

The Relationship between Ropes and Snakes During the Underworld Journey in the Book of the Gates

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Abstract

The iconographic treatment and the context in which ropes, and snakes participate evidence a relationship between both elements in the Book of the Gates. This relationship is reflected in the meanings they represent. The underworld hours display ropes being carried by several deities in an equivalent composition and context. The strong presence of snakes in Egyptian written sources and iconography proves the Egyptian fascination of these creatures. Snakes are often mentioned as primal creatures. The snakes and rope-carriers are symbolically linked. Both elements are strongly associated with time and being more explicit on some occasions with cyclical time and time inversion which leads to rebirth. The depictions of ropes as the solar boat are obviously connected with the underworld journey but at the same time, they often display elements related to the hours. The punishment of the enemies of the Sun god in which both snakes and ropes are involved, is another important step in the Underworld journey.

The aim of the paper is to indicate the roles of ropes and snakes in the underworld hours in the Book of The Gates.

Key words:Ropes _ Snakes _ Underworld _ Hours _ Book of The Gates.

Introduction

Among the ancient Egyptian texts lies with importance a group of texts that were modernly known as the underworld or netherworld books. These texts mainly describe the journey of the sun god in relation to Osiris in the underworld after sunset which represents death.¹

Underworld Books primarily served the purposes of guiding and protecting the deceased.² During the New Kingdom only two books were divided into twelve hours of the night: the Amduat and the Book of the Gates.³ The Book of Gates is the only version among all the underworld books which is divided by gates into 12 sections guarded by snakes representing


¹ Horning, E.,(2007), The ancient Egyptian Books of the Afterlife, London 2007, p. 26.





² Assmann, J., (2005), Death.Salvation in Ancient Egypt, New York, 2005, pp. 1-15.


³ Allen, J.P.,(2004), The sun god's journey through the Netherworld, Schweizer, 2004, p. 56.

the nightly journey.⁴ The sun god Ra passes successfully through the first gate where the guardian snake is called the swallower of sinners.⁵ Ra is protected by the Mehen serpent.⁶

The Book of The Gates displays the ropes and snakes specifically in the 5th, 6th, 8th, and 11th hour. Ropes and snakes are being carried by several deities during the underworld journey. Many of these depictions are closely related to the concept of time. The measuring rope in the fields of Duat probably refers to the 12 hours of the night.⁷

The rope was considered as an icon of lifetime which supported by the twelve gods so the measuring rope might be referring to the fertility of the beyond and the rebirth of the deceased participating in the production of offerings. The presence of a mountain of grain in whose shape evokes the sign *Axt*  (N37)⁸ the horizon might be referring to the measuringrope of the fertility and the rebirth of the deceased.⁹

The sign  (P16)¹⁰ often used to express “lifetime” the hieroglyphic signs  (V15)¹¹ a rope. (Fig. 4) The looped shape could relate to the concept of time.¹² (Fig. 15) The concept of nHH  (V38-N25- V38)¹³ related to the creation of the hours in relation with the time-serpent and related to ropes in the sign of double-twisted rope.¹⁴ dmD  (S33)¹⁵ sign for “unite” emerge from the spiral forms of the rope.¹⁶ (Fig. 19)

The movement of the snake and that could also explain the twisty shape of its iconography  (F59)¹⁷ This S form is enlarged in some decorative versions (Fig. 19) as if it had been duplicated.

An equivalent hieroglyphic sign for this form would be the intestine. Indeed, the snakes’ body is characterized by its long intestine and iconographically this may refer to their digestive capacity.¹⁸

⁴ Kreikamp, D.,(2021), AMDUAT The Great Awakening, Oxford, 2021.p.35.

⁵ Horning, E.,(1999), the Ancient Egyptian Books of the Afterlife. London 1999, p. 56.

⁶ Assmann, A.,(2005), Death, and Salvation in Ancient Egypt, translated from German by D. Lorton, Ithaca, and London, 2005, p. 109.

⁷ Guerra Méndez, C.,(2022), Snaks Iconography in The Egyptian Book of Gates, University of Liverpool, 2022, p.47.

⁸ Gardiner Egyptian Grammar sign list, p. 545.

⁹ Assmann, J., (2005), pp. 1-15.

¹⁰ Gardiner Egyptian Grammar sign list, p. 546.

¹¹ Gardiner Egyptian Grammar sign list, p. 546.

¹² Abitz, F.,(2003), Knowledge for the Afterlife: The Egyptian Amduat- A Quest for Immortality, Zurich, 2003. pp. 11 15.

¹³ Gardiner Egyptian Grammar sign list, p. 545.

¹⁴ Wilkinson, R. H.,(1994), Symbol & magic in Egyptian art. London, 1994, p.24.

¹⁵ Gardiner Egyptian Grammar sign list, p. 545.

¹⁶ Guerra Méndez, C., (2022), p.52.

¹⁷ Gardiner Egyptian Grammar sign list, p. 544.

¹⁸ Allen, J.P.,(2004), The sun god’s journey through the Netherworld, Schweizer, 2004, p. 56.

Objectives of the study

The aim of the study investigates the relationship and roles of ropes and snakes during the underworld journey in the Book of The Gates. The study will achieve the following objectives:

1. Discussing the concept of ropes and snakes during the underworld journey in the Book of The Gates.
2. Cataloguing the scenes of ropes and snakes during the underworld journey in the Book of The Gates.
3. Analyzing the scenes in relation to texts.

Ropes in the Book of The Gates

I. Rope carried by gods



Fig. 1, Ropes carried by several gods, Tomb of Seti I, 19th Dynasty.
(After, Hornung, *The Egyptian Book of Gates*, p.144)

Ropes represented as an icon of lifetime may related to the concept of rebirth which are carried by several gods. According to the text “*Those who supervise the measuring rope in the west*”. This may refer to the duration of time from which the deceased benefits especially in the scenes of measurement of the underworld fields.¹⁹ (Fig. 1)

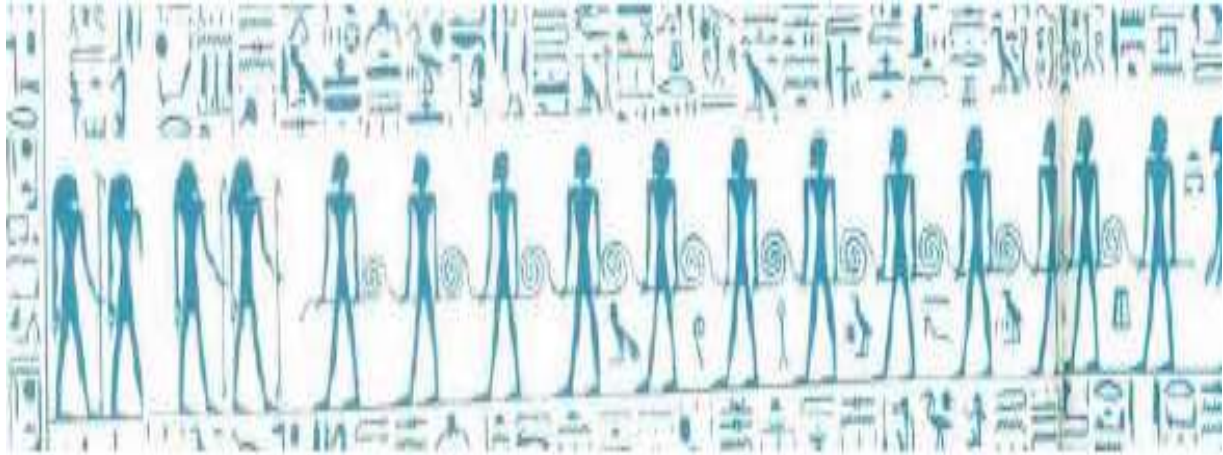


Fig. 2, Ropes carried by several gods, Tomb of Seti I, 19th Dynasty.
(After, Hornung, *The Egyptian Book of Gates*, p.145)

¹⁹ Roberson, J. A., The royal funerary books: the subject matter of scenes and texts, in Wilkinson, R. H. & Weeks, K. R., (eds), *The Oxford handbook of the Valley of the Kings*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, pp. 316-320.

According to texts god Ra is identified with those “who carry the double rope which measures lifetime”. Xryw nwH n jmnt sSmyw AHwt n Axw Szp n. Tn nwH nDr n. Tn sTAYw AHt nj jmntyw (“*You who carry the rope of the West, who allocate plots to the blessed Akh-spirits, receive for yourselves the rope and seize hold of the field-measurer of those of the West!*”).²⁰ (Fig. 2)

II. Ropes as a measuring tool of the time



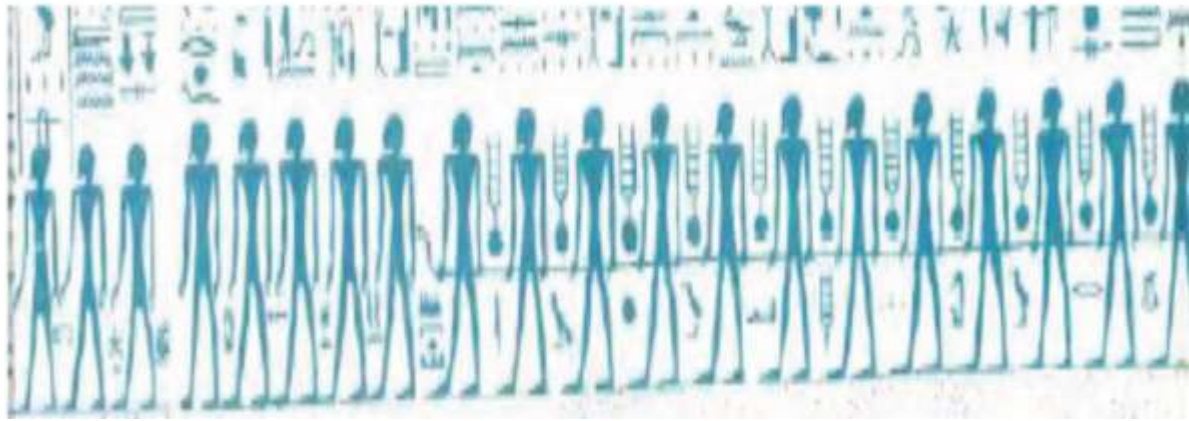
**Fig. 3, Carrier gods, Seti I’s sarcophagus, 19th Dynasty.
(After, Guerra Méndez, C., Snaks Iconography in The Egyptian Book of Gates, p.48)**

Twelve carrier gods probably as a reference to the 12 hours of the night carrying “*the measuring rope in the fields of the Duat*”. The same meaning may be this time as benefit to the *Akh*-souls of the underworld whose surviving depends on measuring “plots” the Duat through this rope this is said by the sungod himself who refers to the ropewhereas time component may be also identified in the 12 carriers mirroring the 12 hours of the night.²¹ (Fig. 3) The four gods with *Ankh* and *Was* signs which follow the scene are called “*Those who supervise the measuring rope in the west*” so may be understand them as a sort of divine foremen whose task is to supervise and organize the works and protect the carriers as it is mentioned in the text.²² (Fig. 3)


²⁰ Horning. E., (2001), p.32.

²¹ Branch, B.,(1988), Field Guide to the Snakes and Other Reptiles of Southern Africa, Sanibel Island: Ralph Curtis Publishing, 1988, p. 62.

²² Abitz, F.,(2003), Knowledge for the Afterlife: The Egyptian Amduat- A Quest for Immortality, Zurich, 2003. pp. 11 15.



**Fig. 4, Rope as an icon of lifetime, Seti I's sarcophagus, 19th Dynasty.
(After, Guerra Méndez, C., *Snaks Iconography in The Egyptian Book of Gates*, p.50)**

The interpretation of this rope as an icon of lifetime is supported by the depiction of the lower register of the same hour where twelve gods identified with “those who carry the lifetime in the west” are carrying a huge serpent with solar disks crowned by sign ²³ often used to express “lifetime” between them the main character of this snake is the representation of the time of the night with the carriers representing the 12 nocturnal hours since “*they are those who establish the lifetime and fix the days in the Ba-souls who are in the West and (those who are) condemned to the Place of Destruction*”.²⁴

In the 5th hour Lower Register according to the text: DADAt jmy(t) dwAt ntsn wDw Htm zSw m aHaw n bAw xntyw jmnt (“Council which is in the Duat. They are those who order destruction and register lifetime for the Ba-souls who are in the West”).²⁵

In the same scene Ra identifies them with those “*who carry the double rope which measures lifetime*”. This refers to a relationship between the upper and lower register and perhaps between the snakes and the measuring-ropes since the snake is provided with the quality of measuring and likely regenerating lifetime.²⁶ However, in this case it measures both for “*the Ba-souls who are in the West and (for those who are) condemned to the Place of Destruction*” displaying an ambivalent role.²⁷

The eight deities in front of it are related to management of the destruction of the damned and the measuring of the time. Perhaps as the foremen of the upper register they must organize the tasks of measuring and punishment that this snake carries out on the Place of Destruction.²⁸ (Fig. 4)

²³ Gardiner *Egyptian Grammar sign list*, p. 546.

²⁴ Redford, D. B., (2001), *snakes' The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, vol. 3. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2001, p.7.

²⁵ Horning. E., (2001), p.34.

²⁶ Guerra Méndez, C., (2022), p.48.

²⁷ Horning. E., (2001), p. 35.

²⁸ Horning. E., (2007), p. 28.

III. Rope that is pulled out of the mouth of the mummiform deity



Fig. 5, God that carry a double-twisted rope, Tomb of Seti I, 19th Dynasty.
(After, Hornung, *The Egyptian Book of Gates*, p.207)

One of the twelve gods carries a double-twisted rope fastened around the neck of a mummiform god identified with *Aqen* (“Aqen”) represented in 6th hour Upper Register on some occasions it appears spelled as *iqn* an action which is related to the same being.²⁹

²⁹ Abitz, F., (2003), pp. 11 15.



The concept of nHH (V38-N25- V38)³⁰ related to the creation of the hours in relation with the time-serpent and related to the ropes in the sign of double-twisted rope.³¹

These twelve gods are called those “who carry the double-twisted (rope) out of which the hours emerge”. This god is attested in the Coffin Texts and later in the Book of the Dead where he appears as a slept ferryman which must be awakened to cross the waters of the underworld.³² (Fig. 5)

The text mentions that the rope is pulled out of the mouth of the mummiform deity however it shows tied around his neck. According to the text: *nDrw n. Tn mannw(j) Sdj.n.Tn m rA aon* (“*Grasp for yourselves the double-twisted which you have pulled out of the mouth of Aqen!*”).³³

The scene shows these deities within the ties that form the ropes and among them can be distinguish twelve stars. The twelve stars represent the twelve hours of the nighttime in which these individuals transformed. The fact that Aqen was associated with boats and travel may be another reference to the Sun’s journey.

The individuals will be “*turned into Akh-spirits through them*”. Thus, it seems that these twelve beings represent the blessed dead or the ba of the Sungod and the double-twisted rope display a positive feature related to transformative qualities which are directly related to the presence of the mummiform deity Aqen (perhaps joining him) transforming them into Akh-spirits.³⁴ (Fig. 5)

³⁰ Gardiner Egyptian Grammar sign list, p. 545.

³¹ Wilkinson, R. H.,(1994), Symbol & magic in Egyptian art, London, 1994, p.24.

³² Darnell, J. C. & Manassa Darnell, C.,(2018), The Ancient Egyptian Netherworld Books, Atlanta: SBL Press, 2018, p.36.

³³ Guerra Méndez, C., (2022), p.51.

³⁴ Feder, F., (2013), The Legend of the Sun's Eye: Córdoba: CNERU, 2013, p.46.

IV. The rope that tows the solar boat



Fig. 6, The rope that tows the solar boat, Tomb of Ramses V/VI, 20th Dynasty. (After, Zahi Hwass, *The Royal tombs of Egypt*, p. 47)

Except for the 1st hour the boat is towed by four deities labelled with the name dwAtyw (“gods of the underworld”) who pull a rope tied to tow of the boat.³⁵

The solar barque although it is not evident shows a symbolic relationship between these ropes and certain snakes since they are sometimes associated with the concept of time to refer to the Sungod's night journey.³⁶ (Fig. 6)



Fig. 7, The advance of the sun god in the underworld, Tomb of Ramses V/VI, 20th Dynasty (After, Coleman, *The Enigmatic Netherworld Books of the Solar-Osirian Unity*, p.62)

³⁵ Hoffmann, N., (1996), *Reading the Amduat*, ZÄS 123, 1996, p.40.

³⁶ Hornung, E. & Abt. T., (2014), *The Egyptian Book of Gates*. Zurich: Living Human Heritage Publications, 2014, p.19.

A more symbolic depiction of the boat towing is attested in the lower register of the 11th hour where 12 goddesses called “The hour goddesses who tow” carry a rope which ends in a spiral shape (Fig. 6).

The text is quite clear mentioned that this is the rope of the solar barque and that they must tow Ra in heaven. Thus, in this moment the boat towing is associated with the rise of the sun.³⁷



Fig. 8, Gods of the underworld dwAtyw, Tomb of Ramses V/VI, 19th Dynasty (After, Hornung, *The Egyptian Book of Gates*, p.55)

An action which is related to the advance of the Sungod in the underworld. Indeed, the statements of the middle register of the 8th hour mention the necessity of these deities to progress in the underworld and the ending offering formula reaffirms their importance.³⁸ Besides, it seems that there is a relationship with the serpent rope of the Upper Register which as we mentioned above is related to the hours of the night.³⁹ (Fig. 7), (Fig. 8)

³⁷ Piankoff, A., (1958), Vallée des rois à Thèbes-Ouest, la tombe No 1 (Ramsès VII) ASAE 55, 1958, pp. 145–156.

³⁸ Richter, B. A.,(2008), The Amduat and Its Relationship to the Architecture of Early 18th Dynasty Royal Burial Chambers. JARCE 44. 2008, pp. 73-85.

³⁹ Guerra Méndez, C., (2022), p.70.



Fig. 9, Ra in his barque with a rope tied to tow the boat, Tomb of Thutmose III, 18th Dynasty.

(After, Castel Ronda, E. *Diccionario de signos y símbolos del Antiguo Egipto*, p.77)

According to the text:⁴⁰

sTAw.Tn n.j Xryw nwH Hmw.Tn r orrt nww (“May you tow for me carriers of the rope and may you turn back at the cavern of Nun”); *jw wdnw n.sn tp tA m Tzw nwH m wjA* (“Whoever makes an offering to them on earth will tie the rope in the (solar) barque”) *wnw sTAw aoA annw* (“Open you who tow when the serpent rope is straight!”) *wnwwt sTAywt; Szp.sn nfrt n(t) wjA r sTA raw m nwt* (“They receive the tow rope of the barque to tow Re in heaven [Nut]”) (Fig. 9)



Fig. 10, Gods as guides, Tomb of Thutmose III, 18th Dynasty.

(After, Hornung, *The Egyptian Book of Gates*, p.55)

⁴⁰ Miriam Lichtheim, (1973), Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings, Berkeley, 1973, p.16.

The scene depicts three gods holding three stars and carrying a rope. They are called “star-gods” and tow a boat. This might be connected to the idea of time gods as guides in the the underworld journey.⁴¹ (Fig. 10)



**Fig. 11, Gods of the underworld dwAtyw carrying a rope with guiding god, Tomb of Thutmose III, 18th Dynasty.
(After, Hornung, *The Egyptian Book of Gates*, p.55)**

These goddesses are identified as the hours themselves identified by the stars above their heads as an element of guidance for the Sungod. Besides, the spiral shape of the rope’s end might refer to the cyclic process of this journey.⁴²

At the same time some identified them as depictions of the circumpolar stars since they are described as those “*Who do not know perishing*” and these stars never disappear below the horizon, but they eternally circle around the pole.⁴³ (Fig. 11)

⁴¹ Wilkinson, R. H.,(1992), Reading Egyptian art: a hieroglyphic guide to ancient Egyptian painting and sculpture. London: Thames and Hudson, 1992, p.52.

⁴² Guerra Méndez, C., (2022), p.58.

⁴³ Roberson, J. A., (2007), An enigmatic wall from the cenotaph of Seti I at Abydos. JARCE 43, 2007, pp. 93-112.

V.Ropes as punishment



Fig. 12, Group of damened tied with a rope, Tomb of Ramses IV, 20th Dynasty.
(After, Hornung, *The Egyptian Book of Gates*, p.57)

The punishment of the enemies of the Sun-God in which both snakes and ropes are involved are another important step in the Sun-god's journey even though it seems to respond to other motivations.⁴⁴ (Fig. 12)

The scene depicts two gods holding a net with both hands an element which possess a similar significance than ropes.⁴⁵

They are "the gods who work charms on behalf of Re- Horakhty in the West" whose "magic is what is upon the nets and what is in the net in their hands"⁴⁶ (Fig. 13)



Fig. 13, Gods holding a net, Tomb of Seti I, 19th Dynasty.
(After, Hornung, *The Egyptian Book of Gates*, p.334)

⁴⁴ Castel, E.,(2017), *Diccionario de signos y símbolos del Antiguo Egipto*.Madrid, 2017, p. 114.

⁴⁵ Roberson, J. A., (2007), *An enigmatic wall from the cenotaph of Seti I at Abydos*. JARCE 43, 2007, pp. 93-112.

⁴⁶ Adolf. E, Abt, T.&Hornung, E., (2010), p. 49.

Ropes and snakes in the Book of The Gates

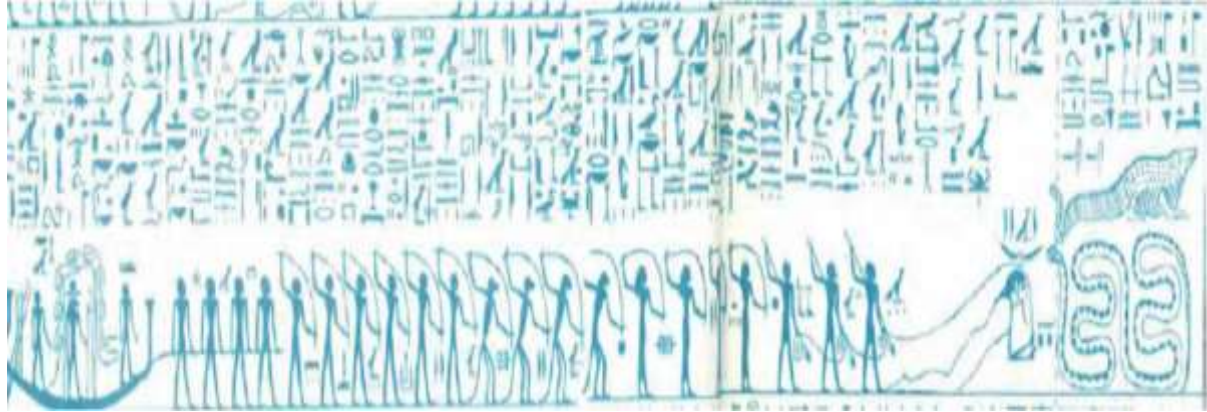


Fig. 14, Groups of deities holding ropes and nets, Seti I's sarcophagus, 19th Dynasty. (After, Guerra Méndez, C., *Snaks Iconography in The Egyptian Book of Gates*, p. 63)

The scene depicts four deities called *dwAtyw* (“gods of the underworld”) who pull a rope tied to the tow of the boat. There are 3 groups of deities holding nets 6 men (“who work charms”) 4 monkeys (“who protect Ra”) and 4 goddesses (“who protect Ra”). these kinds of deities holding nets are associated with the protection of Ra by the magic located in their nets from Apophis at the end of the register.⁴⁷

The net is easy to relate with the action of capturing creatures. The presence of nets in the underworld to protect the dead from net spread out between sky and earth. After them three gods armed with spears and called “those who bear spears” grasp a rope which is held by a half-lying god called “the old one”. The three gods guard the rope in front of Apophis who depicted as a multi coiled serpent and the crocodile *SsSs* whose tail ends in a snake.⁴⁸ The three gods guard the rope which is depicted as a spiral form to prevent Apophis from approaching the barque. might interpret this spiral as the lifetime of the Sungod associated with “the old one”, which must be protected from the serpent.⁴⁹ Apophis is not depicted with a looped body.⁵⁰ In this case Apophis mainly represents the chaos being destroyed mainly with the enchantment of the deities with nets.⁵¹ (Fig. 14)

However, there is not a direct mention to the crocodile which being looking at the opposite side could be acting as a guardian or apotropaic deity against Apophis depicted over it. This interpretation is supported by the usual representation of crocodile gods as guardians in the underworld. Besides a crocodile appears as an emissary of solar power toward the edges of the cosmos. Thus, this representation could be interpreted as an extension of Ra's punishing power over chaotic forces. On the other hand, the snake at the end of its tail seems to show an equivalence with the Apophis' head and therefore the chaotic forces.⁵² (Fig. 14)

⁴⁷ Wilkinson, R. H., (1994), p.24.

⁴⁸ Redford, D. B., (2001), *snakes' The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, vol. 3. Oxford: Oxford University Press, (2001), p. 7.

⁴⁹ Redford, (2001), pp. 296-299.

⁵⁰ David, R., London, (2002), p. 97.

⁵¹ Guerra Méndez, C., (2022), p.60.

⁵² Wüst, R. A. J., (2000), pp. 163-190.

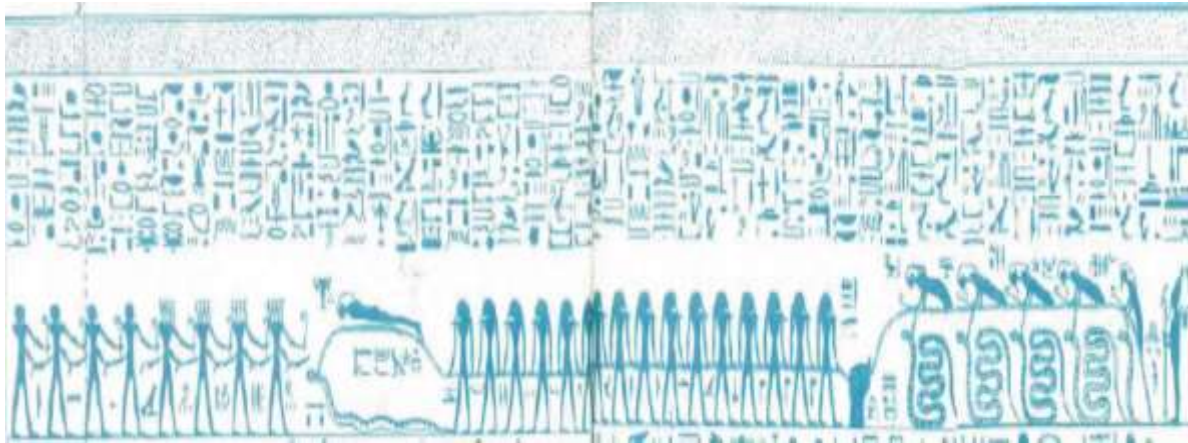


Fig. 15, Apophis is a snake whose neck is retained by a rope, Seti I's sarcophagus, 19th Dynasty.

(After, Hornung, *The Egyptian Book of Gates*, p. 368)

The scene represented a group of four gods without attributes called "The Fetterers" and four gods who has four serpent heads called "The Slaughterers". They have a rope in the one hand and a knife in the other using them as elements of punishment against Apophis located in front of them. The rope might be used to retain it and the knife to destroy it.⁵³ In this scene Apophis is a snake whose neck is retained by a rope which is tied by Selkis depicted lied on the rope.⁵⁴ Behind her there are four gods called "Those who enchain" and changing the direction there are twelve more gods without attributes who hold the rope labelled with a terrifying name ("Gods who cut off throats") highlighting their qualities of guardians.⁵⁵ (Fig. 15)

VI. Snakes as guardians and punishers as fiery creatures:



Fig. 16, Fire Spitting snakes, Tomb of Ramses V/VI, 20th Dynasty

(After, Szpakowska, K., *Striking cobra spitting fire*, p. 27)

⁵³ Hornung, E., (2001), p. 26.

⁵⁴ Roberson, J. A., (2007), pp. 93-112.

⁵⁵ Martin, F., (2013), *Tierkulte im Pharaonischen Ägypten. Ägyptologie und Kulturwissenschaft* 5, München, 226; Geddes & Grosset, *Myth & History*. 2013. p.152.

Snakes defined as “the ultimate transformative creatures giving birth within the earth moving strangely upon the ground without the use of legs and continuously transforming and rejuvenating themselves by shedding their skin”.⁵⁶

This behaviour resulted in a fascination in the minds of the Egyptians that led to a complex iconography which shows a wide variety of forms and sometimes contradictory meanings.⁵⁷

The strong presence of snakes in Egyptian sources and Book of Gates to these creatures. They were especially frequent in funerary and religious contexts. there are spells to avoid the attack of these dangerous creatures to become one and avoid other dangers and associating the deceased or several deities with a snake form.⁵⁸

In the Book of the Dead, it is said that Atum will come back to the primeval waters as a snake at the end of the world: *And I will destroy all that I have made. This land shall return into the Deep into the flood as it was aforetime. (Only) I shall survive together with Osiris after I have assumed my forms of other (snakes) which men know not and gods see not.*⁵⁹

Other beneficial gods were also associated with snakes such as Renenutet who appeared in the form of a hooded cobra and was associated with the fertility of fields the granary and therefore fertility and rebirth making her a funerary goddess protector of the deceased she is not depicted until the New Kingdom.⁶⁰

Another snake goddess was Meretseger being popular in the houses of Deir el-Medina perhaps as protection for the kitchen. Some non-poisonous snakes were considered beneficial to the household since they were harmless against human beings feeding only on small animals eliminating pests such as rodents. This might have motivated such an association.⁶¹

⁵⁶ Szpakowska,(2013), p. 40.

⁵⁷ Castel (2009), pp. 478.

⁵⁸ Houlihan, p. 171.

⁵⁹ Wilkinson, (1994), p. 163.

⁶⁰ Castel Ronda, (2017), p. 80.

⁶¹ Redford,(2001), pp. 296-299.

The scene represents the punishment of the damned. The snake is spitting fire to the eyes of their victims. Their arms are tied by rope; they are called “Enemies of Osiris the burning ones”.⁶² (Fig. 16)

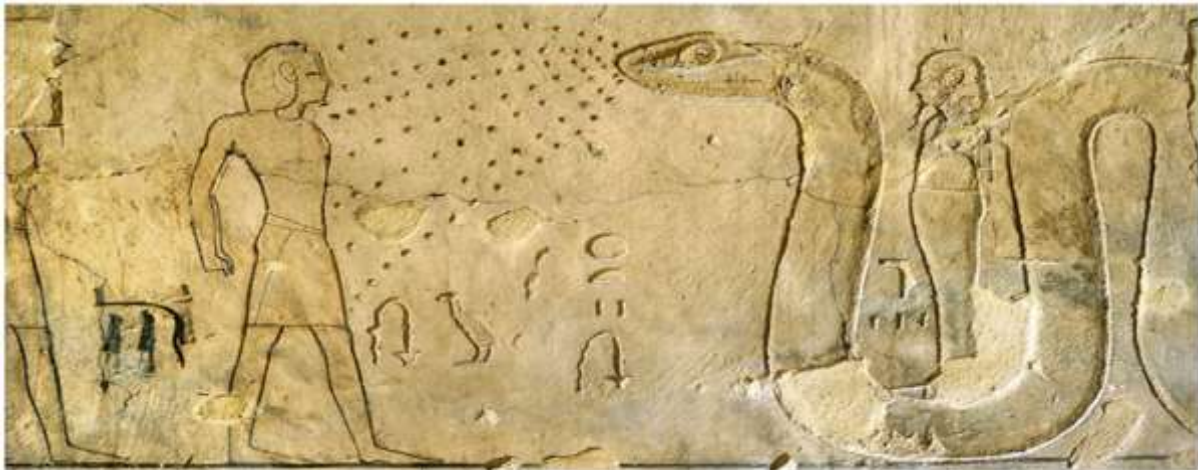




Fig. 17, The snake is spitting fire, Tomb of Seti I, 19th Dynasty. (After, Szpakowska, K., ‘Striking cobra spitting fire’, p. 29)

The name of the snake “The flaming one” is a reference to its fiery qualities.⁶³ The lines depicted in front of its mouth suggest that it is spitting. Thus, it is obvious that it is protecting these gods through fire.⁶⁴ (Fig. 16), (Fig. 17)

This snake is called “The fiery one” and standing in the coils of it there are seven mummiform deities called “Gods who are upon the fiery one”. Horus establishes a connection between its flame and the eye of Horus, and he identifies the mummiform deities with the children of Horus. The children of Horus are indeed seven.⁶⁵

This serpent responds to Horus' orders, but the Ba-souls were advised not to approach the snake due to its danger and they can also avoid the fire through offerings to the children of Horus. In this case the depiction shows the gods stand upon the snake's coils.⁶⁶

The general shape of the serpent could be associated to the general determinative for big serpents  (I14) or  (I15)⁶⁷. Other examples spitting snakes are those depicted in the gates. Some schematic versions show lines in front of the snake's face. Although on some occasions it could be interpreted as an attempt to depict a forked tongue.⁶⁸ (fig. 17)

⁶² Guerra Méndez, C., (2022), p.37.

⁶³ Wilkinson, (1994), p. 163.

⁶⁴ Azmy, D., (2021), p.147.

⁶⁵ Castel, E. (2001), pp. 353-355.

⁶⁶ Wilkinson, (1994), p. 163.

⁶⁷ Gardiner Egyptian Grammar sign list, p. 545.

⁶⁸ Redford, pp. 296-299.

Establishing a relationship with “the flaming one” (fig. 17) and implying that this However, the most evident snake guardians spitting fire in gates are the two *uraei* located in the corners which are spitting a liquid depicted as a line of points that connects both beings.⁶⁹

This may be associated to the determinative (D36)⁷⁰ used for words such as bSi (vomit), “spit”) or mtwt (“venom”).⁷¹ They are named in every hour as “She lights up for Ra” written

with the torch determinative (Q7)⁷² so can be assume that they spit fire against the evil forces.⁷³ (fig. 17)

VII. The time-serpent and Apophis:



Fig. 18, The rope is tied to a leg of the snake, Tomb of Ramses V/VI (After, Hornung, *The Egyptian Book of Gates*, p. 359)

Two ram-headed deities’ retinue of Ra carrying a rope which the end of the rope is tied to a leg of the snake in a way which according to the description of the text doing the same at the end and two large cobras and two snakes with legs.⁷⁴ (Fig. 18)

The scene which follows is a composition formed by 6 snakes each one with a couple of human legs.⁷⁵ They are called “Who walks” and are held by a god without attributes in the middle called “The divider.”⁷⁶ (Fig. 19)

⁶⁹ Castel Ronda, (2017), p. 83.

⁷⁰ Gardiner Egyptian Grammar sign list, p. 545.

⁷¹ David, R., (2002), p. 101.

⁷² Gardiner Egyptian Grammar sign list, p. 544.

⁷³ Castel, E., (2001), pp. 353-355.

⁷⁴ Azmy, D., (2021), Fears concerning Afterlife in Ancient Egypt during the New Kingdom, unpublished PhD dissertation, Minia University, 2021, p.149.

⁷⁵ Castel Ronda, (2017), p. 83.

⁷⁶ Guerra Méndez, C., (2022), p.58.



Fig. 19, The divider god, Tomb of Ramses V/VI, 20th Dynasty

(After, Hornung, *The Egyptian Book of Gates*, p.55)



Fig. 20, Apophis defeated by Atum, Tomb of Ramses I, 20th Dynasty.

(After, Morenz, S., *Apophis: On the Origin Name and Nature of an Ancient Egyptian Anti-God*, p. 201)

The scene of Apophis shows a snake being defeated by Atum Apophis in order not to let it approach the solar boat and stop the advance of the Sungod in his resurrection process.⁷⁷ (Fig. 20)

⁷⁷ Castel, E., (2001), pp. 353-355.



Fig. 21, Apophis defeated by Atum, Tomb of Merenptah, 19th Dynasty.
(After, Hornung, *The Egyptian Book of Gates*, p.62)

There is a particular snake shape which might evidence time connotations related to the rope symbology: the looped serpent. These snakes not only show a symbolism (time and rejuvenation) that can be related to that of the ropes, but its shape is only comparable with the


hieroglyphic signs  (V15)⁷⁸ a rope.⁷⁹ The looped shape could relate to the concept of time.⁸⁰ (Fig. 20), (Fig. 21)



Fig. 22, Atum defeated Apophis by rope, Tomb of Ramses IV, 20th Dynasty.
(After, Hornung, *The Egyptian Book of Gates*, p.55)

⁷⁸ Gardiner Egyptian Grammar sign list, p. 546.

⁷⁹ Redford, (2001), pp. 296-299.

⁸⁰ Roberson, J. A., (2008), The rebirth of the sun: mortuary art and architecture in the royal tombs of New Kingdom Egypt, EXPEDITION 50 (2), 2008, pp. 14-25.

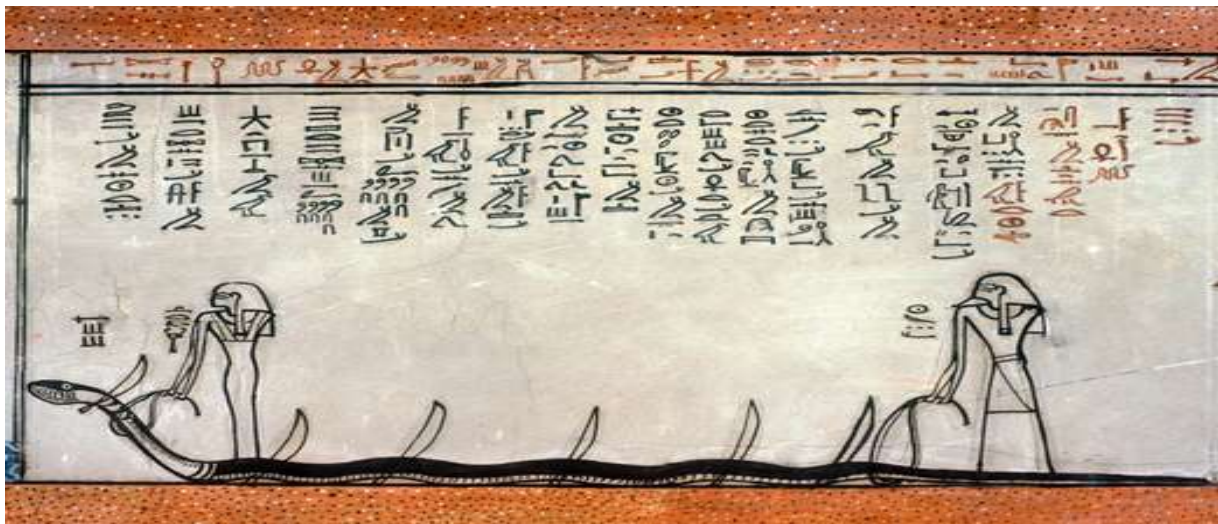


Fig. 23, Two gods defeated Apophis by rope, Tomb of Ramses IV, 20th Dynasty. (After, Hornung, *The Egyptian Book of Gates*, p.55)

Other representations such as the 7th hour show this creature being cut by knives. Indeed, the texts that mention the defeat of this snake often show the determinative of its name stabbed.⁸¹ The scene of Apophis (fig. 23) shows a similar snake being defeated by Atum and nine blessed dead called “the council that drives away Apophis” in order not to let it approach the solar barque and stop the advance of the Sungod in his resurrection process. Knives are used for this purpose although this is not illustrated.⁸²

According to the text:⁸³ znj.t(w) tp.k aApp znj.t(w) oAbw nn tknw.k m wjA raw nn hAj.k r dpt-nTr (“Your head is cut off Apophis, the coils chopped up! You will not come near to the barque of Ra you will not come near to the god’s ship!”). (Figs. 21-23)

⁸¹ Azmy, D., (2021), p.149.

⁸² Castel, E.,(2001), pp. 353-355.

⁸³ Adolf. E, Abt, T.&Hornung, E., BAR 2144 Oxford, (2010), P 46.


VIII. Ropes and snakes that are related to the concept of eternity



Fig. 24, Goddesses of 12 hours with a looped snake., Tomb of Ramses V/VI, 20th Dynasty.

(After, Hornung, *The Egyptian Book of Gates*, p. 120)

The looped shape could relate to the concept of time which is mentioned in the text.⁸⁴ Not only does she “gives birth to twelve serpents” identified as the 12 hours but she also “destroys and swallows (them) afterwards”.⁸⁵ (Fig. 24)

The concept of nHH  (V38-N25- V38)⁸⁶ related to the creation of the hours in relation with the time-serpent and related to the ropes in the sign of double-twisted rope.⁸⁷ This function explains its other names related to the act of taking away. This process is associated with the concept of nHH. This creature as something related to the creation of the hours in relation with the time-serpent.⁸⁸ The hours must be destroyed to give birth new ones and continue the eternal cycle.⁸⁹ The looped shape might the union of both concepts being a cycle which is repeated a great quantity of times.⁹⁰ (Fig. 24)

⁸⁴ Azmy, D., (2021), p.143.

⁸⁵ Guerra Méndez, C., (2022), p.60.

⁸⁶ Gardiner Egyptian Grammar sign list, p. 545.

⁸⁷ Castel, E. (2001), pp. 355-359.

⁸⁸ Wilkinson, R. H., *Symbol & magic in Egyptian art*. London, (1994), p.24.

⁸⁹ Redford, (2001), pp. 296-299.

⁹⁰ Bonanno, M., (2014), p. 63.

IX. Ropes and snakes that are related to the concept of rebirth of Osiris and the Sun-God



Fig. 25, Mummiform gods restrain a huge snake called “The trembling one”, Tomb of Merenptah, 19th Dynasty.
(After, Pinkoff, *The Book of Gates E.A*, p. 77)

The scene represents 9 mummiform God restrain a huge snake called “The trembling one” to prevent it from reaching the sun. Indeed, his name can be also translated as “the recoiling one” so this could be expressed to make this dangerous snake recoil in presence of the god until Ra passes it. The serpent is also destroyed to allow the Sungod’s transformation and rebirth.⁹¹



Fig. 26, Osiris and the Sungod by the human, Tomb of Merenptah, 19th Dynasty.
(After, Pinkoff, *The Book of Gates E.A*, p. 79.)

⁹¹ Guerra Méndez, C., (2022), p.60.

This rope gives birth to mysteries associated to the Sungod since “when Re appears the heads emerge which are in the rope”.⁹²

At the end these heads are identified with the mysteries of the Sungod. There is also a reference to the spiral shape since it is mentioned that “when the top of the heads emerges the rope becomes straight”.⁹³

The words of Re associate this scene with the concept of rebirth of Osiris and the Sungod perhaps represented by the human and falcon heads through their union probably represented by the *dmD* signs. Indeed, the central part of the Litany of Re refers to the “United One” (*DbA-dmD*) as the union of Ra and Osiris. Besides the word mystery (*sStAyw*) is also used into the corpse of Osiris.⁹⁴ (Fig. 25), (Fig. 26)

X.Ropes and snakes that are related to the concept of unification:

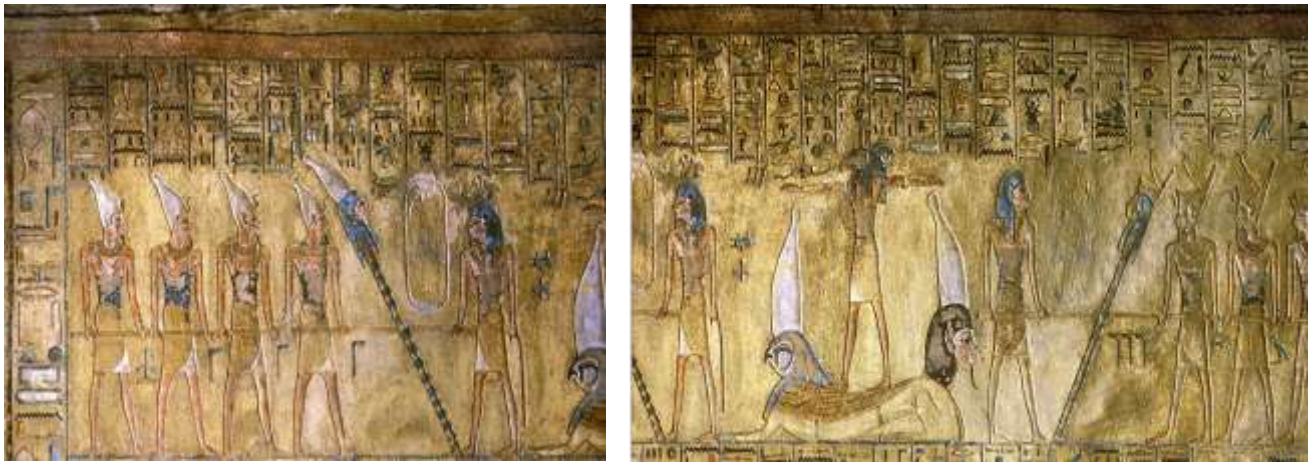


Fig.27, Double-headed sphinx flanked by two gods holding a rope, Tomb of Tawseret, 19th Dynasty.

(After, Hornung, *The Egyptian Book of Gates*, p. 337)

The scene displays a double-headed sphinx flanked by two gods without attributes holding a rope. They are called “He over the front-rope” and “He over the hind-rope” and after them there are two blended sticks with human heads crowned by the White and Red Crown respectively and indirectly mentioned in the text saying that “They stand up for Ra”.⁹⁵

On the other side of the ropes four uraeus-headed beings are depicted crowned by the White and Red Crown respectively. They are called “southern gods” (those of the White Crowns) and “northern gods” (those of the Red Crowns).⁹⁶

The text mentions the process of union of this god and the Sungod as it was argued depicting the union of Ra and Osiris in the darkest hour of the night.⁹⁷ However, in this case it may be

⁹² Redford (2001), pp. 296-299.

⁹³ Castel, E. (2001), pp. 354-357.

⁹⁴ Baines, J., (1995), p. 46.

⁹⁵ Adolf, E, Abt, T.&Hornung, E., BAR 2144 Oxford, (2010), p. 46.

⁹⁶ Wüst, R. A. J., (2000), Rock deterioration in the Royal Tomb of Seti I, Valley of the Kings, Luxor, Egypt, Eng. Geol. 58 (2), 2000, pp. 163-190.

⁹⁷ Castel Ronda, (2017), p. 83.


representing the unification of the Upper and Lower Egypt being the Sungod the maintainer of the reign union through his daily journey.⁹⁸ (Fig. 27)

Analysis

Through the previous scenes, many ideas and inquiries could be realized concerning **The Relationship between Ropes and Snakes during the Underworld Journey in the Book of The Gates**. These would mainly concentrate on:

The Relationship between Ropes and Snakes in the Book of The Gates	Importance	Similarities and Differences	Associated deities	Associated roles	The tomb
Ropes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Measuring tool of time. (Figs. n° 3,4) - Ropes are of key importance in the advance and rise of the solar boat a journey. (Figs. n° 6-11) - Pulled out of the mouth of the mummiform deity. (Fig. n° 5) - Tows the solar boat. (Figs. n° 6-11) - Relate with the action of capturing creatures. (Figs. n° 14,15) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Symbolic depiction. (Figs. n° 1-27) - Carried by gods. (Figs. n° 1-11) - Punishment. (Figs. n° 12-18) - The shape of time snake is closely related to the ropes. (Figs. n° 18-21) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Re (Figs. n° 6-15), (Fig. n° 18) - Atum (Figs. n° 20-23) - Twelve gods of underworld. (Figs. n° 1-4), (Figs. n° 6-11), (Fig. n° 14) - Re-Horakhty. (Figs. n° 13) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identified in the 12 carriers mirroring the 12 hours of the night. ((Fig. n° 5) - Management of the destruction of the damned. (Fig. n° 4) - Measuring of the time. (Figs. n° 1-5) - Punishment against Apophis. (Figs. n° 14-15), (Figs. n° 22-23) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thutmosis III (Figs. n° 9-11) Mernptah (Fig. n° 21), (Figs. n° 25-26) Seti I (Figs. n° 1-5), (Figs. n° 13-15) Ramses IV (Figs. n° 22-23) Ramses V/VI (Figs. n° 6-8), (Figs. n° 18-19) Tawseret (Fig. n° 27)
Snakes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Guardians and punishers as fiery creatures. (Figs. n° 16,17) - Spitting fire to the eyes of their victims. (Figs. n° 16,17) - Protecting these gods through fire. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Carried by gods. (Figs. n° 19,26) - Punishment. (Figs. n° 14-23) - Protect the barque of Sungod. (Figs. n° 6-9) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Re (Figs. n° 18-26), (Fig. n° 18) - Atum (Figs. n° 20-23) - Twelve gods of underworld. (Figs. n° 1-4), (Figs. n° 6-11), (Fig. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Associated with boats and travel of the Sun's journey. (Figs. n° 6-11) - Stopping the advance of the Sungod in his resurrection process. (Figs. n° 14,15), (Figs. n° 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thutmosis III (Figs. n° 9-11) Mernptah (Fig. n° 21), (Figs. n° 25-26) Ramses I (Fig. n° 20) Ramses IV (Figs. n° 22-

⁹⁸ David, R.,(2002), Religion and Magic in Ancient Egypt, London ,p. 97.

	(Figs.n° 16,17) - Necessary for the regeneration of the hours and the rebirth of the Sungod. (Fig. n° 25)		n° 14) - Re-Horakhty. (Figs. n° 13)	18-23)	23) Ramses V/VI (Figs. n° 23-24)
Ropes and Snakes	- Related to the concept of eternity. (Fig. n° 24) -Related to the concept of rebirth of Osiris and the Sun-God. (Fig. n° 26) - Related to the concept of unification. (Fig. n° 27) - Punishment. (Figs. n° 12-15) - The looped shape might the union of both concepts being a cycle which is repeated a great quantity of times. (Figs. n° 24,25)	- Carried by gods. (Figs. n° 1-11) -The punishment of the enemies of the Sungod. (Figs. n° 12-23) - Cyclic process of the Sun's journey. (Figs. n° 24-26) - Its shape is only comparable with the hieroglyphic signs  a rope. (Figs. n° 24,25) -The looped shape could relate to the concept of time. (Figs. n° 1-5), (Figs. n° 13-17), (Figs. n° 19-25) -Both elements are closely associated with time. (Figs. n° 1-5), (Figs. n° 13-17) -Both elements are symbolically linked. (Figs. n° 1-27)	-Re. (Figs. n° 6-10) - Atum. (Figs. n° 13-24) - Twelve gods of underworld. (Figs. n° 14,15), (Figs. n° 6-11) - Re-Horakhty (Figs. n° 13)	- Protect the carriers gods. (Figs. n° 3-4), (Figs. n° 7-8) - Condemned to the Place of Destruction. (Figs. n° 5,6) - Associated to the rise of the sun. (Figs. n° 1-27) -Punishment against the damned. (Figs. n° 12-23) -Identifying with the underworld gods. (Figs. n° 1-27)	Thutmosis III (Figs. n° 9-11) Mernptah (Fig. n° 21), (Figs. n° 25-26) Ramses IV (Figs. n° 22-23) Ramses V/VI (Figs. n° 6-8), (Figs. n° 18-19), (Figs. n° 23-24) Tawseret (Fig. n° 27)

Conclusions

The snakes and rope-carriers are symbolically linked. It seems that both elements are closely associated with time probably due to the length of both.

Ropes are mentioned to measure of the Duat and mentioned in the case of the snake from the lower register of the 5th hour some snakes related to time are also related to these measurements.

The punishment of the enemies of the Sungod in which both snakes and ropes are involved is considered as another important step in the Sungod's journey.

Both elements can sometimes seem linked as being identified with the underworld gods and destroying the enemies of the Sungod.

Ropes are also present along with knives in scenes of punishment and damnation of the chaotic forces. However, ropes are generally associated to concepts of time rejuvenation especially in the scenes of measurement of the underworld fields which are related to the concept of fertility, rejuvenation, and rebirth.

Snakes are closely related to the concept of time reversal. The chthonic forces which these beings represent are necessary for the regeneration of the hours and the rebirth of the Sungod.

It is also present in the necessary destruction and rebirth of the hours as can seen in the time snake whose shape is closely related to the ropes.

Ropes are of key importance in the advance and rise of the solar boat's journey that represent the cyclical course of the sun.

العلاقة بين الحبال والثعابين أثناء رحلة العالم الآخر في كتاب البوابات

المستخلص

من بين النصوص المصرية القديمة تكمن أهمية مجموعة من النصوص التي كانت تعرف حديثاً باسم كتب العالم الآخر . تصف هذه النصوص بشكل أساسي رحلة إله الشمس فيما يتعلق بأوزوريس في العالم السفلي بعد غروب الشمس الذي يمثل الموت. خدمت كتب العالم السفلي في المقام الأول أغراض توجيه وإرشاد وحماية المتوفى خلال رحلته في العالم الآخر و أثناء عصر الدولة الحديثة قد تم تقسيم كتابين فقط إلى اثنتي عشرة ساعة من الليل في كتاب الایمدوات وكتاب البوابات حيث كان كتاب البوابات هو النسخة الوحيدة من بين جميع كتب العالم الآخر التي تنقسم بواسطة البوابات إلى 12 قسماً تحرسها الثعابين التي تمثل الرحلة الليلية. يمر إله الشمس رع بنجاح عبر البوابة الأولى حيث يطلق على الثعبان الحارس للبوابة اسم ابتلاع الخطة ويكون رع محمي من قبل ثعبان الميهن. تظهر الحبال والثعابين في كتاب البوابات على وجه التحديد في الساعة 5 و 6 و 8 و 11 . يتم حمل الحبال والثعابين من قبل العديد من الآلهة خلال رحلة العالم الآخر. ترتبط العديد من هذه المناظر ارتباطاً وثيقاً بمفهوم الوقت. ربما يشير حبل القياس في حقول دوات إلى 12 ساعة من الليل. كان الحبل يعتبر رمزاً للحياة يدعمه الآلهة الاثني عشر ، لذا قد يشير حبل القياس إلى خصوبة ما وراء وولادة المتوفى من جديد. تشهد المعالجة الأيقونية والسياق الذي تشارك فيه الحبال والثعابين على وجود علاقة بين كلا العنصرين في كتاب البوابات. تتعكس هذه العلاقة في المعاني التي تمثلها. تعرض ساعات العالم الآخر الحبال التي تحملها عدة آلهة في تكوين وسياق مكافئين. يثبت الوجود القوي للثعابين في المصادر والأيقونات المصرية المكتوبة الانبهار المصري بهذه المخلوقات. من الواضح أن تصوير الحبال على أنها القارب الشمسي مرتبط برحلة العالم الآخر ولكن في نفس الوقت ، غالباً ما تعرض عناصر تتعلق بالساعات. عقاب أعداء إله الشمس الذي تشارك فيه كل من الثعابين والحبال والتي تعتبر خطوة مهمة أخرى في رحلة العالم الآخر. الهدف من الورقة البحثية هو الإشارة إلى أدوار الحبال والثعابين في ساعات العالم الآخر في كتاب البوابات.

الكلمات الدالة: الحبال _ الثعابين _ العالم الآخر _ ساعات _ كتاب البوابات.

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