

A Journey through the Beyond

The Development of the Concept of Duat and Related Cosmological Notions in Egyptian Funerary Literature

Silvia Zago

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By
Silvia Zago



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Lo duca e io per quel cammino ascoso
intrammo a ritornar nel chiaro mondo;
e sanza cura aver d'alcun riposo,
salimmo sù, el primo e io secondo,
tanto ch'i' vidi de le cose belle
che porta 'l ciel, per un pertugio tondo.
E quindi uscimmo a riveder le stelle.

Dante, *Divine Comedy*, *Inferno*, Canto 34.133–139

"The beauty of the universe consists not only of unity in variety,
but also of variety in unity."

Umberto Eco, *The Name of the Rose*, First Day, Prime

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Chronology

The following chronological table is based on Ian Shaw, ed., *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*, new ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), which will be implied henceforth whenever dates are provided, unless otherwise noted. Details of regnal years are provided only when they are relevant for the present study, starting with the Fifth Dynasty, when the Pyramid Texts appeared, and ending with the demise of the New Kingdom. Dates are omitted whenever a great deal of uncertainty is involved, as is the case for the (mostly) ephemeral kings of the so-called Intermediate periods, for instance.

PREDYNASTIC PERIOD	5300–3000 BCE
EARLY DYNASTIC PERIOD	ca. 3000–2686 BCE
First Dynasty	ca. 3000–2890 BCE
Second Dynasty	ca. 2890–2686 BCE
OLD KINGDOM	2686–2160 BCE
Third Dynasty	2686–2613 BCE
Fourth Dynasty	2613–2494 BCE
Fifth Dynasty	2494–2345 BCE
Userkaf	2494–2487
Sahure	2487–2475
Neferirkare	2475–2455
Shepseskare	2455–2448
Reneferef	2448–2445
Niuserre	2445–2421
Menkauhor	2421–2414
Djedkare	2414–2375
Wenis	2375–2345
Sixth Dynasty	2345–2181 BCE
Teti	2345–2323
Userkare	2323–2321
Pepi I	2321–2287
Merenre	2287–2278
Pepi II	2278–2184
Nitiqret	2184–2181
Seventh and Eighth Dynasties	2181–2160 BCE

First Intermediate period	2160–2055 BCE
Ninth and Tenth Dynasties (Herakleopolis)	2160–2025 BCE
Eleventh Dynasty (Thebes)	2125–2055 BCE
MIDDLE KINGDOM	2055–1650 BCE
Eleventh Dynasty (all Egypt)	2055–1985 BCE
Mentuhotep II	2055–2004
Mentuhotep III	2004–1992
Mentuhotep IV	1992–1985
Twelfth Dynasty	1985–1773 BCE
Amenemhat I	1985–1956
Senwosret I	1956–1911
Amenemhat II	1911–1877
Senwosret II	1877–1870
Senwosret III	1870–1831
Amenemhat III	1831–1786
Amenhemhat IV	1786–1777
Sobekneferu	1777–1773
Thirteenth Dynasty	1773–after 1650 BCE
Fourteenth Dynasty	1773–1650 BCE
Second Intermediate period	1650–1550 BCE
Fifteenth Dynasty (Hyksos)	1650–1550 BCE
Sixteenth Dynasty	1650–1580 BCE
Seventeenth Dynasty	ca. 1580–1550 BCE
NEW KINGDOM	1550–1069 BCE
Eighteenth Dynasty	1550–1295 BCE
Ahmose	1550–1525
Amenhotep I	1525–1504
Thutmose I	1504–1492
Thutmose II	1492–1479
Thutmose III	1479–1425
Hatshepsut	1473–1458
Amenhotep II	1427–1400
Thutmose IV	1400–1390
Amenhotep III	1390–1352
Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten	1352–1336
Neferneferuaten	1338–1336
Tutankhamun	1336–1327
Ay	1327–1323
Horemheb	1323–1295

Nineteenth Dynasty	1295–1186 BCE
Ramesses I	1295–1294
Seti I	1294–1279
Ramesses II	1279–1213
Merneptah	1213–1203
Amenmesse	1203–1200 (?)
Seti II	1200–1194
Siptah	1194–1188
Tawosret	1188–1186
Twentieth Dynasty	1186–1069 BCE
Sethnakht	1186–1184
Ramesses III	1184–1153
Ramesses IV	1153–1147
Ramesses V	1147–1143
Ramesses VI	1143–1136
Ramesses VII	1136–1129
Ramesses VIII	1129–1126
Ramesses IX	1126–1108
Ramesses X	1108–1099
Ramesses XI	1099–1069
Third Intermediate period	1069–664 BCE
Twenty-First Dynasty	1069–945 BCE
Twenty-Second Dynasty	945–715 BCE
Twenty-Third Dynasty	818–715 BCE
Twenty-Fourth Dynasty	727–715 BCE
Twenty-Fifth Dynasty	747–656 BCE
Late period	664–332 BCE
Twenty-Sixth Dynasty	664–525 BCE
Twenty-Seventh Dynasty (First Persian period)	525–404 BCE
Twenty-Eighth Dynasty	404–399 BCE
Twenty-Ninth Dynasty	399–380 BCE
Thirtieth Dynasty	380–343 BCE
Second Persian period	343–332 BCE
Ptolemaic period	332–30 BCE
Macedonian Dynasty	332–305 BCE
Ptolemaic Dynasty	305–30 BCE
Roman period	30 BCE–395 CE
Byzantine period	395–641 CE

Abbreviations

ADAIK	Abhandlungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo
AEL	Lichtheim, Miriam. *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*. 3 vols. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973–1980.
ÄAT	Ägypten und Altes Testament: Studien zur Geschichte, Kultur und Religion Ägyptens und des Alten Testaments
ÄgAbh	Ägyptologische Abhandlungen
ÄF	Ägyptologische Forschungen
AegHelv	Aegyptiaca Helvetica
AegLeod	Aegyptiaca Leodiensia
AOAT	Alter Orient and Altes Testament
ÄOPH	Ägyptische und Orientalische Papyri und Handschriften des Ägyptischen Museums und Papyrussammlung Berlin
AHAW	Abhandlungen der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, Phil.-Hist. Klasse
AoF	*Altorientalische Forschungen*
AnSt	*Anatolian Studies: Journal of the British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara*
AnOr	Analecta Orientalia
AOB	Acta Orientalia Belgica
APAW	Abhandlungen der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Phil-Hist. Klasse
Archéo-Nil	*Archéo-Nil: Bulletin de la Société pour l'Étude des Cultures Pré Pharaoniques de la Vallée du Nil*
ArchVer	Archäologische Veröffentlichungen, Deutschen Archäologisches Institut, Abteilung Kairo
ArOr	*Archiv Orientální: Quarterly Journal of African and Asian Studies*
ASAE	*Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte*
ASAW	Abhandlungen der Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig, Phil.-Hist. Klasse
BA	Bibliotheca Aegyptia
BACE	*Bulletin of the Australian Centre for Egyptology*
BÄBA	Beiträge zur ägyptischen Bauforschung und Altertumskunde
BARIS	British Archaeological Reports International Series
BES	*Bulletin of the Egyptological Seminar*
BEStud	Brown Egyptological Studies
BiAeg	Bibliotheca Aegyptiaca
BiEtud	Bibliothèque d'Étude
BIFAO	*Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale*
BiMes	Bibliotheca Mesopotamica
BiOr	*Bibliotheca Orientalis*
BMPES	British Museum Publications on Egypt and Sudan
BMSAES	*British Museum Studies in Ancient Egypt and Sudan*
BollSer	Bollingen Series
Boreas	Boreas: Uppsala Studies in Ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern Civilisations
BSAK	Beihefte Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur
BSEG	*Bulletin de la Société d'égyptologie de Genève*

BSFE	*Bulletin de la Société française d'Égyptologie*
CahOr	Cahiers d'Orientalisme
CAJ	*Cambridge Archaeological Journal*
CDD	Johnson, Janet, ed. *The Demotic Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*. Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2001–. https://oi.uchicago.edu/research/publications/demotic-dictionary-oriental-institute-university-chicago.
ch(s).	chapter(s)
CHANE	Culture and History of the Ancient Near East
ChronEg	*Chronique d'Égypte: Bulletin périodique de la Fondation Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth*
Civilisations	*Civilisations: Revue Internationale d'Anthropologie et de Sciences Humaines*
ClAnt	*Classical Antiquity*
CNIP	Carsten Niebuhr Institute of Ancient Near Eastern Studies Publications
CNMAL	Collection of the National Museum of Antiquities at Leiden
CRAIBL	*Comptes rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-lettres*
CSEG	Cahiers de la Société d'Égyptologie
CT	Buck, Adriaan de. *The Egyptian Coffin Texts*. 7 vols. OIP 34, 49, 64, 67, 73, 81, 87. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1935–1961.
DemGloss	Erichsen, Wolja. *Demotisches Glossar*. Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1954.
DiscEg	*Discussions in Egyptology*
DVSS	Det Kongelige Danske Videnskabernes Selskab, Historisk-filologiske Skrifter
EAT 1	Neugebauer, Otto, and Richard A. Parker. *The Early Decans*. Vol. 1 of *Egyptian Astronomical Texts*. BEStud 3. Providence: Brown University Press, 1960.
EAT 2	Neugebauer, Otto, and Richard A. Parker. *The Ramesside Star Clocks*. Vol. 2 of *Egyptian Astronomical Texts*. BEStud 5. Providence: Brown University Press, 1964.
EAT 3	Neugebauer, Otto, and Richard A. Parker. *Decans, Planets, Constellations and Zodiacs*. Vol. 3 of *Egyptian Astronomical Texts*. 2 vols. BEStud 6. Providence: Brown University Press, 1969.
EgArch	*Egyptian Archaeology: The Bulletin of the Egypt Exploration Society*
EgUit	Egyptologische Uitgaven
Enchoria	*Enchoria: Zeitschrift für Demotistik und Koptologie*
ENiM	*Égypte Nilotique et méditerranéenne*
EQTÄ	Einführungen und Quellentexte zur Ägyptologie
Eranos Jb	*Eranos Jahrbuch*
esp.	especially
ETCSL	Black, Jeremy A., Graham Cunningham, Jarle Ebeling, Esther Flückiger-Hawker, Eleanor Robson, Jon Taylor, and Gábor Zólyomi. *The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature*. Oxford: University of Oxford, Faculty of Oriental Studies, 1998–2006.
EtudTrav	*Études et Travaux: Travaux du Centre d'Archéologie Méditerranéenne d'Académie Polonaise des Sciences*
EVO	*Egitto e Vicino Oriente*
FIFAO	Fouilles de l'Institute français d'archéologie orientale du Caire.
GDG	Gauthier, Henri. *Dictionnaire des noms géographiques contenus dans les textes hiéroglyphiques*. 7 vols. Cairo: Société Royale de Géographie d'Égypte, 1925–1931.
GHP Egyptology	Golden House Publications, Egyptology
GM	*Göttinger Miszellen*
GOF	Göttinger Orientforschungen, Reihe Ägypten
HdO	Handbuch der Orientalistik I. Abt. Bd. I: Ägyptologie
HES	Harvard Egyptological Studies

HierPal	Möller, Georg. *Hieratische Paläographie: Die ägyptische Buchschrift in ihrer Entwicklung von der fünften Dynastie bis zur römischen Kaiserzeit*. 3 vols. Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1909–1912. 2nd. ed., 1927–1936.
JAEI	*Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections*
JANER	*Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JARCE	*Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt*
JCS	*Journal of Cuneiform Studies*
JEA	*Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*
JEOL	*Jaarbericht van het Vooraziatisch-egyptisch Genootschap Ex Oriente Lux*
JHA	*Journal for the History of Astronomy*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JSSEA	*Journal of the Society of the Study of Egyptian Antiquities*
KAW	Kulturgeschichte der Antiken Welt
LÄ	Helck, Wolfgang, Eberhard Otto, and Wolfhart Westendorf. *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*. 7 vols. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1975–1992.
LANE	Languages of the Ancient Near East
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LGG	Leitz, Christian, ed. *Lexikon der ägyptischen Götter und Götterbezeichnungen*. 8 vols. OLA 110–116, 129. Leuven: Peeters, 2002–2003.
LingAeg	*Lingua Aegyptia: Journal of Egyptian Language Studies*
LingAeg, StudMon	Lingua Aegyptia, Studia monographica
MÄS	Münchner Ägyptologische Studien
MÄU	Münchner Ägyptologische Untersuchungen
MC	Mesopotamian Civilizations
MCLB	Mémoires de la Classe des Lettres, Brussels
MDAIK	*Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo*
MEEF	Memoir of the Egypt Exploration Fund (later MEES)
MEES	Memoir of the Egypt Exploration Society
MIFAO	Mémoires publiés par les membres de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Cairo
MMAF	Mémoires publiés par les membres de la Mission Archéologique Française au Caire
MMJ	*Metropolitan Museum Journal*
MVÄG	Mitteilungen der Vorderasiatischen-ägyptischen Gesellschaft
MVCAE	Material and Visual Culture of Ancient Egypt
MVEOL	Mededelingen en Verhandelingen van het Vooraziatisch-Egyptisch Genootschap Ex Oriente Lux
NAWG	Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Phil.-hist. Klasse
NEA	*Near Eastern Archaeology*
Numen	*Numen: International Review for the History of Religions*
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OIMP	Oriental Institute Museum Publications
OINN	*Oriental Institute News and Notes*
OIP	Oriental Institute Publications
OIS	Oriental Institute Seminars
OLA	Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta
OLP	*Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica*
OMRO	Oudheidkundige Mededelingen vit het Rijksmuseum van Oudheden

Or	*Orientalia* NS
ORA	Orientalische Religionen in der Antike
OrMonsp	Orientalia Monspeliensia
PÄ	Probleme der Ägyptologie
PALMA	Papers on Archeology of the Leiden Museum of Antiquities
PIREI	Publications Interuniversitaires de Recherches Égyptologiques Informatisée
PM	Porter, Bertha, and Rosalind L. B. Moss. *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs, and Paintings*. 7 vols. Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1927–1995.
PMMA	Publications of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Department of Egyptian Art
PPYE	Publications of the Pennsylvania-Yale Expedition to Egypt
PT	Pyramid Text
RAIN	*Royal Anthropological Institute News*
RdE	*Revue d'Égyptologie*
RGRW	Religions in the Graeco-Roman World
RlA	*Reallexikon der Assyriologie*. Edited by Erich Ebeling et al. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1928–.
RSFen	*Rivista di Studi Fenici*
RSO	*Rivista degli Studi Orientali*
RVV	Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten
SOr	Sources Orientales
SAGA	Studien zur Archäologie und Geschichte Altägyptens
SAK	*Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur*
SAOC	Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization
SAT	Studien zum Altägyptischen Totenbuch
SAWH	Schriften der Philosophisch-Historischen Klasse der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften
SDAIK	Sonderschriften des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo
SHR	Studies in the History of Religions
SMSR	*Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni*
SSR	Studien zur Spätägyptischen Religion
StudAeg	Studia Aegyptiaca
StudPohl SM	Studia Pohl: Series Maior
Supp SAWH	Supplemente zu den Sitzungsberichten der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse
TMP	Theban Mapping Project. https://thebanmappingproject.com/.
TrabEg	*Trabajos de Egiptología—Papers on Ancient Egypt*
TUAT-NF	*Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments: Neue Folge*
UAVA	Untersuchungen zur Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie
UGAÄ	Untersuchungen zur Geschichte und Altertumskunde Ägyptens
ÜKPT	Sethe, Kurt. *Übersetzung und Kommentar zu den altägyptischen Pyramidentexten*. 6 vols. Glückstadt: Augustin, 1935–1962.
USE	Uppsala Studies in Egyptology
Urk.	Sethe, Kurt, et al., eds. *Urkunden des ägyptischen Altertums*. 8 vols. Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1903–1957.
UZK	Untersuchungen der Zweigstelle Kairo des Österreichischen Archäologischen Institutes
VarAeg	*Varia Aegyptiaca*
VicOr	*Vicino Oriente*
WAW	Writings from the Ancient World

Wb	Erman, Adolf, and Hermann Grapow. *Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache*. 7 vols. and 5 vols. *Belegstellen*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1926–1963.
WO	*Die Welt des Orients: Wissenschaftliche Beiträge zur Kunde des Morgenlandes*
YES	Yale Egyptological Studies
ZÄS	*Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde*
ZBA	Zaberns Bildbände zur Archäologie
ZDMG	*Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*

Chapter 1
Introduction

"Nothing can dwindle to nothing,
as Nature restores one thing from the stuff of another,
nor does she allow a birth, without a corresponding death."

Titus Lucretius Carus, *De Rerum Natura* 1.261–264

1.1. General Remarks

The Egyptians' attitude toward death and the afterlife is one of the most defining aspects of this ancient civilization and has fascinated the outside world for more than two millennia. The written sources point to the existence of varied conceptions of death itself, ranging from the image of death as a threatening enemy to that of a welcome homecoming.[1] One basic concept, however, remained unchanged: Death was not regarded as the end of human existence, but rather as a transition to a new state of being. Life could only exist, and be renewed, through death, as this belonged in the created world.[2] Indeed, life and death are so closely intertwined in the Egyptian view of the world that the two concepts often appear blurred, as one was the continuation of the other. It could be said that the ancient Egyptians' narrative of cyclical death and return to life was a humanized version of the *perpetuum mobile* of the sun.[3] Attaining a transfigured state (*3ḫ*) after death was conceived in terms of physical passage into another dimension, a journey along more or less clearly defined paths, which the deceased was expected to undertake.[4] In order to fully understand this mindset, it is necessary to bear in mind that the living and the dead formed a community that transcended the somewhat fluid boundaries separating this world from the next. The justified deceased continued to play a significant role in the living's everyday life, hence the great importance of the tomb as an interface between these realms and conditions.[5] Even in modern-day Egypt, the strong connection between the living and the dead continues to define

1. Jan Assmann, *Death and Salvation in Ancient Egypt*, trans. David Lorton (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005).

2. To this regard, see PT 571 §1466c–d, where the status of the cosmos before creation is described in the following terms: "before the sky came into being, before the earth came into being, before people came into being, before gods were born, before *death* came into being." James P. Allen, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, 2nd ed., WAW 38 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 182 (emphasis added).

3. The designation *perpetuum mobile* was first employed by Philippe Derchain to describe the Egyptians' fear that cosmic movements would stop upon the completion of a given cycle and the ensuing creation of a system of rituals meant to ensure a smooth perpetuation of the cosmos, underscoring the fact that an end (west/sunset) is also a new beginning. See Derchain, "Perpetuum mobile," *OLP* 6–7 (1976): 153–61. The solar course, always identical to itself, was nonetheless always in motion, thereby constantly reiterating the notions of cyclical, eternal occurrence (*nḥḥ*) and of renewal. This foundational concept is particularly suitable to adopt in funerary contexts and will be discussed further over the next chapters, especially in connection with the Underworld Books (ch. 5).

4. Assmann, *Death and Salvation*, 141–63.

5. John Baines and Peter Lacovara, "Burial and the Dead in Ancient Egyptian Society: Respect, Formalism, Neglect," *Journal of Social Archaeology* 2 (2002): 5–36; Assmann, 192–208. Egyptian funerary beliefs and practices are connected closely with the ancestor cult, and the reciprocity of the relationship between the dead and the living is underscored by phenomena such as the letters to the dead and the importance of ritual offerings left at the burial sites. Concerning the letters to the dead, see, e.g., Sylvie Donnat Beauquier, *Écrire à ses morts: Enquête sur un usage rituel de l'écrit dans l'Égypte pharaonique*, Collection Horos (Grenoble: Millon, 2014).

the landscape around urban centers, which are punctuated by the presence of several "cities of the dead"—namely enclosed burial grounds resembling real cities, with streets meandering through them and skirting the many houses for the afterlife built within. There could be no better example of the longevity of a tradition that, stretching back for six millennia, demonstrates how death—or better, awareness of mortality—was and is a prime "culture generator" and seems to have permeated many aspects of the lives of the Egyptians.[6] For them, overcoming mortality was of the utmost importance in order to avoid a second and final death, which would have erased a person's existence and the memory of them from this world.

While these far-reaching assertions are generally true, they must be taken carefully. In fact, some issues arise when studying Egyptian (funerary) religion. First, the question of what the ancient Egyptians believed is an extremely complex one, especially considering that their (religious) beliefs were not expressed systematically in dogmatic compositions and they kept evolving for about three thousand years.[7] Second, the surviving evidence comes mostly from elite funerary contexts. This circumstance naturally, if unintentionally, introduces a basic bias in any study of the afterlife beliefs and also has consequences when trying to define who the Egyptians in question were and to what degree they speculated on their continued existence after death. We are faced with the conundrum that, in order to understand Egyptian conceptions, we need materials that represent and, ideally, define them, namely written and pictorial representations—but that such materials are attested almost exclusively for members of the royal family and high elite. Therefore, the extent to which the conceptualization of the afterlife discussed here extended to other sectors of the population, including those who did not leave any material traces behind, is necessarily uncertain.[8] Third, the outline of our understanding of the Egyptians' funerary beliefs and practices—and their so-called quest for immortality—might be more of an Egyptological construct than we realize, and the evidence supporting it may be less rooted in ancient sources than might be expected.[9] Indeed, the tension between ideas and categories indigenous to a specific culture (emic, or first-order) and modern, scholarly (etic, or second-order) constructs is bound to be at the core of any study of ancient cultures, though often the distinction between these two approaches is not as clear-cut as one may think.[10] While the emic perspective tends to be privileged in Egyptology nowadays, it is inevitable that some etic concepts find their way into modern scholarship on ancient Egypt. Indeed, these are necessary in order to be able

6. For "culture generator," see Assmann, *Death and Salvation*, 9.

7. E.g., Christopher J. Eyre, "Belief and the Dead in Pharaonic Egypt," in *Rethinking Ghosts in World Religions*, ed. Mu-chou Poo, SHR 123, (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 33–46. On the absence of dogmatic and canonical texts in ancient Egypt, see further below in §1.2. With regard to the set of problems arising from the use of categories such as religion, faith, belief, and related words, see the most illuminating remarks in Barry J. Kemp, *Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a Civilization*, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 2018), 4–7, with references.

8. Studies such as the one carried out by Janet Richards, *Society and Death in Ancient Egypt: Mortuary Landscapes of the Middle Kingdom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005)—who analyzed the social aspects of funerary practices and what she calls "mortuary landscapes" across some Middle Kingdom provincial cemeteries—have shown that some variability existed even across the elite class in the same cemetery. It is therefore possible that some variability in the conceptualization of the next world existed in such contexts. The reader is cautioned to bear in mind that, where the beliefs of the "Egyptians" are mentioned in the course of this study, they are to be interpreted as referring to conceptions that can be gleaned from the kind of contexts just described. This is not to say that archaeological evidence is to be neglected in the analysis of conceptions of the beyond, but rather that its study follows a different approach, albeit one which is often complementary to that presented here. However, said approach goes beyond the scope of this work, and will therefore be referred to only when it contributes significant evidence to the discussion of the evolution of afterlife beliefs over time. E.g., the connection between funerary texts, their carriers, and the development of funerary ideology and architecture, is discussed in each chapter (§§2.5; 3.3; 4.2; 5.1.2; 6.1.1).

9. Rune Nyord, "'Taking Ancient Egyptian Mortuary Religion Seriously': Why Would We, and How Could We?," *JAEI* 17 (2018): 76–80, explores this issue at length, surveying the reasons behind the origins of the modern, westernized (and Christianized) interpretations of the ancient Egyptian funerary religion—which, the author points out, has become impervious to critiques and has continued to be accepted in mainstream Egyptology.

10. This terminology can be found, e.g., in Michael L. Satlow, "Disappearing Categories: Using Categories in the Study of Religion," *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 17 (2005): 287–98. For a detailed discussion of Egyptian (emic) vs. Egyptological (etic) concepts and more bibliographic references on these categories, see Rune Nyord, "Introduction: Egyptian and Egyptological Concepts," in *Concepts in Middle Kingdom Funerary Culture: Proceedings of the Lady Wallis Budge Anniversary Symposium held at Christ's College, Cambridge, 22 January 2016*, ed. Rune Nyord, CHANE 102 (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 1–23.

to refer to domains of the ancient Egyptian culture that could not be narrowed down otherwise, such as, for instance, "religion," a category for which Egyptian did not possess a distinct word.[11] Therefore, we should try to rethink the conventional ideas of the afterlife applied to ancient Egypt by studying funerary religion in connection with the socio-cultural context in which it originated on the one hand, while relying as much as possible on indigenous Egyptian concepts on the other, in order to avoid superimposing modern (etic) ideas to our analysis. This problematic will be discussed further below with regard to the category of magic.

As the pharaonic civilization developed, the strategies used to explain the various phenomena of the cosmos in which people lived, and of the destiny awaiting them in the afterlife, became increasingly complex. This is evident, among other things, from Egyptian funerary literature. This label is applied to a number of textual and visual compositions that were deposited in burial contexts, thus in the immediate vicinity of the deceased. Scholars have attempted a categorization of these religious texts based on the different contexts and modalities in which they were used—generally accepting the definitions first proposed by Jan Assmann, who spoke of "funerary literature" (*Totenliteratur*) and "mortuary liturgies" (*Totenliturgien*).[12] According to him, the term "funerary" refers to objects (e.g., the funerary equipment), practices, and texts regarding the funeral and the rituals performed on the day of burial, whereas the term "mortuary" designates texts, rituals, and other materials relating to the deceased and their postmortem cult. By this distinction, mortuary texts are texts that served the deceased in the next life, whereas the label of "funerary" only applies to those texts that were buried with the deceased. This alleged dichotomy has since been the subject of extensive discussions among Egyptologists, and it has often been noted how it is difficult and confusing to distinguish between the two labels, since this also obscures the frequently nonfunerary or nonmortuary origin of the texts, images, and objects eventually found in such contexts.[13] As more recent studies have shown, in fact, though the texts under analysis are found mainly in tombs, the same material may have originated in a nonfunerary sphere and may have been used in other contexts and practices as well, including ritual and liturgical performances in domestic and temple settings.[14] Furthermore, it is doubtful that the Egyptians themselves ever made such a distinction—in fact,

11. In the ancient world in general, religion as a separate category—indicating a set of systematic beliefs and ritual practices—did not exist. What in modern terms is identified as religion was integrated fully into a specific culture and was interlaced with several aspects of that culture, helping to shape the identity and the way of life of peoples as well as their understanding of the world around them. Similar remarks apply to other such modern, etic constructs, e.g., magic. See the discussion below in §1.2.1.

12. Jan Assmann, "Egyptian Mortuary Liturgies," in *Studies in Egyptology Presented to Miriam Lichtheim*, ed. Sarah Israelit-Groll, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1990), 1:1–3 with n. 2. The same distinction is also followed by other scholars; e.g., Harold M. Hays, *The Organization of the Pyramid Texts: Typology and Disposition*, 2 vols., PÄ 31 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 1:2 with n. 5. In English, the terms "funerary" and "mortuary" are largely interchangeable. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, e.g., the former means "of or relating to a funeral or the commemoration of the dead," while the latter "of or relating to the burial or cremation of the dead" or, more rarely, "of, concerned with, or depending upon death; relating to or reminiscent of death." Translation issues add to the fuzziness of this dichotomy. As Assmann himself already pointed out, there are no English words that could possibly convey adequately the distinction between "mortuary" and "funerary." For an update of the terminology employed, see, e.g., Jan Assmann, *Altägyptische Totenliturgien, Band 1: Totenliturgien in den Sargtexten des Mittleren Reiches*, Supp SAWH 14 (Heidelberg: Winter, 2002), 13–20. More on this issue can be found in Foy D. Scalf, review of *Death and Salvation in Ancient Egypt*, by Jan Assmann, *JNES* 70 (2011): 124–26. For an overview of the classification of funerary texts in current Egyptology, see also Harco O. Willems, "Who Am I? An Emic Approach to the So-called 'Personal Texts' in Egyptian 'Funerary Literature'," in Nyord, *Middle Kingdom Funerary Culture*, 204–11.

13. Although the distinction between "funerary" and "mortuary" based on Assmann's definitions has been generally accepted, some scholars have occasionally revisited it. E.g., John Baines, "Modelling Sources, Processes and Locations of Early Mortuary Texts," in *D'un monde à l'autre: Textes des Pyramides & Textes des Sarcophages; Actes de la table ronde internationale, "Textes des Pyramides versus Textes des Sarcophages," IFAO—24–26 septembre 2001*, ed. Susanne Bickel and Bernard Mathieu, BiEtud 139 (Cairo: IFAO, 2004), 15 with n. 2, reversed such distinction, calling "mortuary" those texts serving the deceased in the next life, while "funerary" texts and other materials are, according to him, a subcategory of mortuary and relate to the ritual process leading from death to burial. However, Baines also points out the vagueness and inconsistency of these categories, between which it is not always possible to distinguish neatly. Funerary texts, in virtue of their function, have also been designated by means of the more generic label of Books of the Afterlife, as, e.g., in Erik Hornung, *The Ancient Egyptian Books of the Afterlife*, trans. David Lorton (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999).

14. See the remarks in Nyord, "Egyptian Mortuary Religion," 77–79; see also the references in Antonio J. Morales, "The Transmission of the Pyramid Texts into the Middle Kingdom: Philological Aspects of a Continuous Tradition in Egyptian Mortuary Literature" (PhD diss.,

it appears highly unlikely. Once again, this is an Egyptological construct—one which is necessary in order to refer to this part of the Egyptian culture, but which should nevertheless be used with caution and bearing in mind all the considerations just outlined. In this study, the designation "funerary" will be retained to refer to any texts and/or materials associated with the ever-present domain of death in ancient Egypt, including those regarding the funeral and related rituals, the deceased's passage into the next world and their journey through it, leading to their regeneration and rebirth, and finally their provisioning and the related cultic practices.[15] The term "mortuary" will still be employed occasionally, but only when well established in the Egyptological literature to refer to the mortuary cult or to mortuary installations, such as, for example, the so-called mortuary temples attached to the Old Kingdom pyramids.

From early on, and starting with the first attestations of funerary texts, it is evident that a major theme in the speculations about what was beyond human life on earth was the association of the deceased with the eternal, cyclical course of the sun and of other celestial bodies.[16] The nocturnal disappearance of the sun and its timely reappearance above the horizon in the morning naturally required an explanation. As always, when the Egyptians did not have an empirical understanding of a phenomenon, they made speculations in order to fill the vacuum in their knowledge, and generally assigned to an imaginary reality features that were familiar to them from their world. It is perhaps in the speculations about the nocturnal whereabouts of the sun that the ancient Egyptian culture shows best its incredible imaginative strength. There were two mysterious facts that needed explaining. The first was represented by the destination and the path of the sun at night. The second matter was of a more ontological nature, and revolved around the details of the nocturnal regeneration of the aged sun god Atum, who, after setting in the west and navigating through the night, would rise again in the morning in his rejuvenated form, the scarab beetle known originally as Kheprer (*ḫprr*)—later mostly Khepri (*ḫpri*);[17] in turn, Khepri manifested himself as Re at the peak of the voyage across the visible sky (fig. 1.1).[18]

Regardless of what the answers to such questions might have been, the deceased, most pronouncedly from the New Kingdom onward, wished to accompany the sun every step of the way, so that they could be rejuvenated and reborn every day. This is probably the reason why the journey toward rebirth was the most stressed aspect in funerary

University of Pennsylvania, 2013), 82 with n. 216. An increasing number of scholars have been advocating the ritual and possibly nonfunerary origins and use of the so-called funerary texts. Regarding the Pyramid Texts, see Susanne Bickel, "Everybody's Afterlife? 'Pharaonisation' in the Pyramid Texts," in *Studies in Ancient Egyptian Funerary Literature*, ed. Susanne Bickel and Lucía Díaz-Iglesias, OLA 257 (Leuven: Peeters, 2017), 119–48. The liturgical function of the Coffin Texts is surveyed comprehensively in Assmann, *Altägyptische Totenliturgien 1*; see also Alexandra von Lieven, "How 'Funerary' are the Coffin Texts?" in Nyord, *Middle Kingdom Funerary Culture*, 100–116. For the Book of the Dead, see Alexandra von Lieven, "Book of the Dead, Book of the Living: BD Spells as Temple Texts," *JEA* 98 (2012): 249–67. On the possibly ritual and initiatory origin and function of the Underworld Books, see, e.g., Alexandra von Lieven, "Mysterien des Kosmos: Kosmographie und Priesterwissenschaft," in *Ägyptische Mysterien?*, ed. Jan Assmann and Martin Bommas (Munich: Fink, 2002), 47–58; John C. Darnell and Colleen M. Manassa Darnell, *The Ancient Egyptian Netherworld Books*, WAW 39 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2018), 33–36, with more references. For an approach considering how the colonial legacy of Egyptology is deep-seated in and continues to influence our understanding of the Egyptian culture, see Christina Riggs, *Unwrapping Ancient Egypt* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014). Additional references to literature on this topic will be provided in the following chapters.

15. On the central role played by notions of (re)birth in the ancient Egyptian funerary beliefs, see Marie-Lys Arnette, *Regressus ad uterum: La mort comme une nouvelle naissance dans les grands textes funéraires de l'Égypte pharaonique*, BiEtud 175 (Cairo: IFAO, 2020).

16. A long time before the artistic developments of the mature pharaonic state, late predynastic rock inscriptions depict solar barks being towed, providing a conceptual link between the first speculations about the solar circuit with later textual and iconographic material that describes and/or depicts it more or less explicitly. John C. Darnell, "Iconographic Attraction, Iconographic Syntax, and Tableaux of Royal Ritual Power in the Pre- and Proto-Dynastic Rock Inscriptions of the Theban Western Desert," *Archéo-Nil* 19 (2009): 83–107, esp. 92.

17. *LGG* 5:718–19, 713–16.

18. E.g., Jan Assmann, "Sonnengott," *LÄ* 5:1087–94; Silvia Wiebach-Koepke, "Standorte-Bewegungstypen-Kreisläufe: Semantische Betrachtungen zur Dynamik der Sonnenlaufprozesse in Amduat und Pfortenbuch," *SAK* 24 (1997): 337–66. The model proposed here does not account for all the different phenomena connected to the course of the sun as described in the Egyptian sources, as this can take place along different axes. Moreover, it does not account fully for the afterlife destiny sketched in the earliest sources, such as, e.g., the Pyramid Texts (ch. 2). Similarly, contradictions regarding the invisible stretch of the solar journey surface in the Book of Nut, where the Duat is described as being located simultaneously outside the created world, at the furthermost reaches of the cosmos, and inside Nut (ch. 6).

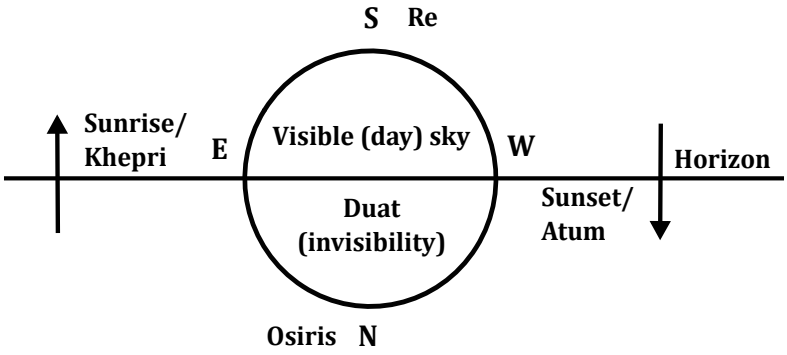

Fig. 1.1. Schematic representation of the solar cycle. Drawing by Silvia Zago.

texts, a fact that may be connected to the initiatory character pervading Egyptian funerary religion and literature as a whole.[19] Thus, a person would not cease to exist after death, but would access another spatial and temporal dimension, which was at the same time a purely speculative region beyond the physicality of this world.[20] Being associated with nighttime and darkness, such a liminal dimension, usually impenetrable to human experience, could be accessed by the sleepers through dreams, which were believed to open a window into the depths of this dangerous time and could, therefore, be harmful to their host.[21] The end of the night invariably brought about the reawakening—that is, the metaphorical rebirth—of the sleeper, as well as of the solar god. The deceased, on the other hand, were left behind in the realm of darkness, where they hoped to be able to enjoy a new form of existence, brightened by the possibility of being regenerated over and over again in eternity.

19. Jan Assmann, "Death and Initiation in the Funerary Religion of Ancient Egypt," in *Religion and Philosophy in Ancient Egypt*, ed. William K. Simpson, trans M. Grauer and R. Meyer, YES 3 (New Haven: Yale Egyptological Seminar, 1989), 135–59. Moreover, the overcoming of death per se and the entry into the new metaphysical dimension of postmortem regeneration has been described variously in terms of fulfillment of those *rites de passage* theorized by Arnold van Gennep in his foundational work *The Rites of Passage: A Classic Study of Cultural Celebrations*, trans. Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Cafee (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960). This view has been challenged by Harold M. Hays, "The End of Rites of Passage and a Start with Ritual Syntax," in *Approaching Rituals in Ancient Cultures, Questioni di rito: Rituali come fonte di conoscenza delle religioni e delle concezioni del mondo nelle culture antiche; Proceedings of the Conference, November 28–30, 2011, Roma*, ed. Claus Ambos and Lorenzo Verderame, *RSO* 86, suppl. 2 (Pisa: Serra, 2013), 165–86, who argues that this categorization cannot be applied systematically to the ancient Egyptian evidence. Without wishing to dismiss these observations, it is worth noting that certain ritual practices from ancient Egypt do seem to conform to the pattern of separation-transition/liminality-reaggregation, which according to van Gennep characterizes rites of passage. In general, one such example is constituted by the notions and rituals surrounding death and the afterlife. These entail the detachment of the deceased from the human society of this world, a transitional phase during which they undergo a ritual transformation, and finally their (re)aggregation into the society of the otherworld. The tomb itself represented a liminal environment, an interface between the two worlds. This topic will be discussed in the following chapters, especially in relation to the conceptualization of the beyond in the Book of the Dead (ch. 4).

20. Wolfhart Westendorf, "Das Ende der Unterwelt in der Amarnazeit oder: Die Erde als Kugel," *GM* 187 (2002): 109, has pointed out that the Duat was imagined by the Egyptians not as a properly physical, tangible place, but more as a mythical dimension, of which no one could have direct experience. This will be discussed several times in the course of the present study.

21. For dreams in ancient Egypt see, among others, Kasia M. Szpakowska, "Through the Looking Glass: Dreams in Ancient Egypt," in *Dreams: A Reader on Religious, Cultural and Psychological Dimensions of Dreaming*, ed. Kelly Bulkeley (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 29–43; Szpakowska, *Behind Closed Eyes: Dreams and Nightmares in Ancient Egypt* (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2003). Erik Hornung, "Chaotische Bereiche in der geordneten Welt," *ZÄS* 81 (1956): 28–32, has proposed that, when the sleepers are experiencing a dream, they find themselves in the otherworld and can interact with its inhabitants. However, the ancient Egyptian evidence on dreams seems to suggests that these merely offered virtual access to the next world—the sleeper would be able to see things normally hidden from view, all while remaining in their usual surroundings (Szpakowska, *Behind Closed Eyes*, 21–29, 33, 123–51).

1.2. Aims and Methodology of the Study

This study aims to delineate the diachronic evolution of the notion of Duat, which to date has defied all scholarly attempts at a clear definition. The analysis is based on royal and nonroyal funerary texts attested from the late Old Kingdom to the end of the New Kingdom. Such texts, which may have had their roots in a ritual, nonfunerary sphere, were adapted to serve the purpose of ensuring the deceased's safe journey in the afterlife, their rejuvenation, and their eventual rebirth, and represent one of the major groups of Egyptian religious literature.[22] The period between the beginning of the Third Intermediate period and the end of Egyptian civilization represented, in some ways, a revival for (most of) these funerary compositions, but it falls outside the scope of this study.[23] Therefore, only occasional reference will be made to later material, and only when it is deemed relevant for the scope of the discussion. The Egyptian term Duat refers broadly to the realm of the dead, and is commonly rendered as "underworld" or "netherworld."[24] This translation, however, is representative only of the best-known version of the Egyptian afterlife as portrayed mainly in the Underworld Books, which are preserved almost exclusively in the New Kingdom royal tombs.[25] The conceptions underlying it represent the culmination of an evolution that took place over centuries, during which new images and ideas were introduced, and new layers were added to the core ideological framework established in earlier times.[26] Some scholars even see the notion of an underworld as a by-product of the Greek and Roman ideas of

22. The problem of the definition of what "literature" was in ancient Egypt has been discussed extensively by scholars. See, e.g., the various essays collected in Antonio Loprieno, *Ancient Egyptian Literature: History and Forms*, PÄ 10 (Leiden: Brill, 1996); Richard B. Parkinson, *Poetry and Culture in Middle Kingdom Egypt: A Dark Side to Perfection* (London: Continuum, 2002), 10–32. For the nonfunerary origin of many of these texts or parts thereof, see §1.1, with the literature cited there. More details will be discussed in the various chapters.

23. For the Pyramid Texts, see, e.g., Thomas G. Allen, *Occurrences of Pyramid Texts with Cross Indexes of These and Other Egyptian Mortuary Texts*, SAOC 27 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950); Antonio J. Morales, "Unraveling the Thread: Transmission and Reception of Pyramid Texts in Late Period Egypt," in Bickel and Díaz-Iglesias, *Ancient Egyptian Funerary Literature*, 463–96. On late attestations of the Coffin Texts, see, e.g., Louise Gestermann, *Die Überlieferung ausgewählter Texte altägyptischer Totenliteratur ("Sargtexte") in spätzeitlichen Grabanlagen*, ÄgAbh 68 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005). Concerning the Book of the Dead, see, among others, Malcom Jr. Mosher, "Theban and Memphite Book of the Dead Traditions in the Late Period," *JARCE* 29 (1992): 143–72; Foy D. Scalf, "The Death of the Book of the Dead," in *Book of the Dead: Becoming God in Ancient Egypt*, ed. Foy D. Scalf, OIMP 39 (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2017), 139–48. For the attestations of the Underworld Books in the Third Intermediate and Late periods, see, e.g.: Alexandre Piankoff, *Mythological Papyri*, 2 vols., BollSer 40.3 (New York: Pantheon, 1957); Abdel-Aziz Fahmy Sadek, *Contribution à l'étude de l'Amdouat: Les variantes tardives du Livre de l'Amdouat dans les papyrus du Musée du Caire*, OBO 65 (Fribourg: Academic Press; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985); Andrzej Niwiński, *Studies on the Illustrated Theban Funerary Papyri of the 11th and 10th Centuries B.C.*, OBO 86 (Fribourg: Academic Press; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989); Colleen M. Manassa, *The Late Egyptian Underworld: Sarcophagi and Related Texts from the Nectanebid Period*, 2 vols., ÄAT 72 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2007). On the attestations of the Books of the Sky in the Late period, see Gilles Roulin, *Le Livre de la Nuit: Une composition égyptienne de l'au-delà*, 2 vols., OBO 147 (Fribourg: Academic Press; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 1:15–16; Marcus Müller-Roth, *Das Buch vom Tage*, OBO 236 (Fribourg: Academic Press; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 45–46. Demotic commentaries of the Book of Nut continued to be redacted until as late as the Roman period; Alexandra von Lieven, *Grundriss des Laufes der Sterne: Das sogenannte Nutbuch*, 2 vols., Carlsberg Papyri 8, CNIP 31 (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2007). Concerning the late history of funerary texts, see also the remarks in Jan Assmann, *Egyptian Solar Religion in the New Kingdom: Re, Amun and the Crisis of Polytheism* (London: Kegan Paul, 1995), 4–11. For the Graeco-Roman period, see Mark J. Smith, *Traversing Eternity: Texts for the Afterlife from Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Martin A. Stadler, *Einführung in die ägyptische Religion ptolemäisch-römischer Zeit nach den demotischen religiösen Texten*, EQTÄ 7 (Berlin: LIT, 2012). Further references will be provided in the course of the study. See also the remarks in §7.1.2.

24. E.g., *Wb* 5:415.3–9. Unfortunately, even though scholars have been increasingly pointing out that the Egyptian afterlife also possessed a celestial nature, as evident, e.g., in the Pyramid Texts, they have failed to reconcile this observation with their rendering of the Egyptian terminology. The terms "netherworld" and "underworld" both imply that the Duat should be regarded as a subterranean region, and since this may only be the case in some of the spells in which the term occurs, such translations are inappropriate.

25. One must nonetheless bear in mind that the chthonic nature of the Duat is not the only one featured in this group of texts. While being applied more consistently to the beyond of the Books of the Sky, the celestial aspect of the Duat overlaps with it at times. On these texts, see chs. 5 and 6.

26. David. P. Silverman, "Textual Criticism in the Coffin Texts," in Simpson, *Religion and Philosophy*, 29; Joshua A. Roberson, *The Ancient Egyptian Books of the Earth*, Wilbour Studies in Egyptology and Assyriology 1 (Atlanta: Lockwood, 2012), 1.

the afterlife, which penetrated in Egypt only very late in its dynastic history.[27] A more accurate rendering of the term Duat may be "otherworld," which will be used henceforth as an alternative designation of it.[28]

Since a netherworld was merely one of many alternative locales of the next world dotting Egyptian sources of various periods, there is to date no scholarly consensus on a proper definition of how the Egyptians imagined the Duat, especially since texts provide no single, unambiguous description of it. Funerary compositions hardly ever adhere to just one doctrine about the destiny awaiting the deceased. Rather, they offer a mosaic of different conceptions, which were either newly developed or readapted from older notions in order to fit a particular historical and socio-cultural background. For instance, texts often provide the deceased with the characteristics of Re, then again with those of Osiris, thereby solarizing and chthonizing the otherworld at the same time, and—perhaps even because of this ambiguity—they are especially vague as regards the location of the Duat and its relation to this world. What is more, though a chthonic characterization of the Duat is not necessarily applicable to all periods for which funerary compositions are attested, an examination of the diachronic evolution of this notion is, to date, still missing. The present study is intended to fill this gap and to shed more light on this elusive, multifaceted aspect of the Egyptian afterlife by analyzing how it is treated in various contexts.

In order to understand what the term Duat encompassed, where it was thought to be located, what its features were, and how it evolved over time, we need to embark on a journey through the funerary texts, which offer valuable insight on this foundational concept of the ancient Egyptian afterlife beliefs. Each chapter is devoted either to a single funerary corpus (e.g., the Pyramid Texts) or to a group of texts (e.g., the Underworld Books). The order in which these are discussed follows chronological criteria, with the earliest material presented first. However, the tradition of funerary literature in Egypt, just like the complicated dynastic history of that country, is not a linear sequence of appearance and disappearance of a corpus and its replacement by another. In almost all the periods for which funerary texts are attested, no single composition was employed alone. Rather, multiple traditions coexisted and overlapped, and as a result the material underwent a long-lasting process of transmission and usage, which took its toll on both content and form. This is the case, for instance, of spells of the Pyramid and Coffin Texts and of the Book of the Dead, the use of which is well attested until the end of the pharaonic era, alongside most of the other funerary texts from later periods. This is especially evident in New Kingdom royal tombs, where the Underworld Books, the Books of the Sky, the Book of the Dead, and other compositions (e.g., the Litany of Re) are found side by side in an attempt to render the kings' otherworldly cosmos as complete as possible and to activate it by means of texts and illustrations.[29] Moreover, funerary compositions evolved continuously. Only a few longer texts, such as the New Kingdom Amduat, had a more or less fixed form.[30] Selections of passages and pictorial representations from such compositions, however, and their use in other contexts, were equally variable. It is also partially due to the pronounced anticanonicity of Egyptian texts that no single, unified version of the afterlife was defined at any one time.

Every chapter introduces the funerary text or group of texts under scrutiny, surveying their definition and origin, their content(s), meaning(s), and purpose(s). This is complemented by an overview of the ideological foundations and/or the funerary beliefs and practices of the period, during which a specific composition originated and was predominantly employed.[31] A thorough survey of these topics, together with the review of the Egyptological literature

27. E.g., Mark Smith, "Resurrection and the Body in Graeco-Roman Egypt," in *The Human Body in Death and Resurrection*: *Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Yearbook 2009*, ed. Tobias Nicklas, Friedrich V. Reiterer, and Joseph Verheyden (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), 27–41. Concerning the afterlife beliefs of the Graeco-Roman culture, see below, §7.1.2.

28. Similarly, see Carolyn Graves-Brown, *Daemons and Spirits in Ancient Egypt* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2018), xvii with n. 2.

29. On the decoration of New Kingdom royal tombs, see the discussions in §§5.1.2 and 6.1.1, and the data collected in appendix tables 11–13.

30. Baines, "Modelling Sources," 15.

31. Although all funerary texts from ancient Egypt underwent a long history of transmission and use, this study is only concerned with the period of their main original use, whose political and socio-cultural aspects are discussed in order to paint the broader picture, against which the discussion of the notion of Duat can be set. E.g., although the Pyramid Texts were used (discontinuously) for about two millennia, the historical period that is discussed along with this corpus is the Old Kingdom.

on them, is necessary in order to support the interpretation of the sources in relation to the notion of Duat. The discussion of said notion is therefore presented against this background. The analysis is based upon the collection and in-depth study of textual passages mentioning or describing the Duat—and any related illustrations, when applicable. While relying on the publications and translations of the various texts available to-date, the original sources were examined in their entirety in order to select the most relevant excerpts to present.[32] Though some excerpts may have escaped investigation, this does not alter significantly the general picture emerging from, and the ensuing conclusions of, the study, which is not meant to be a comprehensive examination of all the passages referring to the Duat. These are, in fact, quite often very superficial and/or repetitive. However, details about all the occurrences of the word Duat in the compositions studied are provided in tables at the end of the volume, including the various determinatives used to classify it.[33] The most significant textual passages providing more or less explicit and/or detailed information about the Duat are presented in transliteration and translation in the course of the discussion in the individual chapters. Furthermore, since afterlife beliefs are connected to other theological, cosmological, geographical, and astronomical conceptions, discussions of these aspects are included whenever necessary to clarify the conceptual framework, of which the notion of Duat formed but a part. Additionally, an attempt has been made to relate the evolution of this notion to the concurrent changes in Egyptian culture, society, and ideology. By trying to bring together all these aspects, it is hoped that significant insights can be gained not only into the conceptualization of the next world but also into the understanding of the physical reality in which the Egyptians lived every day, long before those funerary texts would be of any use to them.

It is known that architectural spaces as well as objects can convey symbolic and ideological meanings alike, which are specific to the culture that created them, and in which they were or are still embedded.[34] Therefore, an analysis of the correlation between the various texts and their material support (pyramids' walls, coffins, tombs' walls, etc.) complements the study, with the purpose of highlighting the importance of the symbolic arrangement of the textual material on its carriers. It will be shown that such patterns of distribution played a significant role in the realization of their goal to accompany the deceased in their successful journey through the beyond. To the ancient Egyptians, the spatialization of texts and imagery in both temples and tombs was of paramount importance, as they conceptualized architectural space in symbolic terms.[35] This principle underlies not only the decoration of the burial chambers and the various parts of a tomb, onto whose walls funerary texts were inscribed, but also the decoration of coffins and sarcophagi, starting already with the Pyramid Texts. As a corollary to the generally accepted opinion that royal and nonroyal expectations and preparations for the afterlife were fundamentally different from one another, the long-standing belief that all developments and innovations must have originated in the royal sphere has unfortunately hampered our understanding of the dynamics underlying the origin and circulation of new ideas across the

32. In order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the texts dealt with and to be able to provide an original interpretation of the relevant passages mentioning the Duat, all the original sources discussed in the present study have been examined first-hand. The rationale behind the omission of certain texts is presented below (§1.3).

33. On the relevance of the analysis of the determinatives used in conjunction with the word Duat, see infra (§1.4). The attestations collected in the tables are only those stemming from sources of Old to New Kingdom date, with one notable exception, i.e. the demotic commentary of the Book of Nut (on which, see also the remarks in §1.3). In the case of the Pyramid and Coffin Texts, details about where on their carrier(s) the specific spells including the word Duat appear are also provided (appendix tables 1–3).

34. E.g., Umberto Eco, "Function and Sign: The Semiotics of Architecture," in *Signs, Symbols and Architecture*, ed. Geoffrey Broadbent, Richard Bunt, and Charles Jencks (Chichester: Wiley, 1980), 11–69, esp. 21–29, with remarks on the Egyptian pyramids.

35. See the exemplary study of the relationship between architectural space and decoration of New Kingdom temples by Dieter Arnold, *Wandrelief und Raumfunktion in ägyptischen Tempeln des Neuen Reiches*, MÄS 2 (Berlin: Hessling, 1962). For the well-known formulation of the notion of "grammaire du temple," see Philippe Derchain, "Un manuel de géographie liturgique à Edfou," *ChronEg* 37 (1962): 31–65. See also John Baines, "Temple Symbolism," *RAIN* 15 (1976): 10–15. On the correlation between funerary texts and their immediate material context, see now also Burkhard Backes, "Der Text und seine Gegenwart: Zur Korrelation zwischen Anbringungsformen und Funktionen funerärer Texte," in *Schrift und Material: Praktische Verwendung religiöser Text- und Bildträger als Artefakte im alten Ägypten*, ed. Joachim F. Quack and Daniela C. Luft, ORA 41 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021), 185–94.

different levels of society. This over-emphasized dichotomy has led, for instance, to the much-debated theory of the "democratization of the afterlife," which was assumed to have taken place after the demise of the Old Kingdom, and which was allegedly evident in the appropriation of formerly exclusively royal privileges by nonroyal individuals during the First Intermediate period, resulting in the diffusion of the Coffin Texts to broader strata of society (ch. 3). It is much more likely, however, that the boundaries between royal and nonroyal spheres were less rigid than has been imagined so far, permitting a mutual exchange of ideas between the two, with innovation and borrowing on both sides. Thus, not only did a transmission of afterlife beliefs and practices take place between royal and nonroyal spheres but, as a result, concrete aspects and manifestations thereof—such as the principles underlying tomb layout and decoration—moved equally between these spheres.[36]

Therefore, the analysis of the notion of Duat as attested in both private and royal funerary compositions needs to be paired with a study of the evolution of the funerary spaces in which these texts are found. The tomb, after all, not only served the purpose of housing the body of the deceased, but was also conceived as the first step toward, and the vehicle for, their regeneration and rebirth in the beyond. Thus, the spatial arrangement of texts and decorative elements within it represents a major factor in furthering our understanding of how the tomb was an integral part of the reenactment of the afterlife journey. While the principles underlying the distribution of texts in tombs are not always agreed upon unanimously by scholars, as, for example, in the case of the Pyramid Texts, it appears clear that by the New Kingdom the royal tomb was turned into a faithful, monumental realization of the funerary composition(s) inscribed in its interior, and of their conceptualization of the beyond—the tombs of the Amduat type being an excellent example of this.[37]

As mentioned above, the anticanonicity inherent in many aspects of the Egyptian tradition resulted in an absence of dogmatic religious beliefs and standard versions of literary texts, at least until very late.[38] Therefore, one aspect that must always be borne in mind when approaching religious texts is the flexibility of the contexts they depict, which span a tremendous range of mythical, ritual, and cultic associations.[39] The modern mind struggles to grasp the complex and often highly metaphorical explanations offered by the ancient Egyptian sources, which frequently present several accounts of a given phenomenon as equally true and valid at the same time. This approach, far from being due to logical inconsistency, was the result, among other factors, of an impulse not to discard older strata of tradition, but to add instead layer upon layer of meaning and symbolism in the conceptualization of a given notion. Accordingly, what earlier scholars may have perceived as dialectic oppositions between two or more seemingly contradictory explanations was regarded as perfectly coherent with their beliefs by the ancient Egyptians, for whom the

36. Bickel, "Everybody's Afterlife," 144; Mark J. Smith, *Following Osiris: Perspectives on the Osirian Afterlife from Four Millennia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 96–101.

37. Concerning the Pyramid Texts, see the references in §2.5. On the early history of the Amduat-type tomb, see Josef W. Wegner, "The Tomb of Senwosret III at Abydos: Considerations on the Origins and Development of the Royal Amduat-Tomb," in *Archaism and Innovation, Studies in the Culture of Middle Kingdom Egypt*, ed. David P. Silverman, William K. Simpson, and Josef W. Wegner (New Haven: Yale University Press; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum, 2009), 103–68. A discussion of the Amduat tomb can be found in §§5.1.2 and 5.2, with additional references cited there.

38. Alexandra von Lieven, "Closed Canon vs. Creative Chaos: An In-Depth Look at (Real and Supposed) Mortuary Texts from Ancient Egypt," in *Problems of Canonicity and Identity Formation in Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia*, ed. Kim Ryholt and Gojko Barjamovic, CNIP 43 (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2016), 51–77. One of the factors leading to the canonization of tradition, most notably through the fixing of oral culture in writing, is foreign rule over a country, whose cultural identity and memory, as a consequence, are perceived to be threatened by the new influences. In Egypt's case, the fear of forgetting its own cultural tradition, due in part to the pressures of the Hellenistic rule, translated into a newly found drive to collect, preserve, and codify said tradition, which found one of its most comprehensive expressions in the temples of the Graeco-Roman period. These were monumental architectural realizations of the Egyptian world and worldview, offering one of the most striking examples of codification of cultural identity to this day. Jan Assmann, "Der Tempel der ägyptischen Spätzeit als Kanonisierung kultureller Identität," in *The Heritage of Ancient Egypt: Studies in Honour of Erik Iversen*, ed. Jürgen Osing and Erland Kolding Nielsen, CNIP 13 (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 1992), 9–25.

39. Katja Goebs, "A Functional Approach to Egyptian Myth and Mythemes," *JANER* 2 (2002): 27–59. For ritual contingency in Egyptian religion, see Smith, *Following Osiris*, 141–45, 147–51, 155, 198–99.

simultaneous existence of several rationalizations of the same concept did not make one any less valid than the next. This principle—which Henri Frankfort termed "multiplicity of approaches"—was the tool by means of which they were able to create kaleidoscopes of ideas and speculations often nested within one another, which are so typical of this culture.[40] For the otherworld, this means that no single, coherent view was required at any one time, but rather two or more conflicting views could be retained and laid out side by side, as will become evident in the course of this study. At the same time, some scholars have pointed to a particular mindset that has been termed "aspective"—a principle by which the most ideal version of each aspect of the world is conjured up in order to recreate conceptually the whole.[41] Though originally coined to define Egyptian art, this notion has been applied increasingly to other aspects of Egyptian society, which are defined by the ensemble of the many—often seemingly contradictory—facets of their complex appearance.[42] Viewed through this lens, the ancient Egyptian culture recalls a giant Picasso painting: its multifaceted foundational elements need to be seen and understood together, no matter how at odds they may seem to be with one another, in order to appreciate fully the whole picture.

1.2.1. Remarks on "Magic"

Before proceeding to explain the structure of this study, it is necessary to make a few remarks on the category of magic in order to avoid any possible misconceptions. Egyptian funerary texts, in fact, are often referred to as being magical and, from a certain perspective, they were indeed, at least in the eyes of their beneficiaries. But what is "magic," and what can be defined as "magical"? While a detailed discussion of the history of the use of the concept of magic falls outside of the scope of this introductory chapter, this section will provide a brief overview of the main issues inherent in applying this problematic category to ancient cultures.[43]

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40. Henri Frankfort, *Ancient Egyptian Religion: An Interpretation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948), 18–19, passim. See also Ann M. Roth, "Buried Pyramids and Layered Thoughts: The Organization of Multiple Approaches in Egyptian Religion," in *Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Egyptologists, Cambridge, 3–9 September 1995*, ed. Christopher J. Eyre, OLA 82 (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 991–1003. See also John Baines, "Interpretations of Religion: Logic, Discourse, Rationality," *GM* 76 (1984): 25–54, where such apparently irrational beliefs are examined and put in perspective together with some religious practices. In a way, the Egyptian conceptualization of the cosmos and the understanding of the events unfolding in it may be likened to hermetic thought. This, as opposed to Greek philosophy, did not seek out the cause-effect of everything, but rather saw all the elements of the world as being interlaced and perpetually mirroring one another, so that the avenues of interpretations became virtually infinite. See Michèle Broze, "L'hermétisme et la gnose: Tradition et distorsion dans la transmission du savoir," *Civilisations* 52 (2004): 37–48, citing, among others, Eco's studies of semiotics and hermeneutics.

41. Heinrich Schäfer, *Principles of Egyptian Art*, trans. John Baines (Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1986), originally described the Egyptians' way of seeing and rendering reality as *geradvorstellig*, which can be translated as "based on frontal views." This was focused more on rendering the characteristic and/or ideal features of a given object by combining several of its sides than on achieving a coherent figurative execution. In this way, the object—turned into a composite assemblage of its various integral parts—could be recognized on the conceptual level more than on the figurative one, as this type of perception foreshortens the whole. The definition of Egyptian art as aspective was modeled by Emma Brunner-Traut on this description (in Shäfer, 421–46).

42. E.g., Emma Brunner-Traut, *Frühformen des Erkennens: Am Beispiel Altägyptens* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1990). Moreover, on the basis of the semiotic models developed by Eco, the *Weltanschauung* of the Egyptian culture has been compared to a hermetic conception of the world, by which the cosmos is founded on the many interconnections between its various constituent elements, which, in turn, are linked to things on earth. See Arnette, *Regressus ad uterum*, 26–27, with literature cited there.

43. A good historical overview can be found in Robert K. Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, SAOC 54 (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2008), 4–28. For a thorough discussion of the history of magic from antiquity to the twentieth century and of the academic debate on this concept, see Bernd-Christian Otto, *Magie: Rezeptions- und diskursgeschichtliche Analysen von der Antike bis zur Neuzeit*, RVV 57 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011); Otto, "Towards Historicizing 'Magic' in Antiquity," *Numen* 60 (2013): 308–47. Concerning how this notion has been understood and employed in Egyptology, see Otto, "Zauberhaftes Ägypten—ägyptischer Zauber? Überlegungen zur Verwendung des Magiebegriffs in der Ägyptologie," in *Ägypten—Kindheit—Tod: Gedenkschrift für Edmund Hermsen*, ed. Florian Jeserich (Vienna: Böhlau, 2013), 39–70. See also Christoffer Theis, *Magie und Raum: Der magische Schutz ausgewählter Räume im alten Ägypten nebst einem Vergleich zu angrenzenden Kulturbereichen*, ORA 13 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 19–25. Several aspects of magic and magical

The distinction between magic on the one hand, and religion and rituals on the other, is especially difficult in the case of said cultures, in which boundaries between religious and social phenomena were blurred—a consideration that modern scholars have often failed to take into account.[44] In general, especially in the earlier scholarship, such a distinction has been applied subjectively, most often stressing the negative connotation inherent in the Western, Judeo-Christian influenced view of magic. In the history of Western philosophy, this term came to be used in the sense of "illogic" or "prelogic," and denoted accordingly all activities that were perceived as being ambivalent, illicit, or impious.[45] As a result, magic has been contrasted traditionally with the official religion on the one hand, while being kept distinct from whatever was regarded as logic—that is, based on theories that are scientifically tenable—on the other. At the same time, the use of the word magic also conveys the idea of illegitimate practices that purport to forcibly manipulate supernatural (and possibly evil) forces in order to fulfill selfish desires of an unsanctioned nature.[46] The Egyptian *ḥkꜣ*, however, was immanent in the cosmos. It was, in fact, a gift of the creator god to mankind, and its use was accordingly legitimate, especially when it came to protection from harm and the destruction of enemies.[47] Magicians should rather be regarded as ritual specialists, as skilled in techniques of protection and healing as priests and doctors or physicians (*swnw*), and who operated in a variety of contexts.[48] For the Egyptians, *ḥkꜣ* had nothing

practices in ancient Egypt and other ancient cultures are discussed in the volume edited by Yvan Koenig, *La magie en Égypte: À la recherche d'une définition; Actes du colloque organisé par le musée du Louvre les 29 et 30 septembre 2000* (Paris: La Documentation Française, 2002).

44. See the remarks in Otto, *Magie*, 28–32, 640–44; Otto, "Zauberhaftes Ägypten"; Jacco Dieleman, "Egypt," in *Guide to the Study of Ancient Magic*, ed. David Frankfurter, RGRW 189 (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 87–114, esp. 88 with n. 4.

45. However, the discourse about "magic" seems to have been substantially different before the introduction of the word *magos* and cognates in Greek culture at the end of the sixth century BCE and until the end of the fourth century BCE. The Old Persian word *maguš* designated originally a caste of Persian priests, who dealt with temple and divine cults and with ritual practices; Albert F. de Jong, *Traditions of the Magi: Zoroastrianism in Greek and Latin Literature*, RGRW 133 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 387. When the concepts of *magos* and *mageia* entered into the ancient Greek language, they underwent some significant semantic shifts and became associated with morally reprehensible practices, although the assessment could vary, as many figures were involved in the performance of magic. Through the Greek adaptation, these notions went on to play an important—if frowned upon—role in Roman, Jewish, and Christian literature throughout antiquity, surviving through the Middle Ages and the Reformation. Otto, *Magie*, 143–218; Otto, "Historicizing 'Magic,'" 311–15 and passim; Fritz Graf, "Greece," in Frankfurter, *Ancient Magic*, 115–38. The words *ḥkꜣ* and *mageía* in Egyptian and Greek sources did not imply explicitly negative connotations per se until the Christian reinterpretation of them.

46. Such are the elements of the caricatural portrait of magicians, also defined as witches, wizards, or sorcerers, depending on the culture and on the context, as presented, e.g., in David Frankfurter, "Ancient Magic in a New Key: Refining an Exotic Discipline in the History of Religions," in Frankfurter, *Ancient Magic*, 1–20, esp. 5–8. See also the concise discussion of *Magie* as "white/positive" magic vs. *Zauber* as "black/negative" magic in Theis, *Magie und Raum*, 12–13. On the figure of the magician in antiquity and in Egyptian sources, see David Frankfurter, "Dynamics of Ritual Expertise in Antiquity and Beyond: Towards a New Taxonomy of 'Magicians,'" in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, ed. Paul A. Mirecki and Marvin W. Meyer, RGRW 141 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 159–78; Rita Lucarelli, "The Magician as a Literary Figure in Ancient Egyptian Texts," in *Cult Practices in Ancient Literatures: Egyptian, Near Eastern and Graeco-Roman Narratives in a Cross-Cultural Perspective; Proceedings of a Workshop at the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World, New York, May 16–17, 2016*, ed. Franziska Naether (2020); http://dlib.nyu.edu/awdl/isaw/isaw-papers/18/. Though "evil" *ḥkꜣ* certainly existed, as numerous textual sources attest to, nowhere in the ancient Egyptian records was this equated with sorcery, and no legislation against it has been preserved to us. Similarly, the perceived (scholarly) distinction between state and private magic/rituals is relevant only insofar as it clarifies their different contexts and scopes. However, it is important to bear in mind that the conceptual framework and principles of operation of state/temple rituals on the one hand, and private rituals on the other, were basically the same, so that the latter were not regarded as an ambiguous or unsanctioned practice. See Dielemann, "Egypt," 94–98. On magic rituals being performed in temples, thus within the sphere of the official, state religion, see Joachim F. Quack, "La magie au temple," in Koenig, *La magie en Égypte*, 41–68.

47. In the Teaching for King Merikare, 136–37, the creator god is said to have created *ḥkꜣw* for men as "weapons to ward off the blow of events," thus making it a defensive tool for them to be protected against adversities. The quotation and related references can be found in Ritner, *Magical Practice*, 20–21 with n. 79; Dieleman, 91 with n. 12. For rituals aimed at incapacitating hostile forces and examples of magic used with an evil purpose, see Ritner, 111–80, 191–220; Theis, 64–87; *ḥkꜣ* was in itself a neutral force, capable of affecting the world negatively or positively, depending on the will of the person practicing it (Dieleman, 87 with n. 2). As regards ancient Egypt, therefore, there can be no question of tension between private rituals—often dubbed as magic—and public, officially sanctioned religious practices. The distinction between these two spheres is an arbitrary one, and its validity is questionable, since they were complementary rather than operating with opposite goals (Ritner, 183–90; Theis, 10–18; Dieleman, 93–96).

48. No clear distinction among these figures is documented in the material and textual evidence; Theis, 40–46; Lucarelli, "Magician."

of the connotation of alterity and suspicion that is commonly ascribed to the term in folklore. In fact, it fell under the category of what is commonly referred to as religion. So how is our magic any different from the sphere of religion and ritual in ancient Egypt? The answer is that it is not.[49] After all, it is a matter of perception: What counts as magic as well as who magicians are depend on the single subjects assessing these phenomena, and on the social constructs of the culture in which they live and of which they are part. When the traditions that originated and were understood in the specific social context of the ancient Egyptian culture shifted into the newly emerged cosmopolitan milieu of the Graeco-Roman world, they stopped being treated as the indigenous traditions they were and became synonymous with alterity, hence foreign, exotic in a sense.[50] It is in this cosmopolitan world that a distinction between the traditional meaning of magic and the ritual sphere may be more justified, as it highlights differences between the conceptions of both religion and magic inside and outside of Egypt.[51]

At a first glance, the use of the term "magic" in Egyptology would seem justifiable through the existence of the Egyptian concept of *ḥkꜣ*—which Robert Ritner has suggested corresponds to the Western idea of magic, defined in broad terms as "any activity that seeks to obtain its goal outside the natural laws of cause and effect."[52] This assumption is based on a few cases, in which the Greek word μαγεία in the Acts of the Apostles (8:9) is translated as **ϩⲓⲕ** in Coptic.[53] However, it cannot be assumed that the meaning of the ancient Egyptian (emic) notion of *ḥkꜣ* stayed unchanged for millennia, until it was (re)interpreted by the Christians of Egypt through Greek documents. Moreover, there are many meanings that Western philosophy has subsumed under the term magic, and therefore such a monolithic approach to the question creates more problems than it fixes.[54]

Some scholars have suggested abandoning the use of the term magic altogether, precisely because of all the negative connotations associated with it that have just been outlined, and because it is virtually impossible to engage in an emic study of what magic in the ancient world encompassed while using the etic concept conveyed by the English word "magic."[55] However, if we were to take such a step, we would be faced with the problem of how to best deal with this or other concepts, which were never labeled unequivocally in Egyptian—such as religion itself, or art, for exam-

49. See the discussions in Robert K. Ritner, "The Religious, Social, and Legal Parameters of Traditional Egyptian Magic," in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, ed. Marvin W. Meyer and Paul A. Mirecki, RGRW 129 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 43–60; Quack, "La magie au temple."

50. Concerning the image of Egypt shaped by the Greeks, who were deeply fascinated by that culture, see the study by Jan Assmann, *Weisheit und Mysterium: Das Bild der Griechen von Ägypten* (Munich: Beck, 2000). David Frankfurter has suggested that the stereotype of Egypt as a land of magic and wondrous, exotic rituals, which is found in countless Greek literary works from Homer through late antiquity, was adopted and even appropriated by hellenized Egyptian priests. According to Frankfurter's model, once officiants of the Egyptian religion within Egyptian temples, priests now turned into independent and itinerant ritual experts, who catered their expertise to a foreign clientele and who, by adopting the image of the exotic *magos* from Graeco-Roman literature to fit the stereotype, ended up promoting the Graeco-Egyptian magical tradition across the Roman Empire and beyond. See David Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt: Assimilation and Resistance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), esp. 198–237; Frankfurter, "Ancient Magic in a New Key," 15 with n. 33. On Egyptian priests of the Graeco-Roman period as repositories of traditional knowledge and wisdom and on their role as ritual practitioners, philosophers, and magicians, see the comprehensive study by Marina Escolano-Poveda, *The Egyptian Priests of the Graeco-Roman Period: An Analysis on the Basis of the Egyptian and Graeco-Roman Literary and Paraliterary Sources*, SSR 29 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2020), esp. 283–326, reassessing the notion that the Roman conquest resulted in a deliberate attack against Egyptian traditions and temples and refuting Frankfurter's "priest to magician" and "stereotype appropriation" models, and 329–38, discussing what defines an Egyptian priest.

51. See Gideon Bohak, "The Diffusion of the Greco-Egyptian Magical Tradition in Late Antiquity," in *Greco-Egyptian Interactions: Literature, Translation, and Culture, 500 BC–AD* 300, ed. Ian Rutherford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 357–81, briefly surveying the slow process, at the end of which the Graeco-Egyptian magical tradition was eventually supplanted by the Christian alternative.

52. Ritner, *Magical Practice*, 1. An analysis of what the term *ḥkꜣ* encompassed in ancient Egypt falls outside of the scope of the present chapter. On this, see, e.g., Rune Nyord, *Breathing Flesh: Conceptions of the Body in the Ancient Egyptian Coffin Texts*, CNIP 37 (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2009), 355–81; Theis, *Magie und Raum*, 35–40; Dieleman, "Egypt."

53. Ritner, 14–15. For the Greek concepts of *magos*, *mageia*, and cognates, see, e.g., Graf, "Greece."

54. See the critiques to Ritner's approach in Nyord, "Egyptian and Egyptological Concepts," 10–12. See also Otto, "Zauberhaftes Ägypten," 63–70.

55. E.g., Otto, *Magie*; Frankfurter, "Ancient Magic in a New Key," 4, 10–11.

ple.[56] Magic shall therefore be used in the present work as a utilitarian, heuristic category to designate a cross-cultural notion, whose emic definition in ancient Egypt remains dubious, and in full awareness of all its implications and pitfalls.[57] Words such as "magic" and "magical" could serve to indicate qualities intrinsic to certain areas of ritual practices and materials, by means of which the ancient Egyptians tried to actively influence and modify their world beyond the basic natural laws, thereby integrating it into the cosmic domain of those unfathomable numinous forces that originally created it and still governed it.[58] They could also help define certain (im)material aspects of rituals that are otherwise grouped under the umbrella of mysticism.[59] Therefore, whenever conceptions surrounding Egyptian magic and its various means and manifestations are encountered in the course of this study, the term should be understood against the foundation just sketched, and not as referring to naïve, liminal beliefs and/or a prelogical way of thinking. Magic indeed represented one of the channels through which the Egyptians could attempt to understand and interact with the inscrutable expanse of the cosmos and of its multiple phenomena, albeit in a prescientific fashion.

1.3. Structure of the Study

This study opens with an overview of previous scholarly discussions on the nature and localization of the Duat (§1.4). The analysis of the funerary texts mentioning the Duat starts in chapter 2, which deals with the Pyramid Texts, the earliest surviving corpus of religious literature from ancient Egypt. While this collection of magical and ritual texts emphasizes the king's attaining of a beatified state known as *akh* (*ꜣḫ*) and the cultic procedures aimed at ensuring the success of his perpetual afterlife journey, it does not provide a detailed description of the Duat or a specific location for it, but it rather appears to mix a solar-celestial afterlife destiny with a chthonic one, embodied by the gods Re and Osiris, respectively. Although a proper temporal and spatial articulation of the journey through the Duat cannot be isolated satisfactorily on the basis of this corpus, it can be established that its texts were deliberately adapted to the architectural frame of the subterranean chambers of the pyramids, in which they were inscribed. Accordingly, the spatialization of the spells contributed to their functioning in conjunction with their (architectonic) support (§2.5).

Chapter 3 focuses on the largest corpus of funerary texts that is preserved from ancient Egypt, the Coffin Texts. These are now recognized unanimously to represent an evolution of the Pyramid Texts and started to appear in non-royal contexts already at the end of the Old Kingdom, gradually superseding the earlier collection (§3.1). Within this corpus, the Book of the Two Ways (of Rosetau), appearing on the floorboards of early Middle Kingdom elite coffins from the necropolis of Deir el-Bersheh, is the first illustrated composition from ancient Egypt, mapping the beyond and its twofold path (§3.1.1). The Coffin Texts represent a bridge between the earlier conceptions of the afterlife as exemplified by the (allegedly) exclusively royal Pyramid Texts and the royal Theban compositions of the New Kingdom, the major themes of which they anticipate in many ways. The primary carrier of these texts, namely the coffin, acted as a miniaturized universe, with texts and decoration working together in realizing magically its function as both a ritual element and a vessel guaranteeing passage to the next world (§3.3). The study of this transitional phase of funerary literature provides valuable insights not only into the underlying evolution of some important theological notions, foremost of all the Duat, but also as regards certain significant socio-cultural changes that Egypt was undergoing in that period. These changes, usually subsumed under the label "democratization of the afterlife," have been

56. Humanistic scholarship depends greatly on descriptive categories that, though rooted in the observation of phenomena and human behavior and experiences characterizing various cultures, do not hold up when scrutinized under the lens of the emic concepts. In other words, religion as well as magic are the creation of the scholar looking in from an outside perspective. As Jonathan Smith aptly put it, "religion has no independent existence apart from the academy"; Smith, *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), xi. These remarks apply equally well to magic. See Frankfurter, 11–13; Kemp, *Ancient Egypt*, 5–6.

57. See Satlow, "Disappearing Categories," 293–95; Frankfurter, 13–20.

58. See the tentative definition of magic in Ritner, *Magical Practice*, 67–72; Dieleman, "Egypt," 87.

59. On mysticism and initiation practices, see Edward F. Wente, "Mysticism in Pharaonic Egypt?" *JNES* 41 (1982): 161–79.

shown to be far more complex than a simple appropriation of royal privileges by private individuals, and have their roots in the period of political instability following the end of the Old Kingdom (§3.2).

The notion of Duat as an increasingly well-defined locale became more clearly delineated at the beginning of the New Kingdom, when the division of the universe into separate domains—sky, earth, and Duat—begins to be attested regularly in funerary and nonfunerary texts, among which the Book of the Dead features prominently; this is the subject of chapter 4. This corpus represents the direct continuation of the Old Kingdom and especially Middle Kingdom funerary tradition and, like the Coffin Texts, it was available (mostly) to private individuals. Continuing the tendency toward a better systematization of knowledge started already in the Coffin Texts, the Book of the Dead contains many titles, colophons, and paratextual notations in general, which clarify the use and significance of the various spells. Thus, besides its primarily funerary collocation and its stated concern with the next world, this corpus provides further insight into the ancient Egyptian cultic dimension. This is exemplified, for instance, by the preeminent position that funerary offerings and the deceased's freedom of movement in the otherworld gain in the composition (§4.3.2).

The temporary nocturnal union of Re and Osiris, a principle usually referred to as "solar-Osirian unity," represents the focal point of the New Kingdom Underworld Books (*Unterweltsbücher*), which are the topic of chapter 5.[60] These describe, through texts and illustrations, the nocturnal journey of the sun through the Duat, which was imagined primarily as being located beneath the earth. Despite the preeminence of a chthonic characterization of the otherworld, however, at the same time this also retains celestial features, most likely due to the intrusion of older religious notions, such as they were expressed already in the Pyramid Texts. The selection of the compositions designated collectively as Underworld Books can vary considerably in modern Egyptological scholarship. The ones considered in this study (Amduat, Book of Gates, Book of Caverns, Book of the Earth) are generally regarded as the core of this group.[61] Some others will not be discussed, for a number of reasons. These include the Book of Adoring Re in the West, better known as the Litany of Re, an illustrated composition attested irregularly from the time of Thutmosis III on and consisting of a series of litanies and addresses to the sun god, with matching vignettes.[62] This text, even though it has been shown to complement the Underworld Books in the tombs in which it occurs, represents a more liturgical composition, both in terms of structure and content.[63] Another New Kingdom treatise omitted from this study is the so-called Enigmatic Netherworld Books of the Solar-Osirian Unity, which is attested on the second gilded shrine of Tutankhamun, on the ceiling of corridor H in the tomb of Ramesses VI, and on the right wall of corridor D in the tomb of Ramesses IX.[64] The heterogeneous contents and diversity of arrangements of the sources belonging

60. Andrzej Niwiński, "The Solar-Osirian Unity as Principle of the Theology of the 'State of Amun' in Thebes in the 21st Dynasty," *JEOL* 30 (1987–1988): 89–106; John C. Darnell, *The Enigmatic Netherworld Books of the Solar-Osirian Unity: Cryptographic Compositions in the Tombs of Tutankhamun, Ramesses VI and Ramesses IX*, OBO 198 (Fribourg: Academic Press; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004). As will be reiterated later in the course of this work, this concept has been reviewed and criticized over the years by a number of scholars, including most recently in the thorough discussion by Smith, *Following Osiris*, 299–355, who proposes to characterize the relationship between these two gods as a "solar-Osirian cycle" rather than a unity in the proper sense. The necessity of reassessing the notion of the alleged solar-Osirian unity, especially with regard to the New Kingdom Underworld Books, has been advocated also by Joachim F. Quack, "Anrufungen an Osiris als nächtlichen Sonnengott im Rahmen eines Königsrituals (Pap. Berlin P. 23026)," in *Forschung in der Papyrussammlung: Eine Festgabe für das Neue Museum*, ed. Verena M. Lepper, ÄOPH 1 (Berlin: Academic, 2012), 165–87, esp. 180–81. See esp. chs. 4 and 5 for details.

61. The corpus of the Book of the Earth is a loose collection of vignettes and texts that, more than other Underworld Books, never had a fixed textual tradition, as is demonstrated by its attestations, which vary considerably across the sources. The appellation Book of the Earth is retained in the present study to refer generically to the corpus of texts and images usually grouped under this heading, or when referring to a specific source of said corpus, e.g. the Book of the Earth of Ramesses VI. Since, however, each source ultimately constitutes a unique Book of the Earth on its own, the designation *Books* of the Earth will be employed whenever different versions of this corpus are referenced. See §5.5 for the discussion of this corpus, its nomenclature, and additional references.

62. Erik Hornung, *Das Buch der Anbetung des Re im Westen (Sonnenlitanei): nach den Versionen des Neuen Reiches: Teil 1; Text*, AegHelv 2 (Geneva: Belles-Lettres, 1975); Hornung, *Das Buch der Anbetung des Re im Westen (Sonnenlitanei): nach den Versionen des Neuen Reiches: Teil 2; Übersetzung und Kommentar* , AegHelv 3 (Geneva: Belles-Lettres, 1976).

63. Winfried Barta, *Die Bedeutung der Jenseitsbücher für den verstorbenen König*, MÄS 42 (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1985), 11–15.

64. Darnell, *Enigmatic Netherworld Books*. In this and older publications (e.g., *PM* 1.2), the corridor in the tomb of Ramesses VI is identified

to this corpus make it more appropriate to speak of a plurality of books to describe it. Their central theme, like the other Underworld Books, is the sun god's journey through the Duat and his interaction with the beings he meets there.[65] However, beyond this, little evidence regarding the conceptualization of the Duat is found. Additionally, the Awakening of Osiris and the Transit of Solar Barques represents a very peculiar composition, which does not fit entirely the criteria generally ascribed to the Underworld Books.[66] Rather, it is a visual compendium of the cosmographic tradition of the New Kingdom and consists of two complementary images, which encode the perpetuation of the solar circuit across the celestial and terrestrial realms by means of the nocturnal union of Re and Osiris and the transmission of kingship from the latter god to the Horus/living king. Occasionally, other short compositions occur alongside the Underworld Books, such as the Spell of the Twelve Caverns (i.e., BD 168), which seems to have existed at the crossroads of the Book of the Dead and the Underworld Books.[67] This has also been omitted here, as it does not contribute significant details to the analysis of the notion of Duat. Finally, another text, which was included more or less regularly in royal tombs, namely the Opening of the Mouth ritual, does not fall within the genre of the Underworld Books, and has therefore not been included in the discussion.[68]

A closely related, celestial counterpart of the Underworld Books in royal tombs is the group of texts known as the Books of the Sky (*Himmelsbücher*), which are discussed in chapter 6. These include the Book of Nut (§6.2), the Book of the Night (§6.3), and the Book of the Day (§6.4).[69] Although these compositions appear alongside the Underworld Books mostly—but not only—in the Valley of the Kings, and even though they also deal with cosmographic notions, they have a more celestial and astronomical focus than the Underworld Books.[70] The Books of the Sky are not only concerned with the two halves of the solar journey (Book of the Day and Book of the Night), but also describe the astronomical events related to the course of the celestial bodies in the cosmos (Book of Nut). The texts and illustrations forming these compositions are framed by the arched body of the goddess Nut spreading over the ceilings of tombs, most often doubled to represent the diurnal and nocturnal skies. The Book of the Day and the Book of the Night can moreover be interpreted as (partially) liturgical compositions and, as such, they are quite removed from the purpose of a cosmographic mapping of the netherworld—on which the Underworld Books are centered. Finally, another New Kingdom celestial composition—the Book of the Heavenly Cow—has been omitted

as "G." However, the system of classification of the various components of New Kingdom royal tombs currently used is slightly different, as explained in §5.1.2.

65. According to Darnell's interpretation, the central motif of these books is the emergence of a giant deity at the eastern horizon at dawn. This supergod, which is present in all three versions of the composition, spans the height of the whole cosmos and is argued to represent the permanent union of Re and Osiris at the end of the night, so that the two gods leave the Duat together as a single entity. However, there are a few substantial problems underlying these conclusions, most notably the fact that the texts never speak of a permanent union of the two gods and that the giant deity, which Darnell suggests is the unified Re-Osiris, is never labeled as such. For a detailed critique of the concept of the solar-Osirian unity as described by Darnell and other scholars over the years, see Joachim F. Quack, "Ein Unterweltsbuch der solar-osirianischen Einheit?" *WO* 35 (2005): 22–47; Smith, *Following Osiris*, 306–7, 311–22.

66. Joshua A. Roberson, *The Awakening of Osiris and the Transit of the Solar Barques: Royal Apotheosis in a Most Concise Book of the Underworld and Sky*, OBO 262 (Fribourg: Academic Press; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013).

67. Alexandre Piankoff, *The Wandering of the Soul*, BollSer 40.6 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 40–114 with pls. 10–42 ("The Quererts"); Daniel M. Méndez Rodríguez, "pBarcelona E-615: Unveiling a New Source of the Book of the Twelve Caverns," *TrabEg* 6 (2015): 71–106.

68. Eberhard Otto, *Das ägyptische Mundöffnungsritual*, 2 vols., ÄgAbh 3 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1960); Hans W. Fischer-Elfert, *Die Vision von der Statue im Stein: Studien zum altägyptischen Mundöffnungsritual*, SAWH 5 (Heidelberg: Winter, 1998).

69. The Book of Nut represents the only exception to the criterion set at the beginning of this study, according to which only texts up to the New Kingdom were considered for discussion. In fact, the inclusion of the demotic glosses of pCarlsberg I and Ia in the discussion of the Book of Nut was necessary, as they are fundamental in elucidating concepts that were expressed in too concise a way or too unclearly in the New Kingdom monumental versions.

70. The Osireion of Seti I at Abydos is the only New Kingdom monument outside the royal Theban tombs in which Underworld Books and Books of the Sky are attested together, some of them for the first time. See Alexandra von Lieven, "Bemerkungen zum Dekorationsprogramm des Osireion in Abydos," in *6. Ägyptologische Tempeltagung: Funktion und Gebrauch altägyptischer Tempelräume; Leiden, 4.–7. September 2002*, ed. Ben J. J. Haring and Andrea Klug (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2007), 167–86.

in the present study, since it does not belong properly to the genre of the Books of the Sky, given its primarily etiological-mythical and secondarily cosmographic character.[71] Among other things, it deals with the rebellion of humankind against the creator god—an event that provides the mythical backdrop for the separation of the cosmos into three different spheres (sky, earth, and Duat)—and it moreover retains a major ritualistic component.

Therefore, the present study deals with ten major ancient Egyptian funerary compositions, preserved from the Old Kingdom to the end of the New Kingdom. Most of the names given to these texts originate from modern scholarship and are not the original Egyptian titles. Generally, the modern designations either refer to the primary carrier, on which the texts appear (e.g., Pyramid and Coffin Texts) or derive from what is perceived as the main subject or dominant feature of the various compositions (e.g., Book of Gates, Book of Caverns, Book of the Earth). The ancient names, where preserved, rather refer to the function of the texts: the "Book of the Hidden Chamber," for example, is the original title of the composition know today as Amduat—derived from *ỉmy-dwꜣt*, "that which is in the Duat"—but this was actually the collective name by which the Egyptians identified the entire genre of the Underworld Books (§5.1). In order to avoid confusion, the terminology used in this study follows standard scholarly conventions, even where ancient titles are preserved. Thus, the more common appellative Book of the Dead is used here to refer to the corpus known originally as the Spells for Going Forth by Day (§4.1), and the name Amduat is retained to designate the ancient Egyptian Book of the Hidden Chamber. No original titles are attested for the Book of Gates, the Book of Caverns, and the Book of the Earth—with the last name being the one most commonly used in modern Egyptological literature for a composition that was previously known as the Book of the Creation of the Solar Disk (§5.5). Likewise, the designation Book of Nut is maintained here to refer to a composition that has been shown to preserve its ancient title, that is, Fundamentals (or Blueprint) of the Course of the Stars (§6.2). No original titles are attested for the other two Books of the Sky, the Book of the Day and the Book of the Night, which are thus known because they are concerned with the diurnal and the nocturnal halves of the solar journey, respectively. The division between Underworld (or Netherworld) Books and Books of the Sky is also a modern one, and is based on the fact that the former compositions focus on the chthonic aspect of the beyond, whereas the celestial body of the goddess Nut, used as pictorial background of the cyclical journey of the sun across the sky, forms the backdrop of the latter.[72] Finally, whenever it is mentioned, the treatise known originally as Book of Adoring Re in the West is called Litany of Re.

Lastly, chapter 7 first provides a brief excursus on the conceptualization of the next world in other cultures of the ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean world (§7.1). The comparison between the Duat and notions of the afterlife of other polytheistic religions may help further our understanding of the specificity and uniqueness (or lack thereof) of the ancient Egyptian formulation. A desirable avenue of investigation to pursue in the future is indeed the evolution of the notion of Duat in post-New Kingdom Egypt, when the Mediterranean cultures were in much closer contact with one another, with a constant exchange of trading goods, peoples, and ideas. Finally, the epilogue (§7.2) offers an overview of the major conclusions of this study, summarizing the results of the diachronic investigation undertaken through its various chapters.

1.4. Previous Scholarship on the Notion of Duat

As stated above, the subject of the funerary texts discussed in the present study is the journey through the otherworld. Among the locales where the transfigured dead were believed to lead their postmortem existence, we find the Duat.[73] Despite representing a major component of the afterlife belief system, scholars to date do not agree on a

71. Erik Hornung, *Der Ägyptische Mythos von der Himmelskuh: Eine Ätiologie des Unvollkommenen*, OBO 46 (Fribourg: Academic Press; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982).

72. E.g., Hornung, *Books of the Afterlife*.

73. This is the most common spelling of the word Duat, which will be maintained throughout this study. Though three main orthographies

unanimous definition of what the Egyptians meant by the term. The characterization of this realm was accomplished, on the one hand, by equating its imagined features with those familiar from the world of the living, and, on the other, by contrasting these same features with their earthly counterparts, with a view to setting life in the beyond apart from daily life on earth. The tension between these diametrically opposed approaches may have contributed significantly to the varied accounts of what the Duat was and where it was located within the cosmos. The otherworld, in fact, could be imagined to be celestial or chthonic, and it could even be regarded as being neither earth nor sky, with all these aspects complementing one another and overlapping at any time. It seems likely that no single delineation of it ever existed, as the Egyptians themselves were aware of the fact that it could designate various domains at any one time, and that the emphasis on any one of its meanings could shift with time.[74] The fact that inconsistencies in the conceptualization of such an important notion were tolerated, leading to a seemingly inextricable complexity of layers nested within one another, has made research on the Duat seem troublesome and frustrating. Perhaps this is the reason why, to date, no comprehensive study of its diachronic development has appeared—with the exception of a few more or less concise encyclopedia entries or short summaries in works discussing Egyptian afterlife beliefs or related topics.[75]

The twofold characterization of the Duat has been generally recognized in texts of all periods.[76] However, because this concept appears first in the Pyramid Texts, this is the first corpus on which scholars have focused when attempting to grasp what this notion encompassed, and the one to which most contributions refer. While it is usually accepted that the spells of the Pyramid Texts point mostly to a celestial postmortem destiny for the king, and more specifically a stellar one, the multiplicity of cosmological notions intertwined in the texts makes it difficult to discern that they nevertheless convey a somewhat coherent vision of the afterlife, in which the royal deceased gained access to the daily cosmic cycle, thus achieving immortality. The Duat plays an important role within this framework, but has so far eluded an unambiguous definition due to the cited multiple layers of meaning condensed in the texts. Some spells seem to point to a (partially) subterranean location of the Duat or at least to its close association with a chthonic domain, possibly commensurate with the earth and the sky, while most seem to locate it in the sky.[77]

Accordingly, at least since the beginning of the twentieth century, scholars generally held the view that two distinct traditions of the afterlife may be detected in the Pyramid Texts, which originally existed separately and were only subsequently mixed together, creating what Adolf Erman ventured to call a "jumble."[78] On the one hand, a tradi-

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of the term (*ḏ3t*, *dw3t*, *d3*) are attested to various degrees across the funerary texts analyzed, these can be considered just variants, which in most cases do not affect the meaning. James P. Allen, "The Cosmology of the Pyramid Texts," in Simpson, *Religion and Philosophy*, 21–22 with n. 143. Further remarks in §2.4.

74. Susanne Bickel, "Die Jenseitsfahrt des Re nach Zeugen der Sargtexte," in *Ein ägyptisches Glasperlenspiel: Ägyptologische Beiträge für Erik Hornung aus seinem Schülerkreis*, ed. Andreas Brodbeck (Berlin: Mann, 1998), 41–56; Manassa, *Late Egyptian Underworld*, 437.

75. It is impossible to list here all the various contributions—even minimal—on the characterization of the Duat in ancient Egyptian textual and visual sources. A good starting point is represented by the following short entries: Erik Hornung, "Dat," *LÄ* 1:994–95; Ursula Rößler-Köhler, "Jenseitsvorstellungen," *LÄ* 3:252–67; Hans Bonnet, *Reallexikon der Ägyptischen Religionsgeschichte*, 3rd ed. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2000), 148–49, s.v. "Dat." Generic treatments of the subject are found in the most diverse kinds of works. See, e.g., Alan J. Spencer, *Death in Ancient Egypt* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982); Erik Hornung, *Die Nachtfahrt der Sonne: Eine altägyptische Beschreibung des Jenseits* (Zurich: Artemis & Winkler, 1991), 207–21; Assmann, *Death and Salvation*, passim; John. H. Taylor, *Death and the Afterlife in Ancient Egypt* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Taylor, *Journey through the Afterlife: Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead* (London: British Museum Press; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), just to name a few. Additional references will be provided in the course of this section about earlier scholarship.

76. E.g., Erik Hornung, *Ägyptische Unterweltsbücher: Eingeleitet, übersetzt und erläutert*, Bibliothek der alten Welt (Zurich: Artemis, 1972); Hornung, *Die Nachtfahrt der Sonne*, 208; Rößler-Köhler, "Jenseitsvorstellungen," 266 with n. 25; Spencer, *Death in Ancient Egypt*, 140; Rolf Krauss, *Astronomische Konzepte und Jenseitsvorstellungen in den Pyramidentexten*, ÄgAbh 59 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1997), 207–9.

77. Allen, "Cosmology"; Harold M. Hays, "Unreading the Pyramids," *BIFAO* 109 (2009): 196 with n. 5; Harco O. Willems, *The Coffin of Heqata (Cairo JdE 36418): A Case Study of Egyptian Funerary Culture of the Early Middle Kingdom*, OLA 70 (Leuven: Peeters, 1996), 366.

78. Adolf Erman, *A Handbook of Egyptian Religion*, trans. A. S. Griffith (London: Constable, 1907), 94, 97–98. Similar conclusions can be found in Hermann Kees, *Totenglauben und Jenseitsvorstellungen der alten Ägypter*: *Grundlagen und Entwicklung bis zum Ende des Mittleren Reiches*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Akademie, 1956), 67–97. For a summary and a critique of Erman's theories, see, e.g., Krauss, *Astronomische Konzepte*, 2–3.

tion seemingly reserved for the king, and entailing detachment from earth and resurrection through a celestial-solar process of ascent to the sky, was postulated, whereby the deceased joined the sun, the moon, and the stars.[79] On the other hand stood a tradition that was not exclusively royal, which envisaged a chthonic afterlife, implying resurrection through interment and connecting the overcoming of death with burial in the west and the necropolis.[80] To this tradition belonged funerary gods such as Anubis, Khentiamentiu, and most importantly Osiris, who plays a major role in these texts, being the prototype of all the deceased by virtue of his mythical story of death and resurrection.[81]

As a result, some scholars have understood the Duat as (at least at times) being the chthonic realm of the god Osiris, while Kurt Sethe defined it as the celestial counterpart of the daily sky, though conceding that it might have been imagined also as a netherworld.[82] In more recent years, James Allen has claimed that, while the Duat is associated with the stars and depicted as a cosmic region that can be crossed in barks and is inhabited by deities on the one hand, on the other it seems to have been visualized chiefly or exclusively as lying beneath the earth.[83] The latter proposition would find confirmation in the fact that, starting with the Coffin Texts, a lower Duat (*d3t ḫryt*) appears. On the basis of a possible subterranean location of the Duat, Allen further argues that the Pyramid Texts associate the concept of "secrecy of places," usually attributed to Osiris and the king in the afterlife, to another (virtually) inaccessible place, namely the tomb, and more specifically the burial chamber, which he sees as the architectural realization of the Duat.[84] However, this conclusion ignores two important elements. The first is represented by all the references to a celestial location of the Duat that had been identified previously by scholars such as Sethe, Hans Bonnet, and Erik Hornung. Second, the existence of a lower Duat should not be taken in itself as an indication that the Duat was located beneath the earth, as this conclusion overlooks the simultaneous existence of an upper Duat.[85]

James Breasted, on the other hand, postulated a further subdivision of the celestial tradition of the hereafter into an older, "stellar" layer centered on the circumpolar/imperishable stars, and another, later layer originating in the solar beliefs, which eventually would have absorbed the former.[86] This vision was also advocated by Hermann Kees,

79. It would seem that, at least in one of the two streams of tradition coexisting in this corpus, the destiny of the king was thought to be different from that of ordinary men. However, the alleged royal exclusivity of a celestial afterlife as expressed in these texts is challenged by evidence pointing to the fact that some of the material incorporated into them had been used previously outside of the royal funerary sphere and had been adapted to fit a royal beneficiary only at a later time (Bickel, "Everybody's Afterlife"). The references to the celestial sphere and the king moving toward it are far too many to be enumerated here. Some of them are cited in the chapter on the Pyramid Texts in order to illustrate the conceptualization of the afterlife that they convey. See also the references listed in Daniela C. Luft and Christoffer Theis, "Jenseitsvorstellungen im Alten Ägypten: Ein Einblick in das dritte und zweite vorchristliche Jahrtausend," in *Jenseitsvorstellungen im Orient: Kongreßakten der 2. Tagung der RVO (3./4. Juni 2011, Tübingen)*, ed. Predrag Bukovec and Barbara Kolkmann-Klamt (Hamburg: Kovač, 2013), 30 with n. 41.

80. The west in this period was characterized as a metaphysical region distinct from the land of the living; at the same time, however, it could also designate the physical domain of the necropolis, with which it overlapped. See, e.g., Andrey O. Bolshakov, *Man and His Double in Egyptian Ideology of the Old Kingdom*, ÄAT 37 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1997), 135–42. The fact that this type of next world was also available to private individuals in the Old Kingdom is proven, e.g., by the attestation of offering lists and rituals in private contexts starting with the Second Dynasty. This suggests that some common ground did indeed exist between royal and nonroyal spheres (Bickel, "Everybody's Afterlife," 123–26).

81. John G. Griffiths, *The Origins of Osiris and His Cult*, SHR 40 (Leiden: Brill, 1980). Osiris was the god of the dead for ordinary men, but he was to have no power over the deceased king. This fact, which seems to contradict the concept that the king laid claim to Osiris's power for himself, rather means that the ruler wished to become Osiris, but without being subject to the god.

82. James H. Breasted, *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt: Lectures Delivered on the Morse Foundation at Union Theological Seminar* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912). For Sethe's opinion, see ÜKPT 1:47–52, 284.

83. Allen, "Cosmology," 21–24; Allen, *Pyramid Texts*, 353.

84. Allen, "Cosmology," 25; Allen, "Reading a Pyramid," in *Hommages à Jean Leclant*, ed. Catherine Berger, Gisèle Clerc, and Nicolas Grimal, 4 vols., BiEtud 106 (Cairo: IFAO, 1994), 1:5–28. On the theories equating the pyramids' subterranean chambers with parts of the cosmos, see §2.5. The identification of the term Duat with the tomb eventually became so embedded in the Egyptian mindset that, by Ramesside times, it could be employed to refer to its innermost chamber. See, e.g., *Wb* 5:416.4–5; Hays, "Unreading the Pyramids," 196 with nn. 6–7. More details are provided in ch. 5.

85. See similar remarks in Darnell, *Enigmatic Netherworld Books*, 380 with n. 29. For references to the upper and lower Duat, see, e.g., Hornung, "Dat," 994–95 with n. 4. These notions will be explored further in chs. 3, 5, and 6.

86. Breasted, *Development of Religion*, 101–2. Thus, he ultimately recognized the existence of two aspects of the Duat—celestial and chthonic—that are sometimes mixed even within the same spell (Breasted, 144 with n. 2).

who, however, also admitted that the chthonic-Osirian Duat could coincide with either the interior of the earth or with a lower, night sky or *Gegenhimmel*, which was the realm of the decanal stars and therefore the counterpart of the diurnal sky.[87] Later, Raymond Faulkner suggested the identification of Osiris with Orion, thereby transposing the Osirian aspect of the hereafter entirely onto the stellar realm, which he still contrasted with a distinct, solar tradition.[88] Various scholars over the course of years have criticized this approach, starting with Winfried Barta, who suggested that, in the Pyramid Texts, an entirely solar hereafter incorporated the stellar tradition as well.[89] Accordingly, the Osirian afterlife would be just one aspect of the solar cycle.

More recently, Rolf Krauss has also dealt with the issues surrounding the definition and the localization of the Duat in the Pyramid Texts, reconsidering the question of whether in these texts a stellar level preceded a later, more complicated stage featuring a united solar-stellar destiny of the deceased, as had been suggested by Faulkner.[90] In his reconstruction of the constellation system of the night sky as it is described in this corpus, he came to the conclusion that, since the Pyramid Texts are often concerned with the *s3ḥ*-Orion-Osiris constellation, and since this was known to move from east to west in the heavenly Duat, located south of the winding waterway, the chthonic Duat mentioned throughout the spells could be associated with the subhorizontal southern sky from which *s3ḥ*-Orion rises.[91] Starting from Barta's findings, he moreover observed that, even though the so-called circumpolar stars (*i.ḫmw-sk*) in the northern sky were part of the solar cycle in this corpus, some stellar notions such as Orion, Sothis, and the Lone Star (*sb3 wꜥty*) appeared to function independently from it.[92] Thus, he concluded with the postulate that, in the Pyramid Texts, an earlier, independent stellar stratum of beliefs is inseparably intertwined with a solar stratum with solarized stellar notions. These two layers, in turn, would be combined with a third—and, according to him, intrusive—characterization of the Duat as a chthonic domain.

Although certainly providing some valuable insight into the conceptualization of the topography of the afterlife in this corpus, Krauss's approach requires a few corrections. First, the localization of the Duat in the Pyramid Texts is ambiguous and cannot therefore be defined with as much certainty and precision as he would have. Second, the evidence for his hypothesis appears to be inconclusive, especially since Krauss does not seem to have considered a number of spells situating the Duat in a context different from the subhorizontal southern sky that he postulated (ch. 2). Silvia Wiebach-Koepke, for instance, accepts that the original location of the Duat may have been the southern sky, or possibly a region close to the southern horizon, but she also recognizes that it changed over time.[93] By the New Kingdom, the cyclical course of the sun became aligned with the diurnal and nocturnal skies, having its midday peak in the south and traveling in the Duat in a northern region at nighttime (fig. 1.1), a system that may have been behind the importance of the Imperishable Stars in the northern night sky already in the Pyramid Texts.[94] Moreover, in keep-

87. Kees, *Totenglauben*, 224–25; see also Bonnet, *Reallexikon*, 148.

88. Raymond O. Faulkner, "The King and the Star-Religion in the Pyramid Texts," *JNES* 25 (1966): 153–61. Similarly, Loius V. Žabkar, *A Study of the* Ba *Concept in Ancient Egyptian Texts*, SAOC 34 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 126–27 with n. 13.

89. Winfried Barta, "Funktion und Lokalisierung der Zirkumpolarsterne in den Pyramidentexten," *ZÄS* 107 (1980): 1–4; Barta, *Die Bedeutung der Pyramidentexte für den verstorbenen König*, MÄS 39 (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1981), 136–50.

90. Krauss, *Astronomische Konzepte*, 150–52, 209–15, 284–85. Krauss's contribution on this topic basically represents a return to the ideas that had already been expressed by Breasted (see above).

91. Examples of the association, and sometimes open identification, of Osiris and *s3ḥ*-Orion are discussed in ch. 2 (especially §§2.2 and 2.4). In virtue of his association with cosmic cycles such as the rising and setting of Orion, Osiris eventually became linked to the cycle of vegetation, namely the natural process of perishing and flourishing again, which plants and crops undergo on a yearly basis.

92. All these cosmological notions are discussed in the next chapter (§2.3 and passim).

93. Silvia Wiebach-Koepke, *Sonnenlauf und kosmische Regeneration: Zur Systematik der Lebensprozesse in den Unterweltsbüchern*, ÄAT 71 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2007), 173.

94. Willems, *Heqata*, 366. This finds corroboration also in the much later Books of the Sky, dealing with the daily course of the sun and the other celestial bodies, and attested for the first time after the Amarna period (Hornung, *Books of the Afterlife*, 112). In particular, the Book of Nut speaks of a northern opening of the Duat, close to the *qbḥw* region, which seems to have been part of the outermost stretch of the cosmos, located outside the sky/Nut; see the remarks in §6.2.2. Although the Book of Nut is attested first only much later, in the Osireion of Seti I at

ing with the understanding of sunrise as a mythical process of (re)birth from the sky goddess Nut, the Duat could also be located within the sky, namely inside the body of the goddess, who was believed to swallow the sun at night and give birth to him every morning. Thus, the nocturnal portion of the journey of the sun and the deceased could be envisaged as taking place simultaneously in a sub-subterranean region and in the interior of the sky, depending on which mythology was adopted in different contexts.[95]

Secondly, it seems almost impossible to find plausible criteria to implement and justify the artificial separation between a supposedly exclusively Osirian-stellar tradition and a purely solar one, as Faulkner had postulated.[96] In fact, the interrelation of the two deities representing the solar and stellar destinies of the deceased, namely Re and Osiris, is already sketched in the Pyramid Texts, and their (temporary) nocturnal union, which lies at the core of the Book of the Dead and Underworld Books, can be traced back to at least the Coffin Texts.[97] As a result, solar and stellar notions are closely intertwined in the Old Kingdom corpus, as they are part of a single cosmic cycle based on the alternation between day (diurnal sky/sun) and night (nocturnal sky/stars).

Furthermore, Natalie Beaux has conducted an interesting study on the meaning of the term Duat in the Pyramid Texts, based on the context in which it occurs and on the determinatives used in conjunction with it.[98] This approach is particularly valuable since, as is now well accepted, the use of determinatives in the Egyptian writing system extended beyond their signaling the end of a word. In fact, they worked as iconic tools to classify the world, mirroring the organization and categorization of knowledge, hence the collective mind, of the ancient Egyptian culture, while at the same time providing the reader with a wide variety of encyclopedic, pragmatic, and grammatical information.[99] Therefore, if determinatives are to be taken as icons encoding elements of the Egyptian cultural knowledge in a condensed form, a complex fabric of relations and symbolic meanings can be unveiled behind these mute reading aids, providing additional information on the words they classified.[100] Based on the determinatives accompanying the

Abydos, some conceptions underlying it and regarding the topography of the cosmos are alluded to already in the Pyramid Texts. Nonetheless, one should always be careful in drawing parallels between sources that are so far apart in time, especially considering that the notions behind them might have evolved over the centuries. On the possibility that the royal funerary complexes were associated with the northern part of the sky before the Pyramid Texts and the arguments against it, see the references in Smith, *Following Osiris*, 59–60.

95. While this conception is formulated much more explicitly especially in the New Kingdom Books of the Sky, most notably in the Book of Nut, one spell of the Pyramid Texts already hints at it (PT 563 §§1416c–1417d). See §2.3.

96. See the survey of literature and similar conclusions in Katja Goebs, *Crowns in Egyptian Funerary Literature: Royalty, Rebirth, and Destruction*, Griffith Institute Monographs (Oxford: Griffith Institute, 2008), 5–6.

97. For the Pyramid Texts, see, e.g., Winfried Barta, "Re," *LÄ* 5:170 with n. 318; Allen, *Pyramid Texts*, 7–8. For the Coffin Texts, see Bickel, "Die Jenseitsfahrt," 48–53. The close relationship and temporary merging of Re and Osiris is usually referred to as the "solar-Osirian" unity; see the remarks above, §1.3, and in chs. 3 (esp. §3.1.1), 4, and 5, passim.

98. Natalie Beaux, "La *douat* dans les Textes des Pyramides: Espace et temps de gestation," *BIFAO* 94 (1994): 1–6. Although it is not made explicit, the approach adopted in this article is based on principles of cognitive linguistics, a science that studies the human cognitive system as having its basis in the physical experience of the world and stresses the connections between linguistic structure and thought processes. A thorough overview of this branch of linguistics, with additional references, can be found, e.g., in Nyord, *Breathing Flesh*, 5–35. On cognitive linguistics applied to Egyptology and the use and significance of determinatives, see Silvia Zago, "Classifying the Duat: Tracing the Conceptualization of the Afterlife between Pyramid Texts and Coffin Texts," *ZÄS* 145 (2018): 205–18. Because determinatives *classified* the world and mirrored the categorization of human knowledge, Orly Goldwasser and other scholars of the so-called Jerusalem School (see the following footnotes) have been advocating the need for a replacement of this term with "classifiers," which would better describe their function from the standpoint of cognitive linguistics. However, critiques have been raised against this new naming, and most Egyptologists continue to refer to this part of the Egyptian script as determinatives. Therefore, for the sake of simplicity, the term determinative(s) is retained in the present work, without, however, wishing to dismiss the arguments of the Jerusalem School.

99. See, e.g., Orly Goldwasser and Colette Grinevald, "What are 'Determinatives' Good for?" in *Lexical Semantics in Ancient Egyptian*, ed. Eitan Grossman, Stéphane Polis, and Jean Winand, LingAeg, StudMon 9 (Hamburg: Widmaier, 2012), 22–32. Additional references to studies of determinatives and principles of cognitive linguistics applied to Egyptology can be found in Zago, 205–9.

100. Orly Goldwasser, *From Icon to Metaphor: Studies in the Semiotics of the Hieroglyphs*, OBO 142 (Fribourg: Academic Press; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995), 80–106. On the common misconception of determinatives serving only as reading aids, see Goldwasser and Grinevald, 17–18 with nn. 4–5.

word Duat in the Pyramid Texts, Beaux has postulated the existence of three types of Duat in this corpus: the dawn in the eastern horizon, the day sky, and the subterranean space between the two horizons. Although some of her assumptions are problematic, as we will see in chapter 2, this study represents a milestone in the history of scholarship on the Duat. Indeed, it has proven how the plurality of notions nested within the Duat is borne out by the Egyptian script, which represents a graphic realization of the multiplicity of approaches inherent in the Egyptian culture. Furthermore, some signs classifying the word Duat in the texts analyzed can be shown to point to a specific cosmovision underlying them, which can in turn be related to either cosmological or astronomical notions, or both. The significance of such determinatives may therefore turn out to be crucial for a better understanding of the development of the concept of Duat over time.[101]

In line with the celestial associations outlined above and with the possibility that the word Duat may at times indicate the (light of) morning, it has moreover been suggested that its etymology provides a link with the semantic field of *dw3*, denoting the morning and morning worship, which was carried out at the break of dawn.[102] On the basis of such a possible meaning and of the close association of the Duat with the southern constellation of Orion, Allen wishes to locate it at the southeastern rim of the sky, in a liminal region between the horizon and the earth, although he concedes that the location of the Duat is not of primary importance in order for the king to be reborn at dawn.[103] Even though the connection between the Duat, morning, and related cultic activities seems to underlie only a few spells of the Pyramid Texts, it might offer an explanation for the ubiquitous presence of water in descriptions of the Duat. Not only was this element a physical constituent of the cosmos even before creation, containing within itself infinite potential for regeneration, but it was also necessary in rituals such as those that would have taken place during the morning worship.[104]

The Coffin Texts, as the Pyramid Texts before them, incorporate many spells with astronomical references and statements about the various cosmic cycles, and therefore the otherworld depicted seems to be mostly a celestial one.[105] It is generally accepted that, despite many commonalities between these two collections of texts, the Coffin Texts tend to sketch not only a more dangerous afterlife, bustling with demonic creatures, but also a slightly better defined one. The celestial realm now seems to be complemented by a chthonic sphere, although a journey through a netherworld is not portrayed properly yet.[106] While the conceptualization of the Duat as a definite locale became de-

101. Zago, "Classifying the Duat"; Zago, "Imagining the Beyond: The Conceptualization of Duat between the Old and the Middle Kingdoms," *JARCE* 54 (2018): 203–17. On signs conveying cosmovisional meanings and notions, see Amanda-Alice Maravelia, "'*ḥwn ntry*, *iwʿw nḥḥ*': Some 'Astronomical' Hieroglyphs and Their Cosmographic and Calligraphic Significance," *Abgadiyat* 2 (2007): 36–50.

102. E.g., Barta, *Die Bedeutung der Pyramidentexte*, 95–96; Leonard H. Lesko, "Ancient Egyptian Cosmogonies and Cosmology," in *Religion in Ancient Egypt: Gods, Myths, and Personal Practice*, ed. Byron E. Shafer (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 120; Beaux, "La *douat*," 5; Beaux, "Sirius, étoile et jeune Horus," in Berger, Clerc, and Grimal, *Hommages Leclant*, 1:66–67. For this meaning of the term *dw3t*, see *Wb* 5:425.10–13.

103. Allen, "Cosmology," 23–24 with n. 153.

104. Diana Delia, "The Refreshing Water of Osiris," *JARCE* 29 (1992): 181–90; Andreas Winkler, "The Efflux That Issued from Osiris: A Study on *rḏw* in the Pyramid Texts," *GM* 211 (2006): 125–39; Joanna Popielska-Grzybowska, "Contexts of Appearance of Water in the Pyramid Texts: An Introduction," *EtudTrav* 29 (2016): 157–67. See §2.4. Moreover, water could be conceived of as a liminal point between the known (this world) and the unknown (supernatural realm); Antonio Loprieno, "Water in Egyptian Literature," in *L'acqua nell'antico Egitto: vita, rigenerazione, incantesimo, medicamento; Proceedings of the First International Conference for Young Egyptologists, Italy, Chianciano Terme, October 15–18, 2003*, ed. Alessia Amenta, Maria M. Luiselli, and Maria N. Sordi (Rome: «L'Erma» di Bretschneider, 2005), 25–40.

105. Patrick Wallin, *Celestial Cycles: Astronomical Concepts of Regeneration in the Ancient Egyptian Coffin Texts*, USE 1 (Uppsala: Department of Archaeology and Ancient History, Uppsala University, 2002). The presence of the so-called diagonal star-clocks, namely astronomical representations of decans and other stars, on the interior of lids of coffins from Asyut dated to the period between the First Intermediate period and the Thirteenth Dynasty, underscores the notion of a (chiefly) celestial afterlife still being imagined in this period. See, e.g., Willems, *Heqata*, 328–37; Leo Depuydt, "Ancient Egyptian Star Clocks and Their Theory," *BiOr* 55 (1998): 5–44; Christian Leitz, *Altägyptische Sternuhren*, OLA 62 (Leuven: Peeters, 1995), 58–112.

106. The most conspicuous among the demonic creatures populating the beyond is arguably the giant serpent Apophis, who makes his appearance in the Middle Kingdom. On this and on the possible traces of a journey through the netherworld in the Coffin Texts, see Bickel, "Die Jenseitsfahrt," 43–48, 53–56.