieroglyph, in sitting position with hanging legs (on an unrepresented lap) and in sunk relief; the latter two also act as classifiers, but on the personal name Idi and the title Foster Child of the King (*sḏ.ty nswt*). The three of them have the same shape, and, except for the lack of inner details, the left arm being raised, only one leg being visible, and the skirt knot, they agree with Gardiner's A17*: 𓀜. This variant is certainly intriguing because of the difficult stroke reproduced between the torso and the legs of the child. At first sight, one may assume it corresponds to the penis, since nudity is one of the main attributes in the representation of children. However, thanks to a new documentation of the inscription (including Photogrammetry and RTI), the matter stands in a different light; the previous drawings (Weill 1912: pl. 4.1; Urk. I, 304–306; Goedicke 1967: fig. 28) are free hand copies that are not suitable for the detailed analysis needed. I propose, in an in-depth paleographic study of these three samples, that this stroke unintentionally represents the skirt knot: its shape and position indicate it might be influenced by other male signs attested on this decree without the craftsman realizing its function (González León in review; cf. Haring 2006: 32 § 13; Collombert 2010: 20 § 22, n. 6; Servajean 2011: 6 § 11).

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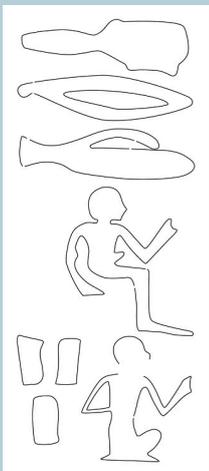
Document: Decree of the Horus Demedjibtauy, also known as "Coptos Decree R"

Date: Late Old Kingdom or First Intermediate Period, possibly Dynasty 8 (ca. 2181–2160 BCE), reign of the Horus Demedjibtauy

Provenance: Coptos

Current location: Egyptian Museum in Cairo, inv. no. JE 41894

Object type: Stela, royal order/decree

Material: Limestone

Hieroglyphic source

MdC: F32-D21-D46-A17C-A1*Z2B

Transliteration: ẖrd.w

Translation: children

Location: Column on the left side (21st out of 25 sections), final part

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Kiss (the earth) the Earth (A92)

Niv ALLON

The Metropolitan Museum of Art

sn 'to kiss' is most often classified with the abbreviated form of the face, showing the nose eye and cheek (⬚; Gardiner D19). In contrast, a lintel from Nakht's tomb (TT C.8, see Manniche 1988, 58–59) does not merely echo the act of kissing but also takes its object—the ground—into account. It thereby depicts the prostrating gesture that the idiom *sn tꜣ* describes. A similarly early classifier from the tomb of Amenemhab, called Mahu (TT 85), playfully places the prostrating man directly above the hieroglyph for earth (fig. 1, photograph by J.J. Shirley), recreating the scene in script. Such a classifier is used even when the image which the inscription accompanies shows the man in a different pose (see Baines 2023: 80–88, and especially p. 85 for this instance). Over time, the classifier appeared even more frequently and in Dendera and Edfu it often functioned as a logogram for *sn* in this idiom.

Fig. 1

Function
Classifier/repeater

Value
[Kissing the earth]

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Document: Lintel of Nakht, the Overseer of Fowl-houses

Date: New Kingdom, Dynasty 18, pre-Amarna (ca. 1550–1353 BCE); see Manniche 1988

Provenance: Bought in the Theban area before 1896; most probably from Theban Tomb C.8

Current location: University College London, Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology (UC14227)

Object type: Lintel fragment

Material: Sandstone

Hieroglyphic source

MdC: N35:D4:Q1*A40:O34:N35:A92-I-N17:E34:N35:F35*A40

Transliteration: *(r[di].t [j]ȝ[.w]) n Wsir sn tȝ <n> wn-nfr*

Translation: ([Giv]ing [Prai]se) to Osiris, kissing the earth (for) Wennefer

Location: Column 2

HIEROGLYPHS

The "God's Palace": A Shrine Sign for *šps*, "August"

Vincent MOREL

Yale University

Function
Logogram

Value
šps
[August, Noble]

The Wadi Hammamat quarries (Eastern Desert, Egypt) preserve a rich corpus of rock art and inscriptions that reflect the Pharaonic perception of the site as a place imbued with numinous character—a landscape where one could engage directly with the divine (Lloyd 2013; Olette-Pelletier 2023; Morel in press).

During the Middle Kingdom, several expedition texts expand on this religious conceptualization, describing the quarries in overtly mythological terms. A royal decree issued under Mentuhotep IV, for instance, refers to the place as: "this august, primordial mountain, first-ranking in the land of the horizon-dwellers, the god's palace that grants life, the divine nest of Horus in which this god rejoices, his pure place of joy, presiding over the deserts of the God's Land" (Couyat & Montet 1912: 98–100, no. 192).

Other inscriptions, however, place greater emphasis on the self-presentation of expedition leaders, while still incorporating—whether subtly or overtly—allusions to the sacred nature of the site. A particularly illustrative example is provided by the inscription of the Director of Works Mery, dated to the reign of Amenemhat III (Couyat & Montet 1912: 41–42, no. 19), where the divine quality of the location is signalled through a striking graphic variation.

In this inscription, the site is described as *ḏw pn šps*, "this august mountain," a relatively standard designation for the quarries. Yet, the adjective *šps*, "august, noble," is written in an unconventional manner. Rather than employing the usual seated-man-of-rank sign 𓀻 (A50), the scribe substitutes the sign for the façade of a shrine 𓊨 (O21)—contra Couyat & Montet 1912: 41, n. 1, who interpret it merely as the seat of the *šps*-sign. This departure from conventional orthography suggests a deeper semantic intention.

Such a substitution can be understood through the lens of *conceptual association*, one of the key mechanisms underlying enigmatic writing (e.g., Werning 2020: 232–233). Here, the shrine sign functions as a paragon-based substitute, operating through iconicity and associative logic: the glyph evokes the conceptual field of *sacredness* by referencing its exemplary

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material form, the shrine itself. Notably, the substitution remains partial. The shrine sign is accompanied by the standard phonetic complement and determinatives for *šps* (col. 3), thus securing the intended reading while simultaneously enriching the word with an additional semantic layer.

This graphic elaboration is further underscored by internal contrast. Later in the inscription, the expected seated-man sign (A50) is used without substitution—once as a classifier in Mery's own name (col. 8), and again in the word *šps* when referring to the blocks of stone brought back to the Nile Valley (col. 13). The initial variation in column 2, therefore, appears to be a deliberate graphic strategy, reframing the mountain itself as a sacralized architectural space—as though the quarries were conceived as the "god's palace," the true dwelling place of the deity.

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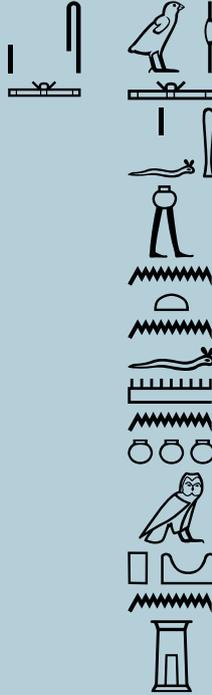
Document: Commemorative Inscription of the Director of Works Mery

Date: Middle Kingdom, late Dynasty 12, reign of Amenemhat III (ca. 1838–1794 BCE)

Provenance: Wadi Hammamat quarries (Eastern Desert, Egypt)

Current location: *In situ*

Object type: Rock inscription

Material: Rock face (greywacke)

Hieroglyphic source

MdC: V24*G43:Y1:U36*(Z1:I9):W25:N35:X1:N35:I9:Y5:N35: (W24*W24*W24):G17:N26*Q3:N35:O21_-!(S29*Z1:Y1)

Transliteration: *wḏ ḥm=f int n=f mnw m ḏw pn šps* (…)

Translation: His Majesty commanded to bring him back monuments from this august mountain (…)

Location: Columns 2–3 of the inscription

A Falcon-Headed Crocodile Hieroglyph: the Akhom-Entity Twice as Vigilant

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Function
Classifier/Repeater

Value
[Akhom]

The noun ꜥẖm/ꜥšm/ꜥẖm, when referring to supra-human entities playing a role in the divine world, is usually written with a falcon or a crocodile figure as classifier. It has been proposed that both animals share a feature perceived as salient by the Egyptians: their eyes, making them considered as prototypically 'vigilant' creatures, a meaning that fits the oldest uses of the corresponding verb (Oréal 2023). A hieroglyph combining a crocodile body with a falcon head thus unites two potential classifiers in one. Beyond the graphic play, the resulting figure has a theological meaning. The god Khonsu-Shu is known for his composite form as a falcon-headed crocodile, which is attested in the temple of Khonsu at Karnak (Traunecker 1982: 348–349) and in the Hibis temple (Davies 1953, pl. 2 V 7). There, its position lying over the Osirian shrine shows that he plays the role of an *akhom*, a watchful guardian joining the dead body in the Beyond. In the Opet temple inscription, this hitherto unrecognised graphic allusion to the specific form taken by the god thus hints at the well-known function of Khonsu-Shu as a protector bringing offerings to the dead ancestors during his daily journey to the West bank of the Nile (Herbin 1994, 145–146, Klotz 2012: 101–109). The lunar dimension may also play a role in the association of Khonsu-Shu to the notion of ꜥẖm, since the nocturnal sun may also be referred to as a vigilant (falcon) in the night boat (Betrò 1990: 67–68). In a scene on the portal of Evergetes, the same noun ꜥẖm associated to Khonsu-Shu shows a simple crocodile (IA5) as classifier (fig. 1), so that the comparison allows us to clearly distinguish the difference with our falcon-headed crocodile, whose silhouette strongly recalls three-dimensional representations of the same composite animal.

Fig. 1

References:

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Davies, N. de G. 1953. *The Temple of Hibis in el Khargeh Oasis,* III. *The Decoration*, Publications of The Metropolitan Museum of Art Egyptian Expedition 17. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Herbin, Fr.-R. 1994. *Le Livre de parcourir l'éternité*, Orientalia Lovaniensia analecta 58. Leuven, Peeters.

Klotz, D. 2012. *Caesar in the City of Amun: Egyptian Temple Construction and Theology in Roman Thebes*, Monographies Reine Élisabeth 15. Turnhout, Brepols.

Oréal, E. 2023. "Achom le vigilant. Nommer l'animal, penser le divin," *Revue d'égyptologie 73*: 81–102.

Traunecker, C. 1982. "Un exemple de rite de substitution : une stèle de Nectanebo Ier," *Cahiers de Karnak 7*: 339–354.

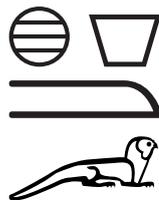## Document: Offering scene (Opet 23) – (KIU 4288)

Date: Ptolemaic, reign of Ptolemy XII Neos Dionysos (in two phases between 80–51 BCE)

Provenance: Opet temple, Karnak

Current location: *In situ*

Object type: Wall

Material: Sandstone

Hieroglyphic source

MdC: W10*Aa1:Aa15:G11I

Transliteration: ꜥẖm

Translation: akhom, "one who is vigilant"

Location: Karnak, Opet temple, offering scene (Opet 23–KIU 4288)