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THE BOOK OF AMDUAT IN ANCIENT EGYPT

FROM THE NEW KINGDOM TO THE PTOLEMAIC PERIOD



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ABSTRACTS

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ORGANIZED BY:

GIUSEPPINA LENZO & ENRICO POZZI

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The Multiple Roots of the Amduat: Antecedents and Hypotheses

Susanne Bickel (University of Basel)

The history of the Amduat remains a subject of debate with proposed dates for its composition varying widely. Hypotheses relating to the age of the composition are often based on one or a few indications only. This presentation aims to explore various possible roots and antecedents, examining dating criteria not only within the 18th dynasty versions themselves, but also within the wider cultural environment. Potential conceptual, iconographical, and architectural antecedents will be considered, along with the question of whether the 18th dynasty Amduat should be regarded as one homogeneous composition or rather as a complex compilation and systematisation of existing ideas and practices. Many divergent perspectives may be reconciled if the Amduat is considered within the intellectual milieu of its first appearances –rooted in the long tradition of funerary conceptions and practices– and if the composition is seen as a highly complex artefact that integrates a number of artefactual strategies in order to enhance its prestige and efficacy.



KV34 and KV9: Tradition and Evolution in the Use of Amduat from the 18th Dynasty to the Ramesside Period

Emanuele M. Ciampini (Sapienza Università di Roma)

The continued use of the Amduat in royal tombs between the 18th and 20th Dynasties certainly represents an important phenomenon of textual tradition. However, this continuity is associated with a broader phenomenon of a reinterpretation of the whole composition: while maintaining its general structure unchanged, the Amduat undergoes a radical transformation in its value, becoming part of a complex message, testifying to the evolution in the meaning of the royal tomb and its decoration.

The ancient model represented by KV34 (Thutmosis III) is established on a cosmographic criterion whose focus is the dynamic structure of the sun's night cycle. This principle is reflected in the arrangement of the composition on the walls of the burial chamber, with an orientation that combines the solar path (east-west) with that which has its end in the night space to the north. This dynamic content is balanced by the immutability of the divine substance, represented by the series of Litanies of Re (Great Litany and invocations, inscribed on the pillars of the hall and on the king's shroud); here the topic is rather that of the divine substance, which supports the process that takes place in the night and which must guarantee the king's rebirth as the image in which Re and Osiris are united.

The Ramesside model, represented by KV9 (Ramesses VI), places the Amduat within a more articulated system. In fact, the composition appears on the walls of corridor G that follows the Osiris shrine and is accompanied by enigmatic texts that appear on the ceiling of the corridor and on the architrave of the passage leading to room H (Schutzbild). The presence of these two new compositions may certainly depend on an external factor (the collision of the excavation site with an older tomb); however, their combination with the Amduat represents a new choice, which transforms the original meaning of the cosmographic composition and its very structure. The greater articulation of the decoration determines certain peculiarities in the use of the text: from the omission of textual units, which may depend on a more general organisation of the sections, to the absence of the last hour of the night, which may be explained by the presence of the two enigmatic compositions in which those acts that accompany the rising of the sun are re-proposed, according to a scheme typical of solar liturgies. The continuity in the tradition of the text can thus be better understood within a functional dynamic: from a rigorous cosmographic structure, which must identify the same physical space of the burial chamber with the Duat (KV34), we arrive at the organisation of the decoration in KV9, where the descriptive nature of the text is accompanied by a series of new texts that rework the end of the path with two compositions born within different traditions, focused on liturgical rather than cosmographic models.

The Amduat Papyri in the British Museum: New Research on Afterlife Texts from the Third Intermediate Period

Christina Geisen (The British Museum)

The British Museum holds approximately 25 Amduat Papyri, which – aside from a brief description in Niwiński's Study on the Illustrated Theban Funerary Papyri – remain largely unstudied and unpublished. A comprehensive publication and analysis of this group is crucial for advancing our understanding of the Amduat Papyri corpus and its relationship to the funerary text corpus' attestations in the New Kingdom royal tombs and other context.

The project "Amduat Papyri – ancient Egyptian afterlife in the Third Intermediate Period" forms part of a broader research initiative centered on objects in the British Museum that illuminate ancient Egyptian conceptions of the afterlife. At the heart of this project lies the systematic documentation, analysis, and publication of all Amduat manuscripts in the museum's collection.

This presentation will introduce the corpus and outline the project's objectives, which combines traditional philological approaches – such as description and translation – with scientific analysis and advanced imaging technologies. Particular attention is given to the role of these manuscripts in the broader transmission of the text corpus.

The project also aims to create a digital repository to facilitate access and foster scholarly collaboration with other institutions holding Amduat Papyri. This will provide a valuable tool for researchers working on this textual tradition and funerary literature and ancient Egyptian religion thought more broadly.

Preliminary results from the scientific analysis of two Amduat Papyri will be presented, including the first application of 2.5D scanning technology to papyri material.



The Last Amduat Papyrus in Egyptian History? P. Royal Collections Trust RCIN 1145259–66

Dr. Ann-Katrin Gill (Egyptological Institute, University of Leipzig)

P. Royal Collections Trust RCIN 1145259–66 is a truly extraordinary document. In February 1862, the heir to the British throne, Prince Albert Edward, eldest son of Queen Victoria and later King Edward VII, set off on a journey to the Middle East. From his sojourn in Egypt, he brought back several antiquities, including this Amduat papyrus, nowadays kept in the library at Windsor Castle.

The original owner Nesmin, son of Padiimennebnesuttaui and Tasheritentaihet, a high-ranking priest at Thebes at the beginning of the Ptolemaic Period, is best known for his vast collection of funerary papyri. The information I have been able to unearth from travel journals and papers connected to the Amduat papyrus and unpublished excavation records finally solves the mystery of Nesmin's original burial place and provides hence a provenience for his papyri including this Amduat.

The fact that this manuscript was written around 300 BCE is striking and it is very likely that the roll originally included an extensive version of twelve hours, even though only hours one to eight are still preserved today. Excerpts from other compositions were inserted in Nesmin's Amduat version, and he frequently integrated himself not just in the texts but the depictions as well. So, was this piece really an Amduat in the classical sense? And who was the person who compiled this manuscript? We know that his other known papyri were all written by his colleague Pakherkhonsu. Was he responsible for writing and perhaps compiling Nesmin's Amduat? This fascinating manuscript sheds a new light on the remarkable creative processes behind religious compositions of the latest periods of ancient Egyptian history.



Reconstructing Thutmose II's Book of Amduat: First-Season Findings from His Newly Identified Tomb

Aude Gräzer Ohara (New Kingdom Research Foundation)

Based on the first season of study, this paper presents preliminary results from research on about a hundred painted fragments of the Book of Amduat recently uncovered by the New Kingdom Research Foundation during excavations of the tomb of Thutmose II (C4) in Wadi C, Theban Western Wadis. Although in a severely fragmentary and deteriorated condition, these remains have provided important insights into the textual and iconographic composition of this newly discovered, early exemplar of the Amduat. The presentation will consider the archaeological context and the preservation state of the fragments, and outline progress in their documentation and reconstruction. It will also discuss initial findings regarding the formal features and structural organisation of the reconstructed text-image sequences, their original spatial arrangement within the king's burial chamber, and some comparative similarities and differences with other known 18th Dynasty examples.



Personalization of Amduat Papyri During the Third Intermediate Period

Émil Joubert (Université de Liège)

During the Third Intermediate Period, Amduat was regularly introduced in private burials, notably on papyri. Material analysis of these manuscripts highlights the fact that they are often written by different scribes. In many cases, even on luxurious or extremely original manuscripts, a second hand added the name of the deceased. The personalization can be elaborated with other elements — e.g. iconographic representations of the deceased and her ba (papyrus of Ankhesenaset, Paris, Louvre, N 3109); “metadiscourses” reformulating the text with the name of the deceased in place of that of the sun god (papyrus of Khonsumes, Paris, BnF Manuscrit Égyptien 154); or text(s) from the Book of the Dead (papyrus of Djedkhonsuiusankh, Paris, Louvre, N 3276; papyrus of Horemakhbit, Berlin, ÄMP P 3001). These additions could be a sign of an anonymous production of manuscripts. However, they are certainly meaningful. Presented as a cosmographic treatise, the Book of the Hidden Chamber has no clear funerary character. The inscription of the name and of funerary formulas underlines its significance for the regeneration of the deceased. It could therefore contribute to the ritual aspects of the papyri.



Serpents from the Amduat in the Shaft Tomb of Iufaa at Abusir

Renata Landgráfová (Czech Institute of Egyptology, CU FA, Prague)

The shaft tomb of Iufaa at Abusir is a true trove of a vast range of texts and vignettes. Besides numerous excerpts from the Pyramid Text, Coffin Texts and the Book of the Dead, it contains various texts unknown from other tombs or completely unparalleled, such as, for example, the initiation handbook of the kherep-Selket priest on the western wall of the burial chamber (Landgráfová & Janák, 2021) or a complete and illustrated version of the purification ritual on the northern wall (Landgráfová & Míčková, 2020). It is these texts and their vignettes that show the prominence of sacred snakes in Iufaa's tomb: seven of these are depicted and described on the western wall, and further four on the northern one, where they appear as vignettes to myths accompanying the purification ritual (Bareš et al., 2021). Two serpents known otherwise from the 6th hour of the Amduat appear among these sacred snakes. The multi-headed protector of the regenerating body of the sun-god 'š3-ḥr.w (Hornung, 1963, no. 458) is in Iufaa's tomb one of the huge sacred serpents that emerge at the time of the New Year. The serpent 'm-jr.w (Hornung, 1963, no. 472), here a snake with the heads of the four sons of Horus on his body, appears in a distorted form on the northern wall of the burial chamber of Iufaa, illustrating the myth of emerging of the sun-god from the primeval ocean Nun. As no other excerpts or allusions to Amduat appear in the tomb of Iufaa, interesting questions arise: do these serpents serve as *pars pro toto*, representing the most dangerous hour of the Amduat by their presence here, or do they carry an important significance both in the Amduat and in Iufaa's tomb, without necessarily referring to the underworld book?

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Who is Who in the Sixth Hour of the Amduat? Solar-Osirian Burial(s) Reconsidered — Once Again

Aleksandra Lapčić (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)

One well established opinion in research on the Amduat is certainly that the Sixth Hour conceptualizes the major event of the Sun God's journey through the Netherworld — namely his union with Osiris — and thus holds a pivotal meaning within the book. That the two deities stand for two opposite and complementary principles, which cyclically reunite — Re being a prototypical ba and Osiris a prototypical corpse — is commonplace as well and shall not be debated upon. However, the identity of the corpse in the burial chests of the upper register and that of the supine figure encircled by a multiheaded serpent in the middle register has been subject to some controversy among scholars (Gestermann 1999, Westendorf 2004, Minas-Nerpel 2006, Manassa 2007): Is the dismembered — as well as the recumbent — body actually to be attributed to the solar god, in particular to his morning hypostasis Khepri, or to Osiris? As much as the question could be axiomatically answered by: "It is Re as Osiris, and vice versa" (cf. Litany of Re, Hornung 1975: I 178), a closer look to the scenes and protagonists of the Sixth Hour reveals that there is more to be said. This paper reopens the vexata quaestio and aims at exploring how the temporary symbiosis of Re and Osiris, which is very elusively (and allusively) expressed in the Amduat, is exactly encoded.

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Sur les vestiges du Livre de l'Amdouat identifiés parmi les fragments décorés provenant de la tombe de Séthi Ier (fouilles et travaux de l'Université de Bâle dans la Vallée des Rois)

Florence Mauric-Barberio (Paris)

Depuis plus de 20 ans, la mission de l'Université de Bâle dans la Vallée des Rois recense les fragments décorés provenant de la tombe de Séthi Ier (KV 17), découverts aussi bien à l'extérieur (à l'occasion des fouilles) qu'à l'intérieur (dans les annexes Jc et Jd). Parmi ce matériel, dont l'inventaire est désormais achevé, on compte de nombreux vestiges du Livre de l'Amdouat, dont les heures se répartissent dans les différentes salles de l'hypogée. À côté de fragments isolés appartenant à divers points de la tombe, on a pu reconstituer deux ensembles cohérents qui livrent chacun une version particulière d'un même texte (i. e. le texte final de la 1re heure, suivi de l'introduction de la 2e heure) et qui témoignent de deux phases successives du décor de la paroi du fond de la salle du sarcophage.



The Book of the Hidden Chamber Copied in the Burial Chamber of the Vizier Useramun (TT 61): Recent Work of the New Kingdom Scribes Project

Daniel M. Méndez-Rodríguez, Lucía Díaz-Iglesias Llanos, and Ana González-Casanova Ávila (Universidad de La Laguna)

The Spanish Epigraphic and Conservation Project at Sheikh Abd el-Qurna (also known as the New Kingdom Scribes Project) investigates various of ancient Egyptian scribes and tomb patrons from the material philological perspective. It focuses on various burial chambers belonging to members of the Egyptian élite and sub-élite, built and decorated during the first half of the Eighteenth Dynasty.

During the most recent fieldwork seasons (2023–2025), the project has concentrated on the epigraphic study, conservation, cleaning, and documentation of the underground structures of TT 61, one of the tomb-chapels belonging to Useramun, who was vizier and major of Thebes under Hatshepsut and Thutmose III.

The burial chamber of TT 61 contains one of the earliest attestations of the Book of the Hidden Chamber (commonly known as the Book of Amduat) within its decorative program. Remarkably, this is the only copy of the composition attested in a private context during the New Kingdom and it includes sections only preserved in KV 9 (the tomb of Ramesses VI). This communication presents the objectives and results of the work conducted to date and outlines future lines of research.



Variability and Heterogeneousness in Amduat Papyri. An Overview Through Ateliers, Repertoires, and Scribal Practises

Enrico Pozzi (Université de Lausanne)

The Amduat underwent a significant, yet largely overlooked, transformation during the Third Intermediate Period. While New Kingdom and Late Period versions have been the subject of extensive scholarly attention, Amduat papyri from the 21st and 22nd Dynasties remain largely unpublished and interpreted through outdated typological frameworks. This paper presents new evidence that reshapes our understanding of Theban Amduat papyri. Drawing on a growing corpus of unpublished material, it identifies multiple production ateliers, reveals the presence of complex scribal practices, and maps the most recurrent iconotextual configurations.

The proposed case studies elucidate not only the heterogeneousness of Amduat papyri in form and content, but also the deliberate strategies of transmission and innovation employed by Theban intellectual circles. This process was both conservative and creative, altering the function of Amduat manuscripts and engaging in what might be termed a process of curated continuity in which the cosmographic repertoire was simultaneously preserved and reimagined with specific funerary and ritual character. By tracing the diachronic and synchronic trajectory of these features, the paper exposes continuity and adaptation in Amduat papyri during the Third Intermediate Period. In doing so, it repositions Amduat papyri as critical witnesses to cultural production and vitality of funerary literature in post-New Kingdom Thebes. Far from marking a decline, Amduat papyri emerge as sources of religious innovation and ritual agency, reflecting the construction and display of élite funerary identity.



The “Amduat Cosmogony” in the Tomb of Padiamenope (TT 33) (Hour 8). With a Mention of the Birth of the Hermopolito-Theban Ogdoad

Isabelle Régen (Université de Montpellier – Paul Valéry – UMR 5140)

In 2007, Colleen Manassa brought to light an unknown passage from the Book of Amduat (Hour 8), a brief hymn to Tatenen found only on three sarcophagi dated between the XXXth dynasty and the beginning of the Ptolemaic period, to which she gave the name “Amduat Cosmogony”.

As part of my research into the texts from the tomb of Padiamenope (TT 33, late Dyn. XXV-early Dyn. XXVI), two additional versions of this rare text have been identified. They provide the earliest attestation of its existence.

These new lessons are of interest both for the nature of their text and for the monument in which they appear, known for its major role in the history of the transmission of funerary compositions in the Late Period.

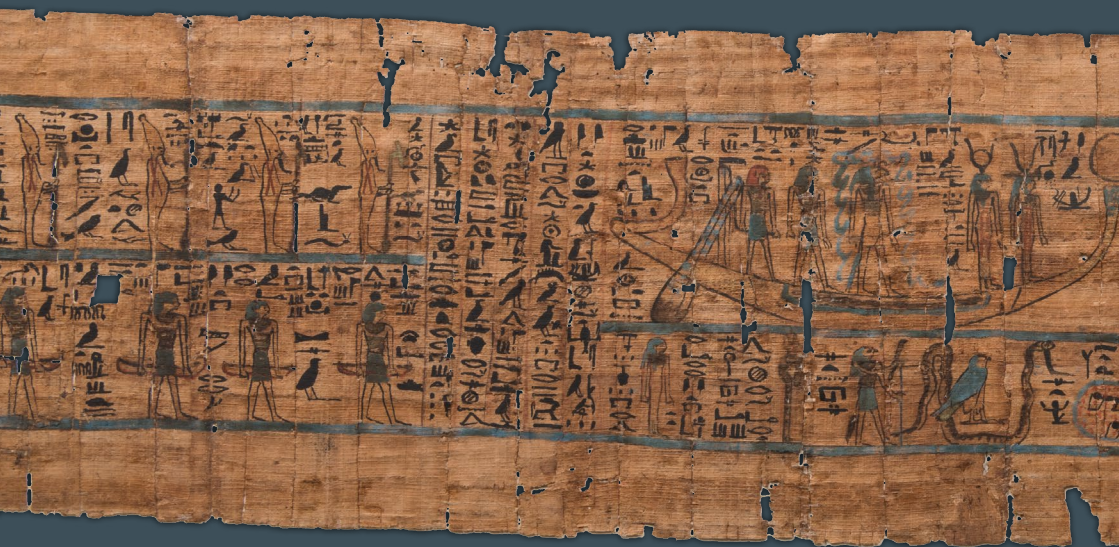
As the religious commentary on the hymn has already been produced by C. Manassa, this paper will focus more specifically on the question of textual transmission: after establishing the synopsis and translation of the five versions, we will place this inscription in the context of the 8th hour of the Amduat, in an attempt to identify the reasons for this addition. Next, the two lessons of tomb TT 33 will be resituated in the history of the transmission of the Amduat. Finally, the oldest attestation of the birth of the Hermopolito-Theban Ogdoad may raise an unexplored question: that of potential links between theological elements of the Jmy.w-Dwꜣ.t Books and the Ptolemaic and Roman temples.

Between Tradition and Innovation: The Case of Two Amduat Papyri in Liverpool

Silvia Zago (University of Liverpool)

During the Twenty-First and early Twenty-Second Dynasties, new types of funerary papyri were created, which included excerpts of the New Kingdom royal Netherworld Books and of the Book of the Dead along with ‘mythological’ scenes, and which became major components of Theban elite burials. Though several studies of these papyri have been carried out, a complete catalogue does not yet exist, and knowledge of these documents is rather patchy, not least due to their dispersal across countless museums and private collections around the world. Among them are the so-called Amduat papyri, containing combinations of images and texts from the New Kingdom royal Amduat, usually selected from hours nine to twelve, which illustrate the final stretch of the solar journey through the night and the sun’s ultimate rebirth in the eastern horizon at dawn. This paper aims to present two Amduat papyri in the collections of the Garstang Museum of Archaeology of the University of Liverpool and of the National Museums Liverpool, World Museum – which have until recently been overlooked by scholarship on Third Intermediate Period funerary papyri.





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