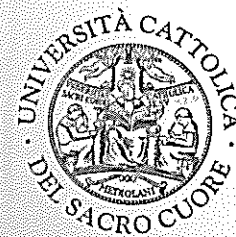


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The Papyrus of Nesipautitai (SR 1025): an iconographical reading

1. Introduction

From the late Ramessid Period on, especially during the 21st Dynasty, new types of funerary papyri were produced. Instead of the traditional composition of the *Book of the Dead*, which combined a great deal of text with carefully designed vignettes, the new books of the hereafter emphasized the magical power of the images, paying little attention the texts themselves. These books became elaborate iconographic compendia, thus being sometimes labelled under the designation of “mythological papyri”. In this article we will focus on the study and interpretation of the papyrus of Nesipautitai (Cairo Egyptian Museum, SR 1025) that presents a particularly careful sequence of symbols and images that follows what seems to be a very well established iconographical pattern, which is also found in other contemporary documents such as the following papyri:

1. Papyrus of Padikhonsu (British Museum, 10004), 21st Dynasty
2. Papyrus of Isetemakhbit (Cairo Egyptian Museum, JE 95657), 21st Dynasty
3. Papyrus of Tabaketenkhonsu (Louvre Museum, N 3287), 21st Dynasty
4. Papyrus of Mashitseket (Turin Egyptian Museum, 1769), 21st Dynasty
5. Papyrus of Amememuia (Berlin Egyptian Museum, Inv. Nr. P 3127), Ramessid Period.

Although there are earlier versions of this particular kind of funerary papyri, such as the papyrus of Amenemuia, most of these documents date from the 21st Dynasty. Compositions such as the book of Nesipautitai

illustrate the interest of the Theban priesthood of Amun in funerary books that showcase complex iconographical compositions based on the symbolic repertoire of either of the *Book of the Dead* or the *Book of the Amduat*. The funerary papyrus described here poses a particularly interesting question since, although its iconographical program is clearly dependent on the repertoire of the *Book of the Dead*, it was understood by ancient authors as a version of the *Amduat book* (1). In fact, in his typology of the Theban funerary papyri of the 21st Dynasty, Niwinski grouped these documents among the *Amduat books* (in the A.III.1a. category) described as «manuscripts with motives of the Book of the Dead» (2). Being an *Amduat book*, the most probable original location of the papyrus of Nesipautitai would be the mummy itself (3). It is likely that the book of Nesipautitai was used as an apotropaic object, in the same way that, during the same period, other magical items such as amulets and divine images were placed over the mummy (4). That kind of archaeological context would certainly stress the apotropaic nature of these papyri.

2. The description of the papyrus and its vignettes

The papyrus of Nesipautitai is 1,25 m long but similar documents can be even longer (such is the case with the papyrus of Mashitsekabet that is 1,71 m). The papyrus of Nesipautitai is very well preserved. The whole composition is arranged inside a colourful double frame. The vignettes are painted with a variety of colours, including red, green, brown, blue and pink. The text, written in cursive hieroglyphic, is limited to some legends that identify the entities depicted. The images are arranged in the papyrus in a single horizontal register. The deceased is only depicted at the right end of the papyrus and one reads it from the right to the left. In the descriptions of the scenes of this papyrus we will follow the division

(1) This is in fact the title that appears, written in hieratic, in one of these documents. See NIWINSKI, *Book*, p. 193.

(2) *Ibid.*, p. 192.

(3) *Ibid.*, p. 245.

(4) See DARESSY, *Sépultures*, pp. 141-148.

proposed by Piankoff and Rambova, although at times the division between the scenes might seem somewhat artificial (5).

Starting from the right end of the scroll, the book shows the deceased kneeling in front of a winged serpent. Above, an inscription gives the name and the title of the deceased, who is wearing a long garment and is adorned with a lotus flower on his head. Nesipautitai is holding his heart in his hands, a gesture that, especially in the funerary context, illustrates that the deceased intends to show its purity (6). The winged serpent is, of course, the representation of a deity, since it is portrayed with divine attributes such as the divine beard and the *maetic* feather on the top of its head (7). In the papyrus of Tabaketenkhonsu the serpent wears an *atef* crown, an *explicitly* Osirian symbol and in the papyrus of Mashitsekabet an inscription states that it is the «Great god who is in the (desert) mountains».

The second scene presents several deities grouped before a large heart amulet: the goddess Maet, the *benu* bird and the scarab Khepri. The goddess Maet wears an *ankh* sign on her knees, from which springs a papyrus blossom. The book of Nesipautitai is the only document listed here that depicts a serpent god seated in front of Maet. While the goddess Maet seems to be a direct allusion to the weighing of the heart in the court of Osiris, the *benu* bird and the scarab are undoubtedly symbols of rebirth. We know that the sacred scarab provided the identification of the deceased with the rising sun, in a way that it might be hieroglyphically read as *kheper*, «transformation», to a solar manifestation. This same intent to provide a solar rebirth to the heart is found on the heart scarabs, the most important funerary *amulets*. On the other hand, the *benu* bird is also a powerful symbol of rebirth that should provide a new beginning, to the deceased.

It is certainly to provide a positive outcome for the weighing of the heart that chapter 30 B of the *Book of the Dead* was inscribed inside the depiction of the heart amulet, a practice that is archaeologically well documented. In the illustration the amulet is inscribed with the Osirian

(5) See PIANKOFF, RAMBOVA, *Mythological*, pp. 77-176.

(6) About the meaning of this gesture see SOUSA, *Cardiac*, pp. 39-53.

(7) To Piankoff these entities are guardians of the West that are connected to the regeneration process. See PIANKOFF, RAMBOVA, *Mythological*, p. 77.

name of the deceased, followed by the version of the two first sentences of chapter 30 B of the *Book of the Dead* which is also a common feature of the heart amulets (8): «heart-*ib* of mine, heart-*ib* of my mother, my heart-*haty* of my transformations, my transformations (of my) heart-*haty*».

In the third scene, we see a kneeling goddess with the West sign on her head. Although absent in the papyrus of Nesipautitai, an inscription usually states that this goddess is «She who faces her Lord» (9). The goddess, being the personification of the necropolis, is kneeling in front of the hieroglyph *heb*, “festival”, and seems to be greeting the justified deceased. In her arms the goddess also shows the symbol *ankh* side by side with the symbols *heb*, *djed* and *was*. These are certainly the gifts of life which she bestows on the deceased after his justification in the court of Osiris. The goddess of the West is followed by a depiction of the four sons of Horus: first Imseti and Hapy, both shown with human heads, followed by Duamutef and Khebehsenuf, depicted with their usual animal features.

The fourth scene presents Thot as a baboon seated above a divine standard with three guardians of the gates of the beyond holding daggers in their hands (10). The first one of these guardians seems to be a dwarf and wears a heart amulet on his chest, while the second guardian, also holding daggers, has the head of a hippopotamus, much like a Tauret composition. The third demon usually has a composite head made by the juxtaposition of two symmetric Bes heads, each one of them with a serpent above.

The fifth scene shows several symbols disposed in a somewhat confused way. Each one of these symbols represents a funerary hill (*iat*). In spite of the confusion of this scene, two symbols are represented quite clearly. The first one is a *lamp-headed* mummiform god and at the end of the scene stands a desert dog with the royal symbols, *heka* and *nekhakha*. These figures are usually depicted in the tombs as symbols of the South and the East respectively. Above these figures, which represent a funerary chamber, we find the *iats* symbols, the tombs (crypts) of the beyond where

(8) See heart amulet nr. SR 9197, Cairo Egyptian Museum

(9) See Papyrus of Tabaketenkhonsu (nr. 3287), Louvre Museum.

(10) In certain versions we can see that the baboon can also wear the heart amulet. See papyrus nr. SR 10229, Cairo Egyptian Museum.

some specific transformations were supposed to occur. In the papyrus of Nesipautitai, the first depiction concerns the 14th mound and is illustrated by a cave where a long serpent is hidden. The legend states that it is a sacred mound in the West. Next we have the representation of the ninth mound, symbolized by a crocodile and a jug. Next to it a legend states: «The mystery in the Duat». The fifth mound is illustrated by a *papyrus* boat. The legend states: «The great mound». The sixth is the final mound, represented by a centipede, which is simply named as «The mound».

After these symbols comes the sixth scene that presents the four paddles of the sky (symbolizing the four cardinal directions). Each paddle has a serpent wearing a crown and an Udjat eye, a symbol of healing and redemption. The first paddle depicts the South and wears the white crown, while the second depicts the North and wears the red crown. The third and the fourth paddles stand for the West and the East, respectively, and are also wearing the white and the red crown.

The seventh and last scene shows Hathor, in the form of a sacred cow, lying in front of a mountain. The legend says that she is «The Lady of the Sacred Land». On the opposite side of the mountain, held by the arms of the god Nun, the sun disk finally emerges from the Duat emitting rays of light. A kneeling goddess with the head of a serpent adores the rising sun. Above her head is a sun disk between two words: Duat (on the right) and Ré (on the left).

2. Symbolic interpretation

The symbols depicted in this document seem to be used to represent a specific selection of chapters of the *Book of the Dead* being an excellent example of the ultimate development of the *pars pro toto* rule in 21st Dynasty funerary papyri (11). In fact whole chapters seem to be represented simply by a vignette: among others we can easily identify chapters 145/146 (figures of the guardians), 149/150 (the depictions of the mounds), 148 (the four paddles) and 186 (the divine cow) (12). Besides those symbolic allusions to these texts, we also

(11) See NIWINSKI, *Studies*, p. 38. See also, NIWINSKI, *Iconography*, p. 27.

have chapter 30 B of the *Book of the Dead* written on the depiction of the heart amulet.

As we have already pointed out, notwithstanding the fact of the clear inspiration for the symbolic repertoire of the *Book of the Dead*, these compositions had a different title, the *Book of the Amduat*. This is interesting since it provides a clue to its primary focus: to depict the journey of the deceased in the Duat. In fact, we believe that the idea of a dynamic process and of a path is clearly expressed in the horizontal arrangement of the symbols, starting on the right border of the papyrus, with the introduction of the deceased to the serpent-god, and ending on the opposite side with the depiction of the rising sun.

The vignettes that represent particular moments of the deceased's path through the Duat stand between these two moments. First, in order to enter the underworld, the deceased must prove the purity of his heart. The heart amulet and related images (the *benu* and the scarab) symbolize the weighing of the heart and the possibility of regeneration. To fully understand the meaning of the heart amulet in this context we must turn to the 21st Dynasty vignettes of the weighing of the heart depicted on coffins. In this pictorial context it is very common that this amulet is given to the deceased as a symbol of its purity and of his justification. In the same archaeological context, the deceased is also depicted wearing the heart amulet during his journey in the hereafter. In fact we see the heart amulet on the chest of the deceased on many occasions in the afterlife, such as in the presence of the sycamore goddess (13), or before the serpent goddess that protects the solar-Osirian union (14). It seems likely that the heart amulet was seen as an Osirian decoration given to the deceased in the court of Osiris as a sign of his justification. With this meaning, the deceased could use it during his journey through the Duat in order to guarantee his regeneration. The large heart amulet depicted in the papyrus of Nesipautitai is therefore a sign of the positive outcome of the weighing of the heart and its large-scale depiction is probably due to its important role of assuring to deceased a good turned journey the Duat in order to be regenerated.

(12) *Ibid.*, p. 193.

(13) See NIWINSKI, *Second*, p. 56. See also external coffin of Pakharu (CG 6122/6121) now in Alexandria National Museum.

(14) See coffin of Nemi, *ibidem*, p. 6.

This path is understood as a kind of “initiation” of the deceased into the mysteries of the underworld. The guardians of the gates and mounds of the beyond are elements of a mystical topography of the Duat, which is understood as a temple where the regeneration of the sun took place, in the secret chambers of Osiris. In the very same way that the pylons of a temple protected the inner sanctuary from intruders and led the priest into the presence of the gods, the gates of the netherworld blocked the way to those who were not aware of the secret knowledge – only the ones that were endowed with the magical power of this knowledge were allowed to led into the most sacred region of the Duat, where their regeneration took place. That is why the demons of the underworld are depicted in the fourth scene of this book. The deceased had to prove to them his knowledge of the mysteries so that he could pass through the doors of the beyond, a situation described in chapters 145 and 146 of the *Book of the Dead*. In some of the vignettes in these chapters (15), the deceased is depicted with the heart in his hands, showing it to the guardians of the gates, in the exact attitude in which it is depicted at the beginning of the papyrus of Nesipautitai. The act of presenting the deceased's pure heart before the guardians opened the gates and allowed him to be kept apart from his own sins (16). Thanks to his purity and knowledge, the deceased would then be able to enter the secret domain of Osiris, symbolized by the sacred mounds, where his regeneration would take place. In this way, mystery and purity were intimately connected to regeneration.

Passing through the gates could be interpreted as entering the womb of the cow goddess that bestowed the powers of life upon the deceased. Each gate was, in fact, an embodiment of the womb of the cosmic mother. In this way, the deceased entered the fourteen mounds or crypts, where mysterious gods were buried. Hence the depiction of the *iats* corresponds to chapters 149-150 (17). On each one of these *iats*, the deceased was able to regenerate a specific spectrum of vital powers.

(15) See *Book of the Dead of Userhatmes* (Cairo Egyptian Museum, SR 10249), vignette of the chapter 145-146.

(16) The role of those entities was to guarantee a moral dissociation of the deceased towards death. The weighing of the heart, the Ammut monster and the keepers of the gates were steps in the path of the deceased, which granted him the removal of all his sins. Once he passed through those gates, the deceased would be safe and protected. See ASSMANN, *Mort*, p. 196.

The depictions of the wild dog and the mummiform god with a lamp's head, symbols of the East and South, allude to the burial chamber of the deceased, also evoked in chapters 151-160 of the *Book of the Dead*. Therefore the funerary chamber of the deceased was also seen as one more secret hill of the beyond, where his powers could be regenerated (18).

In the final portion of the scroll we find the four heavenly paddles, a visual allusion to chapter 148 of the *Book of the Dead*, where the deceased was supposed to meet the seven sacred cows and their divine bull (19). Finally, the depiction of Hathor as a sacred cow is an allusion to chapter 186 of the *Book of the Dead*. Its function is to give birth to the deceased as a solar manifestation of the rising sun. The mythic cycles of Re and Osiris were, at this stage, perfectly united (20). The beginning and the end were bound together, just as life and death were perfectly joined. The path in the Osirian underworld led to a rebirth into the light. This concept is expressed at the very end of the scroll through the depiction of the sun disk between the words Re and Duat.

3. Iconography and ritual: some clues from coffin decoration

Interestingly enough, some of the iconographic repertoire of symbols identified in the papyrus of Nesipautitai are among the most prevalent motives used in the coffin decoration of the 21st Dynasty. In fact, images

(17) The image of death as a path is also present in the *senet* game. In front of the adversary, the deceased must follow a path through thirty squares, in order to reach the opposite side of the table. If he does, he obtains the renewal. *Ibid.*, p. 290.

(18) Especially in the royal tombs, the funerary chamber is a highly symbolic place which is identified with a crypt of Osiris. The purpose to identify the funerary chamber with an Osirian crypt originated some of its architectural layout. The L shaped plan of the Tutmosid tombs built in the Valley of the Kings has been understood as a way to give to the royal tomb the configuration of the Osirian crypt. See REEVES, WILKINSON, *Complete*, p. 25.

(19) *Ibid.*, p. 79. The four paddles of the sky are symbols of the limits of the world, the frontiers through which the sun must run its course. Since they link the underworld to the world of the living, they are also frontiers between life and death. For chapter 148 see BARGUET, *Livre*, pp. 207-208.

(20) Viewed from this perspective the entire book displays an iconographic composition that plays with the solar and Osirian symbols, as many other funerary compositions. See DARNELL, *Enigmatic*.

such as the cow emerging from the Theban Mountain, the four paddles, and the keepers of the gates are common depictions on those objects (21). What seems to be particular to documents such as the papyrus of Nesipautitai is the important part played by the symbols of the heart in the whole iconographic program. Indeed at the beginning of the book, the heart is depicted in the hands of Nesipautitai in a gesture that is meant to show its purity. On the other hand, the large heart amulet depicted on the papyrus seems to be intended to protect the deceased against all the dangers that he might find along the path through the Duat. In short, the heart seems to be the key element that guaranteed the success of the deceased's journey in the Osirian underworld, leading to a rebirth through his identification with the rising sun depicted at the end of the scroll (22). Curiously enough, the composition of the images seems to be symmetrical: the heart amulet, at the beginning of the book has the rising sun as a counterpart at the end of the book. It is between these two symbols, having more or less the same rounded shape, that the path of transformation in the beyond is depicted. Over and above that «geometrical» symmetry between the heart amulet and the sun disk, we can also understand these symbols as different manifestations of the deceased. The large heart amulet explicitly refers to the Osirian identity of the deceased: the Osirian name is written on the surface of this amulet. On the other hand, the rising sun showcases the solar manifestation of the deceased as a result of the regeneration performed in the womb of Hathor, the mother goddess.

Finally it can be said that even if the iconographic repertoire of the Papyrus of Nesipautitai (and similar documents) is not particularly new, their arrangement in terms of a journey centred on the crucial role performed by the heart seems to have no parallel. On the other hand, the great stability and almost rigid replication of this iconographic program in several documents showcases its highly regarded religious significance. In fact, the ultimate message of the papyrus seems largely relevant: through a pure heart the deceased could be justified as an Osiris and through the (sacred) knowledge he could also be reborn fully identified with the rising sun. Then, thanks to its purity and knowledge, the two principles of the universe, Re and Osiris, could be unified in the deceased's heart.

(21) NIWINSKI, *Book*, p. 263.

(22) To the study of the religious papyri of the XXI Dynasty see NIWINSKI, *Studies*, pp. 38-42.

Finally another point must be emphasized. According to Andrzej Niwinski, most of the iconographic program of Theban coffins of the 21st Dynasty can be seen in the light of the funerary ritual. Sharing many of the features found on contemporary coffins, the iconographic program of the papyrus of Nesipautitai may in fact allude to a particular set of rituals where the consecration and offering of a large heart amulet could be the main focus. That might explain the large size of the depiction of this object as well as some of the symbols associated with it. Perhaps it is not by chance that, on the papyrus of Nesipautitai, the *benu* bird and the scarab were depicted next to the heart amulet, since their images were in fact very often engraved on the surface of large heart amulets, frequently on the opposite surface from where chapter 30 B of the *Book of the Dead* was written (23). Thus these depictions found in front of the heart amulet in the papyrus of Nesipautitai may in fact evoke the symbols that were supposed to be represented on the reverse of the object, after the inscription. Therefore it seems highly plausible that this composition could be used to recall a consecration ceremony of the heart amulet, which embodied the purity and knowledge of the deceased required in the court of Osiris in order to be admitted to the underworld and to undergo a solar rebirth.

Curiously enough, depictions of a large amulet surrounded by solar symbols, such as the one that we find in the papyrus of Nesipautitai are also a common feature among 21st Dynasty Theban coffins, where it is also surrounded by the same solar symbols (24). Depicted in this context, these representations of the heart amulet most probably lend support to the idea that there might have been specific funerary rituals involving the presentation of this amulet to the mummy, which in fact seemed to be the aim of chapter 26 of the *Book of the Dead* (25). In this context, the heart amulet was given to the deceased not so much as a substitute for the cardiac organ, but as an Osirian decoration that could testify to the purity and knowledge of the deceased. As such, given the iconographical program that surrounds it, both on the coffins of the Theban priesthood

(23) Depictions of the *benu* bird: see CG 5235 and CG 5231 (in REISNER, *Amulets*, I, p. 4). Depictions of the scarab: see CG 12056 (*ibidem*, pl. VII).

(24) See coffin of Tjenetthatnetjeru, Cairo Egyptian Museum (CG 6191), in NIWINSKI, *Second*, fig. 113. The depiction of sacred objects is a common iconographical feature among 21st dynasty coffins. See NIWINSKI, *Iconography*, p. 27.

and on the papyrus of Nesipautitai, we can risk to say that it was this Osirian heart that could lead the deceased through the Duat in order to be reborn as a solar manifestation.

This dual articulation of the heart as a solar and an Osirian entity is also found in 21st Dynasty coffin decoration. In the external coffin of Pinedjem II, for instance, we find a ravishing depiction of a heart, a winged scarab and a solar disk (26). Similar depictions are found as well on the coffins of Nesikhonsu (27) and Padiamon (28), among others. We can assume that the scarab (and also the solar disk) and the heart amulet (or only the heart) are used in this context in order to define the heart as a solar-Osirian entity. That feature reminds us of the visual symmetry between the heart amulet and the sun disk in the papyrus of Nesipautitai where it once again seems to be an iconographic expression of solar-Osirian unity, here curiously focused on the role played by the heart in the journey through the Duat.

The aim of the present paper does not allow us to explore more deeply this question of the dualistic formulation of the heart, which will be the subject of further studies. However, analysis of documents such as the papyrus of Nesipautitai suggests a strong religious reflection related to the nature of the heart (here mainly understood as the seat of moral value and knowledge) and its role in the hereafter. It also lends support to the idea that the funerary iconographical program of the 21st Dynasty was closely related to the performance of funerary rituals, specially in the Deir el-Bahari area, as Andrzej Niwinski pointed out (29).

Oporto

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(25) See SOUSA, *Cardiac*, p. 43.

(26) See Cairo Egyptian Museum (CG 61029C), in DARESSY, *Cercueils*, pl. XLII.

(27) Cairo Egyptian Museum (SR 10325, J.E. 26199 ou CG 61030), *ibidem*, pl. XLV.

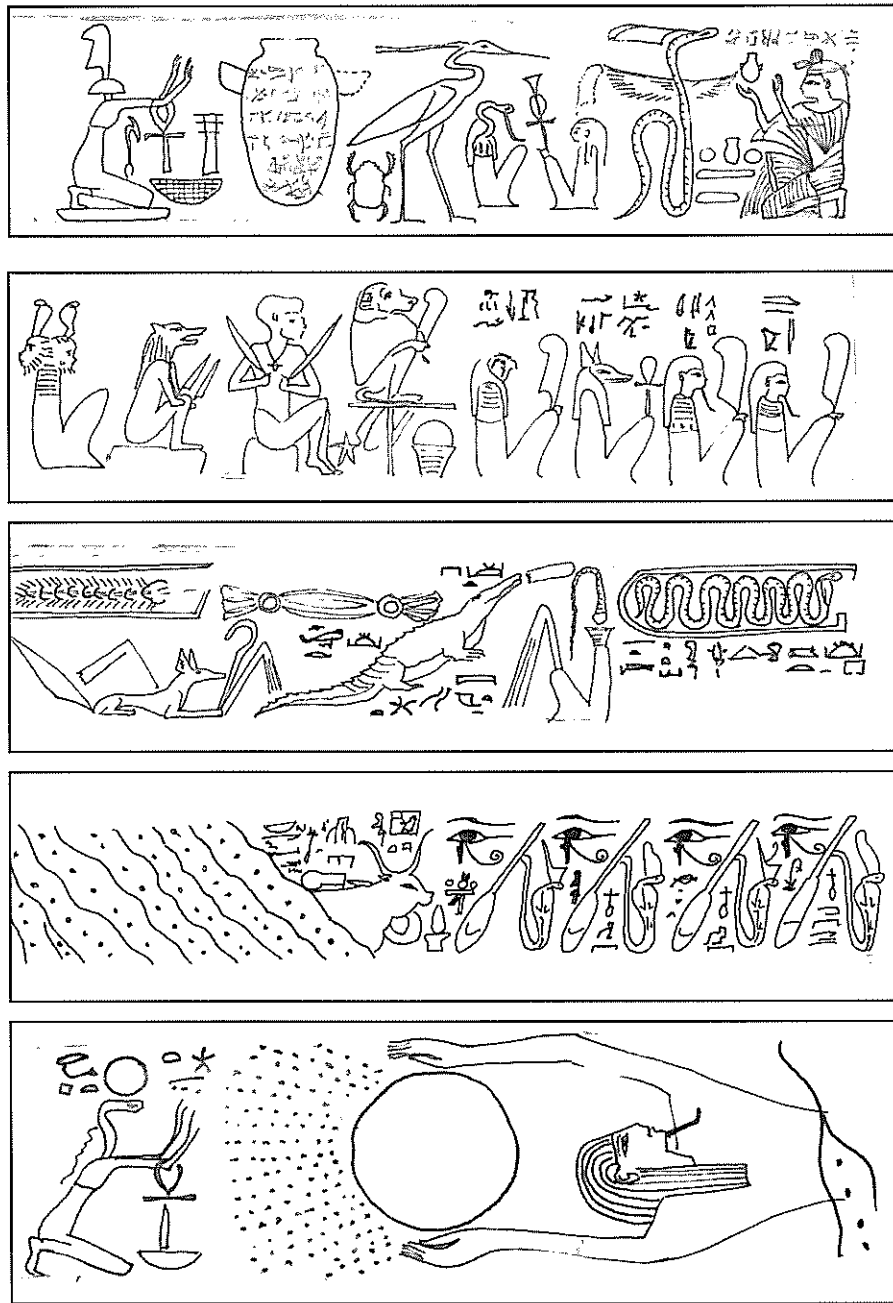
(28) Cairo Egyptian Museum (CG 6235), in HORNUNG, BRYAN, *Quest*, p. 158.

(29) NIWINSKI, *Book*, p. 264

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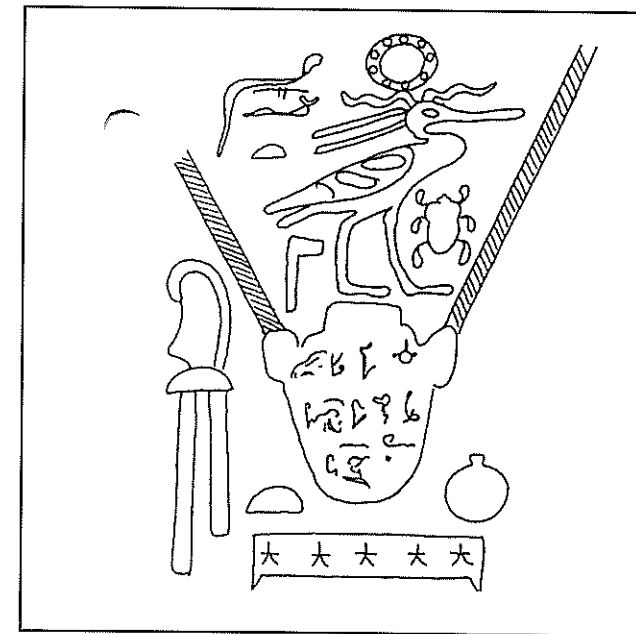
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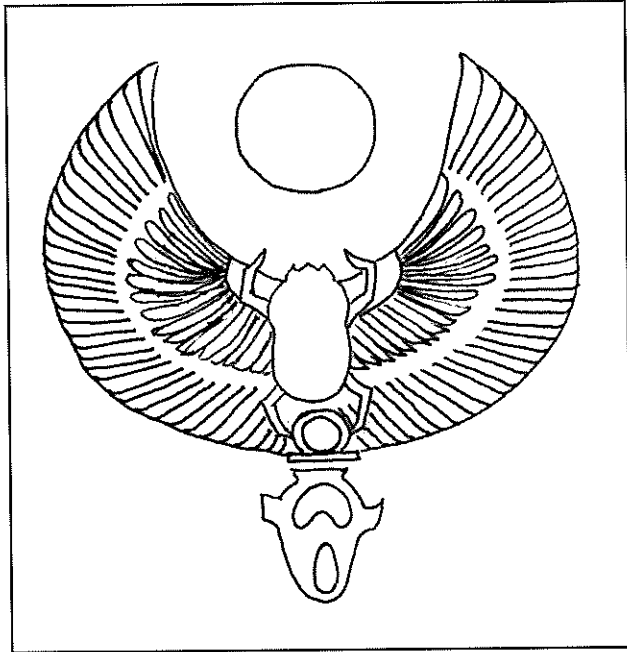
III. 1 - Papyrus of Nesipautitai, Cairo Egyptian Museum (SR 1025), 21st Dynasty (drawing by the author).



III. 2 - Papyrus of Nesipakhchuti, Louvre Museum (E 17401) (drawing by the author).



III. 3 - Coffin of Tjenetethatnetjeru (detail), Cairo Egyptian Museum (CG 6191) (Niwinski, *Second*, fig. 113).



III. 4 - Coffin of Pinedjem II (detail), Cairo Egyptian Museum (CG 61029C) (drawing by the author).