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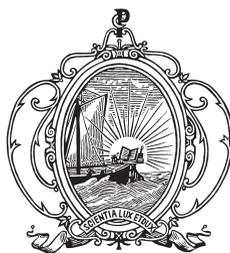
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A TRUE SCRIBE OF ABYDOS

Essays on First Millennium Egypt
in Honour of Anthony Leahy

edited by

CLAUS JURMAN, BETTINA BADER
and DAVID A. ASTON



PEETERS

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CONTENTS

PREFACE	VII
A. Leahy's Bibliography	XI
DAVID A. ASTON, "The Third Cache" – Myth or Reality?	1
MARTIN BOMMAS, The Unpublished Stela of Hunefer. Remarks on Glo- rification Texts on New Kingdom Funerary Stelae	27
GERARD P.F. BROEKMAN, Suggesting a New Chronology for the Kushite Twenty-fifth Dynasty and Considering the Consequences for the Preceding Libyan Period	39
JULIA BUDKA, Kushites at Abydos: A View from Umm el-Qaab	53
MARIA CANNATA, From the Embalmers' Cabinets of Curiosities	65
MÉLANIE CRESSENT, Nouveau raccord memphite: la statue d'Horsema- taouyemhat Vienne Kunsthistorisches Museum ÄS 5775 + Caire Musée Égyptien CG 888	77
DIDIER DEVAUCHELLE, Les enterrements d'Apis au temps des Nectané- bos	95
ROBERTO B. GOZZOLI, Chronology and Royal Succession in the Kushite Kingdom (664–593 BC)	119
STEVEN R.W. GREGORY, On the Horus Throne in <i>dt</i> and <i>nḥḥ</i> : Changeless Time and Changing Times	143
BENJAMIN HINSON, Dead Ringers: The Mortuary Use of Bells in Late Pharaonic Egypt	179
KARL JANSEN-WINKELN, „Libyerzeit“ oder „postimperiale Periode“? Zur historischen Einordnung der Dritten Zwischenzeit	203
CLAUS JURMAN, Impressions of What is Lost – A Study on Four Late Period Seal Impressions in Birmingham and London	239
ALAN B. LLOYD, Saite Warfare: The Resurgence of Military Ambition	273
ANTONIO J. MORALES, Aggregation with the Gods	287
MICHINORI OHSHIRO, Searching for the Tomb of the Theban King Osorkon III	299
FRÉDÉRIC PAYRAUDEAU, Nesptah, père de Montouemhat, à Karnak-nord	319
OLIVIER PERDU, Les origines du précepteur royal Ânkhefensekhmet, le nom ancien de Kôm Firîn et le fief Libou dans l'Ouest du Delta	327

CAMPBELL PRICE, The 'Admiral' Hor and his Naophorous Statue (Manchester Museum acc. no 3570)	369
TROY L. SAGRILLO, King Djehuty-em-hat in Swansea: Three Model Scribal Palettes in the Collection of the Egypt Centre of Swansea University	385
CYNTHIA M. SHEIKHOESLAMI, Some Theban Choachytes of the Third Intermediate Period	415
JOHN H. TAYLOR, Two Lost Cartonnage Cases of the Early Twenty-second Dynasty	445
GÜNTER VITTMANN, An Abnormal Hieratic Letter from Dakhleh Oasis (Ostrakon Amheida 16003)	491

ON THE HORUS THRONE IN *dt* AND *nḥḥ*: CHANGELESS TIME AND CHANGING TIMES

Steven R.W. GREGORY

Introduction

The First Millennium BC is often seen by scholars as a time of considerable change, a time during which ancient Egyptian society was affected by a series of external cultural influences. Firstly the influx of Libyan tribes from the west, then the Kushite Dynasty from the south, followed by Assyrian domination, periods under Persian rule, around three hundred years of Greek influence during the Ptolemaic Period, and the millennium ending with Egypt under the rule of a Roman emperor.

The apparent extent of such cultural change is emphasized in that it follows on from the New Kingdom, a period often viewed as one of particular stability. Yet, on closer examination, the New Kingdom itself was not culturally secure. The period began as the Theban elite expelled the ‘Hyksos’ rulers based at Avaris in the Delta: a line of kings of uncertain origin but described by the Theban king, Kamose, as *ʿmw*:¹ ‘the Asiatics’.² Later, following the Amarna interlude, the Ramesside Period was ruled by kings exhibiting some cultural influences emanating from lands to the north-east of Egypt, influences somewhat distinct from the mores of Upper Egyptian nobles³ — a situation which may have had some bearing, ultimately, on the political differences which brought about the collapse of the empire. Perhaps, therefore, the world of ancient Egypt was never as culturally distinct as some interpretations of history might suggest.

It should be of little surprise, when considering the time-spans involved, that some degree of cultural change occurred as societies evolved over centuries. Change is seemingly a function of time, and it is an observable aspect of human society that, even without the stimulus of foreign influence, fashions and ideas may alter as the years progress. Political circumstances are surely subject to

¹ Translations shown in this paper are by the present author unless otherwise stated.

² A designation apparent in the Kamose Stelae, for which see, for example, HABACHI 1972: 36, fig. 22; SMITH and SMITH 1976: 52.

³ GREGORY 2014: 148. For discussion regarding the intercultural nature of the Hyksos centre at Avaris, later the locality of the principal Ramesside residence city, Pi-Ramesse, see SCHNEIDER 2010: 146–147.

alteration and, in that respect, changes in the order of some modern Western societies ruled variously by monarchy, totalitarianism, and democracy — changes occurring over a relatively short length of time — offer clear examples. What is of surprise in this context, however, is that there was little ideological change relating to the manner of rule during the First Millennium in Egypt or, for that matter, throughout the whole of the Pharaonic Period. Rather, despite the number of cultural influences recognizable over such lengthy periods of time, adherence to pharaonic notions of governance remained remarkably constant.

This ideological constancy during times of apparent social change has of course been noted by scholars before. For example, the advent of the Libyan Period has been seen as a point of departure from earlier cultural traditions, yet, while there are clear indications of Libyan influence in various aspects of society, the monumental inscriptions — the medium in which pharaonic ideology most often survives in the archaeological record — in many respects maintained continuity with earlier customs.⁴ In fact, it is perhaps during such periods of change that the notion of changelessness in this aspect of ancient Egyptian culture becomes most clear. And even where there is some innovation in modes of expression this in itself cannot necessarily be regarded as a change in underlying ideology; it rather adds immediacy to the notions expressed: updating or re-creating ideas with a currency emphasizing their then present validity.⁵ It is by examination of the texts and iconography used in monumental decoration at various points in time that this underlying ideological constancy becomes apparent — and some examples from the period of present interest, along with texts from other pertinent media, will be discussed below.

From these examples it will become evident that they represent a system of beliefs which was relatively impervious to the changes of the material world. The texts and images not only defined but reified a system of order which, regardless of the cultural changes taking place, was a relatively immutable structure: an established political ideology informing a system of governance which could be adopted by rulers throughout the First Millennium, regardless of their own ethnic origins or cultural background.

The immutability of the system derived from its purported origins within universal creation which, from the ancient Egyptian perspective, was thought to have occurred as the potential for that universe was realized from the pre-existing state of chaos by a demiurge. Aspects of the created universe included the notion of kingship: ultimately the means by which the continued order of

⁴ Constancy in the presentation of royal iconography during the period of Libyan cultural influence has been noted by, for example, LEAHY 1985: 57; RITNER 2009a: 2–9. For further recent commentary on Libyan cultural influences more generally see also RITNER 2009b: 336–338; BROEKMAN 2010: 85–97; DODSON 2012: 8, 71–72, 113–114; SAGRILLO 2013: 4073–4074.

⁵ GREGORY 2014: 73–74.

that universe was to be maintained. Also created was time itself, within which the universe became the object of human experience. While the ancient expression of such notions varied, like much that is subject to human interpretation and experience, the notions themselves, the fundamental ideology, remained constant. And the two apparently conflicting aspects of creation — the constantly changing circumstances of human daily life experienced in physical reality and the perfected ideals pertaining to a supposed metaphysical sphere beyond that of quotidian human activity — were themselves significant aspects of pharaonic thought. They presented a dichotomy which seems to have been reflected in the ancient Egyptian understanding of reality: an understanding which seemingly allowed for the duality of conditions closely associated with kingship and encapsulated in the terms *nḥḥ* and *dt*.

While almost ubiquitously articulated in elements of royal titulary, as inscribed in monuments throughout Egypt and throughout the Pharaonic Period, these posited temporal positions are often given little prominence in translation. And when such notions are the topic of specific discourse relating to concepts of time there has been little agreement, and often little clarity, with regard to how these terms might be understood. Therefore, in what is here presented as a preliminary study, it seems pertinent in a discourse relating to the changing times of First Millennium Egypt to look again at the manner in which *nḥḥ* and *dt* might be construed — an exercise which may have some bearing on present interpretation of the observed historical circumstances, especially with regard to such concerns as the ostensible acculturation of foreign elites, or perhaps the political opportunism of foreign elites in adopting traditions of the indigenous population to secure dominion over them.

Interpretations of *nḥḥ* and *dt*

It is perhaps not unusual, when considering time in any general or material sense, to think of ways in which time is reckoned or recorded: noting the passage of time from night to day or, in a more extended view, changes of season year on year, and ultimately as a measure of life itself. In this approach time is perceived in a relative or comparative manner rather than as an absolute entity or abstract notion in itself. The perception of time as the basis of a metrological system used to determine temporal relationships between known events — a system based on solar, lunar, and stellar observations — is apparent in records left by the ancient Egyptians who, as far as history records, appear to have introduced the practice of sub-dividing the day into hours.⁶ The ancient Egyptian year consisted of 365 days and comprised three seasons, each of four

⁶ WHITROW 1988: 16–17.

months, each month having three ten-day weeks, with the addition of five end-of year epagomenal days.⁷

The ancient Egyptian system for the measurement of time is, in many ways, reflected in the manner of such measurement in the modern world:⁸ a circumstance which may lead to the assumption that modern perceptions of time itself are the same as, or fundamentally similar to, those of the ancient culture — but there is significant difference, even in respect of calendrical time. In ancient Egypt the accession of a new king marked a fresh start in the measurement of time, each reign beginning as a Year 1.⁹ Thus, the measurement and recording of time was then not only a matter of astronomical observation, but also a function of kingship. As alluded to above, this also seems to be the case for the terms *nḥḥ* and *ḏt*.

Frequently occurring in the terminal phrase of royal titulary, *nḥḥ* and *ḏt* do not appear to belong to the aforementioned metrological system relating to time. Rather they have frequently been understood to represent the totality of time itself and, in this respect, when considered in recent scholarship the terms have often been viewed as being virtually synonymous: terms used together to express a desire that the king may enjoy eternal life. This understanding seems clear from the various hieroglyphic dictionaries in common use: for example, entries in the *Wörterbuch* give *nḥḥ* as ‘*ewiglich*’, ‘forever’;¹⁰ and *ḏt* as ‘*ewig, ewiglich*’, ‘eternally, forever’.¹¹ When shown together *nḥḥ ḏt* is translated as ‘*ewig und immerdar*’, ‘forever and always’;¹² or in the case of *ḏt nḥḥ*, ‘*immerdar und ewig*’, ‘always and forever’;¹³ and similar interpretations are offered elsewhere. For example, Gardiner proposes ‘eternity’ for both *nḥḥ* and *ḏt*,¹⁴ while Faulkner suggests ‘eternity’ or ‘forever’ for *nḥḥ*, and offers the same choice for *ḏt*.¹⁵

Thus there appears to have been some consensus in interpretation, a general agreement by which the terms in question are viewed as interchangeable temporal references: a situation still apparent in more recent works. Allen offers ‘eternal repetition, continuity, eternity, forever’ for *nḥḥ*, and ‘eternal sameness, eternity, forever’ for *ḏt*.¹⁶ Here a wider variety of options for each term is

⁷ For discussion of the nature of the Egyptian civil calendar and of the epagomenal days see, for example, SPALINGER 1995: 33–47; ALLEN 2000: 105–106; ASSMANN 2006: 498; and, for a more recent and comprehensive discussion, STERN 2012: 125–166.

⁸ STERN 2012: 125.

⁹ Regarding systems of regnal dating as they varied during the Pharaonic Period see, for example, DEPUYDT 1995: 153–155; ALLEN 2000: 104; WINAND 2003: 23–24.

¹⁰ ERMAN and GRAPOW 1971a: 300.

¹¹ ERMAN and GRAPOW 1971b: 506.

¹² ERMAN and GRAPOW 1971a: 301.

¹³ ERMAN and GRAPOW 1971a: 302.

¹⁴ GARDINER 1957: 575, 603.

¹⁵ FAULKNER 1962: 137, 317.

¹⁶ ALLEN 2000: 461, 471.

suggested, yet each is presented as having essentially the same meanings. Perhaps of most significance in the context of the present paper, in a work specifically relating to Late Egyptian, Junge suggests the meaning of *nḥḥ* to be ‘eternity, infinity (“eternal recurrence”)', while presenting *dt* as simply a reference to ‘eternity’.¹⁷ And, again with specific reference to Late Egyptian, Lesko interprets *nḥḥ* as meaning ‘eternity, infinity’; *dt* as ‘eternity, everlastingness’; and *dt nḥḥ* as ‘to all eternity’.¹⁸

In some of the later interpretations mentioned above there does seem to have been an attempt to indicate a degree of difference between the two terms considered, yet the nature of that difference remains unclear. Where these interpretations have been applied in translation, that application itself often appears somewhat arbitrary. And, for reasons which will perhaps become clear in the following paragraphs, in general renditions scholars seemingly show little concern for more nuanced interpretation. Only a few examples will be given here.

In translation of a series of inscriptions of Ramesses II from the hypostyle hall at Karnak, Kitchen consistently translates *nḥḥ* as ‘eternity’¹⁹ or ‘eternal’,²⁰ depending upon the grammatical sense of the passage, and similarly *dt* is rendered as either ‘everlasting’²¹ or ‘forever’.²² In relation to the translation of inscriptions within the monument of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu, The Epigraphic Survey, in a glossary of terms, allows both *nḥḥ* and *dt* to mean either ‘eternity’ or ‘forever’.²³ Here the meanings attributed are clearly synonymous, the only distinction in translation dependent upon whether the terms are used nominally or adverbially. When appearing together as the terminal phrase of the king’s titulary, perhaps the most often used translation for *nḥḥ dt* is ‘forever and ever’,²⁴ this despite clear indication elsewhere in Egyptological discourse that *nḥḥ* and *dt* are in fact references to distinct aspects of time: albeit with little agreement as to how differences in the nature of those terms may be understood.

Bakir, studying aspects of the ancient Egyptian calendar, concluded that *nḥḥ* related to the concept of infinity with respect to time before the world came into existence, while *dt* referred to eternity with respect to the infinite expanse

¹⁷ JUNGE 2001: 338, 360.

¹⁸ LESKO 2002: 243; 2004: 259.

¹⁹ Hieroglyphic texts shown in KITCHEN 1968–1990: 567, 569, 578, 583, 584 with corresponding translations in KITCHEN 1996a: 369, 371, 377, 381, 383.

²⁰ Hieroglyphic text shown in KITCHEN 1968–1990: 583 with corresponding translation in KITCHEN 1996a: 382.

²¹ Hieroglyphic texts shown in KITCHEN 1968–1990: 565, 571, 583 with corresponding translations in KITCHEN 1996a: 367, 372, 381.

²² Hieroglyphic texts shown in KITCHEN 1968–1990: 566, 567, 579, 584 with corresponding translations in KITCHEN 1996a: 368, 369, 378, 382.

²³ THE EPIGRAPHIC SURVEY 2009: 85, 90.

²⁴ As, for example, in translation of a series of occurrences of this phrase on the decorated chair from the tomb of Tutankhamun (EATON-KRAUSS 2008: 80–81).

of time to the world's end.²⁵ He later refined these notions, but retained the basis of his earlier conclusions that, while they might also be references to day and night, *nḥḥ* and *dt* were 'eternally recurring individual phenomena' respectively encapsulating notions of infinity and everlastingness, and the beginning and end of worldly physical activity.²⁶ Žabkar allowed some allusion to 'beginning' and 'end'; however, with references to the texts interpreted by scholars in forming earlier opinions he insisted that their conclusions regarding the use of *nḥḥ* and *dt* as references to this life or the hereafter, or to the beginning and end of infinity with respect to the existence of the created universe, were largely unsupportable. They were rather synonyms used interchangeably 'to introduce the beginning of a long reign, a new era of restoration, stability, and prosperity which will endure without end'.²⁷ Griffiths, however, viewed both *nḥḥ* and *dt* as words meaning 'eternity', and echoed earlier interpretations in stating that the former was associated with the day and with 'the present order and its renewal under Re and Horus'; the latter was associated with 'the night and the afterworld and Osiris'.²⁸ And references to *nḥḥ* and *dt* as being both temporal and spatial concepts, indicative of eternity and the 'eternal abode of the dead', persisted elsewhere in scholarship.²⁹

In a study of time as a theme reflected in ancient Egyptian art, Bochi suggested that the Egyptians, as a result of observing the cyclic rhythms of nature, devised a system of units for the measurement of time but had no word for time as a general concept. They did, however, view time as being either human or divine in nature: the former being time as experienced during life — that measured in moments, hours, days, months, and years — the latter being accessible to humans only after death. Divine time was itself seen as being twofold in nature, consisting of seemingly mutually reinforcing and perhaps interchangeable aspects described by the Egyptians as *nḥḥ*, the endless repetition of cyclical perpetuity, and *dt*, the linear continuity of absolute and infinite timelessness.³⁰ Bochi subsequently restated her views regarding *nḥḥ* and *dt* as aspects of time existing 'beyond the confines of the human sphere' in a further article focussed upon Egyptian perceptions of time as evident in artistic expression.³¹ However, such interpretations were not universally supported and, in view of

²⁵ BAKIR 1953: 110–111.

²⁶ BAKIR 1974: 253–254.

²⁷ ŽABKAR 1965: 79. ŽABKAR responds to interpretations of *nḥḥ* and *dt* made by BAKIR (1953, mentioned above in note 25) and also to similar matters raised by G. THAUSING (1935–1938: 35–42) and T.G. ALLEN (1960), therefore the latter publications are not otherwise cited in the present paper.

²⁸ GRIFFITHS 1980: 102.

²⁹ For example, in COOPER 1983: 42. See also note 34, below.

³⁰ BOCHI 1994: 55–56.

³¹ BOCHI 2003: 52.

the likelihood that at least one of the time positions considered was that experienced in the real world, they seem highly improbable.

In complete contrast to the opinions of Bochi, Allen has viewed both *nḥḥ* and *dt* as aspects of time relating to the physical world of human experience. In his interpretation both terms may be understood to mean ‘eternity’: *dt* expressing the concept of ‘linear’ time, that of ‘eternal sameness’ which encapsulates the totality of time existing between creation and the world’s end, while *nḥḥ* relates to what may be described as ‘cyclic’ time which reflects the repeating natural cycles of seasons and years. In further explanation, Allen offered an analogy in which *dt* may be likened to a play which is ‘fixed and unchanging’, whereas *nḥḥ* may be seen as an individual performance, each different from the last with ‘new settings and new actors’. However, both temporal aspects are related to time as a function of the solar cycle: the continuity of *dt* defined, in part, by ‘the sun rising in the east and setting in the west’; *nḥḥ* is similarly related to the ‘daily cycle of the sun’.³² It seems, on reflection, that here two sets of descriptions are used to explain the same phenomenon: the apparent linear flow of time as marked by the continual solar cycle. However, as, after each cycle, the sun would be further along the linear continuum this may rather be seen as an unending temporal spiral.³³ Morenz had earlier expressed a further alternative in suggesting that, while the relationship between the terms remained unclear, throughout the whole of Egyptian history both *nḥḥ* and *dt* had referred to ‘a forward-looking view of infinity’.³⁴

The difficulties encountered in selecting appropriate interpretations of the terms in question were outlined by Assmann, who stated that while the ancient Egyptians had no concept of space in relation to ‘cosmic totality’ they rather perceived time in that respect as a duality of concepts expressed as *nḥḥ* and *dt*:

³² ALLEN 2000: 104.

³³ Here the considerations of WINAND (2003: 20–21) relating to cyclic and linear aspects of cosmic time, as based on observations of physical phenomena in ancient cultures, may be informative. He discussed ‘une conception sinusoïdale du temps, qui concilie effet pendulaire et linéarité’ in which time successively swings between two extreme states as it continues along a line. Specifically in relation to ancient Egypt, he attributed such cyclic repetition to *nḥḥ*, a term relating to ‘constructions dynamiques’; *dt*, conversely, was pertinent to ‘constructions statiques’; these two elements of eternity — apposite to the dual mode of Egyptian thought — were ‘fondamentaux du temps dans l’idéologie égyptienne’ (WINAND 2003: 32). In a subsequent paper, WINAND (2005: 322) described *nḥḥ* and *dt* as two complimentary but distinct phenomena: *nḥḥ* a dynamic, cyclic eternity; *dt* an eternity encapsulating concepts of permanence and stability, a static condition which may be visualized as ‘une ligne droite s’étendant à l’infini’. For consideration of the combination of *nḥḥ* and *dt* as resulting in a temporal spiral see also RICHTER 2008: 79–80 and Fig. 4.

³⁴ MORENZ 1973: 169–170. MORENZ also expressed uncertainty as to whether *nḥḥ* and *dt* should be viewed as referring to ‘the spatial as well as the temporal dimensions’. Similarly, WESTENDORF (1983: 422–435) argued that in ancient Egypt *nḥḥ* and *dt* were complimentary variables which together represented the universal principles governing the interactions of time and space and, as such, those terms might, respectively, almost be seen as the equivalent of time and space.

a ‘disjunctive concept of time’ which, while having properties of time as it is presently understood — and, ‘as a practical matter’, can either be translated as ‘time’ or ‘eternity’ — did not correspond to ‘time’ and ‘eternity’ as those concepts may presently be perceived.³⁵ He further stated that the terms cannot in fact ‘be translated by any pair of words in Western languages’. Rather *nḥḥ* and *dt* together represented, to the Egyptians, ‘the whole of reality’.

Assmann considered the Egyptian concepts of time as related both to aspects of the ancient pantheon and to the ancient language. In the latter respect he pointed to the fundamental difference in verbal structure in relation to that of present Western systems in which language expresses notions of time in relation to three distinct tenses — past, present, and future — whereas in Egyptian only two ‘aspects’, are represented. These aspects are those of ‘change’ and ‘completedness’, in which categories the temporal concepts of *nḥḥ* and *dt* can be placed respectively: *nḥḥ* representing the passing of days, seasons, and years in a manner reflected in much present understanding of time; *dt* on the other hand was a more difficult concept, one ‘anchored in the world of experience and concepts’. Assmann further related these aspects of time to the gods, Osiris and Re; in this respect he viewed Re, in his ‘endless cycle of rising and setting’, as the embodiment of *nḥḥ* and Osiris, ‘the god of *djet*’, as one in whom ‘continuity and endurance took form’.³⁶

It seems clear from Assmann’s explanations that, in their roles as aspects of time, he viewed both Re and Osiris as active in the real world of human experience. In the rationale presented, Re is perceived as a *ba* in the solar time of *nḥḥ* which descended each night into the *dt* time of Osiris, the corpse with which Re would unite before emerging from the netherworld each morning; a repeating and cyclic pattern describing both the passage of time itself, and what may be thought of as the set of analogous circumstances relating to personal beliefs regarding death, rebirth, and a life after death. Assmann concluded that it was the interrelationship between Osiris and Re in this temporal context that ‘yielded reality, and ... gave rise to the complex of *neheh* and *djet* that human-kind experienced as “time”’.³⁷

³⁵ ASSMANN 2001: 74. In similar vein, HORNUNG (1982a: 183; 1982b: 104) had earlier opined: ‘The pair of Egyptian words we translate “eternity” (*nḥḥ* and *dt*) in fact means “time”’: taken together, the overall time available to the world. See also LOPRIENO (2003: 128) who, while recognizing the dichotomy between the two temporal subdivisions — the immutability, duration, and chthonic nature of *dt* as opposed to the infinitely repetitive nature of *nḥḥ* — questioned whether the two temporal notions were not rather simply treated as a conceptual whole.

³⁶ ASSMANN 2001: 75–79. TRAUNECKER (2001: 37), who described *nḥḥ* as ‘a discontinuous, cyclic eternity’ whereas *dt* eternity was ‘continuous and linear’, similarly associated *nḥḥ* and *dt* with Re and Osiris respectively.

³⁷ ASSMANN 2001: 78. In a subsequent paper relating to time as perceived more generally in early cultures, ASSMANN (2006: 497–504), in a section headed ‘Zyklische und lineäre Zeit: Die altägyptische Lehre der „zwei Ewigkeiten“’, presented similar notions relating to the understanding of *nḥḥ* and *dt*. He described *nḥḥ* as having ‘Charakter eines ritualisierten Kalenders’, and as

There is some evidence to support the notion that, at least in some respects, the Egyptians viewed time in the manner suggested by Assmann. The described union of Re and Osiris is perhaps most notably represented in a scene in the tomb of Nefertari depicting a mummiform, ram-headed figure supported by Isis and Nephthys.³⁸ The text accompanying this scene, *R' pw ḥtp m Wsir: Wsir ḥtp m R'*, may be translated: 'it is Re rested in Osiris; Osiris rested in Re'. Clearly, this may relate to the sun dying each evening to enter the underworld before uniting with Osiris to then be reborn each morning; the constant daily regeneration of the sun itself being congruous with the continuance of time, particularly calendrical time, and, by analogy, represent beliefs or hopes for life after death. Yet, as Assmann himself pointed out, if these matters are to be related to time then it is to real time: time as experienced in physical reality. That this is indeed the essence of Assmann's argument seems to be confirmed by his references to Osiris as 'yesterday' and Re as 'tomorrow',³⁹ thereby relating those entities to features of real time which, in most interpretations of the Egyptian understandings of it, was *nḥḥ* time. What is questionable here is whether, in this cosmic cycle of real time, Osiris should necessarily be seen, as in Assmann's account, as 'the god of *djet*'.

It is not uncommon to find references to Osiris which include epithets relating to both aspects of time. For example, on the stela of Wennefer, an official of Coptos during the reign of Pinedjem I, Osiris is given the title 'lord of *nḥḥ*' on the front, with the dual temporal appellation appearing on the reverse: 'lord of *nḥḥ* and ruler of *dt*'.⁴⁰ It therefore seems most likely that when presented as a counterpart to Re in representations of the solar cycle Osiris should be seen as effective in the same temporal sphere, and thus in his capacity as lord of *nḥḥ*. That said, it should also be noted that Re is not restricted to the realm of *nḥḥ*. In fact it seems likely that, in monumental inscriptions at least, Re is more often associated with *dt*, particularly so in passages usually thought to exhort long life for the king such as *dī 'nh mī R' dt*: an expression generally interpreted to mean 'given life like Re forever'.⁴¹ On these grounds it seems

being related to the motions of the sun, to the Sun God, and to notions of becoming. With the *dt* aspect of time 'verlassen wir das Reich des Sonnengottes und betreten das Reich des Osiris'. As in the earlier paper *dt* is related to night time, to the underworld, and to notions of what has become changeless and perfected — and it is said to be the complex union of solar and Osiris time which amounted to the ancient Egyptian understanding of time.

³⁸ ASSMANN 2006: 505. QUIRKE (1992: 166) relates this scene to notions of rebirth through which both the king and his subjects aspire to eternal life. Similar interpretations are given by HORNUNG (1982a: 93–96), with a reproduction of the Nefertari scene in question on pl. 1, page 94.

³⁹ ASSMANN 2001: 78.

⁴⁰ RITNER 2009a: 117–119. See also DAOUD 1994: 203 for further examples of the use of both *nḥḥ* and *dt* in the titulary of Osiris.

⁴¹ As in, for example, THE EPIGRAPHIC SURVEY 1979: 18, pl. 35; 26, pl. 51; GRIFFITHS 1985: 167.

that Assmann's interpretations, as others, fall short of a clear and complete understanding of the concepts of *nḥḥ* and *ḏt* — although perhaps it may be said that opinions in general allow that at least one aspect relates to the real time of the physical world: and that time seems most likely to be the essential constituent of *nḥḥ*.

The orthography of the word *nḥḥ* itself suggests this to be the term denoting time in temporal reality, the solar disc — which alone may stand for *hrw*, 'day', and appear in other references to real time, for example as a determinative in *sf*, 'yesterday', and *wnwt*, 'hour'⁴² — with, on each side, the wick of twisted flax:⁴³ symbols which may reflect the aforementioned spiral of linear/cyclic time. Therefore it seems reasonably safe to assign *nḥḥ* to the time of physical reality: the metrologically defined flow of time experienced by humankind. And clearly, both Re and Osiris feature in mythology relating to that daily solar cycle. However, that both Re and Osiris may also be related to *ḏt* would indicate that, in ancient Egyptian thought at least, those entities might function in an alternative and quite distinct sphere, the precise nature of which must be sought elsewhere.

Distinction in time

It has been suggested, as outlined above with reference to the terms as they appear in hieroglyphic dictionaries, that *nḥḥ* and *ḏt* were interchangeable, in which case the search for some specific meaning in relation to *ḏt* beyond that already, if somewhat tentatively, attributed to *nḥḥ* may be fruitless. Similarly, if two words of comparable meaning were used merely to suggest emphasis, such as when translated as 'forever and ever' or 'always and forever', then the search for more nuanced connotations would be unrewarding. Yet if the latter option were to be allowed one may wonder why more usual forms of emphatic expression were not adopted. Should the need arise to add emphasis to the expression of a period of infinite longevity this might be achieved by the simple addition of *sp sn* — which may be translated literally as 'two times' or in the vernacular as 'very',⁴⁴ or indeed, following *ḏt*, 'forever and ever' — and instances of such usage do in fact occur. In the earlier referenced texts from the hypostyle hall at Karnak, for example, in inscriptions relating to the Opet Festival of Ramesses II, the phrase *ḏt sp sn* has been interpreted by Kitchen as 'forever and ever' as it occurs in that context on a number of occasions.⁴⁵ And with respect to the former proposition that *nḥḥ* and *ḏt* were interchangeable, it

⁴² GARDINER 1957: 485.

⁴³ An arrangement of symbols generally presented as GARDINER signs V28, N5, and V28.

⁴⁴ See, for example, GARDINER 1957: 157 §207; ALLEN 2000: 100 §9.5.

⁴⁵ Hieroglyphic text shown in KITCHEN 1968–1990: 567, 568, 572 with corresponding translations in KITCHEN 1996a: 369, 370, 373.

could be argued that their use in relation to Osiris alone renders that proposition unlikely in that to present the god as ‘lord of forever and ruler of ever’ would be somewhat inane. Rather it seems that Osiris was being presented in relation to two distinct concepts.

That the efforts of those scholars hitherto described as attempting to seek some deeper meaning in the term *dt* have not been entirely successful is discouraging. However, that apparent lack of success may be attributable to the manner in which modern commentators approach the notion of time. As suggested by Bardon,⁴⁶ the underlying problem with time, despite the considerable thought given to its nature throughout recorded history, is that it remains ‘ineffable’; as a concept to be defined it appears to be ‘beyond words’, and he related this difficulty to a tendency to consider the concept from a scientific rather than a philosophical perspective — the latter allowing for a more abstract approach to the matters in question. For example, thus far I have made mention, on a number of occasions, of time as perceived in reality yet, from a more philosophical position, it may be asked whether time is in fact real at all and, if so, to what extent and in what sense it is real.⁴⁷ Perhaps more to the point in respect of *nhh* and *dt* one might ask, from the ancient Egyptian perspective at least, whether time had more than one reality.

In deciding such questions, reference to the properties of time as considered in either modern general understanding or philosophical discourse may be of little use as neither may necessarily have any bearing on ancient Egyptian perceptions of time; to suggest otherwise may in itself present something of an anachronism — an abuse of temporal perspective in relation to a culturally specific understanding of the nature of the particular topic of enquiry. Here it is of further note that generally accepted concepts of time in modern Western societies are not common throughout the world. For example, the Hopi people of Arizona appear to have no words which express either time or space as one may presently understand those phenomena. There is a verbal system in their language, but one with no tenses. The Nuer, a people situated on the White Nile in the Sudan, have no units of time but rather recognize sequences of events over a limited period, after which historical happenings are either forgotten or merely thought of in a general way as having occurred long ago.⁴⁸ What does seem clear is that diverse peoples may have distinct societally embedded systems relating to notions of time, each of which may differ to a greater or lesser degree from such notions in Western thought. Therefore each system needs to be examined from a more culturally nuanced perspective by giving attention to

⁴⁶ BARDON 2013: 1–5.

⁴⁷ For perceptions of time as an abstract concept independent of clocks see, for example, WHITROW 1988: 6; BARDON 2013: 12–17.

⁴⁸ WHITROW 1988: 8–10.

the specific beliefs informing the society in question. When reconsidering notions of time in ancient Egypt from this standpoint it becomes apparent that there may well have been a clear distinction between *nḥḥ* and *dt*.

The nature of *dt*

When considering systems of belief, it has to be accepted that much scholarly discourse relating to the culture of ancient Egypt has hitherto been couched in religious terminology, although the extent to which this may be an acceptable reflection of the studied beliefs or of the bias imposed by scholars themselves is questionable. That the principal evidence assessed, in many instances, derives from the texts and iconography of the extant monumental record, a record heavily populated with references to entities deemed godlike in nature, seemingly renders a degree of sacerdotal interpretation inevitable. As a consequence, the presentation of this material as being fundamentally religious may, to some degree, place it beyond the bounds of rational thought or argument, whereas examination of the same material from a more secular position might offer a different, and perhaps more productive outcome: a clearer view of underlying intent in the minds of the authors of the decorated structures of the ritual landscape.

While it must be admitted that much of the studied material does present stylized images of what may now be thought of as ‘gods’, those entities were essentially depictions of both tangible and intangible aspects of the created universe, naturally occurring phenomena which could be observed or experienced by humankind and which were given form and identity that they might be the subject of literary and artistic expression.⁴⁹ It should here be emphasized that in pertinent discourse the principal agent was invariably the king, and in the assemblage of scenes depicting encounters between the king and diverse members of the ancient Egyptian pantheon the nett result was absolute rule for the king by divine sanction. Therefore if the described schema is to be viewed as representative of a ‘religion’, then it should be clear that it was the religion of kingship.

It was through the texts and images decorating the state sponsored monuments of the ritual landscape that the ruling elite reified pharaonic ideology, which in turn both established the order and structure of the Egyptian society and the elevated position of that elite within its hierarchy. The principles informing the ideology thus presented were encapsulated within mythologies

⁴⁹ GREGORY 2014: 105. See also QUIRKE (1992: 25–30) for discussion regarding the character of Egyptian deities as metaphors for abstract ‘universal principles of human existence’ as brought into being by Atum. Of these, two are said to relate to time: Shu, the embodiment of *nḥḥ*, an endlessly repeating eternal cycle; and Tefnut, in whom was manifest *dt*, time as a linear, chronological sequence of years.

relating to the creation of the universe, longstanding traditions in which the king was defined as an embodiment of an aspect of the demiurge. Moreover, within the contexts of those mythologies, the living king was linked with Osiris, Re, aspects of time, and, perhaps most significantly within the context of the present discussion, to the moment of creation itself.⁵⁰

The nature of Egyptian creation mythology changed over time in keeping with prevailing views and styles of representation thereby maintaining relevance yet, as outlined above, the underlying principles remained remarkably constant.⁵¹ No single narrative account of creation exists; however, from the various mythological records which do survive it becomes clear that before the existence of the universe as experienced by humankind — that in which the sun arose and time, as measured by its rising and setting, began — the demiurge existed alone in the darkness of the Nun: the chaotic watery abyss in which there was only the potential for creation. That the sun, Re, and by inference the time governed by the motions of the sun, did not exist prior to the act of creation is clear from Coffin Text 76. In this invocation, which relates primarily to the Hermopolitan version of creation, Shu states, ‘I am Shu, who Atum created, from whom Re came to be’, and further, makes reference to the pre-existent chaos and darkness of the watery abyss.⁵² The sequence of events in the creation of the universe is also apparent in Chapter 17 of the Book of the Dead in which the self-created demiurge states: ‘I was alone in the Primordial Waters; I was Re in his glorious appearances when he began to rule what he had made’.⁵³ Thus the demiurge realized the potential for a created universe, rose from the pre-existing waters of chaos, and in his solar aspect ruled over his domain. And just as the Egyptians acknowledged the creation of the physical universe, they also envisaged its end.

Two texts in particular present notions regarding the end of the world. Coffin Text 1130 alludes to the millions of years which will pass between creation and the destruction of the universe when ‘Mounds will be towns. Towns will be mounds. Mansion will destroy mansion’.⁵⁴ Chapter 175 of the Book of the Dead similarly references the certainty of universal destruction in a passage in which, after the deceased enquires as to the duration of his life, Atum informs him that he will have a lifetime of millions of years, after which ‘I shall destroy all that I have made, and this land will return into Nun, into the floodwaters,

⁵⁰ GREGORY 2014: 27, 65, 111.

⁵¹ GREGORY 2014: 105. For an overview of the various cosmogonies see, for example, LESKO 1991: 90–115; WILKINSON 2003: 16–19.

⁵² LESKO 1991: 94. See also FAULKNER 2004: 77–78.

⁵³ FAULKNER 1998: pl. 7.

⁵⁴ PARKINSON 1991: 31–33 and note 5; FAULKNER 2004: 168 (CT VII 467–468).

as (in) its first state'.⁵⁵ From these texts, expressing both universal creation and destruction, it becomes clear that the Egyptians conceived of a form of reality beyond that of human experience, something outside the scope of measurable or solar time. There was the Nun from which the world was created and to which it would ultimately return, and it seems possible that this was, or was in some way associated with, the realm of *dt*.⁵⁶

Whereas the writing of *nhh* is redolent of real time activity the orthography of *dt* — consisting of the cobra, loaf, and land signs — is, as it is normally written, markedly different.⁵⁷ The precise meaning of such a combination of signs is uncertain, yet the land element alone suggests something more static in nature, something with a degree of relative permanence when presented in contrast to the cyclic motions of the sun.⁵⁸ The cobra and loaf together make up the spelling of 'cobra', a creature used as a symbol appearing in a wide variety of contexts but frequently associated with kingship; it also has some solar connotations, but specifically in relation to the underworld⁵⁹ — or, conceivably, a world other than that of human experience. For the present argument it is perhaps of most significance that, in his role as the primeval creator, Atum may appear in the form of a cobra.⁶⁰ Thus the symbolism encapsulated within the orthography of *dt* may be seen as a reference to the land of Atum: a location conceivably beyond that of physical reality. Perhaps this interpretation of the symbolism could not be considered conclusive, but it is nonetheless indicative that the meaning of *dt* is something quite dissimilar to that of *nhh* — feasibly, not a term indicating simply another form of time but one which

⁵⁵ WILSON 1969: 9; FAULKNER 1998: pl. 29. For further remarks on Atum as a destroyer see WILKINSON 2003: 99. For remarks as to the inevitability of the world's eventual destruction and return to its undifferentiated state within the Nun, see QUIRKE 1992: 36; WILKINSON 2003: 21–22; ASSMANN 2003a: 120–122; WINAND 2005: 321.

⁵⁶ Here it is of note that in relation to ancient conceptions of creation, WINAND (2003: 21) remarked that if one recognized that there was a state prior to creation and a state that it will be later then 'on peut se demander si les deux états sont ou non identiques'. He further considered whether, in such circumstances, the creator would exist within the created time or outside of that time in a dimension of its own. For further discussion on this question see WINAND 2005: 322–325.

⁵⁷ An arrangement of symbols generally presented as GARDINER signs I10, X1, and N16/17.

⁵⁸ Acknowledging that some scholars viewed the terms as synonymous, 'denoting, together, the totality of time and existence', GRIFFITHS (1985: 167) viewed *nhh* as 'eternal cyclic movement' and *dt* as probably relating to 'eternal static duration'. It is also of note that other scholars have considered the orthography of the two terms as denoting distinct qualities of the phenomena in question. For example, WINAND (2005: 322) noted that the essence of the two types of eternity is reflected in the hieroglyphic writing: the earth sign in *dt* symbolic of stability, the solar disc of *nhh* representing 'la course inlassable de l'astre'.

⁵⁹ WILKINSON 1992: 109.

⁶⁰ WILKINSON 2003: 98–101; NASSER et al. 2015a: 213. Here it is also of note that, in Chapter 175 of the Book of the Dead, Atum states that after the destruction of all he has made he will return to the Nun, as in its original state, and take the form of a serpent (FAULKNER 1998: pl. 29); see also ASSMANN 2003a: 120–121 on this point.

does indeed indicate some perception of an alternate reality. In this interpretation there is no need to seek the ‘ineffable’ with respect to the duality of time, rather to consider, from the ancient Egyptian perspective, terminology apposite to dual realities.⁶¹

If the possibility of an alternate reality should be allowed then some further consideration may be given to its nature, and here it seems that, even to the ancient Egyptians themselves, this could not have been known, only surmised; it was based upon abstract reasoning and was thus the metaphysical counterpart to the physical reality of human existence. As such it was an ideal reality, or perhaps more precisely the reality in which ideals themselves existed and were perhaps brought to a state of perfection by the demiurge — whose name, Atum, has been understood as meaning ‘the completed one’. Atum was the ‘lord of totality’ who consisted of everything which existed.⁶² Notions of justice, order, kingship — in fact all of the tangible and intangible elements of the physical world — existed, potentially, in the metaphysical realm to be brought into created reality at the First Time: *sp tpy*.⁶³ And while in physical reality ideas relating to such concepts may have changed over time dependent upon individual or societal perceptions, the ideals themselves remained constant — and ever-present as metaphysical concepts. Moreover, there seems to be no requirement to think of this alternate reality — what I suggest to be the reality of *dt* — as being in the distant past because, it being a metaphysical concept, neither conventional laws of time nor measurements of time would apply. As noted above, Atum was present in the Nun at the beginning of real time and it was thought that he would be there at its end; it may therefore follow that *dt* reality would be present throughout — though not be subject to — the time of human experience.⁶⁴ From this standpoint it might further be considered that the world of human experience was thought to be no more than a reflection of the world of perfected ideals: the ever-present *dt* reality created in the Nun.⁶⁵

⁶¹ The tendency in ancient Egyptian thought to view the world as consisting of many paired concepts is well recognized as, for example, in FRANKFORT 1948: 19; HORNUNG 1982a: 240–241; SILVERMAN 1991: 64. ŽABKAR (1965: 83) suggested that the ancient Egyptian ‘propensity towards dualism’ may have played some part in the adoption of the phraseology *nḥḥ* and *dt* which was then accepted as a convention, although they themselves never fully reasoned out its ‘philosophical connotations’. However, while the concept of dualism pertaining to the phraseology in question seems apposite, the notion that the ancient Egyptians were not fully aware of all pertinent connotations seems unlikely.

⁶² QUIRKE 1992: 31; ASSMANN 2001: 77; WILKINSON 2003: 99.

⁶³ MORENZ 1973: 166; GREGORY 2014: 106–107. See also WINAND (2005: 320) who remarked upon the unique quality of the First Time, describing it as the moment when the demiurge created time and space from the inert matter of the Nun; ‘le temps de la perfection, quand le désordre fit place à l’ordre’; and further, as a time which does not return.

⁶⁴ For further discussion regarding the continuance of the primeval waters of chaos together with real time existence see MORENZ 1973: 168.

⁶⁵ In this respect it may be of some note that QUIRKE (1992: 36) remarked: ‘The cyclical repetition of events, *neheh*, mirrored but never captured the perfection of the first time’.

And while it may be argued that it could be no more than speculation to consider an alternative ideal world in the manner outlined, the surviving literary material does not seem to preclude this possibility. That this notion of dual realities should in fact be allowed is encouraged by more concrete evidence relating to similar philosophical beliefs held by scholars in the Greek world by the time Alexander conquered Egypt in 332 BC, beliefs likely to have been influenced by Egyptian ideals.

Archaeological remains from Naucratis — in particular the wide range of pottery and the presence of temples dedicated to Greek deities, including monuments for Aphrodite, Apollo, and Hera — indicate that there was extensive Greek influence centred upon that location from around 600 BC, when it seems to have been an entrepôt serving as the centre for Egypt's trade with the Aegean world. Naucratis would therefore have attracted merchants and mercenaries, yet also politicians and scholars: savants who thus became aware of 'the works of a great civilization',⁶⁶ works which — as is apparent from many surviving archaeological artefacts — strongly influenced the art and architecture of the Greek homelands.⁶⁷ The Persian conquest of Egypt did little to affect Greek interest in the land other than in the short term, and during the period of Persian rule a number of Greek scholars are known to have visited Egypt, including Hecataeus of Miletus who is credited with writing an extensive account of the peoples and customs of that country.⁶⁸ It was said by Herodotus that Hecataeus visited Thebes, where officials gave him a tour of the monuments in a manner subsequently afforded to Herodotus himself.⁶⁹ Later, probably during the reign of one or more of the indigenous kings of the Twenty-ninth or Thirtieth Dynasties, Egypt may have been visited by Plato, whose writings are of some interest in the context of arguments presented in this paper.

It cannot be established with certainty that Plato visited in person, but he could assuredly have accessed a great deal of information concerning Egypt, not least from his close associate, Eudoxus of Cnidus, whose time in Egypt is well attested.⁷⁰ Plato was one of a number of Greek scholars who emphasized that it was from Egypt — considered by them to be the foundation of civilization — that the Greeks acquired all of their knowledge,⁷¹ and Plato's works contain many references to Egypt. Of particular note are those regarding art. In *Laws* he refers to canons of artistic style established by the Egyptians:

⁶⁶ BOARDMAN 1999: 119–131.

⁶⁷ BOARDMAN 1999: 141–153; DAVIS 1979: 122–123. It is perhaps here of some note that GRIFFITHS (1985: 167–168) argued that ancient Egyptian texts, specifically terminology used within divine creative contexts, provided antecedents for similar Greek linguistic constructions.

⁶⁸ BROWN 1962: 258.

⁶⁹ HERODOTUS II: 143.

⁷⁰ DAVIS 1979: 121–122.

⁷¹ BROWN 1962: 266; SCHÄFER 2002: 2, 270–271.

traditional artistic forms which artists and painters were not permitted to alter. While it is nowhere explicitly stated, it becomes apparent from the study of his dialogues that Plato held the Egyptian style in high regard, above that of the Greeks, as it did not use perspective and therefore depicted actual form rather than what the eyes see — thus presenting a truth beyond that of mere appearance.⁷² It therefore seems reasonable to allow the inference that Egyptian art — and ideals encoded therein — was, in some part, influential in Plato's reasoning: including the formulation of his notions relating to time and an alternate metaphysical reality.

In the *Timaeus*, Plato referred to time in the world of human experience as that consisting of days, nights, months, and years as measured by the regular motions of the sun, moon, and five other planets. Moreover, he insisted that this temporal world was but a likeness of, or something which partakes of, another timeless world: an eternal world in which there was no past, present or future, and which 'ran alongside the temporal one'.⁷³ Plato's timeless world, originally in a state of chaos, consisted of the primeval matter which was reduced to order by a demiurge who thereby created the ideal reality, a model upon which the temporal world — an image of that reality continually changing and moving through time — was based.⁷⁴ And here it seems that Plato's notions regarding two distinct realms of existence bear some relationship to those which, as I propose in this paper, are apparent in ancient Egyptian thought: the perfected and ever-present realm of *dt*, and the *nḥḥ* realm of human experience.

From the Egyptian perspective, it was the *dt* world which encapsulated the ideals of universal perfection instigated by the demiurge at *sp tpy*, the moment of creation. The ideals of *dt* reality informed pharaonic ideology as portrayed in texts and images decorating the monuments of the ritual landscape in the physical world of *nḥḥ*. That landscape itself was the arena for ritual and ceremony conducted in accordance with the notions portrayed, the participation in which — as an active agent or passive audience member — served to reify that ideology as a template for the structure of Egyptian society. As mentioned above, the inscriptions themselves focus on the king and the legitimacy of his rule as an aspect of the demiurge. That the king was variously mentioned in relation to both *dt* and *nḥḥ* confirmed his dual nature: a human form embodying the perfected ideal of kingship. He alone was deemed privy to the esoteric knowledge of the metaphysical ideals of *dt* which enabled him to carry out his principal duty: to ensure, on behalf of the creator, that the ideal of perfection,

⁷² DAVIS 1979: 123–126.

⁷³ VON LEYDEN 1964: 35, 37, 39.

⁷⁴ WHITROW 1988: 41.

ma'at, realized at the First Time was upheld in the world of *nḥḥ*.⁷⁵ The office of kingship was therefore perceived as essential to the maintenance of ordered civilization.

The monumental inscriptions also focus on the manner in which the human king attained his office by participation in the principal ritual of kingship, the Opet Festival, during which he became one with the ideal of kingship, an aspect of the demiurge represented in mythology as a falcon deity — most frequently as Horus. Thus the accession of each new king was ‘cosmogonic in nature’,⁷⁶ *dt* and *nḥḥ* elements uniting in what may be seen as a reenactment of *sp tpy* and the establishment of perfected order. And as each king died he became one with Osiris and became one with all previous occupants of the Horus throne, the Souls of Pe and Nekhen; the office of kingship then passed to his mortal successor. However, in this system it is clear that the principle of rule was not within the human element of the union; kingship was preserved in Horus and, significantly, not therefore a matter of human genealogy.

The rituals of kingship, particularly that of the Opet Festival, have been amply discussed elsewhere and it is not the intention to reiterate them here.⁷⁷ Rather, some examples will be given to reinforce the concepts presented here regarding *dt* and *nḥḥ*, and kingship as it was thought to be a quality of the demiurge, so as to provide evidence of the manner in which such notions continued to be represented at various stages during the First Millennium and thereby confirm their relevance throughout that time.

The Horus king, creation, and time

To demonstrate the constancy of First Millennium ideology in relation to pharaonic traditions of earlier periods it seems apposite to present firstly an example from the later part of the Second Millennium. In this respect concepts expressed in a text dated to Year 3 of Ramesses II, as inscribed on that king's monuments at Luxor, are informative. The text begins on the inner face of the east wall of the first court and continues along the rear, southern, face of the east wing of the pylon now fronting the surviving structures. There are lacunae, but much of the inscription remains and lends itself to some evaluation. It opens with the king consulting the archives, where he is said to have

⁷⁵ Regarding the king's role in this respect see, for example, ALDRED 1980: 11. Compare also KARENGA 2004: 211–213.

⁷⁶ KUHLMANN 2011: 2; GREGORY 2014: 107. For discussion of the king as one ‘sharing in the same substance as the sun-god’ see also QUIRKE 1992: 36–38.

⁷⁷ For reference to the significance of the Opet ritual in the legitimization of kingship see, for example, BELL 1985: 251–294; MURNANE 1995: 185–192; GREGORY 2014: 26–28, 63–65; and for the king as a manifestation of Horus or similar falcon deity see FRANKFORT 1948: 39–40; GREGORY 2014: 60–62.

found the secrets of heaven and the mysteries of earth, a reference to the esoteric knowledge to which the king was privy and, conceivably, some allusion to the existence of two discrete realities.

In this distinctly Theban inscription, the text goes on to proclaim Thebes as the location of the primeval mound of the beginning of time and Amun-Re as the demiurge. It is stated that, as king, Amun-Re illuminated heaven then shone on the solar circuit; at the end of this passage the god's name appears in a cartouche, and he is said to be the one whose name is *nḥḥ*, whose nature is *dt*, and whose *k3* is all that exists.⁷⁸ From this one might envisage what, in many respects, amounts to a Theban version of the Heliopolitan creation myth in which Amun-Re is to be seen as the demiurge in whom the totality of creation existed before it was realized as the primeval mound arose and time began. Further, the creator is clearly, and specifically, associated with both solar power and kingship — the latter being an attribute of the creator before becoming an aspect of the physical world. The meaning which may be inferred from the references to *dt* and *nḥḥ* is less certain; however, it is clear that some distinction was being made. It seems possible, albeit somewhat speculative on the information available, that one might conclude that while the creator was recognized in the physical reality of *nḥḥ*, his true nature was in the perfected ideals of *dt*.

The text continues with the living king, Ramesses II, proclaiming his intention to construct further monuments for his father, Amun-Re, thereby ensuring the continuing vitality of the ritual landscape. Other passages attest to the performance of ritual upon that stage as the king confirms that his constructions at Luxor were specifically designed to create a resting place for the god *ḏꜥꜣ* his, Amun's, 'southern Opet' during the Opet Festival: the ceremony through which the legitimacy of the king's rule was established. It is further apparent that throughout these inscriptions the king is identified as Horus, with nowhere any reference to his human genealogy: circumstances indicating the irrelevance of the latter, and also verifying that the significant factor in kingship was the relationship of the human incumbent with the demiurge. Emphasizing this point, it is said of Ramesses: 'Amun himself has caused him to appear, to be ruler of all that the sun's disc encircles'.⁷⁹

Another example of the Amun cosmogony is to be found in the monument constructed for Khonsu at Karnak. In scenes in Room V,⁸⁰ the creator is again presented as Amun-Re, although the text incorporates elements of the Heliopolitan, Hermopolitan, and Memphite cosmogonies: thus blending aspects from all major cult centres. Again Amun is said to have brought forth creation, and

⁷⁸ EL-RAZIK 1974: 144 §1B; 1975: 125–126.

⁷⁹ EL-RAZIK 1974: 146 §2; 1975: 127.

⁸⁰ PORTER and MOSS 1991: 239–240 §74–81.

here, more specifically, from the watery chaos of the Nun *m sp tpy*, ‘at the first time’.⁸¹ Elsewhere in the text Amun is credited with the creation of *ma’at*, and the king is presented as the one who maintains *ma’at*: he presents *ma’at* to ‘the great god who came into existence from Nun ... at the beginning’. It is also of note that within this mythology the role of Osiris in the solar cycle of the physical world is intimated in that he is described as one who ‘shines as the sun’, and further as one within both the sky and the netherworld, a reference to his solar activity during both day and night.⁸²

It is unfortunate that in the scenes relating to the cosmogony in Room V the cartouches above the king were left blank, and therefore the text cannot be dated with any certainty. The early origin of the myth itself is apparent from similarities with a version surviving from the period of Ramesses II in Papyrus Leiden 1.⁸³ However, while the Middle Egyptian style of composition apparent in the Room V inscriptions support such a date, the texts and images themselves are inscribed in a style which suggests that they were carved, or perhaps recarved, during the Ptolemaic Period. A late date is supported by the cartouche of Ptolemy VIII in scenes within the entrance to the room. However, within the room itself there are other scenes, some of which contain cartouches of Ramesses IV, others those of Augustus.⁸⁴ Overall, however, these circumstances do suggest that the Amun cosmogony remained relevant to matters of kingship, at least as they were expressed in Thebes, throughout the First Millennium.

As the Ramesside Period drew to a close some foreign cultural influences began to appear in the monumental record, perhaps firstly in the names of a number of Herihor’s children which, as inscribed in his scenes in the Khonsu monument,⁸⁵ appear to be Libyan in origin. Some scholars have interpreted this circumstance as indicating that Herihor himself was of Libyan descent and that in this period Egyptian kingship was influenced by Libyan tribal customs;⁸⁶

⁸¹ PARKER and LESKO 1988: 169, pl. 34, line 6; LESKO 1991: 105.

⁸² PARKER and LESKO 1988: 171–173.

⁸³ SMITH 2002: 51.

⁸⁴ PARKER and LESKO 1988: 168–169.

⁸⁵ THE EPIGRAPHIC SURVEY 1979: 11–12, pl. 26.

⁸⁶ For discussion of the Libyan origins of the Twenty-first Dynasty see RITNER 2009a: 2–5; also BROEKMAN (2012: 198) who asserted that ‘it must be remembered that Herihor was of Libyan stock’. SAGRILLO (2013: 4073) stated: ‘By the beginning of the Third Intermediate Period, Libyans were well-integrated into the Egyptian administration’, and suggested that many Twenty-first Dynasty kings and high priests of Amun ‘may have been of Libyan descent’. ADDERLEY (2015: 1–2) has remarked that a number of the ‘High Priests of Amun at Thebes’ were of Libyan descent and that the inclusion of the Twenty-first Dynasty in the Libyan Period is also favoured by the division of rule at that time, with kings in the north and the high priests in the south. This division has been seen as reflecting different systems of rule: the northern kings following pharaonic tradition, Thebes adopting a novel and distinct theocratic system. This position has been argued for by, for example, TAYLOR 2000: 346; ASSMANN 2003b: 287–289; BROEKMAN 2012: 198, and has been widely accepted in recent scholarship. However, it has also been argued (GREGORY 2014:

however, on the evidence presently available from the decoration of the monuments themselves, there is no clear indication that this was the case. What is apparent from Herihor's inscriptions is that they conform to styles of artistic decorum evident in earlier New Kingdom presentations of similar material, and of particular interest in this respect is a representation of the manner in which kingship was attained.

In a scene inscribed on the west wall of the first court of Khonsu's monument, Herihor is depicted on the ceremonial barge which carried the barque of Amun-Re during the Festival of Opet. In a caption above the barque, Amun tells Herihor that he has given him every land, with peoples in obeisance and in awe of him, because he has rebuilt the god's house anew as a great abode 'like the horizon of the sky'.⁸⁷ From this it again seems that the king's earthly power was, from an ideological perspective, in part reliant upon his creation of monuments within the ritual landscape. Thus ideology prescribed that a primary function of kingship was the construction of the physical arena which served to promote the legitimacy of the living king as one whose rule was sanctioned by the creator. A somewhat self-fulfilling ideological requirement perhaps, but, it may be thought, no less effective for that.

Amun further states that he proceeds from the monument to Opet, 'my abode of the primeval time [*sp tpy*] in order to make my beautiful voyage during my annual festival'. In this Amun was accompanied by his son, the king, who rowed 'his father Amun to come to rest in Opet' — and Herihor is depicted, standing on the prow of the barge with oar in hand, performing that task. Here it is clear that in the annual affirmation of kingship, the king — or perhaps, more accurately, his *k3* — and the creator are to be seen together in the moment of creation.⁸⁸ And here it does not seem necessary to envisage a long journey, getting longer each year, backwards through time; it was rather a journey into the ever-present metaphysical world of perfected ideals. Moreover, Herihor's text clearly allows the inference that pharaonic kingship was inextricably linked both to the perpetuation of the ritual landscape and the rituals performed therein; it may also be again inferred, from lack of any direct reference whatsoever, that genealogical considerations were not of prime importance. From the ideological standpoint, the father of the king was in every case the demiurge, in one or other of his guises.

13, 18, 63, 137–146) that this perceived variance in styles of government is somewhat illusory; regardless of the presence or otherwise of Libyan influence, the style of government in Thebes, as evident from the inscriptions in the monumental record, was essentially a continuance of pharaonic traditions as expressed in earlier periods.

⁸⁷ THE EPIGRAPHIC SURVEY 1979: 7–8, pl. 21.

⁸⁸ For further discussion of this scene in the wider context of Herihor's decorative programme within the first court see GREGORY 2014: 26–33, 160–171.

Later in the Twenty-first Dynasty, the continuing acknowledgement of kingship as an aspect of the creator is implicit in the text of a papyrus recovered from the Theban tomb DB320 — a burial cache discovered in 1881. The text had been written for the lady, Neskhons,⁸⁹ wife of the Theban ruler Pinudjem II and herself of vice-regal status as indicated by the inclusion of ‘King’s daughter of Kush’ in her titulary. In the text Amun is presented as the creator, the primeval one existing alone before creation, one who brought forth the earth at the First Time, one who lives on *ma’at*, and one ‘from whose form all forms were formed’. The latter attribute — redolent of aforementioned notions of Plato — tends to confirm the idea that the perfected forms of all that may exist were each aspects of the demiurge, only simulacra of which appeared in physical reality. Further, Amun is said to be the one from whom came the sun which circles the earth ‘eternally’, here expressed as *nḥḥ*. Thus Amun placed the sun in the real world. He was also said to be ‘the King who made the Kings, Who knit together the lands by the command that he has made’.⁹⁰ Kingship was therefore, and quite explicitly, an aspect of the god vested in the mortal king.

The Neskhons text also proclaims Amun to be the one *iw nḥḥ ḥr wsr.f iny pḥ n dt*, which has been interpreted as meaning: ‘Under whose might eternity comes about, Who brings an end to infinity’.⁹¹ Here it seems that the choices of ‘eternity’ and ‘infinity’ — should these phenomena have been understood to be in the same reality — may, to some degree, have been arbitrary translations made in an attempt to present a degree of logical sense to the passage; however, one may wonder if this has been entirely successful. Infinity is generally associated with space or number rather than with time, therefore the use of ‘infinity’ may present the notion of limitless space in juxtaposition with the limitless time implicit in ‘eternity’. Nonetheless, to suggest that one who brings about limitless time then ends limitless space does not appear to be entirely reasonable within the context of the passage of the Neskhons text in question, which generally presents Amun in a positive and creative framework. For example, in the section in question Amun is said to have fashioned himself and made both heaven and earth. Thus to continue this list of achievements with the realization of eternity, then follow with the ending of infinity, seems somewhat counter-intuitive — particularly so as the next phrase presents Amun as the ‘Great god, who began creation’.⁹² Alternatively, in a more creative light it seems plausible to take *pḥ* as a reference to a result, in the sense of something gained or attained, rather than an ‘end’, in the sense of something lost. It would not then stretch the imagination too far to translate the passage: ‘under whose

⁸⁹ Papyrus Cairo 58032. For further discussion of this text see, for example, KITCHEN 1996b: 65–66; RITNER 2009a: 145–158.

⁹⁰ RITNER 2009a: 151–154.

⁹¹ RITNER 2009a: 147, line 12 (transliteration); 152, line 12 (translation).

⁹² RITNER 2009a: 147, line 13 (transliteration); 152, line 13 (translation).

might *nḥḥ* comes about; who brings (this) end/result from *dt*'. The expression thus presents the complimentary duality proposed for *nḥḥ* and *dt* in the present paper in a manner which confirms that the demiurge realized the physical world of *nḥḥ* from the pre-existing metaphysical ideal, *dt*. This alternative seems — in that it reflects the creative notion that the known universe was realized from some pre-existing state — both more in keeping with the context of the entire passage, and with creation mythology in general.

With the beginning of the Twenty-second Dynasty the Libyan influence within the Egyptian ruling elite is beyond doubt. In his Abydos Stela, the future king Sheshonq I is referred to as 'Great Chief of the Meshwesh'.⁹³ Yet in his inscriptions within the Bubastite Portal at Karnak, Sheshonq is presented as entirely Egyptian, with no reference to his Libyan antecedent history. He is a king with a full five-fold titulary; proclaimed as one who sits upon the Horus throne as the son of Amun; one who constructs monuments for his father, Amun, who in return grants Sheshonq long life, dominion over his people, and victories over his enemies; and as one who is described on several occasions as the 'Lord of ritual performance'.⁹⁴ Thus while seemingly of a distinctly foreign background, Sheshonq's rule was reliant upon pharaonic ideology as expressed and performed in the ritual landscape in accordance with practices established in Egyptian traditions of earlier times.

Another text inscribed in the Bubastite Portal, that relating the vicissitudes of Prince Osorkon,⁹⁵ is significant in marking the degree of political instability at a time later in the Libyan Period. From the narrative it seems that Thebes had rebelled, and that Prince Osorkon — now generally recognized as later becoming Osorkon III⁹⁶ — was attempting to regain control of the city on behalf of his father, Takelot II. A section of this text is of particular relevance in the present discussion in that it gives some further written account regarding the expression of ideology and performance of ritual in the establishment of legitimate authority.

In the narrative relating to events of Year 11 of Takelot II, Osorkon had gained the upper hand in Thebes as a result of military supremacy and entered the city in victory, whereupon he took part in a ritual festival. Not, on this occasion, that of Opet, but nonetheless an event in which he was presented as the eldest son and representative of Amun and as one said to be appearing as *Ṭwn-mwt.f*, a manifestation of the god Horus symbolizing the ideal of

⁹³ BLACKMAN 1941: 83–95. For a more recent translation and commentary see RITNER 2009a: 166–172.

⁹⁴ RITNER 2009a: 193–213.

⁹⁵ For a consecutive translation of the texts see CAMINOS 1958: 151–171. For more recent transliteration, translation, and commentary of this text see RITNER 2009a: 348–377. For further discussion of the text in the wider historical context of the period see DODSON 2012: 118–132.

⁹⁶ See, for example, ASTON 1989: 150; LEAHY 1990: 192; DODSON 2012: 128.

kingship.⁹⁷ Osorkon thus appears to present himself as one with the authority to act as king. The text does tend to support this notion further in that Osorkon apparently partook in royal prerogative, the preservation of *ma'at*, in as much as he is said to have been charged with the duty of returning Thebes to its former state as it had fallen into disorder:⁹⁸ that former state being a reference to the city as it was created in 'the first primeval time', here expressed as '*p3w.t tp.(t)*'.⁹⁹ However, it is also clearly stated, on a number of occasions, that at the time of the events in question the reigning king was Takelot II. Therefore, in the context of ending a Theban rebellion, Osorkon's appearance as *Ḳwn-mwt.f* may rather be seen as the representation of one acting on behalf of both Amun and Takelot II in returning the ideal of legitimate kingship to Thebes.

Throughout Osorkon's campaigns, which continue for at least a further 13 years, he is presented in the Karnak inscriptions as one acting as deputy, *hm ntr tpy n Ḳmn*,¹⁰⁰ for his father, Takelot II — also described as 'son of Amun'. The text also makes mention of Osorkon's royal mother, Karomama. However, it is noteworthy in the present discussion that despite Osorkon's clear genealogical claims to power, and the fact that he had achieved *de facto* control through military victory, he felt it necessary to reinforce his authority to control Thebes — as the existence of the inscriptions seems to confirm — by active engagement in ritual performance. Moreover, that performance was efficacious in that it was witnessed by both the elite and ordinary people: described in the text as including senior officials together with the 'whole city, in all its districts and all its quarters, the men [and women] united in one occasion'.¹⁰¹

It is of additional note that while Osorkon's subsequent kingship is nowhere explicitly mentioned, many aspects of the text make it clear that the Prince was to be seen as a 'king-in-waiting' in Thebes, both as successor to his father and, primarily and in accordance with the mythology of kingship, as the progeny of Amun.¹⁰² Osorkon could, therefore, adopt the lineage of the generations of kings since the advent of the Pharaonic Period — or, in ideological terms, since the First Time — and in this respect it is pertinent that Osorkon is likened to the young Horus, and said to be one who 'might become the strong-armed Horus of the entire Two Lands'.¹⁰³ Thus reliance on traditional pharaonic ideals

⁹⁷ For discussion of the *Ḳwn-mwt.f* as a manifestation of disembodied kingship see GREGORY 2013: 30–38.

⁹⁸ RITNER 2009a: 355, 363–364.

⁹⁹ RITNER 2009a: 352, line 33 (transliteration); 355, line 33 (translation). For the hieroglyphic text see THE EPIGRAPHIC SURVEY 1954: pl. 16.

¹⁰⁰ RITNER 2009a: 358. For discussion of the title as referring to one acting as the king's deputy see GREGORY 2014: 125–126, 128–131.

¹⁰¹ RITNER 2009a: 355.

¹⁰² At one point Osorkon states that he had carried out the described campaigns on behalf of Amun and Takelot II 'in order that I might be upon his throne' (RITNER 2009a: 353, 358).

¹⁰³ In particular see RITNER 2009a: 360–361.

and rituals in the legitimization of authority is once more apparent, even at times when it is clear that these rulers of Libyan descent were engaged in protracted internecine strife leading to the subsequent political fragmentation soon to be further evident in the historical record.

It is demonstrable from earlier times that while it was desirable for the land of Egypt to be united, this was often more of an ideal than a reality: the reality being that the geographic boundaries of the purported unified land were somewhat flexible. It was quite possible to govern regions of the land, with varying degrees of autonomy, and to claim kingship over those lands by reference to pharaonic ideology. As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, the New Kingdom began with the overthrow of Hyksos kings in the North by a separate line of rulers, the Theban Seventeenth Dynasty, who had claimed kingship in the South. A similar division occurred at the end of the New Kingdom with Herihor king in Thebes while a northern dynasty ruled as kings in Tanis. And political division is perhaps nowhere more evident than at the end of the Libyan Period when, as the Kushite Dynasty was gaining control of lands stretching from the regions of the Fifth Cataract to the Delta, the inscriptions on the Victory Stela of Piye attest to the presence of a number of chiefdoms in Egypt and, in addition, to six kings: each controlling his own region of the land. From the manner of their representation on the stela — a monument set up for Piye at Gebel Barkal — each of these kings appears to have adopted traditional pharaonic style: a style most evident in the inscriptions of the Kushites themselves.

Gebel Barkal, in the region of the Fourth Cataract, had been a centre of kingship ritual since the Eighteenth Dynasty, with monuments modelled on those of Thebes. During the Twenty-fifth Dynasty the site was extensively re-vitalised with the addition of further structures decorated in pharaonic style.¹⁰⁴ As remarked by Kendall, Gebel Barkal was thought to be a place at which all aspects of the creator and the living king merged, as in the Opet ceremony during which the essence of the demiurge became manifest in the living king at *sp tpy*: ‘each new reign and each New Year became a replay of the moment of creation’.¹⁰⁵ The significance of the Opet Festival from Piye’s perspective is apparent from the Victory Stela itself. In this monument, dated to Year 21 of his reign, Piye is addressed as Horus and presents himself as an image of the demiurge, Atum. Much of the lengthy text is then taken up with details of the Kushite campaigns conducted in Egypt to overthrow a rival for power, Tefnakht. However, it is notable that during these extensive operations Piye

¹⁰⁴ For an in depth discussion of the monumental landscape of Gebel Barkal and its relevance for kingship see KENDALL 2002: 1–73.

¹⁰⁵ KENDALL 2002: 37–38.

makes the point that he visited Thebes to celebrate the festival of Amun at the Feast of Opet.¹⁰⁶

During the described campaigns it becomes clear that once they had submitted to his rule, Piye allowed a number of regional kings to remain in power. The ideological justification for this is apparent in an earlier stela, dated to Year 3, in which Amun of Gebel Barkal makes a speech emphasizing that it is he who makes kings. He further states that he gives kingship to his son, Piye, along with the two crowns — regalia symbolic of kingship — as fashioned at the First Time, *sp tpy*. In Piye's response he indicates that the existence of other kings in the land was acceptable as they ruled their cities by his authority, whereas he himself ruled the entire land by the authority of the god.¹⁰⁷ Thus while it is clear that society continued to rely upon pharaonic ideology in the establishment of kingship, and thereby of order, the flexibility of that ideology in adapting to prevailing political circumstances is again apparent. In this respect the comments of a later Kushite ruler, Taharqo, are informative. In an inscription at Karnak, Taharqo stated that Amun alone was the maker of kings, selecting for that office one who may otherwise be unknown.¹⁰⁸ This provides a clear indication that in theory, and perhaps to some degree in practice, a candidate's antecedents were not necessarily considered to be an insurmountable barrier to his prospects for kingship.

Within the context of the present paper perhaps one further example will suffice to establish that pharaonic traditions regarding kinship continued to prevail throughout the First Millennium: this from a monument recently discovered during illicit excavations beneath a house in Akhmim. The inscriptions show that the structure in question was dedicated to a primeval form of Atum, who appears in the form of a serpent. While no king is specifically named on the remains of the monument presently accessible, similarities in style in the rendering of both texts and images with those of monuments inscribed for Ptolemy XII at Athribis allow a date during the Late Ptolemaic or early Roman Period for their authorship.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ For commentary on this text, and transliteration and translation of the inscriptions, see RITNER 2009a: 465–492.

¹⁰⁷ For commentary on this text, and transliteration and translation of the inscriptions, see EIDE et al. 1994: 55–62; RITNER 2009a: 462–463.

¹⁰⁸ EIDE et al. 1994: 184; RITNER 2009a: 506–508.

¹⁰⁹ NASSER et al. 2015b: 3–4; 2015a: 190, 217–218. While it is somewhat beyond the scope of the present paper, it may, nonetheless, be worthy of note that following the conquest of Egypt by Augustus there is some indication that pharaonic ideology was adopted, at least to some degree, in the Roman world — as apparent, for example, in the use of Egyptian architectural elements in furnishing the new imperial landscape of Augustan Rome. For further discussion on this point see DAVIES 2000: 61–63, 77–95; GREGORY 2012: 9–24.

The inscriptions at Akhmim reflect Heliopolitan cosmogony, presenting Atum as the god who *ḥpr.f sp tpy iw t3 m nwn n ḥpr(t) pt n ḥpr(t) t3*:¹¹⁰ ‘came into being at the First Time when the earth was in the Nun, when the sky did not exist, when the earth did not exist’. Atum is said to have created everything in the earth, the sky, and the underworld, and to be the protector of his son, Horus, the great god who is *ḥr srḥ.f dt*:¹¹¹ ‘on his throne for *dt*’. This remark may be read in juxtaposition with that in the first column of the same inscription in which the unnamed living king is presented as the good god, the son of Isis, the son of Re, and lord of crowns. These are standard epithets for a living ruler; however, here the king is said to be one *ḥr srḥ r 3w n nḥḥ*:¹¹² ‘lasting on the throne for *nḥḥ*’. Thus the symbolic manifestation of the concept of kingship, Horus, and the living king were placed, I would suggest, in the metaphysical and physical realms respectively.

Further indicative of the ideal of kingship — as mentioned above, a concept frequently symbolised by falcon-headed deities — as an ideal perfected in the metaphysical realm and associated with both the creator and solar power, is a rather unique image of Atum above the inscriptions here discussed. The god is depicted as a snake with the head of a falcon surmounted by a sun disk. Moreover, while there is no land sign beneath the snake, its coils do rest on the register line: thus the imagery overall may have the same symbolic value as the more usual orthographic rendering of *dt*. That the serpent may be seen as symbolizing Atum’s creative aspect is given additional support by an image at Athribis depicting Atum as a snake standing on its tail. In the accompanying caption he is named *Tm m nwn*: ‘Atum within Nun’.¹¹³ And, overall, I would suggest that the described imagery tends to support my earlier, if somewhat tentative, remarks that the orthography of *dt* may be thought to symbolise the demiurge in the Nun: the creator upon the ideal land, that which may be perceived as the metaphysical and ideal world beyond the created universe in its perfection at the moment of creation, *sp tpy*.

Summary

From the examples given above it seems evident that pharaonic ideology, as informed by long-established mythologies which had persisted through preceding millennia, remained remarkably relevant throughout the First Millennium. Moreover, that ideology itself allowed for the existence of a reality beyond that experienced by humankind, an abstract world of ideals providing the template

¹¹⁰ For hieroglyphic text and transliteration see NASSER et al. 2015a: 201.

¹¹¹ For hieroglyphic text and transliteration see NASSER et al. 2015a: 201.

¹¹² For hieroglyphic text and transliteration see NASSER et al. 2015a: 201.

¹¹³ NASSER et al. 2015a: 213.

upon which the order of the physical world was structured. The maintenance of that order, *ma'at*, was the responsibility of the king who was, in theory at least, the one human encapsulating aspects of both worlds. The ideology therefore rendered the role of king essential to the continuance of civilised society; furthermore, as each king was — from an ideological position — one selected by the demiurge alone, the system was efficacious in the production of kings. However, there was no absolute requirement for the human aspect of the king to be 'Egyptian'.

As demonstrated by history, the cultural background of the ruler was seemingly of no great consequence. Those with the political acumen or military power — or perhaps some combination thereof — could don the mantle of pharaonic kingship through participation in ritual, primarily the Opet Festival. This was the conduit through which each successful candidate for supreme earthly power became the embodiment of Horus — the ideal of kingship, an aspect of the demiurge ever present at *sp tpy*. The king's authority was thereby validated by reference to the totality of kings — the royal ancestors, each in turn partaking of the omnipresent essence of kingship — not predicated upon biological forebears.

In the described system appropriate antecedents may have been desirable, but were not essential. The ceremonies of kingship, however, and the stage on which they were performed, the monuments of the ritual landscape, were crucial as the source of effective authority as sanctioned by the gods. Rule for kings of Egypt was largely a matter of their public image as depicted in the decoration of the monuments wherein each living king was a reflection of Horus, of Re, of the Creator — and, as such, became the guarantor of order. The decorative themes employed, themselves encapsulating longstanding ideals of a metaphysical reality, gave the ritual landscape and its audience the illusion of constancy, and thus also of stability. As such the structures were functional. In bringing such metaphysical concepts into physical reality the ceremonial arena acted as the antithesis of the political turmoil of the world of lived experience. The ritual landscape presented a timeless image of perfection and permanence in an otherwise turbulent world;¹¹⁴ moreover, it gave potential rulers access to that source of order for the benefit of their subjects. Therefore, in the turbulent times of the First Millennium, pharaonic ideology and the physical arenas in which it was manifest were effective governmental tools for those with the knowledge and ability to use them.

¹¹⁴ For further discussion of the somewhat timeless nature of Egyptian 'aspective' art see, for example, WINAND 2003: 27–28. For a more complete consideration of the theory of 'aspective' — a term which expresses the artistic rendering of an object as it really is as opposed to how it appears, as rendered by 'perspective' art — see BRUNNER-TRAUT 2002 (first published in 1986): 421–446; the theory being further developed in BRUNNER-TRAUT 1996.

It may be argued that rulers of foreign descent would not have any particular knowledge of pharaonic ideology, yet the degree to which particular kings subscribed to, or even understood, those doctrines in any depth was perhaps immaterial. What is clear is that somewhere in the ruling hierarchy there were those who understood the system well; it would indeed be remarkable if the observed constancies in the monumental record should have survived otherwise. It therefore appears safe to conclude that, even where pharaonic ideals were adopted as a matter of political expediency, the rituals and mythologies informing them remained a significant aspect of society. It follows that present knowledge of the systems in question would be a prerequisite for complete, or at least a more complete, understanding of the studied civilization.

Barriers to comprehension in Egyptology seem often to be the result of self-imposed boundaries apparent within the established terminology of its discourse. Modes of expression relating to particular aspects of the discipline evolve, become accepted, are passed from scholar to scholar, and become embedded in Egyptological dialogue. To some perhaps, such modes of expression become inviolable. However, to advance the discipline further it is both necessary and appropriate to confront those boundaries. And the purpose of this paper is to offer some challenge to the acceptance of the terms *nḥḥ* and *dt* as synonymous expressions relating to time — particularly where that supposed temporal terminology relates to kingship, a central aspect of ancient Egyptian culture. While ‘forever and ever’ may appear to be an acceptable interpretation of those terms in more popular renditions of the ancient texts, it is less appropriate from an academic standpoint where, rather than offer some banal expression constructed of temporal synonyms, one may endeavour to reflect the deeper and more nuanced concepts apparent in ancient Egyptian philosophy.

As noted above, there was a tendency in ancient Egyptian thought to consider the world in terms of paired and contrasting dualities. However, the attempts of scholars to express notions relating to two versions of time pertaining to one reality appear inherently problematic. In this respect, it may be no less difficult to find suitable expressions for two versions of time in the duality of physical and metaphysical realities proposed in this paper as respectively associated with *nḥḥ* and *dt* — especially when recalling that time itself, from a linguistic viewpoint, has been thought to be somewhat ineffable. Nevertheless, I do not accept that the terms were used in royal epithets merely as banal platitudes. Rather it seems that in some way they were informative with regard to the dual nature of kingship: they reflected the status of the pharaoh as one effective in both physical and metaphysical realms of existence. As such the difficulty is not one of finding a duality of temporal expressions, but of identifying the precise nature of the contrasting components of the *nḥḥ-dt* duality itself. A possible solution is suggested by the construction of the ancient language.

It was noted earlier that in the interpretation of complex notions the differences in language have often been perceived to be problematic, particularly so in the context of temporal matters in that in the modern Western world one tends to think in terms of past, present, and future, whereas in Egyptian only the two aspects of 'change' and 'completedness' are represented. In addressing this matter it is firstly of note that this would not be at all problematic from the ancient perspective: the language would, it may be supposed, adequately communicate notions about the world as it was then understood. Secondly it seems that the ancient system may in some ways be more accurate in that currently accepted notions of life, as largely comprising activities taking place in the 'present', are quite illusory. Time moves faster than thought, and before any notion of the present can be formed that 'present' has already passed. In this view perhaps the notion of the 'present' as something with any degree of constancy can only exist in a metaphysical reality, and outside of time as experienced in physical reality. And as proposed above, it may have been in the ever-present reality — one beyond the reach of mortals, other than the king — that the ideals informing the physical world were thought to exist. From this perspective the nature of *nhh* and *dt* may not be entirely temporal but rather relate, in some degree, to matters of wider ontological significance. Here *nhh* and *dt* become dual and complementary references indicative not only of time but of the condition of the two realities associated with those terms: one in continual temporal motion, the other static. From the modern standpoint it therefore seems necessary that rather than choose to translate these terms using temporal synonyms, some effort should be made to reflect the somewhat more subtle qualities of the original thought encapsulated within the contexts of their usage.

While the somewhat ineffable connotations of time remain — both in respect of the continuing evolution concomitant with the solar cycle in the real world, and in the constant yet enduring state of perfection in the metaphysical realm of ideals — it does not seem beyond the scope of scholarship to overcome apparent difficulties in translating the distinct and complementary aspects of the duality in question, whether the words presently identified with 'eternity' are used separately or in conjunction. Here it seems that some consideration should be given to ideas of 'change' and 'completedness' — to 'becoming' and 'perfected' — apparent in the Egyptian grammatical forms, and to the use of terms which imply such meanings as appropriate to each literary context. There seems no reason here to disallow the use of 'eternal' in respect of the physical world so as to appropriately reflect ideas of longevity, of the passage of time, inherent in *nhh*; conversely, some preference should be given to notions expressing timelessness or perfection in respect of the *dt* aspect so as to adequately indicate the dual nature of the king as apparent in pharaonic ideology. The king, from the ideological perspective, comprised both *nhh* and *dt*: in the

physical world the king changes over time, but is nonetheless the embodiment of Horus, the perfected ideal of kingship constant throughout time.

It now remains to test the presented hypothesis in a variety of contexts across the Pharaonic Period in an attempt to establish its value with a greater degree of certainty. For now, however, it does appear safe to allow a more nuanced interpretation of *nḥḥ* and *dt* in general translation so as to permit, for example, that kings were not thought to live ‘forever and ever’, but rather — irrespective of their cultural antecedents — to occupy the throne of Horus in a state of enduring perfection.

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