

CHAPTER 8

The root *jʿr* and its determinatives in the royal and private funerary texts of the Old Kingdom. Reflections on the afterlife in Egypt at the end of the Third Millennium

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Abstract

In the *Pyramid Texts* and private funerary texts of Old Kingdom Egypt, the lexical root *jʿr* [ASCEND] occurs mainly in the form of the verbs *jʿ*, “rise”, “ascend”, and *sjʿ*, “raise”, “cause to ascend”. However, there is an essential difference in the use of these verbs in the royal and private sphere. From a graphic point of view, the determinatives that accompany the phonetic spelling of these words in the *Pyramid Texts* are signs representing funerary buildings of early dynastic times, while in the private texts the sign of the road N31 and the double staircase O41 are almost always used. Furthermore, the phraseology and the plot contexts are also opposite: rich and diverse in the *Pyramid Texts*, where an aerial ascent to the sky is described, and strongly stereotyped and formulaic in the private ones, where an earthly ascent to the West is alluded to. Graphic iconicity, textual plots, and archaeological referentiality explain each other allowing for a better understanding of a complex cultural reality. This article addresses this case study in order to reflect on beliefs about the afterlife in Egypt at the end of the Third Millennium. The long-debated issue of the “democratisation” of the afterlife is critically revisited.

Keywords: Determinatives; Egyptian religion; Funerary beliefs; Funerary texts; Iconicity; *Pyramid Texts*.

Résumé

Dans les *Textes des Pyramides* et les textes funéraires privés de l'Égypte de l'Ancien Empire, la racine lexicale *jʿr* [monter] apparaît principalement sous la forme des verbes *jʿ*, « s'élever », « monter », et *sjʿ*, « élever », « faire monter ». Cependant, il existe

une différence essentielle dans l'utilisation de ces verbes dans la sphère royale et dans la sphère privée. D'un point de vue graphique, les déterminatifs qui accompagnent la graphie phonétique de ces mots dans les *Textes des Pyramides* sont des signes représentant des édifices funéraires du début de l'époque dynastique, alors que dans les textes privés le signe de la route N31 et du double escalier O41 sont essentiellement utilisés. D'autre part, la phraséologie et les contextes thématiques sont également opposés : riches et diversifiés dans les *Textes des Pyramides*, où l'on décrit une ascension aérienne vers le ciel, et fortement stéréotypés et formulés dans les textes privés, où l'on fait allusion à une ascension terrestre vers l'Occident. L'iconicité graphique, les développements thématiques et les référents archéologiques s'expliquent mutuellement, ce qui permet de mieux comprendre une réalité culturelle complexe. Cet article aborde cette étude de cas et, sur cette base, réfléchit aux croyances sur la vie après la mort en Égypte à la fin du troisième millénaire. La question longtemps débattue de la « démocratisation » des destins de l'au-delà est revisitée de manière critique.

Mots-clés : Croyances funéraires ; Déterminatifs ; Iconicité ; Religion égyptienne ; *Textes des Pyramides* ; Textes funéraires.

...the difference between royal and non-royal funerary architecture
clearly reflects two different visions of the afterlife
(J.P. Allen)

1 Introduction

The Old Egyptian lexical root *j'ʿr*, in its two stems: *j'ʿ*, [RISE, ASCEND], and caus. *sj'ʿ*, [RAISE, ELEVATE, CAUSE TO ASCEND],¹ occurs in both royal and private funerary texts of the Old Kingdom, always in recitations and formulae referring to the transition of the deceased to the afterlife. A significant distinction between the use of the words derived from this root in royal and private texts can immediately be highlighted: while in the former, these words are used in recitations with a very rich and diverse range of topics and phraseology, in the

¹ *Wb* I: 40, 3; 41, 14–25; IV: 32, 9–33, 7; *AnLex77*: 16 (77.0168), 306 (77.3382); *AnLex78*: 19 (78.0194), 308 (78.3325); *AnLex79*: 240 (79.2426); HL1: 31, 670; HL4: 41–42, 1077; *ERL*: 63–64, DRID 1001209. Edel 1955: 188, § 428.bb; 196, § 443; Allen 2017: 218.

latter they are used in formulae of a very stereotyped nature; conversely, however, in the *Pyramid Texts* these words are always determined by signs representing large mudbrick funerary buildings characteristic of early dynastic times but no longer in use in the Old Kingdom, while in the texts of the private tombs they are determined by signs which had a primarily contemporaneous meaning. That is, in the *Pyramid Texts*, the words from the root *j'r* are linguistically very “productive” but graphically archaizing for the time, whereas in the private texts they occur in very stereotyped phrases but are graphically in keeping with the time.

The aim of this article is to revisit and expand on a subject that I already dealt with a few years ago.² Firstly, we will examine the different behaviour of the terms with the root *j'r* in the royal and private funerary texts of the Old Kingdom, as well as their spellings and the semograms used, which, in their great divergence, are highly significant from a religious, symbolic, and ritual point of view. Secondly, on the basis of the foregoing discussion, we will reflect on the conceptualisation(s) of the afterlife of the ancient Egyptians during this time and revisit previous criticisms of the well-known theory of the “democratisation” of the afterlife. This is not, of course, to recover it, but to account for certain epistemological and methodological overreaches which, in my opinion, its critics have been guilty of. In this way, the semograms, in their iconicity, their linguistic and semantic value, and their referentiality, will be revealed as precious sources for religious, ideological, and cultural history.

2 The root *j'r* in the *Pyramid Texts* of the Old Kingdom

In the *Pyramid Texts* of the Old Kingdom, the trilateral strong root *j'r* occurs in four different words with the same basic significance and from the same symbolic context (Table 8.1):³

² Mainly Cervelló Autuori 2006; Cervelló Autuori 2007.

³ In the quotations of recitations and passages from the *Pyramid Texts* that follow, if the numbers are not preceded by superscripts, the numbering established by K. Sethe (1908–1922) in his seminal synoptic edition of the *Texts* is referred to. An asterisk (*) in front of the numbers conventionally indicates R.O. Faulkner’s (1969b) numbering of texts not present in Sethe’s edition. A superscript ^N in front of the numbers conventionally indicates new identifications of recitations (not present in Sethe’s and Faulkner’s editions) or new subdivisions of already known recitations made by the Mission Archéologique Franco-Suisse de Saqqâra (MAFS), in which case ^N indicates “nouvelles numérotations” or “nouvelles segmentations”; capital letters after the recitation numbers specify these subdivisions. A superscript ^A in front of the numbers is an internal procedure of this article to indicate new identifications of recitations made by J.P. Allen in his synoptic edition of the *Texts* (Allen 2013), regardless of MAFS. For all this, see Berger-El Naggar et al. 2001: I, 10, 229; Allen 2005: 3–4, 415–416; Allen 2013: I, i; Pierre-Croisau 2019: I, 301.

- the strong intransitive verb j^c , “rise”, “ascend”,⁴ which always appears in one of the forms of the suffix conjugation (mainly the prospective, the subjunctive, and the perfect) or the infinitive, except in two passages where it takes the form of an exclamatory adjective in $-wj$ functioning as an adjectival predicate (Pyr. *1901a [^N665A]; Pyr. 2165a/b [^N696A]) (14 passages, 29 instances in total);

- the causative transitive verb sj^c , “raise”, “elevate”, “bring up”, “cause to ascend”,⁵ which likewise always appears in one of the forms of the suffix conjugation (mainly the prospective, the subjunctive, and the perfect), the stative or the imperative, except in five passages where it appears in the form of an active participle (Pyr. 291c [254]; Pyr. 333c [262]; Pyr. 801b [437]; Pyr. 1679c [603]; Pyr. 2081b [688]: see below) (23 passages, 66 instances in total);

- the noun j^c , “rising tomb”, “ascensional mastaba”⁶ (1 passage, 4 instances: Pyr. 616f [364] (T, An, M, N));

- the noun j^t , “way of ascent” (1 passage, 1 instance: Pyr. 326c [261] (W)).

As can be seen, the radical $-r$ is never written in these words.⁷ This is possibly a trait of graphic archaism, if we take into account that this radical appears, albeit sporadically, in the spelling of the verb $(j)^r$ in private contemporary funerary texts (see below, section 3 and Table 8.2) and appears regularly in all contexts from the Middle Kingdom onwards.⁸

[PLACE TABLE 8.1 HERE]

TABLE 8.1. Attestations of the words rooted $j^c(r)$ in the *Pyramid Texts* (W, T, P, An, M, N, Nt, Ip, Wd, Ibi). Based on Jéquier 1935; Berger-El Naggar et al. 2001; Allen 2013; Pierre-Croisau 2019. (In the few excerpts of queen Behenu’s pyramid texts published so far—for example, Berger-El Naggar and Fraisse 2008; Berger-El Naggar and Fraisse 2015—there are no attestations of these words.)

⁴ *Wb* I: 41, 15–21; HL4: 41–42.




⁵ *Wb* IV: 32, 9–11; HL4: 1077. For an occurrence with the exceptional meaning of “bring to an end”, see below (HL4: 1077, {26425}).



⁶ *Wb* I: 40, 3; HL4: 40.

⁷ Edel 1955: 188, § 428.bb. As Edel points out, the radical $-r$ is present, instead, in another word in the *Pyramid Texts* that is also derived from the root j^r but related to a completely different sphere of significance, as indicated by the determinative: $\text{𓂏} \text{𓂏} j^rt$, “the uraeus”, lit. “the rising one” (for ex. Pyr. 265d [249] (W); Pyr. 335c [262] (W, P); Pyr. 511a [318] (W, T); Pyr. 1108c [508] (P); Pyr. 1568c [583] (P). *Wb* I: 42, 1–4; *AnLex77*: 16 (77.0170); *AnLex78*: 19 (78.0195); *AnLex79*: 10 (79.0111); HL4: 42; *ERL*: 63, ID Lex. 21780), as well as in graphic variants of the above-mentioned verbs documented in private funerary texts, for which see below. In the Middle Kingdom the verb rj (Coptic $\lambda\lambda\epsilon$; *Wb* I: 41, 14; 208) and the noun $^c / ^t$ (*Wb* I: 40, 3, graphic variants; and see below) are derived from the root j^r .

⁸ *Wb* I: 41, 208.








From a graphic point of view, these four words are written by means of monoconsonantal phonograms followed by a single determinative semogram or, in some instances, without determination. The semograms can be (Table 8.1; Fig. 8.1):

- a trapezoid-shaped sign, depicting a building, with a horizontal base and no interior decoration. This sign is not included as such in Gardiner’s Sign-list or in the Extended Library of hieroglyphic signs.⁹ The icon , coded as O24A in the Extended Library, was created and entered into this list as one of the possible determinatives of the names of the solar temples of the 5th dynasty (the sign O24 being that of the pyramid: ).¹⁰ Thus, although very similar to the glyph of the trapezoidal building referred to here, it is not the same sign;¹¹ therefore we prefer to discard it and instead create and use a new icon with a new code:  *OnewA.¹²

- the same trapezoid-shaped sign but with interior decoration consisting of horizontal and vertical strokes imitating the niches on the outer walls of the building. In the absence of a standard icon both in Gardiner’s Sign-list and in the Extended Library that adequately represents it (the closest,  O234—apart from the fact that, due to the characteristics of the Extended Library, we do not know what exactly it depicts and what its values are—lacks a horizontal base, which is a feature present in most attestations of the sign in the *Pyramid Texts*), we chose to create a new one based on a conventional drawing by K. Sethe and codify it as *OnewB: .¹³ In two cases, the inner decoration is reduced to a door (Pyr. 333c [262] (P); Pyr. 1516 [576] (P)). This sign has a very rare variant (only two attestations in the whole corpus: Pyr. 140c [215] (N); Pyr. 801b [437]


⁹ Gardiner 1957: 438–548 (category O: “Buildings, parts of buildings, etc.”); Grimal, Hallof, and Van der Plas 2000 (*idem*).



¹⁰ Jones 2000: 290–291, 375–376, 534–538; HL4: 1542–1543, 1561, 1567, 1569–1570, 1573–1574. Nuzzolo 2018: 305–342 (*passim*), 540–548, table 3; Nuzzolo 2021: 114, 116–119.


¹¹ This is the reason why Hannig (HL4: 41) opts for the icon  O194 of the Extended Library to reproduce this determinative. It is not suitable, however, because one of the defining features of the trapezoidal building sign is precisely its horizontal base. As a matter of principle, in taxonomic terms two hieroglyphs are two *distinct signs* when they have different scriptural (linguistic) functions and/or depict different objects of reality (for ex.  /  and  / ). Consequently, two hieroglyphs are *variants of the same sign* if they have the same scriptural (linguistic) functions and depict the same object of reality but have slight pictorial differences due to chronological, geographical, contextual or cultural reasons (for ex.  / .

¹² Naturally, the codes attributed to these newly created and coded signs are discretionary and for internal use in this article. We maintain the capital letter “O” of the category “Buildings and parts of buildings” established by Gardiner and, to depart from the usual conventions, we simply add the word “new” and a capital letter to distinguish variants, all preceded by an asterisk: *OnewA, *OnewB, *OnewC.

¹³ Sethe 1908–1922: II, 294 (Pyr. 1455b [570] (M)).

(N) of rectangular rather than trapezoidal shape:  ; here too, we create a new icon from the conventional drawing by Sethe and codify it as *OnewC.¹⁴

• a sign depicting a truncated step pyramid or frustum with an uppermost step taller or turned into a vertical rectangle with slightly sloping sides, this upper part being the aspective representation of the upper platform of the building; in one case (Pyr. 613a [364] (T)), the upper rectangle is decorated with lines imitating niches or a door, a feature that is undoubtedly foreign to the sign and which it received through the influence of the niched-building sign. This glyph has never been recognised as an independent sign by Egyptologists, but has been systematically confused with the sign of the double stairway,  O41,¹⁵ in part because of their similar shape and in part because the latter, depicting a double stairway or stepped pyramid, determines the verbs *j*' and *sj*' in private funerary texts of the Old Kingdom (see below, section 3). But they are, in fact, different signs, and the one we are dealing with here has a much older and well-defined graphic history, as we shall see. Thus, again in the absence of a standard icon in Gardiner's Sign-list and in the Extended Library, we create it again based on one of its renderings in Sethe's edition:  .¹⁶ Since in the following pages we will argue that this glyph should be identified with another documented in the early dynastic period, we will assign it the code attributed to the latter by scholars who have studied archaic writing and palaeography: o12.¹⁷

- the sign of the road bordered by shrubs:  N31.
- Ø : absence of determinative. In line with the tendency of the *Pyramid Texts* to make less frequent use of determinative semograms than in other textual domains,¹⁸ the verbs *j*' and *sj*' can be written only with phonograms.

[PLACE ILLUSTRATION 8.1 (S) HERE]

¹⁴ Sethe 1908–1922: I, 441 (Pyr. 801b [437] (N)).

¹⁵ See, for ex., *Wb* IV: 32; Sethe 1935–1962, III: 145; Badawy 1956: 181–182; Lapp 1986: 61; Alexanian 2003: 35; Lapp 2014: 217.

¹⁶ Sethe 1908–1922: I, 348 (Pyr. 641a [368] (T)).

¹⁷ Kahl 1994: 656 (o12, described as “Palastumfassung mit treppenartigem Untersatz”); *FWb* III: 297; Regulski 2010: 165 (o12, described as “palace ring-wall with stairs”), 575.

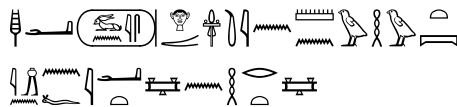
¹⁸ Most recently Allen 2017: 3–4. According to Allen (2017: 4), “The relative paucity of the last two categories [= “ideograms” and “determinatives”] largely reflects scribal practice rather than decorum”. This tendency is probably best explained, however, by the cultic—and therefore eminently oral—character of the “recitations”, regardless of their monumentalization, which favours phonographic rather than semographic notation.

FIGURE 8.1: The words j^c and sj^c determined by the trapezoid-shaped and truncated-step-pyramid signs in the *Pyramid Texts*: a. T/B/E, b. W/B/E, c. N/A/E, d. W/A/E. Photos: a. by the author; b. and d. Albert Triviño Massó; c. MAFS/Emmanuel Laroze.

It should be noted that the verbs j^c and sj^c are only two of the different “ascension” verbs in the *Pyramid Texts*,¹⁹ but also the only ones to be determined by the building-signs. Let us discuss further the meaning and use of these determinatives.

To begin with, the sign of the road as determinative of the root j^c appears only four times in the whole corpus and is, therefore, of exceptional use. This use, on the other hand, is explained by the fact that the words it determines or the phraseology in which they appear are also exceptional. The first of these words is the noun $\left\{ \begin{array}{c} \text{—} \\ \text{△} \end{array} \right\} \text{—} \text{—} \text{—} j^c t$, “way of ascent”, which we have already seen has just one attestation: in the choice of the determinative, the notion of [ROAD] prevails here over the notion of [ASCEND]. The passage reads:

Pyr. 326b–c [261] (W/A/S 10²⁰) (unique version)



$h^c Wnjs hr gs j^c btj n mnw-hwt$

$jn(w) n=f j^c t n hrt$

Unis will stand up on the eastern side of the hail,

after it has been brought to him a way of ascent to the distant sky.²¹

The second word is the verb j^c itself, in the passage Pyr. 369 [267] from the pyramid of Pepy I. This passage and recitation are also found in the pyramids of Unis (W/A/S 26), Pepy II (N/B/Se), and Ibi (Ibi/B/S), but in the first and the third the verb is not determined while in the second it is determined with the most expected sign of the trapezoid-shaped building *OnewB.

Pyr. 369 [267] (P/A/S 6)

¹⁹ Rull Ribó 2012; Mathieu 2018: 20, fig. 6.

²⁰ The codes for the location of the spells in the pyramids are those established by J.P. Allen and listed in Allen 2013: I, 1–2.

²¹ We translate $\left\{ \begin{array}{c} \text{—} \\ \text{△} \end{array} \right\} \text{—} \text{—} \text{—} hrt$ as “distant sky” because of the presence of the determinative $\text{—} \text{—} \text{—}$ N31 instead of the expected $\text{—} \text{—} \text{—}$ N1, from $\left\{ \begin{array}{c} \text{—} \\ \text{△} \end{array} \right\} \text{—} \text{—} \text{—} hr$, “be far / go away”. The same occurs two quotations below (var. $\left\{ \begin{array}{c} \text{—} \\ \text{△} \end{array} \right\} \text{—} \text{—} \text{—}$). See remark below.



j' = f n pt hr = f jr t3

He [= the king] will ascend to the sky and go away from the land.

The two passages discussed allude to transit through the *akhet*, identified with the antechamber: “emerging into and crossing the *akhet*”.²²

The third word determined by the sign of the road is the verb *sj'* in the passage Pyr. 1679c [603] from the pyramid of Merenre (the passage immediately preceding is largely lost, but is preserved almost in its entirety in the pyramid of Pepy I). Again, this passage and recitation is repeated in the pyramid of Pepy II, but here the verb is determined by the expected sign *OnewB.

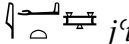

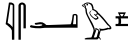



Pyr. 1679b–c [603] (M/B/E 60)


(P/B/E 32: You [= the king] will ascend with him [= Re] in the east... REST LOST [and rest with him]) in life in the west



m-m šmsw R' sj'w hrt n 'ndw

among Re’s followers, who elevate the distant sky at dawn.

In the three passages just discussed, there is a symbolic-lexical-semantic interplay between the words  *j' = f n pt*, “way of ascent”,  *j'*, “ascend”, and  *sj'w*, “(those) who elevate”, on the one side, and  /  *hrt*, “distant sky”, and  *hr*, “be far / go away”, on the other side, which may also explain this exceptional association of the determinative of the road with the root *j'r*.

This association occurs for a fourth and final time in the passage Pyr 291c [254] (W), where the verb has an anomalous and unclear spelling, probably due to a reading and/or engraving mistake.²³ The same passage in Teti’s pyramid gives the correct spelling, the verb in this case being determined by the sign . Here, *sj'* is used with the sense of “end”, “bring to an end”, “bring to a standstill”²⁴ (the days of life of the deceased king); the form is the active participle masculine plural used as a noun.

²² Allen 2005: 46–50.

²³ Sethe 1935–1962: I, 340; Faulkner 1969a: 65 n. 30.

²⁴ *AnLex77*: 306 (77.3382); *AnLex78*: 308 (78.3325); HL1: 670; HL4: 1077 {26425}; HL5: 2110–2112 {26425}.

Pyr. 291c [254] (W/A/W 15)

Unis has protected himself from (...)



sj'w hrw=f n(y) 'nh

those who would bring to an end his day of life.

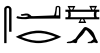
Pyr. 291c [254] (T/A/W 10)


This Teti has protected himself from (...)



sj'w hrw Ttj pn nw 'nh


those who would bring to an end the days of life of this Teti.

The determinative of the road is explained by the fact that the end of a way is metaphorically alluded to. This is the sole example of the use of this verb with this meaning in the *Pyramid Texts*; it will, however, become one of its possible meanings from the Middle Kingdom onwards, when the verb, now spelled  *s'r*, will systematically be written with the determinatives of the road and the walking legs (D54).²⁵

As regards the sign  o12, there are only 6 occurrences in the whole corpus,²⁶ and it is therefore also a semogram used only exceptionally. Furthermore, these occurrences are concentrated in the two oldest pyramids: Unis and Teti. This is undoubtedly due to the fact that it must have already lacked its iconic meaning for the transmitters and remodelers of funerary texts of the pyramid age, who, on the other hand, did not proceed to update it in the sphere of royal texts, as they would do for private texts, less subject to the weight of tradition, as we will see (section 3). This would explain why one of the attestations of the sign has a decoration inside the upper part consisting of lines imitating niches, a feature that is foreign to it, as discussed above.

²⁵ See, for ex., CT I, 158c–159a [38] (*dd.n=f jnt wj tp-r3=tn s'rw.t(w) hrw=j m t3 pn n 'nhw nt(y) wj jm=f*, “He has said that your recitation would fetch me and that my days would be brought to an end in this land of the living where I was”). Wb IV: 32–33; HL5: 2110–2112. It is interesting to note that this is the only case in which the same passage has two different verbs in the two pyramids where the recitation is preserved, since in the pyramid of Unis (W/A/W 15) the verb is *s'h'*, “cause to stand”, “establish”, “fix”, and not *sj'*. The two verbs are interchangeable in their primary sense of “raise up”.

²⁶ Cervelló Autuori 2007.

In other publications,²⁷ I have had occasion to suggest that the sign of the truncated step pyramid had its origin in a sign used by Andjib, the sixth king of the 1st dynasty—and only by him—in commemorative inscriptions on stone vases or even as a pot mark. In fact, in a set of alabaster vessels coming from Andjib’s tomb in Abydos and from the Step Pyramid at Saqqara and probably produced to commemorate his *heb Sed*, the king’s *serekh* is followed by a sign of similar size that represents a truncated step pyramid of three or four steps with a rectangle in the upper part.²⁸ Inside the rectangle there is an inscription that reads: *z3-h3-Hrw*, “protection around Horus” (Fig. 8.2a).²⁹ When attested as a pot mark, the truncated pyramid sign is accompanied by the short inscription *z3-h3*.³⁰ Inscriptions comprised of *z3-h3* and a third element that alludes to the king are also known for four of Andjib’s five immediate successors at the end of the 1st and beginning of the 2nd dynasty: Qaa (*z3-h3-nb*) (Fig. 8.2b), Hotepsekhemuy (*z3-h3-k3*), Raneb (*z3-h3-Hrw-R^c-nb*), and Ninetjer (*z3-h3-Hrw-Ny-ntr*).³¹ In these cases, however, the inscription is not placed inside a stepped sign as in Andjib’s case, but inside a *hwt*-sign  O6.³²

[PLACE ILLUSTRATION 8.2 (M) HERE]

FIGURE 8.2: The inscriptions *z3-h3-Hrw* of king Andjib (a) and *z3-h3-nb* of king Qaa (b) carved on stone vases from their tombs at Umm el-Qaab. Source: Lacau and Lauer 1959: plates III.6, IV.8.

This means, on the one hand, that the aforementioned inscriptions allude to buildings; thus Andjib’s sign is also the aspective representation of a building (as the *serekh* is the aspective representation of a “palace” and the *hwt*-sign is the aspective representation of a rectangular enclosure or building). On the other hand, this also means

²⁷ Cervelló Autuori 2006: 8–10; Cervelló Autuori 2007; Cervelló Autuori 2011: 1137–1143.

²⁸ Kahl 1994: 656 (o12); Regulski 2010: 165, 575 (o12).

²⁹ Petrie 1900: 30 and plates VI.2, VII.5,10, VIII.11; Emery 1949: 82; Lacau and Lauer 1959: plates III.6–7, 6.26–29; Lacau and Lauer 1961: 15–16, 19–20.

³⁰ Petrie 1900: plate XLVI.111–158; Petrie 1901: plate LV.16–26. Although pottery sherds with this mark have been found scattered all over the 1st dynasty cemetery at Umm el-Qaab, most of them come from Andjib’s tomb, which is very likely the origin of all of them (Kaplony 1963: II, 819; Regulski 2010: 58).

³¹ Petrie 1900: 30, 40, plate VIII.12,14, IX.1,2,4; Petrie 1901: plate VIII.12; Amélineau 1902, plate XXI.1,6; Lacau and Lauer 1959: plate IV.7–11, 9.46; Lacau and Lauer 1961: 26, 31–32, 47, 54; Kaplony 1963: II, 817–819; III, plate 153.877; Helck 1987: 192–195; Cervelló-Autuori 2007: 306–307; Kahl 2007: fig. 4–5, plate 1; Regulski 2010: 541–542.

³² *FWb* III: 296–297; Regulski 2010: 59, 541 (O6)–542 (O6/O7/O8). Some scholars, such as Helck (1987: 192) and Regulski (2010: 58–59), read Andjib inscription as *hwt-z3-h3-Hrw*, giving the stepped sign the value of the *hwt*-sign of the later inscriptions, but nothing authorises doing so. The reading of Andjib’s stepped sign remains unknown; would it already be related to the root *jʿr*, given the archaising character of the determinative of the truncated step pyramid in the *Pyramid Texts*? On the possible ascensional nature of the building represented by the sign, see immediately below; on the most ancient redactional strata of the *Pyramid Texts* see below, section 5, moment 3.

that Andjib’s building must have been an exceptional structure, as unique as the sign that represents it between the five parallel inscriptions under discussion. W.M.F. Petrie already argued that *z3-h3* was the generic way of referring to the tombs of these kings and that the fourth element was the specific identifier of each one of these tombs, through an allusion to the king (*nb*, “lord”; *k3*, “*ka* (of the king)” —the *ka* par excellence—; *Hrw-R^c-nb*, “Horus Raneb”; *Hrw-Ny-ntr*, “Horus Ninetjer”).³³ Although some scholars have suggested that these inscriptions allude to the royal palace,³⁴ others—myself included—continue to believe that they refer to the royal tombs.³⁵ In the *Pyramid Texts* the sign of the pyramid (\triangle O24), that is to say, that of the royal tomb of the Old Kingdom, is always associated with the notion of the protection and durability of the funerary complex of the deceased king.³⁶

Now, in the 1st dynasty cemetery at North Saqqara there is a tomb, dated to the reign of Andjib, whose superstructure may well have inspired the sign under discussion.³⁷ It is mastaba S3038, which includes a stepped mudbrick tumulus, a unique architectural feature—at least in its regular and symmetrical shape and dimensions—, within its panelled walls.³⁸ Externally, the monument appeared as a large rectangular mastaba with

³³ Petrie 1900: 30.

³⁴ Weill 1961: 141; Kaplony 1963: II, 816–821; Helck 1987: 192; *FWb* III: 296.


³⁵ Roth 1991: 166–168; Wilkinson 1999: 124. See Regulski 2010: 165 (o12). It is worth noting that of the five kings for whom we have inscriptions referring to a *z3-h3* building, the last three (the first three kings of the 2nd dynasty) are buried at Saqqara, south of the Netjerikhet enclosure (Wilkinson 1999: 83–85, 240–243; and most recently Van Wetering 2018; although Raneb’s tomb has not been found, archaeological and epigraphic evidence suggests that it must also have been there); the other two are Andjib (sixth king of the 1st dynasty) and Qaa (eighth and last king of the 1st dynasty), while for king Semerkhet (seventh of the 1st dynasty) we have no documented inscriptions referring to a *z3-h3* building. Now, Semerkhet is not recorded at Saqqara at all, while Andjib and Qaa are well documented in the niched mastabas at north Saqqara S 3038 and S 3505, respectively; as is well known, the kings of the 1st dynasty were buried in the cemetery of Umm el-Qaab at Abydos, but it is no less true that these two mastabas present certain specific features that seem to link them to the royal sphere (cenotaphs for the kings?) (for the first of these tombs, see below; for both, see Cervelló Autuori 2017). The five *z3-h3* sequences could therefore allude to Saqqara funerary buildings: tombs of kings (2nd dynasty) or tombs linked in one way or another to kingship (1st dynasty). The *z3-h3* sequence would disappear in the second half of the 2nd dynasty, as a result of the important political changes that took place at that time.






³⁶ PT 534 (P), 599 (P, M, N), 600 (M, N), 601 (P, M, N). Allen 2005: 166–167, P 483; 199–200, P 582; 219, M 226; 269–271, N 359–361; Mathieu 2018: 481–483.


³⁷ See already Lacau and Lauer 1961: 16.

³⁸ Emery 1949: 82–94 and plates 21–35. The tumulus feature has been documented in other tombs in the cemetery, but as a much smaller, non-stepped structure: Emery 1958: 73, 77, plates 85–86; Cervelló Autuori 2017a: 224, table 4; Ormeling 2019: 111. Tomb S 3038 has been the subject of a new and exhaustive re-evaluation by M. Ormeling (2019), mainly on the basis of a review of the unpublished field notes of the excavator, W.B. Emery, and from a modern archaeological and architectural perspective. According to Ormeling, the building was not constructed in three successive stages, as Emery claimed, but all its structures were conceived as part of a single homogeneous project. This does not question the central structural importance of the tumulus, which, on the contrary, Ormeling describes as an “astonishing new construction feature”.

We are therefore faced with graphic and phraseological traditions that originate in the royal documents of the 1st dynasty and continue in the funerary and monumental texts of the kings of the Old Kingdom.



In the *Pyramid Texts*, the sign  o12 conveys the notion of ascending (to the sky), which must have been inherent in mastaba S3038 itself, if we take into account, not only its internal stepped tumular structure, but also the fact that it was located, like all the mastabas in the 1st dynasty cemetery at Saqqara, right on the edge of the desert escarpment, which must have given them all a markedly “aerial” character, also conveyed by the monumentality of their walls.⁴⁴ This could already have linked them to a symbolism of an ascensional nature.⁴⁵ This is therefore a good example of how archaeology can explain certain graphemic realities and how these, in turn, can provide clues to the interpretation of certain archaeologically documented realities.


If the tumulus inside the mastaba S3038 appears to have been the model for the truncated step pyramid sign, the large niched mastabas that were this same tomb and all of the others in this cemetery seem to have been the model for the signs  *OnewB (var.  *OnewC) and  *OnewA: on the one hand, all these signs are interchangeable in the *Pyramid Texts* and are therefore part of the same graphic tradition and convey the same semantic and symbolic notions; on the other hand, the tumulus and the mastabas are also part of the same archaeological tradition. The graphemes  and  are in fact two variants of the same sign, one with, and the other without, internal decoration. The first one is by far the most widely used in the *Pyramid Texts* and occurs in all the pyramids where the root *jʿr* is recorded; the second one appears only in the oldest pyramids (Unis, Teti, and already exceptionally Pepy I and Ankhnespepy II) and, in the case of Teti, its recurrence may be due to a mere matter of execution, as the signs systematically lack interior decoration.⁴⁶ That the trapezoidal signs represent a tomb is evidenced by the fact

4th dynasty onwards, on royal reliefs from the funerary temples and the Wadi Maghara, the image of the king is often accompanied by the inscription  z3 ʿnh h3=f, “protection of/and life around him”, in isolation or in a somewhat broader phrase (*Wb.* III: 9, 15; 414, 19–20; HL1: 655; for the Old Kingdom see HL4: 1054; Borchardt 1913: plate 18; Jéquier 1938: plate 63; Gardiner and Peet 1952: plates II.7, III.7, VIII.16; Gardiner, Peet, and Černý 1955: 58, 63; Tallet 2018: 102, 298 [IS7]; 112, 309 [IS16]).

⁴⁴ For further discussion see Cervelló Autuori 2017a: 217–219, and references.

⁴⁵ See already Mercer 1952: II, 78, 301. See also the seminal article by Badawy (1956), where the author first raised the relationship between the verbs *jʿ* and *sjʿ* determined by the signs of the truncated step pyramid and the mastabas in the *Pyramid Texts* and the funerary buildings of the 1st dynasty at North Saqqara.

⁴⁶ The signs on the Teti pyramid lack interior details, except for some rare instances of very specific signs (such as  D1 and  D2) and in very precise locations (É. Bène, personal communication). In the later pyramids, the trapezoid-shaped signs are sometimes replaced by a simple square: Pyr. 160b [217] (Ip); Pyr.

niched mastabas at Saqqara—were already characterised by slightly sloping walls,⁵³ a common feature of the Memphite mastaba from the beginning.⁵⁴ The fact that the inclination of the walls was minimal in these early nighed monuments explains the glyph  *OnewC, with its vertical side strokes. In the case of the truncated step pyramid sign, the stepped layout directly evokes the notion of [ASCEND].








It may be of interest to note here that the continuity of a particular and characteristic grapheme or graphic combination from the proto- and early dynastic periods to the *Pyramid Texts* is not limited to the sign of the truncated step pyramid. Examples include, among others:

[PLACE ILLUSTRATION 8.4 (M: DIFFERENT SMALL ITEMS, ORDERED IN FOUR GROUPS; (a) = 3 ITEMS; (b), (c), (d) = 2 ITEMS EACH) HERE]

FIGURE 8.4: The spelling of different expressions and names on Early Dynastic documents and the *Pyramid Texts*. From: a. Spencer 1980: plate 54.461; Friedman 1995: fig. 14; Berger-El Naggar et al. 2001: II, plate VII (P/A/W 25); b. Lacau and Lauer 1959: plate V.4; Pierre-Croisiau 2019: II, plate IX (M/A/W sup 43); c. Spencer 1980: plate 53.457; Berger-El Naggar et al. 2001: II, plate XVIII (P/Cmed/E 49); d. Petrie 1900: plate XXVII.67; Pierre-Croisiau 2019: II, plate XV (M/Cmed/W 2).

- the spelling of the expression *wrw-ḥ-ḥd*, “the great ones of the White Palace”, or *ḥ-ḥd-wrw*, “the White Palace of the great ones”, in a label of king Semerkhet (1st dynasty), a stele of king Netjerikhet from the substructure of the Step Pyramid,⁵⁵ and Pyr. 949c [475] (P, M, N) (Fig. 8.4a);

⁵³ See for ex. Emery 1938: 3; Emery 1949: 14.



⁵⁴ See for ex. Bard 1999: 594; Arnold 2003: 138–139; Snape 2011: 36 and fig. 3.1. The connection between the signs representing early sloping (nighed) mastabas and the sloping mastabas themselves as actual referents would be maintained throughout the Old Kingdom. In fact, the term *jz*, “tomb”, “mastaba”, can in rare cases be determined with the graphemes , , , , and even  or —see note 51—in private funerary texts of this period (*Wb* I: 126; see, for ex., Mariette 1889: 195, 201, 278; *Urk*. I: 12–14, 33, 88, 154, 174, 190, 197, 202, 232, 250; Edel 1944: 75, 77; Kanawati 2006: plates 2.a, 40) (see below, section 3). It is important to note that the term *jz*, in its meaning of “tomb”, “mastaba”, is documented only from the 4th dynasty onwards (Régen 2006: 257); the determinatives of the nighed mastabas in the spelling of this term could hardly be explained without their early dynastic origin. On a related note, the sign  (M40) would be, according to Régen (2006: especially 279–280), another graphic representation of a funerary practice well predating the Old Kingdom; it would, in fact, be a logogram representing the mat that wrapped the body of the deceased in predynastic times. In this case also, the connection between the sign and the reality depicted would have been completely lost by the Old Kingdom.

⁵⁵ British Museum EA 32668. Petrie 1900: plates XII.1, XVII.26; Spencer 1980: 65 n° 461, plates 49.461, 54.461 (label of Semerkhet); Friedman 1995: 22–26, fig. 14; Baud 2002: 174–175 (stele of Netjerikhet).

- the spelling of the proper name Weneg, based on or including an archaic plant-sign, in different stone vessels of king Weneg (2nd dynasty)⁵⁶ and referring to the god Weneg in Pyr. 607d [363] (T); Pyr. 952c [476] (P, M, N, Nt) (Fig. 8.4b);

- the representation of a crenelated watch tower in a label of king Djer (1st dynasty)⁵⁷ and the semogram of the word *swnw*, “crenelated watch tower”, in Pyr. 719c [409] (T); Pyr. 1105d [507] (P, M, N) (Fig. 8.4c);⁵⁸

- the glyph that represents a man with his body or his arms over a pool of water and, sometimes, drops of water above his head, which is used as a phonogram with the value of *nj* to designate an office of the palace administration in seal impressions of the 1st and 2nd dynasties,⁵⁹ and also as a semogram to write the verb *nj*, “swim”, in Pyr. 1188e [517] (N); Pyr. 1684c [606] (M, N) (Fig. 8.4d).



All of the above allows us to make interesting chronological observations. In the *Pyramid Texts*, the root *jʿr* essentially refers to the king’s “aerial” ascension to the sky. Now, at the time when the texts were carved in the inner chambers and corridors of the royal pyramids, the actual royal and ascending building was precisely the pyramid itself. However, the sign of the pyramid,  O24, is never used as a determinative of a word with the root *jʿr* in the *Pyramid Texts*. It is interesting to note that, on the contrary, words with this root are determined by the sign of the double ladder or step pyramid ( O41) in contemporary private funerary texts, as we will see (section 3), and by the sign of the true pyramid itself from the New Kingdom;⁶⁰ it is obvious, therefore, that in these cases




⁵⁶ Lacau and Lauer 1959: plates V.4, 19.105, 20.101–104, 106–107; Lacau and Lauer 1961: 50–53; Kahl 1994: 586 (m4); *FWb* I: 119–120; Kahl 2007: 7–28; Regulski 2010: 144, 508 (m4).

⁵⁷ British Museum EA 35525. Petrie 1901: plate V.10; Spencer 1980: 64 n° 457, plates 47.457, 53.457.

⁵⁸ Mathieu 2021: 139–142.

⁵⁹ Petrie 1900: plates XVIII.6, XXI.21, XXVII.67,69, XXIX.81; Petrie 1901: plates XVII.131–132, XIX.146–148,150; Kaplony 1963: I, 126–127; II, 803–805; III, for ex. plates 30.88, 31.92,95, 62.221, 63.223, 73.275, 74.277, 76.282; Kahl 1994: 429–430 (a4–a10); *FWb* II: 224–227; Regulski 2010: 90–91, 265–266, 336–337 (a4–a10).

⁶⁰ In the words “/ ʿ”, “tomb”, derived from the root *jʿr*: *Wb* I: 40, 3; *HL*1: 29 (see note 7). In the Theban tomb of Djehuty, overseer of the treasury in the reigns of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III (TT11), a rare ritual, labelled  *phr/dbn h3* “, “circulating around the tomb”, is depicted in painted relief. The ritual is attested in only two other sources: the Theban tomb of Montuherkhepeshef (TT20, contemporary with Djehuty), where it is also depicted but poorly preserved, and the papyrus Ramesseum E (British Museum, EA10753, 2; 13th dynasty), where it is referred to textually, as  *dbn h3 jʿ zp 4* “circulating around the tomb four times” (Gardiner 1955: 14, plate IV, col. 74; also plate III, col. 27; Díaz Hernández 2014: 27, col. 74; also 23, col. 27). What is striking are the icons that depict the “tomb” in these documents. In Djehuty’s scene, the word “ in the inscription is not determined because the object alluded to is reproduced in the relief. It is a strange object with a height equivalent to three quarters of a person, consisting of a thin horizontal base coloured in green on which a structure of vertical strips joined together, alternately coloured in green and yellow and forming a double staircase at the top is arranged. In the papyrus, the determinative used for the word *jʿ* is the sign of the plain mastaba (*OnewA), executed very faithfully and maintaining its hieroglyphic form. These are undoubtedly late revivals of the signs used in

the scribe has proceeded to update the spelling of the terms. Furthermore, as we have already noted, the word   *mr*, “pyramid” (or  *Mn-nfr*, in the case of Pepy I), determined by the sign O24, never appears in the *Pyramid Texts* associated with the ascension symbolism, but in passages alluding to the protection and permanence of the funerary complex of the deceased king.⁶¹ It follows that the spellings of the words *j'* and *sj'* attested in the *Pyramid Texts* must necessarily predate them and, given the above, could date back to the Early Dynastic Period. B. Mathieu goes further and considers that “on peut y voir un indice de l’ancienneté de la rédaction de beaucoup de formules, antérieure à l’apparition du concept architectural de pyramide”.⁶² I believe, however, that we should be cautious and make a clear distinction between the chronology of a specific passage and that of the entire recitation in which it is contained. As we have already noted (section 1) and as we shall see immediately below, the ascension recitations or passages of the *Pyramid Texts* in which the verbs *j'* and *sj'* are used are noticeably diverse in form and subject, and demonstrate the great creativity of their composers and transmitters: they constantly (re)created and updated them from a symbolic and ritual point of view, in accordance with evolving beliefs and actual ritual needs. In this regard, H.M. Hays writes:

As transition texts were a site of personal religious practice, and as they were separate from collective performances, they were not as restricted by the formal rules governing cultural projects regarded as belonging to the community. For this reason they admitted greater creativity in their composition. Transition texts were generated by the most dynamic engine of production responsible for the composition of the Pyramid Texts as a corpus.⁶³

What is interesting is that, in this textual variety and reformulation, the validity of certain original spellings and determinatives, undoubtedly endowed with a strong symbolic and performative significance, was never questioned. It is therefore the concepts, graphemes, and symbols that can be traced back to the Early Dynastic Period

the *Pyramid Texts* as determinatives of the words rooted *j'r*, preserved in the ritual tradition (see also note 74). For a comprehensive study on the subject see Serrano Delgado 2019; on the papyrus see Gardiner 1955 (with facsimile edition); Díaz Hernández 2014.

⁶¹ It is, moreover, a term and a sign very rarely used in the *Pyramid Texts*: only in the recitations of protection of the royal funerary complex referred to above and only from the pyramids of Pepy I, Merenre, and Pepy II (see note 36).

⁶² Mathieu 2018: 9. See also Billing 2018: 265; Bène this volume. Interestingly, Černý and Gardiner had already argued in this direction: Gardiner 1955: 17.

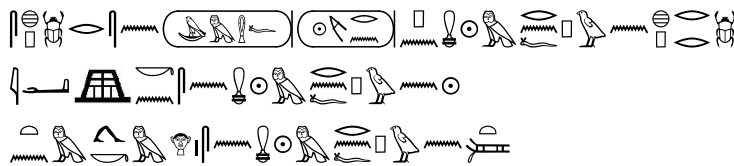
⁶³ Hays 2012: 283.

and not so much the texts themselves as they have come down to us. Different chronological and doctrinal elements and layers overlap in the *Pyramid Texts* as we know them (see below, section 5, “moment” 3).

Turning now to the topics, out of the 37 passages concerned (31 recitations plus 1 isolated fragment; 103 attestations of words with the root *jʿr*; see Table 8.1), 33 refer to a process of “aerial” ascension. The other 4 are part of an invocation in the context of the offering ritual (Pyr. 216a [223]), of a recitation for passing through the *akhet* already discussed above (Pyr 291c [254]), and of two recitations for the spirit’s rebirth (Pyr. *1901a [N665A]; Pyr. 2165a/b⁶⁴ [N696A]). Of the 33 ascension passages, 16 are of purely solar symbolism, such as the next two examples; in the first one, the Sun-god is alluded to in his three aspects (the east, noon, and west Sun) and the verb *jʿ* is associated with the rising of the noonday Sun, in the fullness of his strength:

Pyr. 1694a–1695c [606] (M/Cm/W 13–15)

They [= the cosmological gods] will make for you this recitation they had made for Re-Atum, who shines every day. They will install this Nemtiemsaf Merenre on their thrones, at the head of every Ennead, as Re and his successor.



shpr=sn Nmtj-m-z3=f Mr-n-R^c pn mj R^c m rn=f pw n Hpr

j^c=k n=sn mj R^c m rn=f pw n R^c

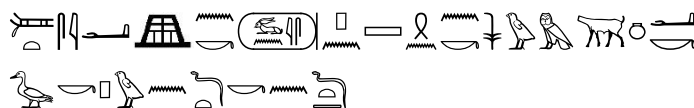
tnm=k m hr=sn mj R^c m rn=f pw n Tm

They will bring into existence this Nemtiemsaf Merenre like the Sun-god, in this his name of Kheprer [= the rising Sun].

You will ascend to them like the Sun-god, in this his name of Re [= the noonday Sun].

You will move out of their sight like the Sun-god, in this his name of Atum [= the setting Sun].

Pyr. 213a–b [222] (W/B/E 33)



Tm sj^c n=k Wnjs pn šn n=k sw m-hnw (wj)=k

z3=k pw n dt=k n dt

⁶⁴ According to Sethe 1908–1922, II: 526: Pyr. 2165b; according to Faulkner 1969b: 60: Pyr. 2165a.

The hail-clouds of the sky have taken him [= Unis] away so that they would elevate Unis to Re.

The object of the ascension is explicitly mentioned in 20 out of the 33 passages. In these cases, by definition, only the transitive verb *sj*^c is used. On 14 occasions, it is the deceased king or his *ka* who is elevated (Pyr. 213a [222]; Pyr. 333c [262]; Pyr. 336b [262] (W), discussed above) in complementarity with the phraseology with the verb *j*^c, where the king is the subject of the action of ascending. Other objects are the “sky”, the “distant sky” (Pyr. 1679c [603], discussed above), and “the gods”, elevated by Horus to the king:

Pyr. 613a [364] (T A/W 30)



sj^c.n n=k Hr w ntr w rdj. n=f n=k sn shd=sn hr=k

Horus has made the gods come up to you [= Teti] and has given them to you so that they may brighten your face (= make you pleased).

As for the final destination of the ascension, it is explicitly mentioned in 26 out of the 33 passages. Here, too, there is a great deal of variety. The most common destinations are the Sun gods or the bark of Re (8 cases, as in Pyr. 213a [222]; Pyr. 336b [262], discussed above), the celestial gods (Horus and Nut, 5 cases, as in Pyr. 645c [370]; Pyr. 616f [364]), and the sky (4 cases, as Pyr. 326c [261]; Pyr. 369 [267] discussed above), but the generic “god”, “great god” or “gods” (5 cases, as in Pyr. 1695b [606] discussed above), the king himself (3 cases, as in Pyr. 613a [364] just quoted), and the Eye of Horus also occur.

As we have seen, then, most of the passages in the *Pyramid Texts* in which the verbs rooted *j*^c are used describe a process of “aerial”, “vertical” ascent or elevation whose most common agent or object is the deceased king or his *ka* and having the sky or the Sun-god as its main destination.

3 The root *j*^c in private funerary texts of the Old Kingdom

In the private funerary texts of the Old Kingdom, the root *jʿr* occurs in two words with the same basic significance and from the same symbolic context (Table 8.2, listing all attestations to date):⁶⁶

- the strong verb *jʿ* (var. *ʿr*), “ascend”, which almost always appears in the active subjunctive form (3p.m/f.s.): “that he/she may ascend”, and, exceptionally, in the relative form and the infinitive (but these latter forms, only in the specific context of the *Wissensformel*: see below) (26 instances);


- the causative verb *sjʿ*, “ascend”, “cause to ascend”, which always appears in the passive subjunctive form (3p.m.s.): “that he be ascended” (7 instances).




[PLACE TABLE 8.2 HERE]

TABLE 8.2. Attestations of the verbs *jʿ*, *sjʿ*, and *ʿr* in the private funerary texts of the Old Kingdom. Based on references listed by Hannig (HL4: 41–42, 1077) and Lapp (1986: 61–70), with some additions.

All attestations are dated from the reign of Unis to the end of the 6th dynasty or slightly later, so they have exactly the same chronology as the *Pyramid Texts* of the Old Kingdom.⁶⁷




From a graphic point of view, as in the *Pyramid Texts*, these words are spelled with monoconsonantal phonograms; the verb *sjʿ* is never accompanied by a determinative semogram, while the verb *jʿ* (var. *ʿr*) usually is. However, the semograms used are completely different from those accompanying the same words in the *Pyramid Texts*. They are (Table 8.2; Fig. 8.5):

- the sign of the road bordered by shrubs:  N31 (12/26 instances of *jʿ/ʿr*). If, as we have seen, in the *Pyramid Texts* this sign is very exceptional and appears in very defined transit contexts, in private texts it is one of the two regular determinatives of these words. The notion of a horizontal route, on foot and on the ground, is evoked.

- the sign of the double stairway:  O41, sometimes reproduced in the form of a step pyramid, a graphic variant for which we propose the standard icon  and code *O41A (8/26 instances of *jʿ/ʿr*: 6 and 2, respectively, the latter with *jʿ*). As mentioned in section 2, this sign has been systematically confused with the sign of the truncated step pyramid:  o12. But despite their formal resemblance, they are completely different

⁶⁶ See lexicographical references in notes 1, 4, and 5.

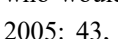
⁶⁷ Mathieu 2004: 258.




signs, referentially, iconically, and semantically. In fact, while the upper part of sign O41 reproduces the last step of a stairway, the upper part of sign o12 has the shape of a wide quadrangle because it does not evoke a step, but a platform, as already discussed. These different features of iconicity are highly significant and imply that the signs evoke completely different referents, such as a staircase and a stepped tomb, that is to say, a “functional” versus a ritual referent, the former as the sign of the road already discussed. Both evoke the notion of ascension, but they have different origins and are used in different contexts. If the signs reproducing mastabas are exclusive to the *Pyramid Texts* as determinatives of the terms derived from the root *jʿr*, so is the sign of the truncated step pyramid. The determinatives for these terms in the royal and private domains are not the same because they correspond to different symbolisms and have different chronologies: the former come from an ancient graphic tradition, as we have seen in section 2, while the latter are characteristic of the standard hieroglyphic system of the Old Kingdom. Thus, besides functioning as determinative of the terms in question, in Middle Egyptian the sign  O41 could also function as determinative of the term *q33/q3y*, “hill”, “high ground”, derived from the root *q3j*, “to be high”.⁶⁸ In this use, it alternates with the sign  O40 (stairway), which, in turn, also functions as determinative of the terms *rwd*, “stairway”, “terraced platform” (as in *rwd n ntr ʿ3*, “the platform of the great god”, in the temple of Osiris at Abydos, where the funerary stelae were erected),⁶⁹ and *htyw*, “terrace with stairs” or “terraced hillside” (as in *htyw mfk3t*, “the terraces of turquoise”, the terraced Wadi Maghara in Sinai).⁷⁰ Taking these graphic and lexical relationships into consideration, it can be concluded that the iconical feature of the steps is not primarily associated with the notion of [ASCEND], but with the notion of [TERRACED AREA], as is usually the way to the necropolis. In the *Pyramid Texts*, the sign  O40 occurs as the determinative of the word *r(w)d*, which is used with two different meanings. On the one hand, in one passage it clearly refers to the “desert terraces” or “desert slopes” in the plot context of describing “natural” cataclysms that will happen “if no place is made for this Teti” in the *akhet*.⁷¹



⁶⁸ *Wb* V: 5; HL1: 848; *ERL*: 402, DRID 1001918; Gardiner 1957: 497.


⁶⁹ *Wb* II: 409, 9–15; HL4: 706, 737; Gardiner 1957: 497.

⁷⁰ *Wb* III: 348–349; Gardiner 1957: 497.

⁷¹ Pyr. 279c [254] (T): “[The earth is completely dammed up, for the mountain ranges on either side of the river have been joined and the two banks have been united, the roads have been made inaccessible to those who would pass,] and the terraces have been destroyed for those who would go up” (translation: Allen 2005: 43, W 165). The word is spelled  *rwdw*, where the second determinative (N33A) “possibly refers both to the rocky nature of this feature and to its plural” (Diego Espinel this volume). Faulkner (1969: 65 n. 9) wrote: “Possibly the gentle rise from the level of the river to the foot of the cliffs may be envisaged”.

On the other hand, in four passages it refers to a “stairway” in plot contexts of the ascension of the deceased king to heaven,⁷² because ascension in the royal corpus is by definition towards heaven; this, however, is a specialised sense, linked to the use of the word in these particular texts, not its general sense. Signs  o12 and  O41 (var.  *O41A) are therefore distinct signs, and the scribes of the Old Kingdom always kept them in their respective fields of use and did not interchange them. The former conveys a notion of an aerial ascent to heaven; the latter, of an ascent through the terraced desert uplands. The step-pyramid shape given to the latter in some of its attestations is undoubtedly due to the evocative power that would be conveyed by the step pyramid of Netjerikhet in Saqqara.

- a strange composite sign, formed by a glyph similar to that of the plain mastaba in the *Pyramid Texts* (*OnewA; see above, section 2) topped by five “grains” of a slightly vertical ovoid shape:  (only 1/26 instances of *j'ʿr*) (Fig. 8.5f). This sign is documented only once, on the exterior architrave of the tomb of Mehu, at Saqqara.⁷³ The five “grains” indicate that the scribe or carver did not consider the sign as representing a mastaba and that, for him, the sign of a mastaba was not to be expected in this context. The sign undoubtedly comes from the mastaba signs of the *Pyramid Texts*, but it seems that the makers of this inscription did not understand it and exceptionally chose to “reinterpret” it rather than use the usual determinatives of the verb *j'ʿ* in private funerary texts: in the tomb of Mehu this verb occurs three other times, always with the expected determinatives (Table 8.2, [2]). The “grains” could perhaps be connected with the sign  O51, similar in form to the one under discussion and much more familiar to the scribe or carver.

- the sign of the walking legs:  D54 (only 1/26 instances of *j'ʿr*).
- Ø : absence of determinative (4/26 instances of *j'ʿr*; 7 instances of *sj'ʿ*). In one third of the attestations of the verbs *j'ʿ* and *sj'ʿ* in private funerary texts, they appear without determinatives.

[PLACE ILLUSTRATION 8.5 (M) HERE]

⁷² *Wb* II: 409, 9; 462, 16; HL4: 737. Pyr. 1090c [505], Pyr. 1322a [539], Pyr. 1325a [539], Pyr. 1749b [619].

⁷³ Hawass 2002. The architrave is known only from the restoration work of the tomb carried out by the Supreme Council of Antiquities in the early 2000s and does not appear in the publication by Altenmüller (1998). According to Hawass (2002: 223), many of the autobiographical formulas used in the text are well known, “but other phrases are new and illustrate considerable originality”. Perhaps it is in this “experimental” context that the unique sign we are dealing with should be understood.

FIGURE 8.5: The words j^c and sj^c determined by the signs of the road and the double stairway in private funerary texts of the Old Kingdom: a. false door stela of Ankhmerire Ihines (Cairo CGC 1483); b. false door stela of Shedabed (Cairo CGC 1453); c. architrave of Hezi; d. and e. false door stela of Mehu; f. lintel of Mehu (Table 8.2, [2], [5], [13], and [20]). Photos: a. and b. Yasmine Afram; c–f. Albert Triviño Massó.

Thus, while the grapheme of the mastaba, in its different variants, is the sign most commonly used to determine the terms derived from the root $j^c r$ in the *Pyramid Texts*, it is never used for the same function in the private funerary texts of the Old Kingdom (the only exception might be the sign on the architrave of the tomb of Mehu just discussed, but we have already seen that it was probably not intended to be a representation of a mastaba).⁷⁴ In contrast, in the private texts it does appear on rare occasions as a determinative of the term jz , “tomb”, “mastaba”, as is also the case in the *Pyramid Texts*, as already discussed.⁷⁵ It is clear, then, that the sign represents a mastaba, but it lacks any ascensional connotation in the private texts.

Unlike in the *Pyramid Texts*, where the terms derived from the root $j^c r$ appear in very diverse morphosyntactic, phraseological, and narrative contexts, in the private texts they occur in very fixed and stereotyped sequences, though sometimes with slight variations that can be very significant, as we shall see. By “sequence” I mean a clearly delimited part of text, both in terms of layout (lines or columns of text in an architrave or

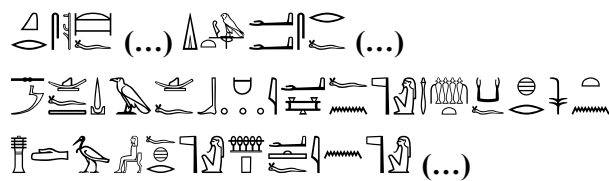
⁷⁴ Very interestingly, exactly the same thing that happens in the private funerary texts contemporary to the *Pyramid Texts* happens in the *Pyramid Texts* transmitted to the Middle Kingdom and incorporated into the *Coffin Texts* (Allen 2006b). Thus, in the latter, 11 recitations from the *Pyramid Texts* including passages with terms derived from the root $j^c r$ were retained: Pyr. 140c [215], Pyr. 160b [217], Pyr. 213a [222], Pyr. 216a [223], Pyr. 326c (326b) [261], Pyr. 336b [262], Pyr. 613a [364], Pyr. 616f [364] (two terms), Pyr. 641a [369], Pyr. 645c [370] (see Table 8.1 for all of the above), plus 2 passages from the pyramid of Pepy II that do not appear in Sethe’s and Faulkner’s editions (from N216+4–51; see Allen 2006b: 440–443). Some of these recitations and passages are copied in several coffins, bringing the total of documented passages to 60. All these data come from Allen 2006b: 78–79, 145, 250–251, 278–279, 306, 310, 328–329, 441–442. In 15 of these 60 passages, the term derived from the root $j^c r$ has been lost or has lost the determinative. Of the remaining 45 attestations, 20 have the determinative of the road N31, 3 have the determinative of the double stairway O41, and 15 have no determinative, the same options as in the private funerary texts of the Old Kingdom. The other 7 attestations have a determinative derived from the mastaba signs of the *Pyramid Texts*. However, only 1 of them faithfully reproduces the sign of the trapezoidal mastaba without interior decoration *OnewA (coffin Ab1Le^b; Allen 2006b: 78). The others adopt distorted forms, with gates, fences or towers, or are assimilated to sarcophagi, which indicates, as is the case with the sign in the tomb of Mehu discussed above, that they were no longer understood with their original value in these contexts (coffins T9C, with 2 attestations, B2Bo, B9C, B10C, Sq13C; Allen 2006b: 79, 145, 251, 310). In three cases, moreover, the sign is in the passage Pyr. 616f [364], where the term $j^c r / ^c$ means “tomb”, which explains the shape of the signs as mastabas with doors (see note 54). On the transmission of the ancient determinatives of mastabas associated with terms derived from the root $j^c r$ and the update of the spelling of these terms from the New Kingdom onwards, see also note 60.

⁷⁵ See above, section 2 and notes 49 and 54.

false door stele...) and in terms of phraseology (for example, starting with *h₁tp-dj-nswt*). Two well-defined patterns can be recognised (Table 8.2⁷⁶):

1) Pattern A: *zm₃*, “join” + *d₃j*, “cross” + *j^ʿr*, “ascend” (possibly accompanied by *qrs*, “bury” – *sd₃*, “go off” – *h₁ppj*, “travel” – *šms*, “accompany” – *dj*, “extend” – *dd*, “remain” – *šzp*, “accept”); *sšm*, present in pattern B, is unattested in pattern A). The verb from the root *j^ʿr* is systematically associated with the verbs *zm₃* and *d₃j*, almost always in the noted order. Very often, this fixed sequence is accompanied by one or more of the verbs indicated in brackets, in varying order. This is a standard example for this pattern:

Architrave of Hermeru Merery (Saqqara, Unis cemetery) (Table 8.2, [10])

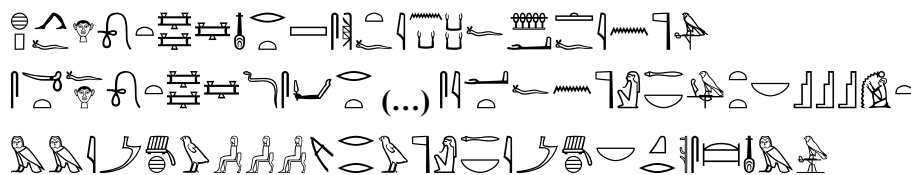


qrs(·tj)=f (...) dj Jmnt ‘*wj=s r=f (...)*
zm₃=f t₃ d₃=f bj₃ j^ʿ=f n n₁r ʿ₃ h₁nt k₃=f h₁r nswt
dd b₃=f h₁r n₁r šzp(·tj) ʿ=f jn n₁r (...)

That he be buried (...), that the Western-goddess may extend her hands to him (...),
 that he may join the earth, that he may cross the *bia*, that he may ascend to the great god in front
 of his *ka* before the king,
 that his *ba* may remain before the god, that his credentials be accepted by the god (...).

2) Pattern B: *j^ʿr*, “ascend”, without *zm₃* and *d₃j* (and combined with *qrs* – *h₁ppj* – *šms* – *šzp* – *sšm*, “guide”; *sd₃* – *dj* – *dd*, present in pattern A, are unattested in pattern B). The verb from the root *j^ʿr* is not accompanied by the verbs *zm₃* and *d₃j*, but by the verbs indicated in brackets, which may or may not coincide with the complementary verbs in pattern A. The following is a standard example for this pattern:

Stele of Neferseshemre Sheshi (Saqqara, Teti cemetery) (Table 8.2, [18])



⁷⁶ Table 8.2 lists only those documents in which the textual sequence explicitly includes a verb derived from the root *j^ʿr*; for examples of documents with the same phraseology but omitting a verb from this root, see Lapp 1986: 64–65.

hp=f hr w3wt nfrwt šms·t(j)=f jn k3w=f šzp(·tj) ʿ=f jn ntr
sšm·t(j)=f hr w3wt dsrwt (...) sjʿ·t(j)=f n ntr ʿ3 nb Jmntt nb swt wʿbwt
m-m jm3hw mrrw ntr ʿ3 nb jm3h nb qrs nfr m hrt-ntr

That he may travel upon the beautiful roads, that he be accompanied by his *kas*, that his credentials be accepted by the god,
that he be guided upon the sacred roads (...), that he be ascended to the great god, lord of the West and lord of the pure places,
among the honoured ones whom the great god, lord of veneration and lord of good burial in the necropolis, loves.

All these verbs appear in the subjunctive, active or passive, depending on whether the action is performed by the deceased or by some divine agent acting in relation to him. It is always, indeed, a matter of optative formulae, of soteriological wishes. It is wished that the deceased can make the journey to the necropolis and to his tomb, possibly with the help of the divinities of the West.⁷⁷ Indeed, the authors who have dealt with these formulae consider that they describe the actual burial ritual; in Lapp’s words:

“ <i>zm3=f t3</i>	Landen am Westufer
<i>d3=f bj3</i>	Fahrt bis zum Fuss des Westgebirges
<i>jʿ=f n ntr ʿ3</i>	Emporsteigen zum Friedhof ” ⁷⁸

Lapp insists on the eminently ritual and performative character of these formulae. However, rite and myth must be understood in a complementary way: since the rite actualises the myth, the formulae also describe the journey of the deceased in the afterlife, as the allusion to the great god and the divinities of the West clearly evinces. Following Lapp’s analysis,⁷⁹ this is an earthly and on-ground journey rather than a celestial and aerial one, since the ascension alluded to through the verbs *jʿ/sjʿ* is the ascension to the necropolis or, in mythical terms, the climb through the mountains of the West, the realm of the dead.

It is not necessary to comment in detail here on the formulae under discussion, but it is worth making a few remarks.

The actions concerned are the following (Table 8.3):

⁷⁷ This phraseology has been studied in detail by G. Lapp in a now classic work (Lapp 1986: 39–90, especially 59–86). The patterns we identify here do not coincide exactly with his as they focus specifically on the uses of verbs derived from the root *jʿr*. See also Barta 1968: 27–31, Bitte 4–37.

⁷⁸ Lapp 1986: 66; Lapp 2014: 215, following Barta 1968: 306. See also Junker 1947: 144–146; Wilson 1954: 251–252; Barta 1968: 30, Bitte 29–31.

⁷⁹ See most recently Lapp 2014.

[PLACE TABLE 8.3 HERE]

TABLE 8.3. Actions referred to in Old Kingdom private funerary formulae for access to the afterlife.

As can be seen, these are a very restricted number of actions, all expressed in a stereotyped way. All of them are physical actions of transfer in earthly space (travel, guidance, help, arrival, reception) or of burial. The determinatives (legs walking, legs running, roads, boats, sarcophagi, and no semograms specifically related to the sky) are quite eloquent in this respect. Only two of the ten actions could be interpreted (and, in fact, have been interpreted⁸⁰) as an ascension to, or a journey through, the sky: the first is precisely that expressed by the verbs *j'sj*ꜥ, “ascend”, because the ascension is *n ntr* ʕ, “to the great god”, sometimes qualified as *nb pt*, “lord of heaven”; the second is that expressed by the verb *dʒj*, since its object is *bjʒ*, one of whose meanings is “firmament”.⁸¹ However, to begin with, the phraseological context, with eight other actions clearly referring to an earthly transfer, strongly suggests that the two actions in question should also be understood as taking place on earth.

As far as the great god is concerned, it is true that he is called *nb pt* on several occasions.⁸² But it is also true that this is a very generic epithet, attributed to celestial and solar gods as well as to gods who have nothing to do with the celestial sphere. Even in the *Pyramid Texts*, of the 27 mentions of the “great god(s)”,⁸³ only 4 refer explicitly to the Sun-god or the sky, while the others are generic allusions, often in the dual, or referring to the king, Horus, Geb, Neith, or even, in two cases, explicitly associated with the earth and its produce.⁸⁴ “Lord of heaven” is thus a generic epithet for highness and is not to be interpreted literally.⁸⁵ Much more useful for understanding the character of the

⁸⁰ For ex. Alexanian 2003: 35; Mathieu 2004: 257–258; Hays 2011: 125. See discussion in Lapp 2014: 216–219.

⁸¹ *Wb* I: 439, 9; HL4: 414–415; *ERL*: 131, RID 0006000. Graefe 1971: 40–46.

⁸² Table 8.2, [7], [13], [15], [20], [24], [27].

⁸³ Allen 2005: 454, “Great God”.

⁸⁴ Pyr. 1182a [515] (P, M, N) = Allen 2005: 158, P 463: “This Pepy will receive a place and a meal from that which is in the granary of the great god”; Jéquier 1936: plate XIV, 1055+52 = Allen 2013: VI, PT*710=CT208 = Allen 2005: 287, N 474: “Pepi Neferkare is the Bull of offerings, owner of a quintet of meals in Heliopolis—three for the sky and two for [the earth: three meals for the sky with Horus and two meals for the earth with the great god]” (text restored from CT 208) (the asterisk in front of the number in Allen’s edition indicates a recitation absent from Sethe’s and Faulkner’s editions and newly identified and numbered by him; in this article we have chosen to reserve the asterisk for the recitations newly identified and numbered by Faulkner—as MAFS does—and to use an [^] for those by Allen, except in this case, because we reproduce Allen’s headline; see note 3).

⁸⁵ According to the meaning of *pt* “comme image de la stabilité et la durée” (*AnLex77*: 125, 77.1351).

“great god” in the texts under discussion are the sequences of epithets that define him in more specific ways. Thus, he is called “lord of the West” (Table 8.2, [6]); “lord of the West and lord of the pure places, (...) lord of veneration and lord of good burial in the necropolis” ([17], [18]); “lord of burial” ([20]); “lord of veneration and lord of a good burial in the necropolis” ([23]); or he is placed “in the Western-burial-desert” ([2]). From these epithets and locations it is clear that the “great god” alluded to in these formulae is a funerary god, related to the West, the necropolis, and burial.⁸⁶ Much has been written about the “great god” and his identification with one divinity or another.⁸⁷ It seems most prudent to consider him as an abstract divine entity or a “contextual” deity, in a henotheistic sense, so that his nature and functions depend, in each case, on the symbolic context. Thus, the verbs *j’/sj’* do not allude here to an aerial ascent into the sky, but to an earthly ascent to the necropolis, as argued by Lapp. Their precise meaning in this context is deduced from passages such as: “that he be ascended to the great god, lord of the West and lord of the pure places, among the honoured ones whom the great god, lord of veneration and lord of good burial in the necropolis, loves” ([17], [18]); “that he be ascended to the great god as an honoured one whom the great god, lord of veneration and lord of good burial in the necropolis, loves” ([23]);⁸⁸ “that he may ascend to the great god upon the sacred roads of the West” and “that he be ascended to the great god upon the sacred roads upon which the honoured ones travel” ([21] and [25], where the phraseology

⁸⁶ Although rarely, in the *htp-dj-nswt* formula, the great god may alternate with Osiris, Anubis, and Khentiamentiu, the funerary gods: Davies et al. 1984: 26–27, plate 26 (false door stele of Wernu: Table 8.2, [8]); Kanawati and Abder-Raziq 2001: 61–62, plates 12b, 53 (architrave of Geref Itji: Table 8.2, [1]); Soleiman 2017: 109–110 (lintel of Ptahshepses from the Gisir el-Mudir site at Saqqara). On the stele of Wernu from Saqqara, the sequence *htp dj ntr ʿz* appears twice, at the beginning of the third column of the outer jambs on each side (while on the other two columns Anubis and Osiris appear); at left, the great god concedes “that he may travel upon the beautiful roads of the West”, while at right he eloquently concedes “that he be spiritualised (*szh-t(j)=f*) by the lector priest after being treated (*srwh(-w)*) by the embalmer”. In the architrave of Geref Itji and the lintel of Ptahshepses, also from Saqqara, the sequence *htp dj nswt (htp dj) ntr ʿz* appears at the beginning of the third line (while on the other two lines Anubis and Osiris appear): in the former the great god grants the *pwt-hrw*; in the latter, only titles and epithets of the deceased are given.

⁸⁷ A state of the art can be found in Shalomi-Hen 2006: 46–52 with references. See also Barta 1968: 291–292 (with discussion and earlier references); Shalomi-Hen 2015: 460–461; Nuzzolo 2021: 128–129.

⁸⁸ Regarding the sequence *m-m jm3hw* (var. *m jm3hw*) *mrrw ntr ʿz nb jm3h nb qrs nfr m hrt-ntr*, present in [17], [18], and [22], it could be interpreted as “among the honoured ones / as an honoured one whom the great god, lord of veneration and lord of good burial in the necropolis, loves”, with the epithets *nb jm3h* and *nb qrs*... referring to the god (Kanawati and Abder-Raziq 1998: 34; El-Khadragy 2005: 171), or “among the honoured ones / as an honoured one whom the great god loves, [as] lord of veneration and lord of good burial in the necropolis”, with those epithets referring to the deceased (ex. Simpson 1976: 20). While it is true that *nb jm3h* may be an epithet of the deceased, the parallel, and immediately preceding, sequence in [17] and [18] *sj’-t(j)=f n ntr ʿz nb Jmnt(t) nb swt w’bwt*, “that he be ascended to the great god, lord of the West and lord of the pure places”, with epithets undoubtedly referring to the god, and the fact that *ntr ʿz nb qrs*, “great god, lord of burial”, is also a frequent independent phrase (ex. [20]) and that *nb qrs* is also an epithet of Anubis, all strongly suggest that all these epithets refer to the god.

that is normally linked to the verb *hꜣpj*, “travel”, is very significantly linked to the verbs *jꜣ* and *sjꜣ*).

Regarding the sequence *dꜣ=f bjꜣ*,⁸⁹ it is for contextual coherence that it must be understood as the description of an earthly action: a passage of the deceased through the firmament along a journey entirely connoted as an earthly transfer to the West does not seem to make sense. *Bia* does not refer here to a heavenly “mineral” extension, as is the “firmament”, but to a terrestrial mineral extension, as are the desert sands that separate farmland from “the foot of the western mountains”, in Lapp’s terms.⁹⁰ This interpretation is supported by several pieces of evidence. Firstly, in a few cases (Table 8.2, [3]) the term *bjꜣ* is, significantly, replaced by *šꜣ*, “sand”, indicating that the two concepts are interchangeable.⁹¹ On several occasions ([2], [9] and [12]),⁹² moreover, the term *bjꜣ* is determined with the sign \equiv N17, 𓂏 N25 or 𓂏 N21 (perhaps \square O39) instead of or in addition to the usual $\circ \circ \circ$ N33A (sometimes \circ N33), indicating unequivocally that it refers to a terrestrial and desert (perhaps stony) space. As is well known, the signs N25 and O39 are those that determine the polysemic term *bjꜣ* in its meanings of “mine”, “mining region”, “Sinai”, and “mineral”.⁹³ On the other hand, the text on the right inner jamb of the false door stele of Neferseshemre ([18]) begins: *dꜣt bjꜣ ... prt jr tp dꜣw n hꜣrt-nꜣtr*, the term *bjꜣ* here being determined by the sign of the water-filled channel 𓂏 N36A; the two actions are presented as successive and significantly related, so that the passage could be understood as: “crossing the irrigated-land-*bia* ..., going up to the top of the

⁸⁹ HL4: 1489–1490.

⁹⁰ See also Graefe 1971: 44–46.

⁹¹ HL4: 1490; Lapp 1986: 60, 67–68; Lapp 2014: 215. Another example in a sequence without *jꜣ/sjꜣ*: *Urk. I: 251–255, n° 13(153)* (tomb of Qar Nefermerire of Edfu, dated Teti–Merenre; PM V: 200).

⁹² *Wb I: 439*; Barta 1968: 306; Graefe 1971: 88 plate 8; Lapp 1086: 60–70 (with more examples in sequences without *jꜣ/sjꜣ*).

⁹³ *Wb I: 438–439*. According to Graefe (1971: 1–8), all words containing the consonant sequence *bjꜣ* would form part of the same lexical family, that is, they would share the same root, provided that one assumes an unrecorded passive original sense of this root **“entfernt sein”*, **“getrennt sein”*, that is “be distant”, “be separated”, which would have given rise to the reflexive sense “*sich entfernen*”, that is “remove oneself (from a person or a place)”, “be far from”, of the recorded verb *bjꜣj* (*Wb I: 439, 10–12*). Indeed, metals (in the first instance meteoric), the mining regions, the firmament, the desert ways to the necropolis in the West, and extraordinary events (*omina*) are all realities distant from the usual spaces and experience of humans. Thus, in the context we are examining, *bjꜣ* can have the essential meaning of “space-other”, that which is not frequented during earthly life. See *Wb I: 436–441*; HL1: 246–247; HL4: 414–416; *ERL: 130–131, DRID 1000042/3/4*. In any case, the notion of *bjꜣ* is complex and polysemic and has different connotations depending on the symbolic context in which it operates. Thus, in the *Pyramid Texts*, in which the entire regeneration process passes through the sky and the Sun, its symbolism is clearly heavenly and solar (Borrego Gallardo 2010: 279; Almansa-Villatoro 2019; Almansa-Villatoro this volume).

mountain of the necropolis”. This would be in line with the image of leaving the city and the nome (= the irrigated land) by the (private) deceased at the moment of setting out on the way to the afterlife, according to the initial phraseology of the “ideal autobiographies” of the Old Kingdom.⁹⁴ It is true that in one case ([13]) the verb *d3j* has the object *pt*, “sky”, and not *bj3*. This foreshadows what will happen in the Middle Kingdom, where the formula under discussion loses the third component (verb *j^c/sj^c*), reverses the order of the other two, and replaces *bj3* with *pt*.⁹⁵ However, this is precisely because of the new religious sensibility that emerged from the First Intermediate Period (see below, section 5, *in fine*). The exceptional use of *pt* in this context in the Old Kingdom must be considered as the exception that proves the rule. Finally, on one occasion ([7]), the verbs *zm3* and *d3j* interchange objects, so that the action of “join” is associated with *bia* while the action of “cross” is associated with “the earth”.⁹⁶ The fact that the verbs in these formulae are interchangeable (see also just above) indicates that they all respond to the same spatial symbolism and allude to interrelated actions. In one case ([6]), the action of ascending “to the great god, lord of the West” is even placed before those of joining the earth and crossing the *bia*.

Regarding the action of “joining the earth”,⁹⁷ one of the documents (Table 8.2, [2]) informs us that it takes place *r Jmnt nfrt*, “in the beautiful West”. The West appears in these formulae not only as the space in which the whole travel takes place, but also as the personification of the divine entities who help the deceased to make it: *Jmnt*, the Western-goddess ([10], [14], and [21]), *Zmjt*, the Burial-desert-goddess ([9]), and *Zmjt Jmntt*, the Western-burial-desert-goddess ([12]). As mentioned above, the ritual journey to the necropolis and the tomb is all one with the mythical and soteriological journey to the afterlife.

Two of the attestations of the verb *j^c* in Table 8.2 ([26] and [27]) correspond, not to the formulae of the journey to the West, but to the so-called *Wissensformel* or formula of knowledge.⁹⁸ In it, in terms of initiation, the deceased expresses that he has the knowledge of the rites and formulae that will allow him to ascend to the great god. This

⁹⁴ Stauder-Porchet 2017: 110–111, 169–174, 183–192 (p. 172: “Si je suis sorti de ma ville, descendu de mon nome, c’est que j’avais fait la Maât pour son maître, l’avais satisfait avec tout ce qu’il aime”, Hezi, Table 8.2, [20]). On *bj3* as a water container (albeit in the celestial domain), see Almansa-Villatoro 2019: 75–78.

⁹⁵ Barta 1968: 306–307; Lapp 1986: 70–71.

⁹⁶ Lapp 1986: 67 (with another example in a sequence without *j^c/sj^c*).

⁹⁷ *Wb* III: 448–449; HL4: 1121–1122.

⁹⁸ Kloth 2002: 118–119; Hays 2011: 123–126; Lapp 2014: 216–217.

is yet another indication of the inextricable complementarity between the rite (the recitation of formulae) and the myth (the ascent to the great god, that is to say, access to the afterlife).

4 Comparison

A comparison between Tables 8.1 and 8.2 immediately reveals the following:

1) From a lexical point of view, in the *Pyramid Texts* the verb *sj*^c is documented twice as often as the verb *j*^c, while in the private texts the latter is documented three times as often as the former. It would seem that in the private texts the deceased is mostly seen as the agent of the action of ascending, whereas in the royal texts the one who ascends (the deceased king or other entities) is seen rather as the object of that action or as both agent and object at the same time (reflexive construction). The private deceased rises on his own, while the royal deceased must be raised, helped to rise, or must raise himself. We will return to this in section 5.

2) From a graphic point of view, the semograms used to determine the terms derived from the root *j*^r are essentially different between the funerary royal texts (*Pyramid Texts*) and private texts. In the former, these are mainly icons that depict buildings (pyramid trunk and mastaba), while in the latter, these signs are not used. The sign of the road N31, although shared, is exceptional in the royal texts, where it appears in very special contexts as discussed in section 1, whereas it is the most commonly used sign in private texts. As for the stepped signs in the royal and private texts, we have insisted that, although they have been systematically interpreted as the same icon, they are, in fact, different signs, since they allude to different referents of reality (a stepped building versus a stairway or terraced elevation). This does not mean, however, that at the time the *Pyramid Texts* were carved, the referent of the royal stepped sign, namely a unique building constructed during the 1st dynasty, had been forgotten; the agents responsible for the “monumentalisation” of the texts (see below, section 5), however, always reproduced the sign with the iconic characteristics that defined it from its creation, contemporary with the building it depicts (with only a minor adaptation on one occasion: Pyr. 613a [364] (T); see above, section 2). The determinatives, phraseologies, narratives, and symbolic contexts refer, in the royal sphere, to an aerial ascent towards the sky and the Sun, and, in the private sphere, to an ascent on foot along stepped or terraced paths and mountains. Thus, contrary to H.M. Hays’s opinion, I am returning here to the

opposition already proposed by J. Assmann⁹⁹ between “verticality” and “horizontality” in the forms of transfer to the afterlife of royal and private persons. Hays writes:

Assmann (...) asserted that “die Entrückung der Menschen aus der Welt der Lebenden vorwiegend in Formen der Horizontalität begriffen wird” while the “offizielle Dogma des Königstodes” expressed the royal forms of transport “im Zeichen der Vertikalität”; the opposition is erroneous, since both forms of transport are attested in the Pyramid Texts and thus are equally applicable to a king.¹⁰⁰

The two forms of transport are attested in the *Pyramid Texts* because the horizontal transfer is a common denominator between the soteriological beliefs of both royal and private persons, but this does not exclude that the kings had, during the Old Kingdom, complementary afterlife destinies of an exclusively celestial and solar nature. We will return to this in detail in section 5.



3) Contrary to what might be supposed, the passages in which the verbs *jꜣ* and *sjꜣ* appear in the *Pyramid Texts* display a much greater narrative and phraseological richness than that observed in the passages with the same verbs in the private texts, which are much more stereotyped. In both domains a journey to the beyond is described, but in the royal texts the diversity of situations, means, agents, points of departure, points of arrival, syntactic forms, narrative resources, and wordplay is much greater. In the royal texts, mythical allusions are very present,¹⁰¹ while they are minimal in the private texts. The multitude of celestial and solar gods who intervene to help the deceased king/queen in the former contrasts with the presence of only the two goddesses who personify the West in the latter (*Zmjt* and *Jmnt*): sky symbolism versus earth symbolism. It could be argued that we do not know what the funerary formulae recited at the burial of private individuals consisted of, but it is precisely the comparison of the behaviour of the same lexical root

⁹⁹ Assmann 1977: 1206. See also Lapp 2014: 216.

¹⁰⁰ Hays 2012: 282 n. 1012.

¹⁰¹ For the concept of “mythical allusion” see Cervelló Autuori forthcoming, with references. See also Rouffet 2011: 14–15 (who uses the term “historiolae”); Hellum 2012: 44–45; Hellum 2014: 123–132; Baqué-Manzano this volume. In this article, we use the terms “myth” and “mythical” to refer to a form of thought, regardless of whether or not it already entails the existence of organic narratives. Regarding the *Pyramid Texts*, J. Hellum (2014: 132) writes: “The physical context of the Pyramid Texts combines with their content to render each corpus a *metamyth*, a term used here to indicate a religious element that is more than the combination of the physical hieroglyphs and the metaphysical content. The content, the context, and the magical potential of the hieroglyphs work together in the same way more traditional, narrative myths do, providing liminal access to the afterlife, albeit in a non-narrative format and with an added physical dimension”.

in both domains which allows us to make inferences in this regard on a reliable basis. Indeed, it should not be forgotten that, in the absence of documentation in the private sphere, it is not possible to affirm a complete equivalence between royal and private funerary texts and rituals. Again, we will come back to this in the following pages.

4) The symbolism of the ascension journey to the afterlife is different in royal and private texts essentially because in the latter the Sun-god is never alluded to. While the solar element is omnipresent in the *Pyramid Texts*, it plays no explicit role in the textual and decorative programs of the private tombs. The Sun-god is never mentioned in them as a funerary god, but only in proper names of persons and buildings and in priestly titles. He does not appear in the formula *ḥtp-dj-nswt* or in the epithet *jm3ḥw ḥr NN*. He is, of course, never depicted. The arguments that have been put forward about the possible presence of a solar element and symbolism in private soteriology¹⁰² are never based on explicit evidence, but on interpretation of what is considered indirect evidence, which is thus open to other readings. A couple of examples will suffice to illustrate this point. J.P. Allen points out that the *shṯ ḥtp*, “field of rest”, is an element of the topography of the afterlife present in both the *Pyramid Texts* and the private funerary texts. However, as we have already noted, a shared element cannot be proof of complete equivalence, but of the existence of a common denominator, and the motif referred to admits interpretations in a non-solar sense. N. Alexanian wonders, for her part, whether the staircases and upper floors of the tombs of private individuals that begin to appear at the end of the 5th dynasty, just as the *Pyramid Texts* were first carved, could be due to a solar component of the non-royal funerary ritual. Her argument, however, is based, on the one hand, precisely on the supposed identity between the determinatives  and  of *jʿr* in the Old Kingdom funerary texts, which we have already seen not to be so, and, on the other, on an interpretation of the rites that would have been celebrated in the upper floor of the tombs based on private rituals of a solar character dated from the Middle Kingdom onwards, when Egyptian funerary beliefs would have undergone substantial changes with respect to the Old Kingdom and solar notions would have become universalised. Alexanian herself admits that there is a transfer between the royal and private worlds when she writes: “Mann kann also vermuten, dass einige wenige Personen Zugang zu den führenden theologischen Ideen hatten und vom König die Erlaubnis bekamen, auf diese

¹⁰² See, for ex., Allen 2006a: 9, n. 4; Alexanian 2003; Mathieu 2004: 257–258; Morales 2016: 112–113; Bickel 2017: 128–129. *Con.* Lapp 2014.

zurückzugreifen”,¹⁰³ only she brings it forward to the end of the Old Kingdom. She also acknowledges that the sanctuary at the top of the private tombs was not open-air, as the pictorial representations show, but was covered, which fits in poorly with a possible solar rite. Furthermore, a staircase to an upper floor does not imply solar symbolism. The interpretation is therefore not conclusive.

There is thus a substantial difference between royal and private funerary texts in describing the journey of ascent to the afterlife. Is this just a question of *decorum* or “modesty”? And where does *decorum* end and qualitative soteriological differences begin?

5 Once again on “democratisation”

The case study presented in the preceding sections has allowed us to observe significant differences in the treatment of an essential lexical root between the funerary texts of the royal and private spheres in the Old Kingdom: on a shared basis, namely the use of the root *jʿr* for the notion of [ASCEND], divergent specific expressions materialise, namely graphic solutions with completely different semograms that seem to allude to mutually exclusive soteriological notions. The ascent of kings is aerial, vertical, and in it the solar element is decisive; the ascent of private individuals is terrestrial, horizontal, and in it the solar element is non-existent. It seems reasonable to believe that it is precisely this opposition that underlies the essential divergence between the royal and private tombs in the Old Kingdom, that is, between the pyramid and the mastaba or rock-tomb. The question is then: is this difference only quantitative, of social rank or *decorum*, or is it qualitative, ontological? In other words, would a mere quantitative difference have given rise to the architectural opposition in question and the construction of the pyramids? Or even further: on a common basis of ideas and rituals about the afterlife shared by kings and private individuals, were there exclusive aspects in the royal soteriology of the Old Kingdom that explain the uniqueness and monumentality of the pyramids as royal tombs and that, from the First Intermediate Period onwards, became integrated in turn into the common *acquis*? I am not at all trying to revive the old theory of the “democratisation of the afterlife”, but it seems to me that the absence of “democratisation” need not

¹⁰³ Alexanian 2003: 36.

necessarily imply the absence of any qualitative difference. In other words, the problem to be discussed is not *democratisation* but *difference*.

As in so many scientific issues, the “law of the pendulum” has also been at work in the Egyptological debate on access to the afterlife in the Old Kingdom. It has shifted from postulating a funerary literature and an afterlife exclusively for kingship and a later “democratisation”,¹⁰⁴ to denying the existence of any difference between funerary texts and rituals and the afterlife destinies of kings and private individuals. Although the more careful study of the evidence and the texts themselves that has been carried out in recent years makes the “democratisation” theory as it was originally formulated untenable,¹⁰⁵ the opposite position is not free of problems either. Let us proceed along the lines of the arguments of one of the advocates of this new position: H.M. Hays.

ARGUMENT 1. The funerary offerings recorded in the offering ritual of the *Pyramid Texts* and those on the offering lists of the fragmentary reliefs of the royal funerary temples of the Old Kingdom are practically the same as those listed in the offering lists of contemporary private tombs and correspond to the canonical offering *Listentyps A* of W. Barta’s typology.¹⁰⁶

Since the beginning of the fifth dynasty, [non-royal] mortuary service representations contain three stereotyped elements: ritualists, offering lists, and deceased at offering table. Most remarkable about this pattern is that surviving fragments of decoration from the sanctuaries of pyramid temples contain precisely these components. (...) The actions ritually done for the king are the same as the actions ritually done for the elite.¹⁰⁷

These offering lists can be traced back in time in private funerary inscriptions to the 2nd dynasty, so it is an element shared by kings and private individuals since we have documentation.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ Sethe 1908–1922: I, ix–x; Breasted 1912: 256–257, 272; Moret 1922: 332, 359; Breasted 1933: 223–249. Overviews of the origin and development of the theory can be found in Willems 2008: 131–142; Hays 2011: 115–117; Smith 2017: 166–172, 264–266.

¹⁰⁵ Mathieu 2004: 256–258; Allen 2006a; Willems 2008: 131–142; Smith 2009; Hays 2011; Hays 2015; Bickel 2017: 120–123; Mathieu 2018: 2–4.

¹⁰⁶ Hays 2011: 128–129. For Type A in Barta’s typology see Barta 1963: 47–78, fig. 4. See also Hassan 1948.

¹⁰⁷ Hays 2011: 128–129.

¹⁰⁸ Hays 2011: 129–130. See also Hassan 1948: 4–5; Barta 1963: 5–46; Morales 2015a: 179–184.

ARGUMENT 2. In the decoration of private tombs, funerary cult scenes include depictions of officiants reciting *s3h.w*, that is to say, spells intended to transform the deceased into an *3h* or “transfigured spirit”, and private funerary texts frequently allude to the knowledge or ritual that enables the transformation into an *3h*, this transfiguration being the chief goal of the *Pyramid Texts*.

...even though one does not find a proper body of non-royal mortuary texts for centuries, the existence of the same is indirectly attested by Old Kingdom pictorial representations of ritual performances in accessible cult chambers. Such scenes show a lector priest reciting *s3h.w* with a papyrus roll in hand (...). Since the attainment of the state of being an Akh is a chief goal of the Pyramid Texts, and as the meaning of the term *s3h* is ‘to make into an Akh’, it may be said that the title *s3h.w* indicates the purpose of the whole body of mortuary literature. (...) This is the simplest conclusion: the *s3h.w* given in the hieroglyphs of the Pyramid Texts constitute the words of the rites pictorially shown performed for elite persons. The democratization theory really is obsolete. Non-royal persons claimed to attain the status of Akh-hood in the Old Kingdom, and that is the purpose of the Pyramid Texts. Non-royal persons claimed to attain this status by ritual and knowledge, and that is what the Pyramid Texts embody...¹⁰⁹

ARGUMENT 3. What then accounts for the manifest differences between the architecture and the textual and decorative programs of the royal and private tombs of the Old Kingdom?

...differences in display between social groups reflect processes of social distinction, and the differentials of display can certainly change over time, even as fashion changes. Simply this: certain kinds of iconography and certain kinds of texts were not shared between the classes in decorating certain areas of the tomb, as a matter of what John Baines would call *decorum*. (...) During the Old Kingdom, elites did not decorate their tombs with Pyramid Texts simply because that kind of decoration was particular to the royal family.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Hays 2011: 127–128.

¹¹⁰ Hays 2015: 202. See also Hays 2011: 118–120.

In my view, the problem with all of these arguments is that they proceed by metonymy. The fact that the funerary rituals of kings and private individuals during the Old Kingdom share essential elements, that is, have a common denominator, does not mean that there cannot also be qualitative differences and elements not shared between the two. This is all the more so since from the private sphere we only know that *s3hw* were recited, but we have no evidence of such recitations, which makes any assessment hypothetical. In short, as I shall have occasion to argue, it seems to me excessive to deduce from the evidence at hand the complete equivalence of the funerary ritual of kings and private individuals in the Old Kingdom. The architectural opposition between the royal pyramid and the private mastaba or rock-tomb is, on the contrary, tangible evidence that qualitative differences were at work. While differences in decorative programs can indeed be attributed to reasons of privilege or *decorum*, it does not seem that the architectural opposition, and the fundamental conceptual and symbolic opposition behind it, can be explained in the same terms. I have the impression that this question is conditioned by a certain “modernity bias”: “our highly secularised and rationalised Western world”—to use S. Bickel’s words¹¹¹—poorly tolerates social inequality sanctioned by religion and this discomfort is easily projected onto its view of the past.

Against the “democratisation” theory, other scholars have also put forward another argument: that of the continuity between the *Pyramid Texts* and the *Coffin Texts*. According to these scholars, the *Pyramid Texts* of the Old Kingdom and the *Coffin Texts* of the Middle Kingdom are not two distinct and successive collections of funerary spells but constitute a single corpus and are therefore identical in essence. If the latter are clearly accessible to all the deceased (many of whom, moreover, were able to have them inscribed on their coffins), the former would also be so, even if only their royal version has come down to us since only the kings—and only those of the late Old Kingdom—had them carved inside their pyramids. There is, therefore, no divergence between the magical spells used by the kings of the Old Kingdom and those used by private individuals contemporary with them to gain access to the afterlife. This argument has already been counter-criticised, from various perspectives and by different scholars, so we will not dwell on it, but refer to the conclusions of these scholars. In M. Smith’s words:

¹¹¹ Bickel 2017: 119.

...the “world” of the Coffin Texts and that of the Pyramid Texts are figuratively and literally two very different places. (...) Undoubtedly there are similarities, convergences, and a certain amount of overlap with respect to content between the Pyramid Texts and the Coffin Texts. (...) Both clearly belong to the same tradition. But the idea that they are essentially the same, or that the latter, in their entirety, represent a direct, linear development from the former is improbable...¹¹²

This is ultimately because it responds to the same methodological problem as in the case of the previous arguments: the procedure by metonymy. Indeed, the identity of certain spells or sequences of spells between the two *corpora*—relatively limited, moreover—does not imply that the two are the same thing. We can speak of the same tradition, of shared notions, and of the direct transmission of some spells, but hardly of a single corpus documented at two successive times. In short:

...the Coffin Texts do mark a real religious change in so far as they introduce new spells, including previously unattested types of spell, adapt or reinterpret old spells, and combine the two in a distinctive new corpus.¹¹³

Thus, it is for other reasons that the theory at hand, as formulated, does not seem to me to be tenable. There was no “democratisation” of afterlife destinies because the afterlife destinies of the Egyptians were always “democratic”, in the sense that everyone had access to the afterlife at all times and benefited from spells to access this afterlife, and that these destinies were in essence shared. The funerary ritual based on the deposition of offerings in the tomb originated, as we shall see, from Neolithic times and in its beginnings was universal and egalitarian by definition. Hence, this aspect constitutes the necessary common denominator of all forms of funerary cult in Egypt, for any social group and in any period. But this does not mean that kingship did not develop its own exclusive aspects of the funerary ritual. As we shall also see, the will to “separate” and to have “distinct” afterlife destinies is present from the very appearance of leadership or kingship in the Nile valley and finds its most categorical expression in the opposition between the pyramid and the private tomb in the Old Kingdom, a key element that is often

¹¹² Smith 2009: 6.

¹¹³ Smith 2009: 9.

not given due weight in this debate. J.P. Allen puts it eloquently in the sentence that opens this article.¹¹⁴

The history of funerary beliefs in Egypt from Neolithic times to the First Intermediate Period can be divided into five major stages or “moments”. Let us now describe them in relation to the specific issue at hand.

MOMENT 1: NEOLITHIC AND PREDYNASTIC TIMES. In principle, we can affirm that wherever there is a grave and a deposition of food offerings and personal adornments, there is a funerary ritual and a belief in an existence beyond death; death rituals revolve around the transformation of individuals to a new state of existence.¹¹⁵ In agrarian societies, both those of the past documented by archaeology and, eventually, a written record, and the traditional modern ones documented by ethnography, a solidarity is conceived between the cycle of cultivated plants and the deceased: the seeds are buried to bear their fruit and the deceased are buried to be born to a new form of existence. This is what M. Eliade has called “structure sotériologique de la mystique agraire”.¹¹⁶ It is true that the behaviors of certain traditional societies with respect to their deceased have sometimes been interpreted by anthropologists more as a “job of disposal” than as a soteriology.¹¹⁷ Egyptology itself has echoed these ideas for predynastic times.¹¹⁸ Precisely in the case of the Nile Valley, however, the subsequent cultural history does not seem to leave much room for doubt. In dynastic Egypt, tombs are strongly defined in ritual and soteriological terms, and this must have had a beginning: there is nothing to prevent placing that beginning already in neolithic and predynastic times.¹¹⁹

Since the middle of the 5th millennium, all human communities in the Egyptian Nile Valley and surrounding deserts had adopted, to a greater or lesser extent, the neolithic way of life. The cemeteries of Gebel Ramlah, in the Western Desert at the level of today’s Lake Nasser, and Deir Tasa, in Middle Egypt, dated to around 4500 BCE, already reveal a well-defined funerary culture (tombs, burial patterns, and grave goods), which “presumably also reflects developed ideas about the afterlife”.¹²⁰ The first of these cemeteries may have been related to the megalithic complex in the contemporary settlement of Nabta Playa, just 30 km to the southeast; these stone circle and alignments

¹¹⁴ Allen 2006a: 9.

¹¹⁵ Astuti 2007; Ekengren 2013: 176–177; Bickel 2017: 119–120.

¹¹⁶ Eliade 1970: 303–304.

¹¹⁷ Ucko 1969: 265.

¹¹⁸ Snape 2011: 9–11.

¹¹⁹ Bickel 2017: 119–122, 127.

¹²⁰ Hendrickx and Huyge 2014: 242.

were once considered calendars, but today they are preferably interpreted as “cultic centres that, among serving other purposes, were the site of funerary rites”.¹²¹ From these early cemeteries and the following ones of the Badari culture (4500-3900 BCE) it is clear that, as elsewhere, early Egyptian neolithic societies were also essentially egalitarian. This means a necessarily universal funerary ritual. Despite the lack of any evidence, it can be suggested that, at some point, the physical practices of laying bodies and grave goods in the tombs began to be accompanied by codified gestural and speech acts, which, judging by the subsequent evolution, would primarily be aimed at reinforcing the magical-performative strength of the offerings themselves.

A fundamental change takes place with the advent of the Naqada culture, from around 3900 BCE. Funerary archaeology reveals an increasingly intense social stratification. Especially in the most dynamic centers of Upper Egypt, Hierakonpolis, Naqada, and Abydos, this led, as early as the end of Naqada I (around 3750 BCE), to a clear distinction between the rulers and the rest of the social body which even manifested topographically. In Hierakonpolis, for example, which during Naqada I and II was the leading center of cultural and social change in predynastic Egypt, the cemetery of those whom R.F. Friedman already calls “Egypt’s early kings”, at locality HK6, is spatially separated from the settlement areas and private cemeteries (such as the cemetery at locality HK43), and its characteristics are qualitatively different from those of the latter.¹²² We are not dealing with simple individual or collective tombs, but with funerary complexes concentrically structured around a main tomb, that of the leader, which is of greater proportions and complexity, and around which are arranged the tombs of his relatives or trusted followers and of wild and domestic animals. This is not the place for a detailed discussion of these complexes and the symbolic meaning of their features; our goal is to highlight the difference between the treatment of the dead leader and the rest of the deceased, which is not quantitative or dependent on *decorum*, but is qualitative or ontological. Indeed, we are not dealing with identical features in greater or lesser proportion, but precisely with *qualitatively different features* (for example, a powerful wild animal is associated with the leader, not with the private individual). Whether or not we accept the “divinity” or special ontological status of the leader/pharaoh, it is clear that

¹²¹ Hendrickx and Huyge 2014: 242–246 (comprehensive overview; quotation from p. 243). See also Friedman and Hobbs 2002 (Tasian and its revaluation); Kobusiewicz et al. 2011 (Gebel Ramlah).

¹²² Friedman 2008; Friedman 2011; Friedman, Van Neer, and Linseele 2011; Hendrickx and Huyge 2014: 251–254; Friedman et al. 2017.

this distinction will remain a characteristic of the funerary culture of Egypt throughout the 3rd millennium BCE, of which the pyramids will undoubtedly be the most eloquent illustration.

MOMENT 2: LATE PREDYNASTIC AND EMERGENCE OF WRITING. At the end of the Predynastic period, during Naqada III (3300–3100 BCE), writing made its appearance in the Nile valley. Following the work of the *Deutsches Archäologisches Institut* in the cemetery of Umm el-Qaab, in Abydos, we are now well acquainted with the first stages of this writing. Unlike other early scripts in the world, the first evidence of Egyptian writing comes from the funerary sphere, in the form of *dipinti* on pottery jars and inscriptions engraved on bone labels, both from the well-known tomb U-j.¹²³ They are limited to sequences of between 1 and 3 signs and seem to record names related in one way or another to the grave goods, such as those of the prestigious places or institutions from which they came or where they were produced, since the objects bearing them contain or are attached to funerary offerings. Some labels are engraved with numbers, which would most probably quantify the offerings in one way or another (for example, textiles or grain), as would also be the case in the offering lists of later periods. Scholars debate whether the system constitutes a writing “au sens fort”, that is to say, already with a phonetic component, or rather a “sémiographie restreinte”, to use the term coined by P. Vernus.¹²⁴ On the other hand, the idea of an administrative purpose for this writing, postulated, undoubtedly based on the Sumerian model, by its discoverer, has given way in recent years to a vision more in line with the sources themselves: we are faced with a graphic system of sophisticated and expert execution that makes it not “utilitarian”, but conceived *for the tomb*.¹²⁵ Its *raison d’être* is not so much related to personal knowledge, but to the magical-performative efficacy of the written word.¹²⁶ The “royal” funerary ritual at Abydos during Naqada III would undoubtedly involve some form of recitation of offerings: written codification of names related with these offerings and of their quantification would have the purpose of perpetuating their effect.¹²⁷ This is, therefore, a writing for the below-ground part of the tomb, exactly as the *Pyramid Texts* would be later on. Despite the temporal and “quantitative” distances, the ultimate purposes of these

¹²³ Dreyer 1998: 47–91, 113–145.

¹²⁴ Vernus 2016: 119 (both quotations). See also Baines 2004a: 171; Kammerzell 2009: 304; Stauder 2010: 141.

¹²⁵ Stauder 2010: 142–147; Wengrow 2011: 103; Vernus 2016: 119, 124.

¹²⁶ Coulon 2004: 119–125; Cervelló Autuori 2016: 360–366.

¹²⁷ Cervelló Autuori 2016: 410–416.

early inscriptions and of the lists and recitations of offerings in the *Pyramid Texts* are essentially the same. Thus, the need to “eternalise” the magical-performative function of the ritual word through its written emplacement on a hard medium is not only deeply rooted in time but is at the very origin of Egyptian hieroglyphic writing. It is impossible to know whether these first written sequences were also preserved in some kinds of documents on more transient materials, as an aid for the officiants or as an archive. If this was not the case, it is clear that “monumentalisation” preceded “entextualisation”, and not the contrary; if this is so, both practices occurred at the same time. In fact, the inscriptions on offerings and grave goods or on labels associated with them intended for the below-ground of the tomb cannot be neglected and are functionally comparable—bridging the gap—to the lists of offerings of the *Pyramid Texts*.¹²⁸ Be that as it may, the practice of “monumentalisation” in the below-ground of the tomb is not a point of arrival in the history of the funerary ritual of Early Dynastic and Old Kingdom Egypt, as Hays and Morales suggest,¹²⁹ but, in a broad sense of the concept, exists since its beginning.

MOMENT 3: EARLY DYNASTIES. The contents of some passages of the *Pyramid Texts*, as well as the presence and use of certain semograms (logograms or determinatives, such as those discussed in section 2 above) and their semantic, semiotic or iconic value strongly suggest that one of the oldest sets of materials included in the corpus dates back to the 1st dynasty. It constitutes the first of the four “strates de conception et de rédaction” recently described by B. Mathieu: that of “le fonds protodynastique non héliopolitain”.¹³⁰ On the other hand, the monument containing the oldest documented offering list so far dates from the 2nd dynasty: the stele of a person probably named Meri, which was once kept in the Bankfield Museum in Halifax (UK) but is now lost.¹³¹ The names of the offerings pronounced during the funerary ritual and their quantification are again “eternalised” here by their being inscribed on a hard medium, but this time destined for the above-ground of the tomb: a funerary stele. The *Bildfassung* or “tabular version” of the offering ritual is thus created, with the names and amounts of the offerings arranged in tabular layout. Although the sequence of the offerings here is not yet comparable to that in the *Pyramid Texts*, this monument indicates that the offering ritual has already

¹²⁸ All of them are “actualisations monumentales”: Vernus 1996: 144; Mathieu 2004: 252.

¹²⁹ Hays 2012: 257–263; Hays 2015: 212–218; Morales 2016: 73–76.

¹³⁰ Mathieu 2018: 9–10; Mathieu 2021. On the “chronologie rédactionnelle” of the *Pyramid Texts* see Mathieu 2004: 253. See also Baines 2004b: 28; Morales 2016: 102 n. 143; Romion this volume, n. 112. On the “oral prehistory” of the *Texts* see Reintges 2011: 21.

¹³¹ Gardiner 1917; Hays 2011: 129–130 and fig. 4 (drawing by the author from the photograph in Gardiner 1917: plate 55).

acquired considerable complexity. There would undoubtedly have been an oral version of the funerary ritual, which would already consist of a series of more or less developed recitations regarding the offerings and their deposition in the tomb. These recitations would probably already include mythical-narrative allusions¹³² regarding chthonic destinies (transfer to the beyond, journey through the beyond, and divinities involved), since these topics are common in the religions of agrarian societies¹³³ and are widely present in the *Pyramid Texts*. At the same time, the need to partially “monumentalise” this ritual continued to exist, following the same impulse that had been at the very origin of writing in Egypt (moment 2), but now in relation to private individuals and to the “public” part of the tomb. This is a collective, universal ritual, just as the Neolithic funerary beliefs from which it ultimately originates were egalitarian and collective (moment 1). The tabular version of the offering ritual is not so much a guide for the officiant but rather a means to guarantee the magical-performative effect of the list through its eventual reading, and mainly through its mere “eternal” physical existence, which keeps it in perpetual actualisation (see above, moment 2). Beside the oral ritual and its tabular version, there would undoubtedly be a version on a soft medium as a model for “monumentalisation”, as a guide for collective ritual performance, and perhaps already as a breviary for personal preparation for transit (see below).¹³⁴

At the same time, in the royal sphere, during the 1st dynasty, labels associated with funerary offerings continued to be produced, which now became larger and more sophisticated. They included longer and more complex inscriptions, referred primarily to first-quality oils, and included the mention of the monarch concerned and a year of his reign named after events (“nom événementiel”¹³⁵).¹³⁶

MOMENT 4: THE OLD KINGDOM. At the beginning of the Old Kingdom, a qualitatively new and decisive element began to make its impact on the political and cultural history of ancient Egypt: solar beliefs, from the very first moment strongly associated with kingship.¹³⁷ The first and most visible expression of that impact was that the royal tomb ceased to be a mastaba and became a pyramid, that is to say, the

¹³² For the concept of “mythical allusion” see note 101.

¹³³ Eliade 1970: 281–309; Eliade 1976: 40–67.

¹³⁴ Baines 2004b: 26–30; Hays 2012: 115.

¹³⁵ Baud 2000.

¹³⁶ Most recently Piquette 2018 (with comprehensive references).

¹³⁷ It is possible, in fact, that the appearance, first development, and progressive link with kingship of the solar religion took place already during the first two dynasties: Saied 2005; Kahl 2007; Cervelló Autuori 2011; Reader 2014: 426–428.

architectural embodiment of the solar cosmogonic symbol *par excellence*. Throughout the Old Kingdom the pyramid would remain an exclusive prerogative of kingship, while private individuals would continue to be buried in mastabas and rock-tombs. The opposition is so categorical that it cannot but be qualitative, both at the level of certain components of the funerary ritual and of certain soteriological beliefs: only the king is buried in a pyramid, just as only the king has access to a specifically solar afterlife, as the *Pyramid Texts* illustrate. The new beliefs do not replace the previous ones in the sphere of kingship, but are added to them and constitute the contents of new “strates de conception et de rédaction” of the *Pyramid Texts*: those belonging to “le fonds héliopolitain”.¹³⁸ Of course, all Egyptians, kings and private individuals alike, had an afterlife and all shared a funerary ritual and texts centered on burial and the deposition of offerings in the tomb, of very ancient origin. But now the kings also had an alternative afterlife and ritual, of a solar nature and reserved exclusively for them. A second dramatic opposition confirms this: the total absence of any allusion to the solar god in the funerary texts and formulae of the private tombs,¹³⁹ in contrast to his omnipresence in the *Pyramid Texts* (see above, section 4). There is nothing in the textual and decorative programs of the private tombs¹⁴⁰ that would even lead one to suspect that the strictly solar recitations contained in the *Pyramid Texts* were shared by kings and private individuals. Thus, ‘pyramid versus mastaba/rock-tomb’ and ‘presence versus absence of the solar deity in the texts’ are categorical oppositions which cannot be neglected in addressing the issue at hand.

However, solarisation implies separation. The early pyramid builders, Netjerikhet and Sekhemkhet, had coronation names (the second, as an actual name, the first, as a later

¹³⁸ Mathieu 2018: 11–14.

¹³⁹ With the exception of proper names. As early as the 2nd dynasty (Kahl 2007: 29–42) it is common for members of the Memphite elite to have theophoric names containing the name of Re (Scheele-Schweitzer 2014: 33–44). This means that the Sun-god plays a role in the personal beliefs or political ambitions of the court dignitaries of the time (almost all of them are male individuals buried in the Memphite necropolis and many of them would have served as priests of the solar cult in Heliopolis and in the royal solar temples) but not in their afterlife beliefs.

¹⁴⁰ Mythical or ritual allusions to ascension processes in texts or iconography of private tombs (Alexanian 2003; Mathieu 2004: 257–258; Allen 2006a: 9, n. 4; Smith 2009: 8; Morales 2016: 112–113; Bickel 2017: 128–129) never have as their explicit ultimate destination or *raison d’être* the Sun-god or the solar sphere. As with the ritual of offerings, the notion of ascension exists in both royal and non-royal soteriology (it is a conceptual common denominator: transfiguration by ascension), but it is expressed in a qualitatively different way, as we have seen in section 4 above. It is the strict and exclusive linkage of the royal ascension with the Sun that explains the pyramid. If it were only a matter of *decorum*, the royal tombs would have been simply more monumental or sophisticated mastabas or rock-tombs, as is indeed the case in the New Kingdom, not totally different and so strongly connoted buildings. We refer to the quote by J.P. Allen at the head of this article.

attributed name) formed from the root *dsr*, “sacred” in the sense of “separate”, “secluded”.¹⁴¹ In historical-religious terms, it is not surprising that the solarisation of kingship and the link between the king and the Sun-god were originally expressed in terms of exclusivity, if we consider the uniqueness of the sun: there are many buried seeds but the sun is alone in the sky. In a completely different historical and cultural context, something similar happened in the New Kingdom, when a new form of solarisation of kingship, which culminated in the Amarna episode, took place. It is true that the Amarna creed is universal and affects all human beings, but it is no less true that, in it, the king reserves for himself a singular and unique status and ritual role (*W^c-n-R^c*, “Unique-of-Re”), just as the Aten is singular and unique (*ntr w^c*).

Progressively during the 3rd and 4th dynasties, the tabular version of the offering list was gradually expanded with the addition of new items,¹⁴² and from the beginning of the 5th dynasty it acquired its canonical form, that is to say, a fixed number and order of items. In the private sphere, the oldest documented version of the canonical offering list (Barta’s *Listentyps A*) comes from the tomb of Debeheni at Giza, dated to the very beginning of the 5th dynasty.¹⁴³ At the royal level, very fragmentary evidence suggests that it was already sculpted in the funerary temples of Sahure, Neferirkare, and Niuserre in Abusir.¹⁴⁴ As several scholars have pointed out, the offering recitations in the *Pyramid Texts* constitute the words of the ritual “summarised” in the tabular lists.¹⁴⁵ From the 4th dynasty onwards, in private tombs, lists or scenes of offerings may be accompanied by depictions of lector priests reading *sꜣḥw*, that is to say, these very words; from the 5th dynasty onwards the deceased proclaim in the offering formula or autobiographies that they have been spiritualised by the lector priest, sometimes by order of the king

¹⁴¹ *ERL*; 471, DRID 1000281. These are the names given to them in the Ramesside and Manethonian royal lists. In the case of Horus Sekhemkhet, the name (Djeserti) is documented on an ivory plaquette found in the substructure of his pyramid at Saqqara (Goneim 1957: plates 65.B–66; Wilkinson 1999: 98, 205; Baud 2002: 67–68); in the case of Horus Netjerikhet, it is a name (Djeser) which, significantly, was attributed to him after the Old Kingdom, since his actual coronation name was identical to that of Horus (Wilkinson 1999: 95–96; Baud 2002: 76–79).

¹⁴² Hassan 1948: 4–7; Barta 1963: 26–46; Morales 2015a: 181–183, fig. 1; Morales 2015b: 59–63, fig. 5–14; Morales 2016: 79–89.

¹⁴³ PM III¹: 235–236 (LG 90); Hassan 1943: 159–184 (list: 176–178, fig. 122); Barta 1963: 47–50, fig. 4; Lapp 1986: 146–148, fig. 26; Smith 2009: 8–9; Hays 2011: 129; Hays 2012: 86–89, fig. 8; Morales 2015a: 210–211, fig. 5.4; Morales 2016: 89, fig. 7. An incomplete precursor, though not yet in canonical order, is found in the offering lists from the tomb of Khufukhaef I, probably a son of Khufu: PM III¹: 188–190 (G 7130+7140); Simpson 1978: 14–16, plates 19, 21, fig. 31–32; Hays 2011: 128–129, fig. 3; Hays 2015: 204–205, fig. 5.2; Morales 2015b: 63; Morales 2016: 88.

¹⁴⁴ Borchardt 1907: 80–81, 83 fig. 59; Borchardt 1909: 30, fig. 32; Borchardt 1913: 68, 126 (where the author already points out, in notes, the passages in the *Pyramid Texts* that refer to the offerings mentioned here), plate 63; Barta 1963: 60–61; Hays 2011: 119, 129; Morales 2015b: 56–58; Morales 2016: 80–85.

¹⁴⁵ Hays 2011: 127–130 and references. See also Barta 1963: 67; Baines 2004b: 21–22; Smith 2009: 8–9.

himself.¹⁴⁶ Indeed, as mentioned above, the text of the ritual would have been preserved written on papyrus rolls, as a model for successive uses, as a guide for the officiant priest, and, given the indirect evidence provided by the *Pyramid Texts* (see below), as a personal breviary.¹⁴⁷ This material would be stored in archives in temples or in the residence, or even owned by private individuals. The canonical list continued to be used in royal and private tombs throughout the Old Kingdom, the best known examples at the royal level being the two carved on the sanctuary of the funerary temple of Pepy II.¹⁴⁸

MOMENT 5: *PYRAMID TEXTS* AND AUTOBIOGRAPHIES. From the end of the 5th dynasty onwards, a general trend of increasing complexity in the design of the subterranean part of the tombs has been noted.¹⁴⁹ At the royal level, from Djedkare Izezi onwards the below-ground chambers and corridors of the pyramids acquire a standardised structure and layout which will last until the end of the Old Kingdom;¹⁵⁰ from Unis the *Pyramid Texts* are carved in these very same spaces. According to most authors,¹⁵¹ this architectural layout is dictated by the funerary cosmology and the texts are arranged in the different chambers, passages, and corridors in accordance with that cosmology. For H.M. Hays,¹⁵² who contests this majority view, the *Pyramid Texts* are, in origin, scripts for ritual practices, some collective and social, others individual and intimate, and had to be adapted and re-edited in the course of their monumentalisation, that is, their transposition to a setting for which they had not been intended.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁶ Lapp 1986: 153–192, figs. 30, 38, 64, 67, 68, 70, 76, 78; Mathieu 2004: 257; Hays 2011: 126–128, fig. 1; Hays 2012: 91–92, fig. 9; Smith 2017: 177–184. In general, on the scenes of presenting or reading papyri to the deceased sculpted in Old Kingdom private tombs, see Der Manuelian 1996. In the false door of Neferseshemre (Table 8.2, [18]), one can read, for example: *s3h.t(j)=f jn hry-hbt jn wt*, “that he be spiritualised by the lector priest and by the embalmer”; in the entrance door to the tomb of Nimaatre at Giza (5th dynasty) the following is written: *jw wd.n nswt jrt n(=j) ht nb(t) 3h*, “the king ordered to perform for me all the rites of spiritualisation” (Edel 1944: 74–78; PM III¹: 282–284).

¹⁴⁷ Baines 2004b; Coulon 2004: 122; Mathieu 2004: 250–252; Smith 2009: 7–8; Reintges 2011: 20, 28; Hays 2012: 45–51; Gourdon 2016: 256–257, 264–266; Morales 2016: 72–79; Bickel 2017: 124.

¹⁴⁸ South and north walls. PM III²: 428; Jéquier 1938: 56, plates 61, 67–70, 81, 85–87; Barta 1963: 60–62; Hays 2011: 128–129, fig. 2; Hays 2015: 204–206, fig. 5.3.

¹⁴⁹ See, for ex., Bárta 2005: 121–122; Hays 2015: 219.

¹⁵⁰ Labrousse 1996: 11–13; Gourdon 2016: 255–256, 267–273.

¹⁵¹ Allen 1989; Allen 1994; Mathieu 1997; Mathieu 1999: 13–14; Mathieu 2001: 51–55; Mathieu 2017; Bène 2021: 130–134. According to Allen (1994), “The concept of the king’s journey from death to new life enshrined in Unis’s *Pyramid Texts* parallels that of the sun: dying in the west, uniting with Osiris in the Duat, and rising again in the east. The cosmology of this solar passage (...) is reflected (...) in the substructure of the pyramid itself” (p. 24), since the sarcophagus chamber is the Duat, the antechamber is the Akhet, and the corridor leading from the antechamber is the entrance to the day-sky.

¹⁵² Hays 2009: esp. 4–22, 251–263: “The *Pyramid Texts* were not composed to decorate the walls of the tombs in which they are first attested. They were adapted to that use from texts prepared to be recited in religious performances” (p. 251).

¹⁵³ For a summary of the debates see Hellum 2014: 129–130; Gourdon 2016: 262–266; Billing 2018: 77–82. For Billing (2018: esp. 77–82) the two approaches are not mutually exclusive: “I find the recognition of the bicameral pyramid tomb as a monumentalized cosmograph still valid as *one* possible means of

The first appearance of the *Pyramid Texts* must therefore be understood in the context of this general movement. The earliest decorated burial chamber for a private individual also dates from the reign of Unis.¹⁵⁴ In contrast to the royal sphere, where funerary temples continue to be of a considerable size and include complex textual and iconographic programs, indicating the persistence of a rituality still decisive for the transfiguration of the deceased king, in the private sphere the importance of the substructure increases throughout the 6th dynasty and reaches its peak in the reign of Pepy II, when the tombs have no, or only minimal, above-ground cultic spaces.¹⁵⁵ This indicates that less importance is given to the ritual intercession of the living for the transfiguration of the deceased.

The *Pyramid Texts*, as we know them, are the monumentalisation of texts transmitted on papyrus which are, in turn, the written form of the oral recitations that were performed in the context of the funerary rituals.¹⁵⁶ The ultimate aim is the transfiguration of the deceased into an effective *akh*-spirit and his access to the afterlife.¹⁵⁷ As we have seen, the *Texts* are the result of the incorporation of successive “strates de conception et de rédaction”, finally harmonised by the Heliopolitan “editor”.¹⁵⁸ The core of the corpus is the offering ritual,¹⁵⁹ probably the most ancient part and clearly universal, since its synthetic tabular version is known for both kings and private individuals. In the pyramids it occupies a “position stratégique”, always on the north wall of the burial chamber,¹⁶⁰ and is enriched by passages devoted to the presentation of royal insignia, logically

conceptually organizing the mythological trajectory laid out by the chamber system” (p. 82). For Hellum, the problem with both positions is that neither one nor the other “take into account the mythic content of the texts” (p. 130). For complete bibliographies on the issue in chronological order see Bène and Mathieu 2015: 23 n. 2; Mathieu 2017: 460–462.

¹⁵⁴ Hays 2012: 3, n. 19.

¹⁵⁵ Jéquier 1929: 1–3; Bolshakov 1997: 111–122; Kanawati 2010; Russo 2010: 262 (“La sépulture est désormais conçue comme un ‘integral system’ et par un phénomène de transfert, la chambre funéraire devient le lieu où est censé s’accomplir le culte grâce à l’effet performatif de l’écrit et de l’image”); Hays 2015: 219.

¹⁵⁶ See most recently Morales 2016. On traits of orality in the “grammatical organisation” of the *Pyramid Texts* see Reintges 2011; Morales 2016: 101–108. From the archives of the funerary temple of Pepy I come two fragments of papyri glued together, inscribed on the visible sides with passages from the *Pyramid Texts*, one in hieratic and the other in cursive hieroglyphic, and dated to the Middle Kingdom (Berger-El Naggar 2004): although late, they are eloquent and tangible proof of the existence of this type of document.

¹⁵⁷ Allen 1989: 1–3; Englund 1994; Coulon 2004: 122; Morales 2016: 108–109.

¹⁵⁸ Bickel 1994: 297–298; Morales 2015a: 176, 187; Morales 2016: 119; Mathieu 2018: 11.

¹⁵⁹ Editions: Sethe 1908–1922: I, 9–67 (PT 23–200); Berger-El Naggar et al. 2001: I, 22, 59, 64–113; II, plate IV B (P/B/Ne); Allen 2013: II; Pierre-Croisiau 2019: I, 31–120; II, plate I. See Barta 1963: 60–63; Allen 2005: 19–29, 251–265, 314–321; Hays 2012: 81–92, 268–270; Mathieu 2018: 5–6 (with a list of the recitations in Pepy I’s pyramid), 27–159; Billing 2018: 190–203.

¹⁶⁰ Mathieu 1999: 16–18; Mathieu 2017: 410–411.

exclusive to kings.¹⁶¹ The offering spells include mythical allusions of a chthonic nature related mainly to Osiris; in them the king is addressed as “Osiris-NN”, Osiris here being the divine essence of the deceased king (the king’s mummy and spirit are identified with him).¹⁶² In the private sphere the same was probably true, since the identification of the non-royal dead with Osiris is documented from the second half of the reign of Pepy II in the context of the offering lists.¹⁶³ Apart from the offering ritual, other common topics have been observed between the *Pyramid Texts* and private funerary texts and

¹⁶¹ Barta 1963: 61–62; Smith 2009: 9. On “pharaonisation” in the *Pyramid Texts* see Bickel 2017: 146–148.

¹⁶² The conceptualisation of the offerings as the “Eye of Horus”, which the Osiris-NN is invited to accept, is also exclusive to the kings and the *Pyramid Texts*: Mathieu 2018: 6, with references; Baqué-Manzano this volume.

¹⁶³ Brovarski 2005: 52–54, 62–63; Hays 2011: 121; Smith 2017: 159–161. It is true that this is a relatively late date, but the first record of Osiris is somewhat random. For example, if we did not have the *Pyramid Texts*, we would not know the link between the god and the deceased king, because in the Old Kingdom this link is only documented in these texts (Hays 2011: 121). The first appearance of the god occurs in the private sphere, in the context of the *hṯp dj nswt* offering formula. Although his earliest secure documentation dates from the reign of Niuserre (Shalomi-Hen 2006: 72–79; Shalomi-Hen 2007: 1695–1696; Mathieu 2010: 77–78; Hays 2011: 121–122; Siffert 2021: 176), there are convincing arguments that some attestations may date back to the reign of Neferirkare (Nuzzolo 2021: 112–119, 129–130). The attestation recently found in the tomb of the *wab*-priest Wahty at Saqqara (Bubasteion area), dated to the reign of Neferirkare, would corroborate this chronology (Waziry and Youssef 2019: 84–86). Moreover, in the private sphere the Osiris+NN doublet is very rare until the Middle Kingdom (Brovarski 2005: 52–54, 62–63; Nuzzolo 2021: 122–123). In addition to this, the god was not given a sure and definitive iconographic form until the latter period (see most recently Siffert 2021 with references), so that during the Old Kingdom and the First Intermediate Period his existence is attested almost only in written form, unlike all the other divinities (except for Isis and Nephtys, structurally linked to him). Only three images have come down to us from the Old Kingdom that could represent Osiris. The oldest comes from the funerary temple of Djedkare Izezi (see most recently Siffert 2021: 176, who doubts the identification with Osiris; Megahed 2022, who defends it). It is a small fragment of painted bas-relief in which traces of two anthropomorphic divinities in procession can be seen, oriented left to right. Of the first one, the upper right part is preserved (left side of the character), with the back of a long black tripartite wig and the naked torso and arm painted in red. Above and to the right of this figure’s head are traces of two hieroglyphs arranged in a column, which could correspond to  (if it really was the name *Wsjr*, the spelling is, significantly, that of the *Pyramid Texts* and not of the private funerary texts, where the two signs are reversed: Nuzzolo 2021: 125–126; Megahed 2022: 348, 350; Megahed fails to note that the horizontal stroke at the bottom of the possible throne-sign would be a palaeographically archaising feature: Callender 2019: 286 § 421 with references; also 44–45 § 61, 550 § 421). The other two “images” of Osiris are actually pictograms: on two private funerary stelae of the 6th dynasty, preserved in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo (CGC 1574; Borchardt 1964: 53–54, plate 75) and in the Louvre (C 160; Ziegler 1990: 193–196), the name of Osiris Khentimentiu is determined with the sign  A43E, a variant of  A40 ([GOD], [KING]) in which the seated anthropomorphic figure is wearing the white crown and holding the *nh3*-flail and *hq3*-sceptre or *wt*-cane (Perdu 2005: 131–132). Although the figure is seated and not mummified, it is evident that the iconic notion of Osiris Khentimentiu as god-king with white crown, flail, and sceptre/cane is already in place. U. Siffert (2021) has argued that this is, in fact, the original iconography of Khentimentiu and that slowly from the Middle Kingdom onwards, and definitively in the New Kingdom, it became associated with Osiris. R. Shalomi-Hen (2006: 83–84, 107–113; 2007) has proposed to see in the sign A40 the earliest plastic representation of Osiris, but her suggestion is today considered untenable (Megahed 2022: 350). Until the Middle Kingdom, then, Osiris does not appear properly in Egyptian art, nor does he receive his definitive iconography, as a mummified anthropomorphic god bearing royal insignia. In my view, rather than being a question of fashion (Hays 2011: 121), the reason for all these contingencies lies in the very nature of the god: like all the dying gods of the ancient Near East (Adonis, Attis, Dionysus), Osiris also has a haphazard and late access to documentation, both written and iconographic (by way of example, for Dionysus see Gasparri 1986; for a detailed discussion see Cervelló Autuori 2017b: 67–76).

iconography, again evoking common ideas and sensibilities regarding death and the afterlife.¹⁶⁴ What made the categorical difference between royal and private funerary ritual was the strictly solar soteriology, the recitations linked to it forming the most recent strata of mythical-ritual material in the *Texts*, incorporated by the Heliopolitan editor.

As Hays has shown,¹⁶⁵ the editing process was extensive and well conscious. One of the adaptations consisted of the substitution of the first grammatical person (the deceased as speaker) with the third (the ritualist as speaker and the deceased as referent). Examples of the use of the first person are sporadically preserved in the texts, but Hays has concluded, taking into account aspects of content and transmission, that a total of 313 recitations out of the thousand or so that make up the *Pyramid Texts* were originally written in the first person. He calls them “personal texts”, as opposed to “sacerdotal texts”, those in the second or third person.¹⁶⁶ The first person implies that the deceased presents himself as the agent of the ritual and recites the spells in order to obtain his own transfiguration. It is possible that, in life, people learned and even performed these recitations in preparation for death, as has been argued for other moments of Egyptian history.¹⁶⁷ In this sense, some papyrus copies of the ritual may have served as learning breviaries (see above). This is important as it means that, at the moment of monumentalising the corpus, that is, of carving it in order to “eternalise” it, it was believed that the personal texts should be turned into sacerdotal texts: the weight of the ritual should fall on the ritualist, not on the deceased. For Hays, the monumentalisation of the *Texts* in the below-ground of the pyramid represents a shift “from ritual” (which is celebrated in the above-ground of the tomb) “to knowledge” (the recitations in close and permanent contact with the deceased):

The Pyramid Texts emerge at a time when religious interest was shifting away from ritual practice over to religious knowledge, as registered in statements made by

¹⁶⁴ Mathieu 2004: 257–258, 262, fig. 4; Morales 2016: 108–118; Bickel 2017: 126–143. It has also been suggested that some recitations or soteriological notions may have come from the private sphere and have been adapted for the use of kings: Morales 2016: 101–102; Bickel 2017: 124–126.

¹⁶⁵ Hays 2012: 136–161; Hays 2015: 214–222. See also Morales 2015a: 188–189; Morales 2016: 98–100.

¹⁶⁶ Mainly Hays 2012: 125–203.

¹⁶⁷ After analysing the chapters of the *Book of the Dead* in which the beneficiary of the spells also appears as the officiant, H.M. Hays concludes that the funerary texts were originally intended for the use of the living, who would perform the rites as a personal mystical practice to ensure a beneficial afterlife and would learn the arcana as a prerequisite for transit: “Books of the Dead originally constituted or were modeled after operative documents—things to be performed in life on a personal basis” (pp. 48–49); “It is also not to deny that the purpose of such in-life practice was chiefly to obtain a beneficial Afterlife. (...) the texts of the Book of the Dead were read with the aim of preparing oneself for the catastrophe of death, in order to learn the magical knowledge deemed requisite to the transition from this world to the next” (p. 50).

elites. They were elaborate displays of archival texts, demonstrations of knowledge.¹⁶⁸

I cannot agree with Hays on this. The change from the first to the third grammatical person means, in my view, precisely the opposite: that the texts cease to be part of the sphere of knowledge of the deceased and become external to his personal activity: their transfiguration no longer depends on him. The function of the texts is the same in the above-ground and the below-ground of the tomb: the word is the instrument to make the transfiguration effective.¹⁶⁹ But if the word is oral, ritual, when above, the word is written, magical, when below.¹⁷⁰ Eloquent proof of this are, for example, the “cleft”, “mutilated” or “suppressed” hieroglyphs,¹⁷¹ which are well explained in terms of magic but would be meaningless in terms of knowledge.

If we look at the textual and iconographic programs of the pyramid complexes (pyramids and temples) and the private tombs of the 5th and 6th dynasties as a whole, one thing becomes clear: what they share is the offering ritual (the core of the funerary ritual), its tabular version, and the related *szhw*, that is, the set of recitations associated with the offering ritual that served to “activate” the magical-performative force of the latter and thus convert the deceased into an *zh*, meaning an effective, enlightened spirit, a transfigured being opened to existence in the afterlife. But beyond this important and ancient common ground, the differences are also striking: on the one hand, there are very few mythical allusions¹⁷² in the texts of the private tombs as opposed to their omnipresence in the *Pyramid Texts*; on the other hand, the presence of autobiographies¹⁷³ is common in the private textual programs as opposed to their absolute absence in the royal texts. It seems clear that this is not due to a lack of evidence, but that the difference is structural, ontological. Herein lies, in fact, the qualitative opposition between the king and private individuals in the Old Kingdom, which informs the soteriological opposition. Autobiography involves the presentation and expression of the “I”; it implies a “self-

¹⁶⁸ Hays 2015: 222. For an analysis of the statements cited by the author see Hays 2011: 123–125; Hays 2015: 218–221.

¹⁶⁹ Coulon 2004: 122.

¹⁷⁰ Hellum 2012: 45; Hellum 2014: 126–127.

¹⁷¹ Lacau 1913; Goldwasser 1995: 79–80; Russo 2010: 261–262; Hellum 2014: 126, 131–132; Cervelló Autuori 2016: 135–136, 360–366; Roth 2017 (in this field, too, important differences can be observed between the royal and private spheres); Iannarilli 2018; Iannarilli 2019; Thuault 2020. See also Iannarilli this volume.

¹⁷² See above, section 4 and note 101.

¹⁷³ Kloth 2002; Strudwick 2005: 261–378; Stauder-Porchet 2017; Stauder-Porchet 2020.

referential” discourse.¹⁷⁴ This psychological-cultural attitude, which is the basis of the appearance of literature (understood in a restricted sense) from the First Intermediate Period and, especially, the Middle Kingdom onwards, is opposed to the mythical archetype presented in the *Pyramid Texts*. Perhaps this same difference in psychological attitude underlies the statistical opposition between the use of the verbs *j*ʿ and *sj*ʿ in royal and private funerary texts observed in the case study which has been presented in the first part of this article (see above, section 4 and Tables 8.1 and 8.2): in the private texts, the verb *j*ʿ, “rise”, “ascend”, is predominantly used, while in the *Pyramid Texts* the causative verb *sj*ʿ, “raise”, “cause to ascend”, is mostly used. The lexical choice itself seems to suggest that the private deceased is the protagonist of his ascent, while in the royal sphere, which as we know is much more varied from a plot point of view, the ascent (of the king or other entities) is presented as mediated and conditioned by multiple mythical actants and situations.

Here, then, is another difference between the afterlife of kings and private individuals that is neither quantitative nor dependent on *decorum* but is qualitative and culturally essential. It is the opposition between the referential, the “objective”, the great truths of the universe and of life, conveyed through myth, and the self-referential, the “subjective” and personal, the social, conveyed through autobiography. The king does not have an “autobiography” because he corresponds to a mythical archetype; his “life” and his destiny are those of a god, they are repeated unchanged since the beginning of time and belong to the sphere of myth. For this reason, the *Pyramid Texts* are essentially the same from pyramid to pyramid (and, as far as we know, the iconographic-textual programs of the funerary temples and ramps were also largely the same). On the other hand, however much the phraseology and topics are repeated from one private tomb to another (stereotype is not archetype), no two iconographic-textual programs are the same between the tombs of private individuals, especially since the appearance of the autobiographical genre and since the “I” of the deceased defines the architectural, decorative, and ritual concreteness of the tomb. Together with solarisation, this is therefore the other form in which, in the funerary sphere, the ontological opposition between the king and his subjects was manifested during the Old Kingdom.

From the First Intermediate Period onwards, strictly solar soteriology ceased to be reserved exclusively for kings and became part of the common body of Egyptian funerary

¹⁷⁴ Loprieno 1988: 1–21; 1996: 45–51. See also Parkinson 1999; Reintges 2011: 5–19.

beliefs. The change was undoubtedly part of the deep socio-political and cultural transformations of the time. It is not, moreover, the only example of an exclusive and defining political-religious attribute of kings in the Old Kingdom to be associated with the elite from the First Intermediate Period onwards. L. Coulon writes, for example, in relation to the imperative word:

La personne royale est investie, à l’Ancien Empire, d’un pouvoir de parole de droit divin qui lui est exclusif, *wꜥ*, appuyé sur deux entités divines Hou et Sia. (...) Alors qu’il ne pouvait être auparavant que l’instrument de la parole royale, le particulier proclame à la P[remière] P[ériode] I[ntermédiaire] son indépendance de parole et d’action. Le processus de diffusion des formules funéraires auprès de l’élite est évidemment à mettre en parallèle avec ce processus.¹⁷⁵

One could say that *wꜥ* is in the political sphere what assimilation to the Sun-god is in the soteriological sphere. Exclusivity is thus an ontological quality inherent to kings in the Old Kingdom. The extension of these prerogatives is not, of course, a question of usurpation, claim or concession, but of gradual changes in legitimacy. In the private funerary field, this attitude led to a shift in the rules of *decorum*, which meant that private individuals began to incorporate the actual *szḥw* into the textual and decorative programmes of their tombs and coffins.¹⁷⁶ Thus, a double movement occurred: adoption by private individuals of the solar soteriological symbology and explicit display of funerary formulae on their tombs. Again, the uses of terms derived from the root *jꜣr* in funerary texts are eloquent illustrations of this. In the context of the offering formula, the stereotyped phrase *jꜣ=f n ntr ꜥ* falls into disuse (not so the other two phrases related to it: see above, section 3), while on coffins several ascensional (and usually solar) recitations from the *Pyramid Texts* using the verbs *jꜣ* and *sjꜣ* are copied, with the essential updating of the determinatives of the spellings to make them understandable and effective.¹⁷⁷

Ultimately, there was no “democratisation” of the afterlife in Egypt in the 3rd millennium BCE because, from Neolithic times, belief in an afterlife was universal, as was the ritual that ensured access to that afterlife, centered on the deposition of offerings in

¹⁷⁵ Coulon 2004: 119–120. See also Coulon 1997: 120–122. Although the last sentence of Coulon’s statement refers to the use of funerary texts in general, it could also be applied specifically to the extension of solar spells.

¹⁷⁶ Smith 2017: 184–190.

¹⁷⁷ See note 74.

the tomb and the recitation of spells considered to transfigure the deceased (*szhw*, “spirit-*akh*-makers”). This was the core of funerary rituals throughout Egyptian history, with the expected quantitative variations due to social status and *decorum*. But this common denominator does not exclude alternative developments involving qualitative differences between kingship and the rest of society. Archaeology eloquently shows how, since the earliest forms of leadership or kingship appeared in the Nile valley, in Hierakonpolis, the leader or king received a clearly differentiated funerary treatment, which is not measured in quantitative terms (greater or lesser size of the tomb, more or less offerings), but rather seems to respond to ontological reasons (for example, the leader or king as a wild beast, that is, as a power of nature, a notion that will be maintained in the royal iconography and symbolism throughout the Predynastic period and beyond). This differentiated treatment reaches its most forceful and dramatic expression in the Old Kingdom. In royal soteriology, the solar beliefs and ritual are added to the universal ritual of offerings (there is nothing to suggest that this is also the case for private individuals at this time, since, as we have seen, the Sun-god and the “mythical” universe associated with him play no role in the iconographic and textual programs of the private tombs); the king is categorically separated from the social body (*dsr*) and has alternative and exclusive afterlife destinies that involve aerial ascension to heaven and union with the Sun-god. This separation has its powerful physical manifestation in a building as over-human as it is unique: the pyramid, in contrast to the tombs of private individuals which remain mastabas or rock-tombs, built by the hundreds and even in series.

Separation also has one of its “mythical” expressions in ascension texts or formulae. Indeed, the analysis of the semograms accompanying the terms derived from the root *jʿr*, [RISE], [ASCEND], [RAISE], [CAUSE TO ASCEND] in the *Pyramid Texts* and in the private funerary texts of the Old Kingdom presented in the first part of this article illustrates these divergent mythical conceptions. Such semograms, completely different in one domain and the other, suggest qualitatively opposed modes of ascent: some aerial and vertical, others terrestrial and more horizontal; the former towards the Sun-god or the gods of the sky, the latter towards the “great god”, specifically defined in the private texts as “lord of the West and lord of the pure places, (...) lord of veneration and lord of good burial in the necropolis”. As we have seen, the *Pyramid Texts* are the result of an extensive editing process carried out by the Heliopolitan priests. If in this task they did not proceed to “update” these semograms, which represented architectural realities already in disuse in the royal domain, and to equate them with those used in the private texts for the same

terms, it was probably partly because of tradition and partly because these hieroglyphs made it possible to emphasise, in an arcane and effective way, a difference felt to be fundamental. In this case, semograms convey deep cultural and symbolic notions and become for us Egyptologists a privileged and sophisticated source for the knowledge of these notions.

Abbreviations

- AnLex77/78/79* Meeks, D. 1980 / 1981 / 1982. *Année lexicographique. Égypte ancienne*. Paris: D. Meeks.
- ERL* Satzinger, H. and D. Stefanović 2021. *Egyptian Root Lexicon*. LingAeg-StudMon 25. Hamburg: Widmaier.
- FWb* Kahl, J. 2002–2004. *Frühägyptisches Wörterbuch*, 3 vols. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- HL1* Hannig, R. 1995. *Die Sprache der Pharaonen. Grosses Handwörterbuch Ägyptisch-Deutsch (2800–950 v. Chr.)*. Hannig-Lexica 1. Mainz: Philipp von Zabern.
- HL4* Hannig, R. 2003. *Ägyptisches Wörterbuch I. Altes Reich und Erste Zwischenzeit*. Hannig-Lexica 4. Mainz: Philipp von Zabern.
- HL5* Hannig, R. 2006. *Ägyptisches Wörterbuch II. Mittleres Reich und Zweite Zwischenzeit*, 2 vols. Hannig-Lexica 5. Mainz: Philipp von Zabern.
- PM III¹* Porter, B.; Moss, R.L.B. 1974. *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs, and Paintings III. Memphis, Part 1: Abû Rawâsh to Abûshîr*. Oxford: Griffith Institute; Clarendon Press.
- PM III²* Porter, B.; Moss, R.L.B. 1981. *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs, and Paintings III. Memphis, Part 2: Saqqâra to Dahshûr*. Oxford: Griffith Institute; Clarendon Press.
- PM V* Porter, B.; Moss, R.L.B. 1962. *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs, and Paintings V. Upper Egypt: Sites*. Oxford: Griffith Institute.
- Urk. I* Sethe, K. 1933. *Urkunden des alten Reichs. Urkunden des Ägyptischen Altertums I*. Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs.

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