

Commentaries and Discursive Texts in Ancient Egypt

التعليقات والنصوص الاستدلالية في مصر القديمة

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ملخص

تضمنت النصوص الدينية أو العلمية في مصر القديمة - في غالب الأمر - مجموعة التعليقات أو التعليقات؛ التي يمكن أن تكون قد أُضيفت بالفعل إلى النص الأصلي، أو أنها بالأساس جزء من نص محدد. وعلى الرغم من كثرة النصوص التي تضمنت تلك التعليقات أو التعليقات، فإننا في كثير من الأحيان نجد نصوصاً قد وردت إما متضمنة تلك النصوص الشارحة وإما بدونها. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، نجد في بعض الأحيان أن هناك اختلافاً لغوياً-زمنياً يمكن تمييزه بين النص الأساسي والتعليقات الواردة.

فضلاً عن هذا، هناك نصوص استدلالية تحتوي في الأساس على عناصر شارحة، ولا يمكن تصنيفها كتعليقات بشكل صريح. لذلك فإن هذه الورقة البحثية تقدم أمثلة ونماذج على تلك الأنواع مختلفة النصوص والتعليقات الخاصة بها، كما تناقش الدور الوظيفي لتلك النصوص في الحضارة المصرية القديمة.

In Ancient Egypt, religious or scientific texts often contain commentarial elements. Commentaries could either be added later to already extant older texts, or they could be originally part of a given text. The former is the usual practice, though, as in many instances, the same texts are attested with or without commentary. Also, there is often a linguistic difference in age discernible between a basic text and its commentary.

Apart from this, there are discursive texts that contain explanative elements from the start and which are not commentaries actually speaking. The paper provides examples for these different genres and discusses their function within Egyptian culture.

1. Preservation of the evidence

Commentarial literature is a logical development in a culture engaging in any deep way with texts, be they part of its own tradition or of a different background, which however commands interest of one or the other sort for the culture in question. As Ancient Egypt had a vast textual output over approximately three millennia, some of which demonstrably enjoyed also a very long history of tradition within this timespan, it is to be expected that also a certain amount of commentarial literature should have existed—and indeed, remnants of this literature are preserved.¹ However, the amount of known material is unfortunately much less than one might wish for. The reason for this is easy to pinpoint. As so often, the problem of preservation of papyri from library contexts in settlements in contrast to funerary material taken into tombs grossly distorts the picture. It is necessary to bear this fact in mind to avoid drawing incorrect conclusions about the nature of Egyptian text culture.

The problem is of course that within Egyptology—in contrast to Mesopotamia—there is an almost complete lack of preserved libraries from settlements, specifically from the older periods. This fact is too often forgotten even by seasoned Egyptologists, let alone by scholars from neighboring disciplines, as there seems to be such a wealth of artifacts from Ancient Egypt. However, this material is from a few tombs fortunately not robbed in Antiquity. Textually, they most often contain only a minor choice of texts useful to the deceased for their eternal well-being. In other words, they contain a minimum and careful selection, not everything that existed or could possibly exist at a given time. The interesting texts for all questions of religion and history of philosophy would have been written on papyrus or leather and kept in temple or palace libraries, almost completely lost today, as they were not located in dry desert areas, but within the wet Nile Valley. Apart from the high groundwater levels, the places in question have been continuously reused and been built over until the present—or at least, they have been well robbed since at least Late Antiquity. Thus, absence of evidence is definitely not evidence of absence. To the contrary, the amount of evidence still preserved despite these problematic conditions lets us suspect a once very rich culture of such texts.

1.1 Definitions

Before presenting the preserved material, it is also necessary to define the subject more clearly.

There are generally two types of such works in Egypt.² On the one hand, there are text commentaries, texts that explain a basic text lemma by lemma.³ The speaker is not named, nor is the author of the basic text, as Egyptian texts are usually without indication of any author, except for the wisdom

teachings including some prophetic texts which are always ascribed to a specific person as their author and teacher of wisdom. When a text commentary speaks of “when he says”, the “he” is of course the commented text or implicitly its author, but the latter is never explicitly named.

This is in stark contrast to another sort of text, namely what can be termed “discursive texts”. There, at the heart of the reflection is not another text that also could—and does indeed—exist without commentary, but rather the facts themselves. These facts are then within the basic text itself discussed and interpreted by named interlocutors in a dialogue. It is this very dialogue that constitutes the basic text, which is then elaborated.

A commentary strictly speaking is a secondary explanatory text attached directly or indirectly to another, primary text. By direct or indirect attachment the type of transmission together or separately from the basic text on the same writing support is to be understood. The author of such a commentary is different from the author of the basic text. There also can be a more or less considerable difference in time between the composition of basic text and commentary. If both text and commentary stem from the same author, one should speak of an auto-commentary. Apart from full-fledged commentaries, there can also be simple explanatory glosses, which are to be found in the margins of a text. During the process of transmission, such glosses can make their way into the main body of the text, where however they can still be discerned by their syntax and content, sometimes even by their historic–linguistic character.

Discursive texts are of course also explanatory and thus share many features with the commentaries proper. They also stem from the same mental background: a will to understand and to make sense

of things. It seems therefore important to distinguish between the two, on the other hand, both should be discussed here.

While in principle all these, and possibly other forms of explanatory text types, are to be expected in Ancient Egypt, it may sometimes be difficult to discern the different types. This is particularly true of the commentary vs. auto-commentary distinction. As the Ancient Egyptians rarely indicated names of authors, it can be very difficult if not impossible to differentiate the two from each other, unless there are good criteria like linguistic differences⁴ or a broader tradition including both versions with and without commentary. Even in the latter case an auto-commentary on originally different writing supports could not definitely be excluded.

Discursive thinking in general once must have played a major role in Ancient Egyptian religion. Unfortunately, this fact has been much obscured by the chances of preservation. This is even worse than with the strict commentaries, probably due to the fact that commentaries—like the early cases within the *Coffin Texts* and *Book of the Dead* quoted below, could be used also for funerary purposes, while strictly discursive texts that are not commentaries were more of a matter for libraries within temples (and probably also other settings).

As examples for true commentaries, one could mention those to the *Fundamentals of the Course of the Stars* or the *Book of the Fayum*. As examples for discursive texts, the so-called *Myth of the Sun's Eye*, the so-called *Book of Thoth*, more accurately named the *Ritual for Entering the Chamber of Darkness* or the *Dialogue between Pharaoh and Imhotep* come to mind. The latter unfortunately is still unpublished.⁵ For the others, see below.

Finally, there are hybrid texts between commentary and discursive texts. A prime example for this would be the so-called *Demotic Chronicle*.⁶

2. True commentaries

The two examples for commentaries that are already known and discussed for the longest time within Egyptology exemplify the problem. *Book of the Dead spell 17* and its forerunner *Coffin Texts spell 335* contain appended to each passage of text an explanatory commentary and often at least one variant, each introduced by a rubricized heading “What does it mean?” or “Another version”.

As the glosses are thought by Erik Hornung to be part of the original text already,⁷ because they are already present in the *Coffin Texts* version of the Middle Kingdom, the question whether this is to be called a commentary proper has been strongly debated between Ursula Rößler-Köhler⁸ and Jan Assmann.⁹

Another case in point where this question is of some relevance are some of the medical texts preserved from the New Kingdom. Texts like pEbers or pEdwin Smith are precisely famous for their scholarly character, including elaborate explanations of specialist vocabulary. This clearly resounds with modern medicine using Latin terminology.

While these texts are preserved mostly from the New Kingdom, they linguistically are definitely of older date. Early Egyptologists studying those texts, such as James Henry Breasted in his edition of pEdwin Smith, therefore assumed sometimes that the explanatory parts were later accretions which were supposed to explain outdated vocabulary not easily understandably any more.¹⁰ However, is this interpretation correct? In fact those parts are a bit long and elaborated for simple glosses, while at the

same time also fitting a bit too neatly into the text to assume that they were later insertions. Therefore, they rather contain a precise terminology being explained for the benefit of a reader, possibly a student of medicine, which was clearly one of the most prized sciences of Ancient Egypt through all periods.¹¹ In the classification set out above, these parts would therefore need to be labelled as auto-commentaries, if not explanatory texts dealing with facts.

The fact that there is a specialized terminology with clear definitions is very remarkable insofar as in other contexts the apparent lack of a clearly definable terminology which delineates a precise meaning to the exclusion of other possible meanings is rather vexing.

Thus, while the question of true commentary or not cannot ultimately be solved, at least the scholarly use of these texts is out of the question.

However, not all commentaries were intended for purely scientific reasons. Some of the preserved commentaries deal with ritual texts. There, they likely were intended not solely for the purpose of understanding for understanding’s sake, but probably also for providing effectiveness to the texts on a deeper level. From a text in the Temple of Edfu,¹² it is clear that the ‘explanation of the difficulties’ of the ritual conducted before was an integral part of that ritual.

This is also the true significance of the layout in little boxes exhibited by some particularly archaic texts, labelled in Egyptology as ‘Dramatic Texts’.¹³ As an example one may mention the so-called ‘Dramatic Ramesseum Papyrus’,¹⁴ after its find spot in a Middle Kingdom tomb under the later Ramesseum.¹⁵ It contains a royal ritual. However, this is not restricted to rituals, but can also be used in texts that deal purely with knowledge. For

example, the Lunar and Planetary Chapters of the *Fundamentals of the Course of the Stars* belong into this category as well. The label ‘Dramatic Texts’ is due to the fact that in the past, it was believed that the little boxes contained stage instructions. While for rituals this would be perfectly imaginable, for texts as the *Fundamentals*, which are definitely no rituals, this interpretation does not make any sense. Thus, the information in the boxes rather is to be understood as a very concise form of commentary. Only with this interpretation of the feature it is understandable how it can be present in texts not intended for any ‘dramatic’ performance.

A commentary papyrus on the *Ritual of Opening of the Mouth* which explains objects, titles and even whole ritual pronouncements in their deeper meaning surely was also used for the purpose of ‘explaining the difficulties’ of this important ritual.¹⁶ This ritual by the way also is organized in the form of a ‘Dramatic Text’ in the monumental copies.¹⁷ Unfortunately, concerning the papyrus, only a tiny scrap with remains of eight lines of text is preserved. The manuscript is from Elephantine and dates to the first half of the sixth century BCE. The commentary is written in Middle Egyptian language and hieratic script, which further speaks in favor of a commentary as important part of the performance of the ritual itself and not just a later attempt to make sense of it. A cult commentary *in nuce* or rather a commentarial gloss is also to be found in the *Ritual of Trampling the Fishes*, as attested in Edfu.¹⁸ The language of the gloss is clearly datable to the change from the Twenty-fifth to the Twenty-sixth Dynasty, which fits nicely with the content of the gloss, as Pascal Vernus has shown.¹⁹ The gloss explains ‘Knowing the meaning of the ritual *Trampling the Fishes*. They are the rebels which are in the water. As for the millstones,

they are the corpses of the rebels from Napata. As for the laments of the birds in their cages, they are the souls of the rebels. As for the flywhisks of doum-palm, they are their hair.’

After the Saite Twenty-sixth Dynasty took over power from the Nubian Twenty-fifth Dynasty, which had been crushed by the Assyrians, they started a propaganda campaign against their predecessors. Napata was their capital, where they continued to reign over Nubia after their loss of the Egyptian kingship. The explanatory gloss here thus actualizes the ritual for a concrete political situation. Nevertheless, this is a good case in point to show how such a gloss can become a fixed part of the text. The sole copy of the text known today is to be found on a wall in the Ptolemaic temple of Edfu, where it was engraved in the first century BCE. At this time of course, the Nubian capital was not any more in Napata but had already been transferred even further south to Meroe. Needless to say, that also the current language had evolved from the stage of half a millenium earlier.

Extensive commentarial passages are also to be found in the so-called *Great Horus Myth* at Edfu.²⁰ There, they are an integral part of the text which one could easily imagine to have been recited along with the narrative part of the text. This is even facilitated by the fact that at least some parts of these explanations are laid into the mouth of Thoth, god of wisdom.

Perhaps it is no coincidence that just for rituals, commentaries or at least commentarial glosses are best attested. However, commentaries once also existed for more technical treatises, which unfortunately themselves are almost completely lost. All the more interesting therefore are the inscriptions from the gold-house of Dendera.²¹ It is not to be expected that the room so labelled is

the actual gold-house, which was the workshop for the production of cult statues, etc. Probably, the small room within the temple building proper was just the place where the finished products were set up, perhaps for some final rituals like the Opening of the Mouth.²² At any rate, the inscriptions on the wall contain excerpts from one or two treatises describing work in the gold-house. One speaks of the organization of the employees,²³ sounding suspiciously similar to the way the *Book of the Temple*²⁴ describes the offices within the temple hierarchy and their respective duties. As the respective section of the *Book of the Temple* could not yet be reconstructed, it is impossible to verify this assumption. The other text is clearly excerpted from a commentary to a larger handbook on statuary and the materials it is made from.²⁵ The basic text itself is not cited, just the commentary or at least part of it. While such descriptions of statues themselves are often attested,²⁶ mostly adapted for all sorts of religious purposes, this is up to now the only commentary dealing with such material. Interestingly, this text shows that not even in Ancient Egypt all sparkling things were solid gold. The text reads: ‘If he says about a god that his material is wood and gold, without naming the wood, he says it concerning Ziziphus wood plated with gold. If he says about a god that his material is stone without naming the stone, he says it concerning black granite and black flint stone. ... When he says about a god that his material is real stone, he says it concerning magnetite. When he says about a god that his material is copper, he says it concerning black copper. When he says about a god that his material is elektron, he says it concerning wood. As for this wood, it is Ziziphus wood plated with gold. When he says about a god that his material is gold, it means that his body is from silver, likewise plated

with gold. When he says about a god that he is plated with gold, the plating is gold of the thickness of an Ibis egg.’ The last surely means the thickness of the eggshell. Similar to other commentaries, the text refers to his basic text by a masculine suffix of the third person singular. The same is typical also for external references. As already stated above, in such cases, the referent for ‘if he says...’ and the like is the basic text, or in the case of reference works,²⁷ ‘book X’.

2.1 A case study: *The commentary to the Fundamentals of the Course of the Stars*

As stated before, true commentaries are often separated from their basic texts by a considerable time span. This implies that the language might have evolved more or less strongly between the time of the original composition and the time of the commentary. Therefore, commentaries are sometimes combined with a translation of the basic text²⁸ into a younger phase of the Egyptian language. The commentary itself is then also composed in this younger phase. In a way, of course, a translation in itself is already sort of a commentary, as it requires sometimes a certain interpretation to equate one word or grammatical construction with another one, when there would theoretically also be another possible choice. On the other hand, not every case of a translation into a younger phase of Egyptian is accompanied by a commentary. Translations into Greek (which do exist from the Greco-Roman periods) by the way, are never accompanied by a commentary, as far as the preserved documentation allows to judge.²⁹ The finest preserved translations and commentaries are certainly the ones of the *Book of the Fayum*³⁰ and the *Fundamentals of the Course of the Stars*.³¹

What is interesting to see is the fact that for both texts, there are three different versions attested: an illustrated version of the basic text written in hieroglyphs within a complicated layout, an unillustrated version of the basic text transposed into hieratic writing in simple lines and finally also a version of the latter with additionally a translation and commentary of the basic text in Demotic script and language. The text in the version with translation and commentary is split into individual lemmata, which mostly follow the syntax. Occasionally, though, a single sentence can be split into smaller parts for the purpose of the commentary. While for the *Book of the Fayum*, several copies of each of the three versions are attested, which do not seem to be at variant with each other a lot, for the *Fundamentals of the Course of the Stars*, there are clear differences of the versions attested in Tebtynis to be seen. This variance is also true, not just for the basic text, but also decidedly for the two versions of the commentary in pCarlsberg1 and 1a, despite the fact that both papyri were clearly written by the same scribe. This is relevant in so far as it clearly proves that the commentary was not composed *ad hoc* by the scribe in question, but that it also enjoyed a longer history of transmission, a fact also corroborated by the linguistic character of the text as well as by other observations on the individual manuscripts.³²

The reason for the existence of six rather different copies of the *Fundamentals* at the same time and place, but two by even the same scribe, is likely a deliberate collecting of variants of the text by the priests in Tebtynis, proving again their scholarly interest.

What is also evident in case of both texts, the *Fundamentals* as well as the *Book of the Fayum*, is the fact that the versions with the commentary clearly presuppose the availability of the illustrated version in

the hands of their readers. The *Fundamentals* describes the illustrations in some detail and refers again and again to them, particularly in stating where in the picture the following parts of text are to be found.

In the beginning, the picture in its entirety is described and interpreted:

‘This is [the picture on the sc]roll. The female figure, which is the heavenly vault,³³ namely the one whose head is in the west and whose backside is in the east, this is Nephthys, this is the northern sky. When he called her [.....]. This is the [...] of the north, which is extended(?). The hand of the one, which does not reach to the [...] and she lifts her heels behind him. Her backside is in the east, namely the one of the female figure. If he let the backside be first then because it is the place of birth. [.....] these are the sides of the vicinity of the sky. Re does not rise there. The upper part of the socle which is under the hawk, [...] these are the sides of the vicinity of the sky. The sun does not normally rise within them. If he said this, then because [...] kind of water, from which Re rises. The stand which is below the hawk [...]. These regions of the vicinity of the sky, i.e. these waters, which I mentioned [...] while they traverse the sky. This means it happens that they circulate after his course. [...] The course of the stars happens according to the regulation for the circulating of the stars, i.e. those that rise in the sky. [...] those that rise in the sky, all of them, meaning all that rise in the sky, i.e. [...]’ (1, 1-13).

Then follows the first lemma, which is unfortunately lost. It must have contained the part which likely contains the original title of the text. Indeed, the commentary states:

‘The kind of things which the ‘*Fundamentals of the Course of the Stars*’ does, this is its explanation.’

In this particular case, the ‘explanation’ means the commentary itself. Later on in the text, this is a book title cited time and again as a reference work.³⁴ It must have been a sort of encyclopaedia, which indeed is also cited in a few other works.

References to the picture later on in the commentary read for example ‘The writings which are under the beetle which is below her leg’ (§13). Then the lemma is given ‘Then he enters as this <scarab>’. In the illustrated version there is a gap in the hieroglyphic text, in which one needs to actually read the winged beetle represented at the sky goddesses’ leg. Unfortunately, in pCarlsberg 1 and 1a the lemma is lost entirely, but the commentary in pCarlsberg 1 explains ‘He enters as this one, he goes to the sky as this one, namely the figure of the scarab, which is on the picture. If he said this, then because he goes to the Duat in front of the rebels in the shape in which he rose in the sky, being strong.’ PCarlsberg 1a is unfortunately much more destroyed, but enough is preserved to see that the commentary clearly was different. Moreover, it even contains a variant indicating that there were even further versions known to the scribe: ‘[...] this means Re rises and [.....]. Variant: after Re appeared [...].’

That the picture is not just described for the benefit of somebody who does not have it at hand, but that to the contrary, the commentary is rather to be used as an explanatory volume next to the illustrated version is clear from §20, where a peculiar hieroglyphic orthography for *tšr.t* ‘redness’ is commented on by the injunction: ‘Look onto the picture. The  is what is to be read as ‘redness’’. Interestingly, the hieratic lemma in pCarlsberg 1 already gives the intended reading, not the cryptographic writing. Altogether, there are seven explicit references to the picture.

Earlier scholars mused about whether the picture might have been present at the beginning of pCarlsberg 1 itself, but this is highly unlikely. The papyrus is inscribed on both sides, four columns on the recto and three on the verso, and it does not seem to be convincing that just the part with the drawing would have broken off so that no other text was lost. There was however an illustrated hieroglyphic version in the same library at Tebtynis, but it surely was an entirely different manuscript. While it is unfortunately lost except for one small scrap, it does contain one interesting element. The major difference between the illustrated and non-illustrated versions is the absence of the two lists of decans from the latter, where they are replaced by a detailed explanation of the calculations underlying the decanal time-keeping.³⁵ In this context, it is interesting to note that pCarlsberg 1a does not simply give the name of the model decan *ph.wi-č̣.t* and the category of date, but adds before the category ‘He wrote with ‘green’ ink opposite it’. Now, *ri.t ẉč̣.t*, or as here in Demotic with Fayumic lambdacism, *ḷ wt*, literally ‘green ink’, is often attested in magical texts, as a writing material. As the word *ẉč̣* could in principle also mean ‘fresh’, many scholars have opted for a translation as ‘fresh ink’, because green ink has never been found to have been employed for any writing on papyrus. Joachim Quack to the contrary proposed already in 1998 to take ‘green’ as a conscious euphemism for ‘red’,³⁶ a usage attested also for example for the Red Crown, which is personified by the Goddess Wadjet. Now, pCarlsberg 1a in comparison to the illustrated pOxford 79/105 has proven beyond doubt that Quack’s interpretation was correct. In pOxford, there is just a part of one of the date categories preserved, and indeed, the relevant word is written in red ink.³⁷

That a commentary refers to an illustrated version on another papyrus and that in turn this illustrated version has added numbers to indicate the correct part in the commentary is nicely shown by the finest of the hieroglyphic illustrated copies of the *Book of the Fayum*.³⁸ The layout of the text is basically a stylized religiously interpreted map of the Fayum, showing the lake surrounded by settlements, or rather the respective temples with their divinities.³⁹ To describe them by indicating verbally their position, as in the *Fundamentals of the Course of the Stars*, would have been as cumbersome as prone to errors. Instead, an ingenious scribe inserted little Demotic numerals into the illustrated copy, which surely refer to a version of the commentary.

Interestingly, also the general organization of the Demotic commentaries of the *Book of the Fayum* and the *Fundamentals of the Course of the Stars* is a bit different. While for the *Fundamentals* the lemmata are starting at the vertical column border, there is a second vertical line, where the Demotic commentary following the lemma can run on, so that the whole lemma and commentary has an indented layout until the next lemma starts. The commentary to the *Book of the Fayum* to the contrary is written in *scriptio continua* with no particular accentuation of the lemmata.

As for the content of the commentary of the *Fundamentals of the Course of the Stars*, sometimes it only rephrases the translation of the basic text. In other instances it becomes more precise, though. For example, the lemma for §61, which is part of a description of sunset, states in view of the sun-god Re ‘He is efficient and beautiful in the arms of his father Osiris’. The Demotic version in pCarlsberg 1 reads ‘He is good and beautiful in the arms of his father Osiris. This is the water.’ Thereby, the

commentary supplies the ‘scientific’ concept of waters into which the setting sun disappears, which was encoded in the basic text in a purely religious picture, namely the arms of Osiris. Of course, the god Osiris or more precisely, the efflux from his corpse, is regularly equated with the Nile and thus with water,⁴⁰ so the idea was clearly the same.

Interestingly, the author of the commentary sometimes voices his puzzlement over passages he had trouble to make sense of. For example, in §60 the older monumental copies read ‘The majesty of this god enters in view of her first hour of darkness.’ However, the orthography there is already problematic, so that instead of the presumably correct original *wnw.t tp.ỉ=s n whʒ* the text rather looks like *wnw.t sp=s n.ỉ whʒ* or in the first version of Ramses IV later painted over, even *wnw.t snsp*. As this is obviously senseless, it seems that the later tradition of the text resorted to creative emendation, reading *wnw.t s:htp.n=s* ‘The hour ‘who pacifies for herself’’. As the different hours of the day had names in ancient Egypt and ‘Who pacifies for herself’ is indeed one of these also otherwise attested names,⁴¹ such an emendation is perfectly plausible, as long as one does not think a lot about the sense of the text, that is. The minor problem with this reading is that the hour usually called ‘Who pacifies for herself’ is not at the right time of the day for sunset. The author of the commentary had a basic text stating ‘Thus this god enters into her (the sky goddess) mouth in the hour ‘Who pacifies for herself’ in the darkness.’ His commentary eternalizes his bewilderment: ‘This god enters her mouth in the evening in the hour ‘Who pacifies for herself’, meaning this god enters her mouth in the third hour of the evening. Normally, he comes forth from her in the hour ‘Who pacifies for herself’. This is the ninth hour of the night.’

Another even bigger text-critical accident occurred in §§85-103 at the beginning of the second chapter on the decans. While the order of sentences in the Osireion in Abydos is clearly the correct one, most of the Roman period papyri from Tebtynis attest to a garbled sequence. It is not entirely clear how this could happen, but it is likely due to incorrect copying of a model written in retrograde script. Retrograde script is typical for ancient cursive hieroglyphic texts and it was notoriously prone to misreading already in later periods in Ancient Egypt herself.⁴² Only one of the Tebtynis papyri of the *Fundamentals of the Course of the Stars* likely had the correct sequence of text⁴³ – ‘likely’, because this can only be deduced by other text-critical features, while the relevant passage is lost.

While the non-commented versions could simply ignore the problems created by the garbled text, the commentary had to face it. This he did, albeit in a very Egyptian way. He never states that there is an error and discards this version. Instead he faithfully comments sentence for sentence in isolation. It is of course only possible to see the problem for what it is by comparing the correct version. While a modern scholar is able to do this and the priests in Tebtynis also could have done so if the mentioned hypothesis of a correct sequence in pCarlsberg 497 is correct; the author of the commentary probably could not. As already stated, the commentary was just copied in second century CE Tebtynis, but not composed there. Where it was composed must remain open, but the date of composition of the commentary is for historical linguistic reasons likely the fifth or fourth century BCE.

Even further on, in §130a the basic text in pCarlsberg 1 inserts a sentence or rather fragment thereof in a place where the parallels have nothing at all, except maybe pCarlsberg 496, but there is only

some mostly lost text extant. Probably originally *sw hpr Gb* “Thus Geb came into being/became” here is just a doubling of the correct *sw hpr Gb m ỉrỉ-p^c.t ncr.w* “Thus Geb became the Prince of the Gods” in §125. The author of the commentary also realized that there was something odd about this chunk of a lemma. He comments ‘This means the one who became through the becoming that Geb did, saying it(?), that means, does he say this normally?’ The text is as strange as the translation suggests, which clearly shows the antique commentator’s struggle of understanding here. Of course, as there is only a copy of the commentary extant, a weird sentence might have grown even more strange during the likely four to five centuries of transmission history of the commentary itself.

The clearest case, however, is the final statement before the end of the commentary, which only covers the first two chapters concerning the decans. After §144, the first sentence of the Lunar Chapter, reading ‘The moon of the second lunar day is the feast of Horus’ the commentary states ‘The moon of the second lunar day is the feast of Horus. His rise in the West on the second lunar day is the feast of Horus. ... It is the risings of the moon which he is going to treat. This is the beginning of other things. It is 28 when they complete the circle, as he, namely the ‘Explanation’ did. *bn-p=y gmỉ=f* | This is its end.’ Earlier scholars understood *bn-p=y gmỉ=f* literally as ‘I have not found more’, thinking that the commentator had only the text on the decans at his disposal. However, this is not very convincing. If he did not find more text, then how did he know that the following chapter actually treated the lunar cycle? Taking into account that the verb *gmỉ* ‘to find’ can also be used in the sense of ‘to understand’, ‘to find an intellectual solution to a problem’, it is very likely that the final comment

bn-p=y gmi=f actually means ‘I did not understand it’. If this interpretation is correct, the author of the commentary would have deliberately ended his text here without trying to deal with the Lunar Chapter.

Indeed the Lunar and Planetary Chapters are very difficult to make sense of, partly because of their content, but partly also because of their syntactical difficulties doubtlessly due to their long history of transmission. While the former aspect is a problem for the modern scholar, but not for an Ancient Egyptian one, the latter would also have affected anybody in Antiquity dealing with the text. Therefore, it would be very understandable why one would try to avoid commenting on it.

The later chapters are also heavily religious-mythological in their outlook. The purely astronomical content is decidedly less prominent and sometimes rather well hidden. The Nut Picture and Decan Chapter to the contrary are much more prominently astronomical. The commentator grows particularly interested and verbose in connection with the date list of the Nut Picture which he does not show in its out-dated entirety but replaces it with a detailed explanation of the underlying principles demonstrated with a model calculation. In view of this, one might be inclined to think that he, not unlike Otto Neugebauer and Richard A. Parker in their study in *Egyptian Astronomical Texts I*,⁴⁴ was only interested in the more strictly astronomical aspects of the text. However, as he himself does supply several definitely religious pieces of information not present in the original text, such an assumption would miss the point.

For example, in §132 the fallen dead decans and their time of invisibility are explained.⁴⁵ The lemma says ‘The ‘evils’ become men’. The commentary elaborates on the funerary theme, stating: ‘The ‘evils’ become men; it is the same which comes into

being as days of evil for men; the 70 days which they spend in the embalming workshop. Beginning of their recitation. Their way of resting it is, which he described in the book ‘The Upper’, while thinking again of the speaking of the 42 words.’ The latter comment clearly evokes the Negative Confession of the *Book of the Dead*,⁴⁶ thus an important part of human funerary belief.

2.2 Quotes from Reference works

Just in relation to religious aspects, a very interesting feature of the commentary is the fact that named books and even sayings are cited as back-up for statements by the author of the commentary.⁴⁷ This is not unique to the commentary on the *Fundamentals of the Course of the Stars*, though. Quotes from other books can already be found in pEdwin Smith.

The commentary to the *Fundamentals* in pCarlsberg 1 cites nine different books by title, at least two of which figure also in the commentary of pCarlsberg 1a, which is unfortunately much less well preserved. Often, they are not just adduced as authority, but actually cited verbatim. One of these books tops all the others by far. The book *Explanation (bl)* is quoted nine times in pCarlsberg 1 and at least five times in pCarlsberg 1a. It must have been a veritable encyclopedia, as it is also cited in the commentary on the *Book of the Fayum* and in another unpublished hieratic-Demotic text, pCarlsberg 650.⁴⁸ The latter is also a commentary, probably to a ritual. The quotes there have nothing to do with astronomy, while those in the commentaries to the *Fundamentals* all concern astronomical facts. Interestingly, pCarlsberg 650, despite being only a small fragment, quotes in general from an amazing number of books.

Although the author has not yet looked for any joining fragments in Berlin, nor had the time to work through the considerable number of fragments from Florence, even the little bits in Copenhagen already contain quotes from five different book titles, three of which were as yet completely unknown (*čʒw nb*, *mtw n.ı̄ S3k3*, [*mtw(?)*] *n.ı̄ Mn-nfr*). The others are the *Explanation* (bl, quoted twice) and the book *The Upper* (*hr.t*), quoted five times in pCarlsberg 650 and once in pCarlsberg 1 and 1a respectively. One of the new titles, the *Compendium of the Lord* (*čʒw nb*) is even quoted twice in pCarlsberg 650. As a matter of fact, the latter text also does contain elements which could point in the direction of at least some links with religious astronomy. Then again, there are many other aspects, and in general, the contents are not yet fully clear.

The book *The Upper* might have been a treatise on the sky, but this is not entirely clear. The other texts cited by the commentary on the *Fundamentals* are a likely liturgical text for the seeing of the sun disk on the New Year's day (*m33 itn*), a book on the five epagomenal days (*hrw 5 hr.ı̄w rnp.t*), a protective ritual for the bedroom (*s3 hnk.t*), a likely divinatory work on the *Influence of Sothis* (*shn Spt.t*), a possible cosmographic text *Primeval Sky Vault* (*gb.t p3.t*), an unclear work by the possible name of *Incantation* (*št*) and another work, the title of which cannot securely be read, let alone made sense of (*s3.t(?)*). However, it is quoted with exactly the same title in yet another unpublished commentary fragment from Tebtynis.

Altogether, this strong tradition of commentaries quoting reference works reminds almost of modern scholarly books with their footnotes quoting other literature. While it is certainly not the same, it is still remarkable how these texts proceed.

As an example, one may quote §25, where in pCarlsberg 1 the lemma 'Thus the command that he distances himself from humans in the hour 'Who pacifies' comes about' is commented on as follows: 'It comes to pass that he commands his distancing from the humans within the Duat in the hour 'Who pacifies'. This is the ninth hour of the night. When he said so, then because the book *Primeval Sky Vault* said: 'The eighth door of the Duat, namely the humans being in it.' Variant: He commences to 'throw' his distancing from the humans, he rises completely. Compare the book *The Five Epagomenal Days* in the hour 'Who pacifies', the ninth hour of the night, the one in which he rises.

While unfortunately very little is preserved of Ancient Egyptian commentarial literature, the few extant examples can at least provide some impression of the strategies such texts used to explain their subject matter.

3. Discursive Texts

As stated above, true commentarial literature is definitely to be distinguished from general discursive texts. Yet, they are somehow similar in as much as both try to explain something and therefore reflect on a particular subject. While the former follow a line strictly dictated by a basic text, the latter could associate more freely, or at least so it seems.

The preserved and already published discursive texts,⁴⁹ namely the *Ritual for Entering the Chamber of Darkness*, as well as *Myth of the Sun's Eye*, are both difficult to understand, likely on purpose.

3.1 *The Ritual for Entering the Chamber of Darkness*

Both works include a text-internal communication situation. In the *Ritual for Entering the Chamber of Darkness*,⁵⁰ designed as a model

of an initiatory interview, it is a dialogue between several teacher figures and a pupil. The main teacher is labelled *hr=f n Hsr.t* *'Thus he spoke in Heseret'⁵¹ or as a variant *hr=f n hsi-rh* 'Thus spoke he as the one who praises knowledge', clearly the better version. Likely, the two designations are in principle identical and related by word-play. As a matter of fact, 'word-play' is one of the favorite hermeneutical tools of Egyptian scholars to establish relationships between entities. For example in creation accounts or similar mythological stories, it is often stated, that X happened and therefore Y came into being or something is called Y 'until the present day'.⁵² These aetiologies almost always function via word-play. One of the most famous such cases is certainly the origin of humans (*rmč.w*) from the tears (*rmy.t*) of the Sun god.

At any rate, it is clear that in this text it is not the god Thot himself talking to a human pupil (as thought by the original editors), but a human teacher talking to a human pupil in an entirely worldly situation (as Joachim Quack proposed in his reviews⁵³). Nevertheless, the questions posed and answered do touch on all sort of esoteric and religious matters. Yet, in one way or the other, the dialogue is centred on writing and the acquisition of knowledge related to written texts. As far as the state of preservation allows to check, it is most likely that this is an initiatory dialogue situated at the end of scribal training in the context of a temple scriptorium. Therefore, quite fittingly, there are some parts within the text which clearly seek to establish a link between writing and related intellectual activities on the one hand, and other culturally important activities as agriculture or hunting. A few quotes should illustrate this:

'When he said 'realm' (*ḥ.t*) as name of the field, he said this in view of the cows that plough'.⁵⁴ This is

a clear word-play with a designation *ḥ.t* for a certain type of cow, although one has to know the intended word, as it is not present in the actual text, which uses a different word for cow (*ih.t*). 'When he said 'bull' as name of the Nile flood, he said this in view of the bulls showing effort'. This is a theological explanation, as indeed the deified flood could be identified with a bull. The annual flooding of the fields by the Nile was vital for agriculture, as was of course ploughing. The next sentence 'When he said 'remainder' as name of the strong one, he said this in view of the threshing floor with fruit' contains a clear play with the hieroglyphic writing system. The word 'remainder' (*sp*) is written in hieroglyphs with a sign that shows a threshing floor with a few remaining grains on it () . There might even be another layer of meaning here, but it is unfortunately impossible to unravel it at the present.

Theological speculations are also at the basis in the following text where each of the 42 canonical nomes is explained in relation to a female vulture and her fledgling. The descriptions refer to local myths. As an example one can quote one of the entries in this section: 'A vulture, in whose hand is her young one, while it is disgorging what it has eaten—that is Assiut'.⁵⁵ This is not to be directly explained by any writing of the nome, although each nome had a standard also used as a hieroglyph to write its name. However, indirectly, there probably is a connection, as the standard of the nome of Assiut does only show a reclining jackal. While that would seem innocent enough, the disgorging of food is something that is said about Upuaut, one of the jackal-shaped chief deities of Assiut in the *Mythological Manual* pFlorence PSI inv. I 72 from Tebtynis.⁵⁶ 'Upuaut hid the Mutilated One (Osiris) in the cave in his temple. When Horus noticed it he made haste to open the way for his father Osiris. The gang of the Vile One

(Seth) quickly went to him because he had licked up the putrefaction of the Venerable Mummy (Osiris). Therefore, it is a jackal that is above his body, because he disgorges again what he gobbled up before. The venerable shape was reconstituted and the god's efflux was protected after he had mutilated the relic of his father. One says about him 'He is a greyhound (*čsm*): what he devoured, he spat out, but he turned to devour it again' and one says 'dog' (*iw̄w*), because he came (*iw̄=f*) to devour what he had spat out, because of what his master said when he barked at him for his recompensation. When his master understood what he had eaten, he disliked it very much, because he had devoured the efflux oozing from his body as well as his fingers, namely of the Weary-of-Heart (Osiris). Thereupon, he spat them out onto the ground. This is the giving up of what he had eaten again.'

This quote shows several important elements. One of them is that it relates the statement about the young vulture to a local *mythologumenon*, linked otherwise to a local deity. As this deity is a jackal or dog, it is actually connected with the nome standard, which shows such an animal, although the one on the standard is just lying there, not spitting out any food. While this is the immediate relevance for the *Ritual for Entering the Chamber of Darkness*, the *Mythological Manual* from Tebtynis also offers two other elements that are noteworthy in this context, namely in the use of wordplay to explain the origin of the designation dog (*iw̄w*) for a deity from the fact that he came (*iw̄=f*). Besides, while this story seems pretty weird and disgusting, this is nevertheless a true behavior of canines. Although it is not presented as aetiology for this behavior, this is probably also subintended. At any rate it shows how well the Egyptians observed nature, and that it is important to know such facts

to correctly understand and assess their religious texts and concepts.⁵⁷ This proves moreover, not that the Egyptians had a weird mythology, but to the contrary, that just because the natural facts seem weird, the Egyptians felt a need to sensibly explain how these facts came into existence. Of course, they did this by recurring to their general world-view, which is only reasonable.

3.2 *The Myth of the Sun's Eye*

While the *Ritual for Entering the Chamber of Darkness* is an initiatory dialogue between fully human interlocutors, the so-called *Myth of the Sun's Eye*⁵⁸ entirely takes place between two divine dialogue partners. It is thus a truly discursive text, with a mythological event just serving as background for the action.

The two speakers are animal shaped deities, perfectly normal for Ancient Egypt. The monkey, called 'little dog-ape' in the text, is a son of Thot, although some variants of the basic myth also have Thot himself as the involved god. The cat, called the 'Ethiopian cat' in the text, is nobody else than the mighty goddess Tefnut, the daughter of the creator and sun god Atum. According to the influential Heliopolitan cosmogony, in the beginning, Atum created the world by masturbation, thereby producing the first sexually differentiated divine couple, namely Shu and Tefnut. At some point, Tefnut grew angry with her father and went away to Punt, far away in the southeast. She had then to be pacified and brought back to Egypt. This situation is the one underlying the *Myth of the Sun's Eye*. The little dog-ape has been sent to induce the Ethiopian Cat to return to Egypt. To appease and mollify her, he talks to her about many subjects, which leads to a religio-philosophical debate between the two.

Occasionally, to illustrate a point made in more theoretical discourse before, fables are told.

As an example for the deep reflections in this text, which seem to contain sort of an auto-(?) commentary to the discourse of the deities, one may quote from a speech of the dog-ape and its explanation with which he wants to incite the goddess to long for her proper home, Egypt:

‘Moreover he said: ‘One does not build a palace for the honeybee. One does not build the stable from dung. More comfortable is the beehive from dung than the beehive from stone’. His explanation: One does not build a house from stone for the bee, as her work in it is useless, as it is not the house in which she has been born. When he says ‘One does not build the stable from dung’, then because the stable where the cat bears is not built from dung, which is manure. From stone it is built. This is the comparison of the house of the cat with the house of the bee, which he did, because honeycomb is what is said to a piece of honeycomb. When he said ‘More comfortable is the beehive from dung than the beehive from stone’, it means ‘More comfortable is the beehive from dung, which is manure, with its honeycombs, much more than the beehive from stone’ which he mentioned. This is milk which is food for the mouth until it produces teeth. When he said ‘much more’, then because everything that is food for the bee, so that she drinks and eats it, she spits it out again opposite of this and it will be pure. This is an explanation which he made for the goddess, meaning ‘Is there any reservation against the bee who makes her honeycomb in the beehive, while it smells after the manure of the cow, from whom she emanated, who is Neith?’ This is the comparison of the bee with the cat, which he did, because honey-bee is her very own name. When she is awakened in the morning by the beekeeper, then

they call her by a reed, because a reed was what Neith grabbed in the beginning. When one wants to write honey (*bi.t*) in hieroglyphs, one is to write the figure of Neith in whose hand is a reed, because it is her who purifies the shrines of the gods of Upper and Lower Egypt, which are newly founded. The gods will not repose in their apartments if they have not been made clean. Moreover: ‘Tomcat’ is what he should be called. When he has a cat face, so because this is the form that remained to the primeval god Re, that is his form as a tomcat. The cat is also the eye, which again is the uraios. Moreover again, he says ‘king of Lower Egypt’ (*biti*) as name of the honeybee and says it also as name of the cat, which is again the uraios. ‘At the front of the house of the king of Lower Egypt’ (*hnti hw.t-biti*) is what is said to the chapel of Neith, which is again the name of the things he mentioned above. These are the explanations which he made for the goddess.’⁵⁹

The phrase ‘When he says x, then because y’ is typical for commentarial literature. However, in contrast to real commentaries, which are secondary to a basic text, which can stand for itself and is often attested within the stream of tradition without the commentary, the discursive text can offer some sort of auto-commentary, although it does not need to be phrased this way. As already stated, another difference often to be found is that real commentaries can be linked to translations from an older into a younger phase of the language.⁶⁰ Thus, a good deal of the commentary is actually explaining the phraseology and certain words. The latter can be found in discursive texts as well in the form of glosses, which is visible here in view of the words ‘dung’ or ‘manure’ but it is not the main part of the reasoning. Also, a feature found in some of the better preserved scholarly commentaries are

quotes from other titled books. In discursive texts, to the contrary, there do not seem to be such quotes.

In fact, especially some of the scholarly commentaries, namely the one to the *Fundamentals of the Course of the Stars*, explain disappointingly little in the eye of a modern reader, although that may just be a modern impression.

In contrast, the discursive parts of a text like the *Myth of the Sun's Eye* do offer a lot of deep reflection, where even the purported explanatory part itself is to some degrees esoteric and requires good knowledge of theological presuppositions.

The quoted part not only targets the idea that one can only live well, productive and happily in one's correct surroundings, that is basically in the place where one was born. Moving abroad—like Tefnut, the Ethiopian Cat actually did—is therefore strongly discouraged. This was a fundamental conviction of the Ancient Egyptians and the goddess understands this well. For this reason, she is very sad in the next chapter of the text, starting to feel bad about her mistake. Beyond this simple fact, however, there is hidden much more. There is a description of actual natural and cultural facts again, but there is also a theological layer, equating the cow with the goddess Neith, who indeed is said to have been in the shape of a black cow at the beginning of time.⁶¹ Neith is according to the cosmogony of Sais and subsequently Esna the mother of the sun god Re, who himself is basically identical with the Heliopolitan Atum. Of course, Atum is the solar creator without mother, while Neith is the creatrix who is the mother of the Sun. To a modern logic, this is incompatible, to the Egyptian multiplicity of approaches, this seemingly was not a problem. Historically, of course, these are just different ideas that originated in different places. How exactly the Egyptians wrapped their

minds around these seeming opposites once they syncretized all local traditions from different periods with each other, scholarship today cannot easily understand. Apparently they did, perhaps by not clinging to a literal interpretation of it all, but rather an allegorizing interpretation of the different constellations (the latter consciously taking up a term coined by Jan Assmann, although modifying its content a bit). This implies that they were actually fully aware of the ineffability of the divine. To speak about all the mythology of who is father or son to whom, or the different animals mentioned, are just metaphors for something higher. A sentence like 'The cat is also the eye, which again is the uraios' makes perfect sense in such a vein. Yet, they were not above going into the details of speaking about smelly manure.

Actions like the beekeeper's behavior and implements are allegorized. Finally, there are also passages again making use of wordplay and esoteric interpretations of hieroglyphic writing. The words *bī.t* 'bee', *bī.t* 'honey', *bī.t* 'Red Crown of Lower Egypt', *bī.t* 'Crown Goddess of Lower Egypt', *bī.tī* 'beekeeper' and *bī.tī* 'King of Lower Egypt' are all related at least phonetically, if not indeed etymologically. It is therefore clear why a figure of Neith with her typical iconographic marker, the Red Crown of Lower Egypt, can be used to write the word 'honey'. The reed for purification is not what gives the sound value, yet it supplies another element with the purity. Honey is of course used very much in medicine and does indeed have a disinfecting quality, which is probably implied here.

The Crown Goddess of Lower Egypt, moreover, is a cobra, in other words an uraios.

3.3 Speculations on Egyptian Hieroglyphs before Horapollo

The text here is not the only Egyptian text using such speculations about the reasons why something should be written with this or that sign, usually supplying a writing that can be and is used, yet is not always the normal orthography. The Demotic text of the *Myth of the Sun's Eye* itself contains further examples, and so do some hieroglyphic temple inscriptions⁶² as well as pJumilhac, an illustrated hieroglyphic papyrus containing a Nome Monograph of the seventeenth and eighteenth Upper Egyptian nomes.⁶³

Such texts are rather well attested, the actual use of such writing principles without further explicit reflection is even much more widespread. Of course, this sort of approach to hieroglyphic writing is known quite well from Greek authors, first and foremost among them Horapollo. However, contrary to the long held scholarly assumption that this way of dealing with hieroglyphs would betray an utter lack of understanding by the authors of such allegorizing treatises, it turns out that this is indeed the genuine view of Egyptian priestly scholars themselves.⁶⁴ In some cases, these explanations try to supply further sense by investing a certain writing with extra meanings, in other cases they try to make sense of a writing that is not immediately logical to understand. In this capacity, little discursive islands can even enter into texts that are not discursive in their entirety, like the already mentioned pJumilhac. In this text, two writings are commented on. In one case, 6, 6-7, the name *'Inpw* Anubis is explained: 'As for Anubis, it is said as name for Horus when he was a child – it was said in view of the wind, the water and the mountain. Concerning the , this is the wind, concerning the , this is the water,

concerning the , this is the mountain'. Anubis is one of the dominant local gods in the seventeenth/eighteenth Upper Egyptian nome. At the same time the word means Crown Prince, thus it is a plausible designation for Horus, the royal god *per se* in a youthful form. His name written with three monoconsonantal signs in this explanation moreover becomes an embodiment of the whole earth. This is graphically plausible, although the Iota in front is actually a reed-leaf, not a feather as the explanation might suggest. The *n* is indeed a curling line of water, but the *p* is again in reality a sort of seat or parcel-like object. Still, it does look very similar to the stone hieroglyph if one dispenses with the lines normally filling it and this is precisely what the explanation here does. This is therefore a clear case of enriching a word or orthography, or both with extra meaning.

In another case, 16, 19-20, to the contrary, a hieroglyph that is not immediately sensible is explained. In the text, the gods Thot and Baba have a dispute which is escalating. Thot, whose magical abilities are immense, manages to embarrass Baba bitterly in a sexual situation, when he inhibits him from getting out again of a female partner, which by the way in itself is an aetiology for a natural fact, namely the sexual 'hanging' of dogs.⁶⁵ Baba is very angry and tries to take revenge with his axe. Thot, however, just recites another magic spell and Baba instead of hurting Thot hacks himself into the head with his axe. The text then states 'The gods said 'He is fighting with himself'. Thus, his designation as 'enemy' came into being until the present day.'

This is a clever explanation for the hieroglyph *hft.i* 'enemy', which in the later periods does show a squatting man hacking himself an axe into the head () . Now, indeed it is not very plausible why an

enemy should be somebody hurting himself. In fact, the original form of the sign known in Egyptology as the ‘Dying Warrior’ is indeed just that—a man who has been mortally wounded and who is falling to the ground, catching a stream of blood squirting from his wound into his hands (𓂏𓂐). Unfortunately, it is not clear what was first—a misunderstanding of the sign form, which then had to be explained via a myth or to the contrary, a myth capitalizing on the vaguely similar contours of an axe to a bloodstream, which then secondarily led to a change of the sign form. As this myth is only preserved in this one papyrus of the fourth century BCE, while the second sign form is attested already earlier, one might be inclined to think the former, but one cannot be sure, not the least, because pJumilhac is a compilation of older material of different date.

In the end, this is not so relevant anyway. What is relevant, though, is the fact that over the centuries or rather millennia, there are quite a number of texts attesting to different strategies of discursive thinking from Ancient Egypt.

Notes

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1 For examples, see the quotes below.

2 For a good discussion of both genres and their relationship to each other see U. Rößler-Köhler, ‘Text oder Kommentar. Zur Frage von Textkommentaren im vorgriechischen Ägypten’, in J. Assmann, B. Gladigow (eds.), *Text und Kommentar; Archäologie der literarischen Kommunikation IV* (Munich 1995), 111–139.

3 A. von Lieven, *Grundriß des Laufes der Sterne. Das sogenannte Nutbuch, The Carlsberg Papyri 8, CNIP 31* (Copenhagen, 2007), particularly 263–167.

4 For the question of historic-linguistic dating of texts see von Lieven, *Grundriß des Laufes der*

Sterne, 223–250; A. von Lieven, ‘Why Should We Date Texts by Historic Linguistic Dating?’, in G. Moers, K. Widmaier, A. Giewekemeyer, A. Lümers and R. Ernst (eds.), *Dating Egyptian Literary Texts, Göttingen, 9–12 June 2010*, vol. 1, *Lingua Aegyptia – Studia Monographica 11* (Hamburg, 2013), 161–176.

5 For short preliminary reports by the prospective editor see J.F. Quack, ‘Vom Dekret des Neferkasokar zum Dialog des Imhotep. Ägyptische Textquellen zum idealen Tempel’, *Sokar 27* (2013), 80; J.F. Quack, ‘Imhotep – der Weise, der zum Gott wurde’, in V. Lepper (ed.), *Persönlichkeiten aus dem Alten Ägypten im Neuen Museum* (Petersberg, 2014), 54–57.

6 Edition: W. Spiegelberg, *Die sogenannte demotische Chronik des Pap. 215 der Bibliothèque Nationale zu Paris Nebst den auf der Rückseite des Papyrus stehenden Texten, DemStud 7* (Leipzig, 1914). An extensive treatment of the commentarial/discursive aspect of the text is given by J.F. Quack, ‘Menetekel an der Wand? Zur Deutung der demotischen Chronik’, in M. Witte and J.F. Diel (eds.), *Orakel und Gebete. Interdisziplinäre Studien zur Sprache der Religion in Ägypten, Vorderasien und Griechenland in hellenistischer Zeit*, FAT 2. Reihe, (Tübingen, 2009), 23–51; for complete translations of the whole text see J.F. Quack, ‘The Demotic Chronicle’, in K.L. Younger (ed.), *The Context of Scripture*, volume 4. *Supplements* (Leiden/Boston 2017), 27–32; F. Hoffmann, J.F. Quack, *Anthologie der demotischen Literatur. Zweite, neubearbeitete und erheblich erweiterte Auflage, Einführungen und Quellentexte zur Ägyptologie 4* (Berlin, 2018), 244–251.

7 E. Hornung, *Das Totenbuch der Ägypter* (Zurich/Munich, 1979), 424.

8 U. Rößler-Köhler, *Kapitel 17 des altägyptischen Totenbuches*, GOF IV, 10 (Wiesbaden, 1979), 325–340; Rößler-Köhler, in Assmann and Gladigow, *Text und Kommentar*, 124.

9 J. Assmann, ‘Altägyptische Kultkommentare’, in J. Assmann and B. Gladigow (eds.), *Text und Kommentar; Archäologie der literarischen Kommunikation IV* (Munich, 1995), 93–109; J. Assmann, ‘Rezeption und Auslegung in Ägypten. Das «Denkmal memphitischer Theologie» als

- Auslegung der heliopolitanischen Kosmogonie', in R.G. Kratz and Th. Krüger (eds.), *Rezeption und Auslegung im Alten Testament und in seinem Umfeld*, *OBO* 153 (Fribourg (Sw)/Göttingen, 1997), 125–139.
- 10 J.H. Breasted, *The Edwin Smith Surgical Papyrus*, *OIP* 3 (Chicago, 1930), XV.
- 11 For an overview of Egyptian medicine see W. Westendorf, *Handbuch der altägyptischen Medizin*, *HdO* I 36 (Leiden/Boston/Cologne, 1999). It was once intended to be complete, but after only two decades of new research it could already be much supplemented. However, this only demonstrates the enormous importance of medicine in Ancient Egyptian culture.
- 12 Edfou V, 134, 8–9; A. Egberts, *In Quest of Meaning. A Study of the Ancient Egyptian Rites of Consecrating the Meret-Chests and Driving the Calves*, *EgUit* VIII (Leiden, 1995), 1, note 2.
- 13 After K. Sethe, *Dramatische Texte zu altaegyptischen Mysterienspielen* (Leipzig, 1928). That such texts are not at all “dramatic”, but rather commentaries exhibiting a very special layout was first demonstrated in von Lieven, *Grundriß des Laufes der Sterne*, 274–280.
- 14 Sethe, *Dramatische Texte zu altaegyptischen Mysterienspielen*, 81–258, Taf. 1–22; C. Geisen, *A commemoration ritual for Senwosret I: P. BM EA 10610.1–5/P. Ramesseum B (Ramesseum Dramatic Papyrus)*, *YES* 11 (Yale, 2018). Although the latter author does have von Lieven, *Grundriß des Laufes der Sterne* in her bibliography, she does not cite it in her comments on the supposed “dramatic aspect(s) of the ritual”, treated in detail on pages 53–59.
- 15 P. Meyrat, *Les Papyrus Magiques Du Ramesseum. Recherches Sur Une Bibliotheque Privée de la Fin Du Moyen Empire*, *BdÉ* 172 (Cairo, 2019).
- 16 J.F. Quack, ‘Fragmente eines Kommentars zum Mundöffnungsritual (Papyrus Berlin P 23070)’, in N. Bosson/A. Boud’hors/S.H. Aufrère (eds.), *Labor omnia uicit improbus. Miscellanea in honorem Ariel Shisha-Halevy*, *OLA* 256 (Leuven, 2017), 431–442.
- 17 E. Otto, *Das ägyptische Mundöffnungsritual*, *ÄA* 3 (Wiesbaden, 1960). A complete new edition of this ritual is under way in a project led by J. Quack in Heidelberg.
- 18 Edfou V, 134, 303–33; M. Alliot, ‘Le culte d’Horus à Edfou’, *BdÉ* 20, 2 (1954), 525.
- 19 P. Vernus, ‘Un témoignage culturel du conflit avec les Éthiopiens’, *GM* 29 (1978), 145–148
- 20 D. Kurth, *Treffpunkt der Götter. Inschriften aus dem Tempel des Horus von Edfu* (Zurich/Munich, 1994), 196–217 (text 29).
- 21 Ph. Derchain, ‘L’atelier des orfèvres à Dendara et les origines de l’alchimie’, *CdÉ* 65 (1990), 219–242.
- 22 Originally a ritual for the production of statuary and only secondarily expanded to include other uses like the one for mummies, nowadays much better known because of the large number of funerary attestations preserved. However, the original character of the ritual has been convincingly demonstrated by H.W. Fischer-Elfert, *Die Vision von der Statue im Stein, Schriften der Philosophisch-historischen Klasse der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften* 5 (Heidelberg, 1998).
- 23 Derchain, *CdÉ* 65, 233–235.
- 24 To be edited by J.F. Quack, see his preliminary reports J.F. Quack, ‘Ein ägyptisches Handbuch des Tempels und seine griechische Übersetzung’, *ZPE* 119 (1997), 297–300 and J.F. Quack, ‘Das Buch vom Tempel und verwandte Texte. Ein Vorbericht’, *ARG* 2 (2000), 1–20.
- 25 Derchain, *CdÉ* 65, 235–236.
- 26 For an example see F. Hoffmann, ‘Zum Körperkonzept in Ägypten (P. Berlin P. 10472 A + 14400)’, in A. Berlejung/J. Dietrich/J.F. Quack (eds.), *Menschenbilder und Körperkonzepte im Alten Israel, in Ägypten und im Alten Orient*, *ORA* 9 (Tübingen, 2012), 481–500.
- 27 See for examples von Lieven, *Grundriß des Laufes der Sterne*, 284–290.
- 28 The author has treated this phenomenon extensively in von Lieven, *Grundriß des Laufes der Sterne*, 258–262.

- 29 J.F. Quack, ‘Translating the realities of cult: The case of the Book of the Temple’, in I. Rutherford (ed.), *Greco-Egyptian Interactions. Literature, Translation, and Culture, 500 BCE–300 CE* (New York, 2016), 267–286, A. von Lieven, ‘Some Observations on Multilingualism in Graeco-Roman Egypt’, in J. Braarvig/M.J. Geller (eds.), *Studies in Multilingualism, Lingua Franca and Lingua Sacra, Max Planck Research Library for the History and Development of Knowledge/Edition Open Access. Studies 10* (Berlin, 2018), 339–354, also online under <http://edition-open-access.de/studies/10/index.html>.
- 30 H. Beinlich, *Der Mythos in seiner Landschaft. Das ägyptische “Buch vom Fayum”*. SRAT 11 (Dettelbach, 2013–2017). The demotic translation and commentary are in volume 3.
- 31 Von Lieven, *Grundriß des Laufes der Sterne*.
- 32 Von Lieven, *Grundriß des Laufes der Sterne*, 39.
- 33 Compare the important study by Christophe Thiers, ‘Le ciel septentrional *ghr.t* et le ciel méridional *gb.t*’, *ENiM* 2 (2009), 53–58.
- 34 Von Lieven, *Grundriß des Laufes der Sterne*, 285–286.
- 35 Von Lieven, *Grundriß des Laufes der Sterne*, 63–68 (§44–44c).
- 36 J.F. Quack, ‘Mit grüner Tinte rot schreiben?’, *GM* 165 (1998), 7–8.
- 37 This also proves that the critique by A. Wüthrich, *Édition synoptique et traduction des chapitres supplémentaires du Livre des Morts 162 à 167*, *SAT* 19 (Wiesbaden, 2015), 118–119 and similarly M. Stadler in his review of Wüthrich in *OLZ* 114 (2019), 113 is not cogent. Both adduce *Book of the Dead Spell 164* as an argument against Quack’s proposal. However, one might even think that writing in red ink on a red support might have further empowered said spell. A real readership by living humans cannot have been intended anyway for this spell within a mummy, thus significantly diminishing the validity of their argument against readability.
- 38 The demotic numerals are well visible on the photographs in Beinlich, *Der Mythos in seiner Landschaft*, Taf. 4–12.
- 39 S.L. Lippert, ‘Das Fayyûm als Abbild Ägyptens. Zu den topographischen Abschnitten des Buches vom Fayyûm’, in C. Arlt and M. Stadler (eds.), *Das Fayyûm in Hellenismus und Kaiserzeit. Fallstudien zu multikulturellem Leben in der Antike* (Wiesbaden, 2013), 95–118.
- 40 J. F. Pécoil, ‘Les sources mythiques du Nil et le cycle de la crue’, *BSÉG* 17 (1993), 97–110; J. Assmann, ‘Das Leichensekret des Osiris. Zur kultischen Bedeutung des Wassers im alten Ägypten’, in N. Grimal, A. Kamel and C. May-Sheikholeslami (eds.), *Hommages à Fayza Haikal, BdÉ* 138 (Caire, 2003), 5–16.
- 41 For these names, compare the lists in the Tebtynis onomastica, see J. Osing, *The Carlsberg Papyri 2, Hieratische Papyri aus Tebtunis I, CNIP* 17 (Copenhagen, 1998), 198–201, 263, Taf. 17.
- 42 H.G. Fischer, ‘L’orientation des textes’, in S. Sauneron (ed.), *Textes et langages de l’Égypte pharaonique. Cent cinquante années de recherches 1822 – 1972. Hommage à Jean-François Champollion* 1 (Cairo, 1973), 21–23; R. S. Simpson, ‘Retrograde Writing in Ancient Egyptian Inscriptions’, in R. Jasnow and Gh. Widmer (eds.), *Illuminating Osiris. Egyptological Studies in Honor of Mark Smith* (Atlanta, 2017), 337–345.
- 43 Von Lieven, *Grundriß des Laufes der Sterne*, 18, 38–39 (PC 497).
- 44 O. Neugebauer and R.A. Parker, *Egyptian Astronomical Texts I, The Early Decans* (London, 1960).
- 45 Von Lieven, *Grundriß des Laufes der Sterne*, 92, 172–173.
- 46 G. Lapp, *Totenbuch Spruch 125. Synoptische Textausgabe nach Quellen des Neuen Reiches, Tbt3* (Basel, 2008), 64–149.
- 47 Von Lieven, *Grundriß des Laufes der Sterne*, 284–290.
- 48 Publication by the current author is in preparation.

- 49 There are a few more fragmentary texts preserved, see specifically J.F. Quack, 'Fragmente eines theologischen Traktats', in J.F. Quack/K. Ryholt, *The Carlsberg Papyri II. Demotic Literary Texts from Tebtunis and Beyond*, Copenhagen 2019, 1–35.
- 50 R. Jasnow/K.-Th. Zauzich, *The Ancient Egyptian Book of Thoth. A Demotic Discourse on Knowledge and Pendant to the Classical Hermetica* (Wiesbaden, 2005); R. Jasnow and K.-Th. Zauzich, *Conversations in the House of Life. A New Translation of the Ancient Egyptian Book of Thoth* (Wiesbaden, 2014); J.F. Quack, 'Die Initiation zum Schreiberberuf im Alten Ägypten', *SAK* 36 (2007), 249–295; J.F. Quack, 'Ein ägyptischer Dialog über die Schreibkunst und das arkane Wissen', *ARG* 9 (2007), 259–294; J.F. Quack, 'Review of Jasnow/Zauzich, *Conversations in the House of Life*', *Enchoria* 35 (2016/17), 215–230.
- 51 As Heseret is a cult center of Thot, this gave the original editors the idea that the teacher would be Thot himself.
- 52 For similar cases, where the simple sound of a word develops creative power, see A. von Lieven, 'Sounds of Power. The Concept of Sound in Ancient Egyptian Religion', in P. Reichling and M. Strothmann (eds.), *Religion für die Sinne – Religion for the Senses, Artificium* 58 (Oberhausen, 2016), 25–35.
- 53 Most clearly in Quack, 'Review of Jasnow/Zauzich, *Conversations in the House of Life*', *Enchoria* 35 (2016/17), 228.
- 54 Here and subsequently following Quack, *ARG* 9, 265.
- 55 Quack, *ARG* 9, 286.
- 56 J. Osing and G. Rosati, *Papiri geroglifici e ieratici da Tebtynis*, (Florence, 1998), 129–188, tav. 17–21 (whole papyrus), this particular section 143–150.
- 57 For a similar case, where a seemingly bizarre myth can be perfectly explained by the knowledge of biological facts, see C. Leitz, 'Die Auseinandersetzungen zwischen Thoth und Baba', in (no editor named), *Quaerentes Scientiam, Festgabe für Wolfhart Westendorf* (Göttingen, 1994), 103–117.
- 58 F. de Cenival, *Le mythe de l'oeil du soleil. Translittération et traduction avec commentaire philologique*, DemStud 9 (Sommerhausen, 1988); F. de Cenival, 'Les titres des couplets du Mythe', *CRIPEL* 11 (1989), 141–146; L. Prada, 'For a New Edition of P.Lond.Lit. 192: Current Research on the Greek Version of the Myth of the Sun's Eye', in P. Schubert (ed.), *Actes du 26e Congrès international de papyrologie, Genève, 16–21 août 2010, Recherches et Recontres* 30 (Geneva, 2012), 627–634.
- 59 De Cenival, *Le mythe de l'oeil du soleil*, 18–21.
- 60 Von Lieven, *Grundriß des Laufes der Sterne*, 258–267, A. von Lieven, 'Translating the Fundamentals of the Course of the Stars', in A. Imhausen and T. Pommerening (eds.), *Writings of Early Scholars in the Ancient Near East, Egypt, Rome, and Greece, Beiträge zur Altertumskunde* 286 (Berlin, 2010), 139–150.
- 61 As attested in Esna 206, S. Sauneron, *Le temple d'Esna III* (Cairo, 1968), 28–34; S. Sauneron, *Le temple d'Esna V* (Cairo, 1968), 253–276.
- 62 Edfou V, 356, 6–7; see J.F. Quack, 'Les traités systématiques des Égyptiens sur les sens de leurs signes écrits', (to be published Open Access in the framework of a colloquium on Horapollo organized by J.-L. Fournet), also mentioned in J.F. Quack, 'Ein alphabetisch sortiertes Handbuch der Hieroglyphenzeichen', in K. Ryholt (ed.), *Hieratic Texts from Tebtunis including a Survey of Illustrated Papyri, The Carlsberg Papyri* 15, CNIP 45 (Copenhagen, 2020), 77–106, Taf. 16–19.
- 63 J. Vandier, *Le papyrus Jumilhac* (Paris, 1961).
- 64 The author treated the whole problem in A. von Lieven, 'Wie töricht war Horapollo? Die Ausdeutung von Schriftzeichen im Alten Ägypten', in C. Leitz, D. von Recklinghausen and H. Knuf (eds.), *Honi soit qui mal y pense. Studien zum pharaonischen, griechisch-römischen und spätantiken Ägypten zu Ehren von Heinz-Josef Thissen, OLA* 194 (Leuven, 2010), 567–574.
- 65 Leitz, in *Quaerentes Scientiam*, 103–117.