

# On orientation and order of the cardinal points among the Egyptians

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submitted by MS Schott at the session of January 8, 1965<sup>1</sup>

The subject I propose to treat<sup>2</sup> is not new; For a century Egyptologists have been interested in the problems of orientation and cardinal points; the first substantial remarks, due to Chabas and Lepsius, go back to the years 1862 and 1865<sup>3</sup>. My task will therefore consist above all in bringing together the observations which have been made on this subject, as far as I have been able to collect them, and in trying to coordinate them. The abundance of material will oblige me to limit the examination to a selection of facts; neglecting in large part the discordant testimonies which it will always be possible to bring together and interpret separately, I will retain a few of those which harmonize and which can easily be explained by the most common orientation, that which was rooted in the customs of the Egyptians and which marked their language.

Studying the Map of the Gold Mines<sup>4</sup>, Chabas was the first to note that "*the drawing scribe placed the direction of the sea to his left. Now the Red Sea is to the east. The map is therefore oriented in the opposite direction to ours; the south instead of our north*", etc.<sup>5</sup> Around this remark, often repeated and which also applies to representations of the world<sup>6</sup>, other facts have been grouped to establish that the Egyptians were oriented towards the South. Some have assumed that the use was introduced into the Nile Valley by intruders from the North<sup>7</sup>; others have thought that the Mediterranean peoples among whom the same practice is observed would have borrowed it from Egypt<sup>8</sup>. These theories are skeptical: the southern

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<sup>2</sup>I would like to thank Messrs. E. Benveniste, J. Filliozat and C. Lévi-Strauss who helped me to understand how the subject that occupied me presented itself in a few fields other than Egyptology. My gratitude also goes to Mr. DA Kennedy who provided me with an abundant extra-Egyptological bibliography on the question.

<sup>3</sup>Bible. *Egyptological* 10, 223-230; *ZAS* 3, 9-13.

<sup>4</sup>See now the admirable color reproduction (partial) published by Scamuzzi, Museo Egizio di Torino, pl. 88.

<sup>5</sup>Bible. *Egyptological* 10, 223-224. - Goyon, *ASAE* 49, 337-392, wanted to interpret the map by taking its top for the North, which forced him to identify *jm* (the sea) with the Nile.

<sup>6</sup>Clere, *MDIAK* 16, 30-46; Edel, *Nachr. Göttingen* 1963, 4, 111-113. - Jastrow, *ZA* 23, 207, reported Arab and Italian maps also having the South at the top; he saw there a legacy of the Babylonian astronomers who oriented towards the South

<sup>7</sup>Brugsch, *Die Aegyptologie*, 29; Sethe *Nachr. Göttingen* 1922, 2, 241-242, see below, p. 72.

<sup>8</sup>Cf. Huisman, *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung* 71, 98 where one will find the bibliography.

orientation, widespread in the world<sup>9</sup>, is natural enough not to need an impulse from outside.

This orientation was perfectly suited to the inhabitants of a valley that stretches through the desert along the general South-North axis<sup>10</sup>. The Nile constituted for the residents a dividing line between East and West; the upstream represented the South and the downstream, the North. In local practice, the coincidence was rarely perfect, between Qeneh and Hou the river even flows towards the west. Nevertheless, by going up the current the Egyptian was sure to reach the South and by going down to reach the North. This is what ultimately counted and made the Nile, despite its curves, a sort of meridian<sup>11</sup>.

Many semantic facts show that the orientation to the South was fundamental in Egypt. For those who look towards the South, this cardinal point is in front and the North, behind. Also we use in toponymy the adj. *hnty* "earlier" in the sense of "southern" and the adj. *phwy* "posterior" to say "northern"<sup>12</sup>. Other words formed on the same roots are used to designate the southern and northern parts of a territory<sup>13</sup>. Derived prepositional phrases mark the limits: "beginning at — ending at" or "from — up to", the beginning being South and the end, North<sup>14</sup>. The secondary meaning is so well anchored in usage that the "front" is opposed to the proper term which denominates the North (*mh.t*)<sup>15</sup> or that the coastal and marshy zone of the Delta is called the "rear", term which will also be applied to the northern borders of the foreign countries of the North<sup>16</sup>. The verb *hnty*, lit. "to go forward" means "to sail upstream, to travel south"<sup>17</sup>.

The word "head", both "in front" and "top", is also used for the South<sup>18</sup>. We thus oppose *tp* "head" to *ph.t* "end" (North)<sup>19</sup>. The southernmost part of Upper Egypt is called the "southern head" (*tp-rs*)<sup>20</sup>. According to various

<sup>9</sup>See e.g. Frothingham, *AJA*, II Series, 21, 60-69; Tallqvist, *Himmelsgegenden und Winde*, 118-122.

<sup>10</sup>The observation also applies, to a certain extent, to Mesopotamia which also practiced the southern orientation. The Tigris and the Euphrates flow in a direction opposite to that of the Nile; the preference given to the South therefore did not depend on the direction of the current.

<sup>11</sup>If in everyday life the Egyptians were satisfied with an approximate, they were capable of great precision when it was a question, for example, of orienting their monuments, cf. Zaba, *Astronomical Orientation in Ancient Egypt*; Lauer, *BIFAO* 60, 171-183.

<sup>12</sup>Wb. III, 305, 6-8; I, 537, 6-8. Cf. Brugsch, *Die altäg. Völkertafel*, 26-27; Sethe, *oc*, 228.

<sup>13</sup>Wb. III, 306, 7 and 11; I, 538, 5. Cf. Gardiner, *The Wilbour Pap.*, II. Commentary, 26.

<sup>14</sup>Wb. III, 306, 9-10; I, 538, 6; Gardiner, *Gramm.*, § 179.

<sup>15</sup>Ayrton, *Abydos III*, 29, 3; see *Urk.* I, 101, 11 noted by Sethe, *Ie*

<sup>16</sup>Wb. I, 538, 12-539, 4.

<sup>17</sup>Wb. III, 309.

<sup>18</sup>For the correspondence between "front" - "rear" and the extremities of the body, cf. *hnt* "face", etc. (Wb. III, 302, 1-4) and *phwj* "behind", etc. (Wb. I, 535, 14--20).

<sup>19</sup>Cairo 20543, 10.

<sup>20</sup>Faulty transcription *tp-šm<sup>c</sup>* in Wb. IV, 473, 2-4; for the correct reading, cf. Gardiner, *JEA* 43, 6-9.

authors, the word *rs* "South" itself comes from the Semitic *r<sup>c</sup>s(š)* "head"<sup>21</sup>. In the same vein, we say "horns of the earth" ( *wp.t t3* ) when speaking of the southern reaches of the known world<sup>22</sup>. Contrary to the verb *hntj*, the verb means "to sail down the current, to go north"<sup>23</sup>; it would be tempting to bring it closer to the secondary formation verbs *šhd* and *šhdhd* which refer to the head down position<sup>24</sup>.

To the figurative uses of words correspond images. We read in the *Tale of Truth and Falsehood* this hyperbolic description of an ox: " *If it stood at Païeamoun (Tell el-Balamûn), the tuft of its tail would rest on the Thicket of papyrus ( P3-twfj ), one of its horns would be on the western mountain and the other one on the eastern mountain, the Great River being its resting place* "<sup>25</sup>. The giant beast, installed in the arm of the Nile, faces upstream<sup>26</sup>. Stobaeus notes that the earth, represented as a man, "has its head located towards the south of the universe"<sup>27</sup>. One wonders whether the custom, widespread in Egyptian prehistory, of burying the dead with their heads to the south is not also linked to the southern orientation. It is with boats as with men and beasts; Hatshepsut is "the front cable of Upper Egypt" and "the back cable of Lower Egypt"<sup>28</sup>. The ship faces upstream; this is the normal direction: *imj-wr.t* "starboard" is for west and *t3-wr* "port" is for east<sup>29</sup>.

The South being the direction of origin, the front, the beginning, the head, occupies the first place and precedes the North which is the back, the end. It is the most common order for the two cardinal points and also for all that pertains to the southern distinguished from the northern. Whether celestial or terrestrial regions and places, buildings or parts of buildings, winds, gods, men, wings ("horns") of an army, etc., those of the South normally precede those of the North<sup>30</sup>. This order is observed with rigor for all that relates to the double royalty; Upper Egypt is named before Lower Egypt<sup>31</sup>. The towns and provinces of the valley are enumerated down the stream, from South

<sup>21</sup>Eg. M. Müller, RT 31, 188; Albright, AJSL 34, 90; Farina, Aegyptus 6, 39; Tallqvist, oc, 112.

<sup>22</sup>Wb. I, 298, 3.

<sup>23</sup>Wb. III, 354-355.

<sup>24</sup>Wb. IV, 265, 8-266, 10; 267, 3-7.

<sup>25</sup>P. Beatty II, 9, 1-4; L.-Eg. Stories, 35. Cf. Gardiner, JEA 27, 158; Smither, JEA 27, 158-159; Bolte, *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 3, 172-173.

<sup>26</sup>The orientation of the terrestrial ox crosses that of the cow of the sky which is held from East to West according to the course of the sun.

<sup>27</sup>Transl. Festugière in Coll. Budé, *Corpus hermeticum* IV, fragment XXIV, 11.

<sup>28</sup>Urk. IV, 60, 6 and 8; see 1649, 16-17 (inaccurate copy).

<sup>29</sup>Wb. I, 73, 6-12; V, 230, 16-231, 3.

<sup>30</sup>Numerous examples in Sethe, Z.AS 44, 1-29, with a few cases of the reverse order.

<sup>31</sup>To explain this fact, we usually invoke considerations of precedence, historical reasons. If these motives existed, which is quite possible, they played out in a way that was self-evident. In any case, it seems difficult to attribute an essential importance to them and to want to explain the South-North order as well as the whole Egyptian orientation starting from the conquest of the Delta by the archaic kings of Upper Egypt.

to North<sup>32</sup>, as one normally enumerates the parts of the body from head to toe<sup>33</sup>. Elephantine and her nome, the southernmost in Egypt, are referred to as the "beginning"<sup>34</sup>. The verb *ḥdj* "to go down the current" always precedes *ḥntj* "to go up the current"<sup>35</sup> probably because it retains the starting point of the movement, that the first marks that which comes from the South and the second, that which comes from the North<sup>36</sup>.

For those who are oriented towards the South, the West is on the right and the East, on the left. The same root is used to designate the right side and the West ( *imn* ), the left side and the East ( *iʃb* )<sup>37</sup>; we have already noted these twin uses for "starboard" and "port". The Egyptian *imn* belongs to the Semitic stock ( *ymn* ) where it also means "right", but instead of being associated with the West, it is associated with the South, in accordance with the traditional orientation of the Semites in east direction. Instead of looking for a historical cause for this change of assignment<sup>38</sup>, we will rather see an adaptation of the primary meaning "right" to a different way of orienting oneself, already in use on the banks of the Nile.

The fact that West is the absolute right and East the left has influenced the order in which these cardinal points are normally classified. The Egyptians could have allowed themselves to be guided by the course of the sun and all the representations attached to it to place the sunrise before the sunset; it is not uncommon for them to do so. But they were more sensitive to the pre-eminence of the right over the left, which favors the reverse order. This pre-eminence, amply attested elsewhere<sup>39</sup>, already appears from the etymology of most of the terms which designate the two sides: the right is firm and useful, the left — bad, secondary, twisted and weak<sup>40</sup>. The place of honour, of trust is on the right hand; we have noted in this regard the title "fan-holder to the right of the king"<sup>41</sup> and proper names of the type "Montou-is-on-his-right"<sup>42</sup>. On the contrary, the name of the deserters, at

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<sup>32</sup>See e.g. Gardiner, *Onom.* I, 40.

<sup>33</sup>Grapow, *Grundriss der Medizin* I, 12; Lefebvre, *Table of Body Parts*, 2-3; CT VI, 391-392. See Firchow, *MIO* 1, 313-325.

<sup>34</sup>See Couroyer, *RB* 68, 527.

<sup>35</sup>Wb. III, 309, 8-11.

<sup>36</sup>See e.g. Sin. B, 271-272: " *Let the crown of Upper Egypt go down the current and let the crown of Lower Egypt go up the current so as to unite ...*".

<sup>37</sup>Wb. I, 85, 11-87, 13; 30.1-31.10; Brugsch, *Le.*; Sethe, *Nachr. Geittingen* 1922, 2, 197-242.

<sup>38</sup>Sethe, *oc*, 241-242; see above, p. 69.

<sup>39</sup>See e.g. Chantraine in *MNHMHE XAPIN. Gedenkschrift P. Kretschmer*, I, 61; Morenz, *ZAS* 82, 63, n. 1

<sup>40</sup>Sethe, *oc*, 198-200, 203-206. Note also that the right does not change its name, since the adoption of *wmmj*, while for the left we observe an instability and a renewal of vocabulary. To compare similar facts in ancient Greek where they are explained by the favorable character of the right, unfavorable of the left, cf. Chantraine, *oc*

<sup>41</sup>Wb. III, 246, 10.

<sup>42</sup>Chabas, *OC*, 228; *ZAS* 3, 9-10. Chabas makes the connection with the nouns of the type *Mntw-ḥr-ḥpš.f*, considering that *ḥpš*, "the arm which holds the sword", is the right arm.

the time of Psammetichus I, means, according to a tradition collected by Herodotus II, 30: "those who stand on the king's left hand"<sup>43</sup>. It is also known that the sun is the right eye of the supreme god, the moon — his left eye<sup>44</sup>, and the Pap. Ebers, 100, 3-4 teaches us that the right is associated with life, the left with death. Pending a systematic study of the representations and rules relating to the right and the left, these few facts, among others, show which of the two sides was entitled to first place<sup>45</sup>.

The auspicious nature of the right has contributed to making the setting sun, which corresponds to it and which is the normal sojourn of the dead, this *imn.t nfr.t*, hope of blessed survival. The expression has as its corollary this other cliché: "the good paths of the West", qualified *nfr.wt* because they are "large and convenient"; they oppose the roads of the East, "difficult and small"<sup>46</sup>. East, which is on the left, is dangerous for the dead man who hates it and does his best to avoid it<sup>47</sup>. Amon sends the culprit there and assigns the righteous to the West<sup>48</sup>, which is sometimes called the "region of life" *ꜥnh.t*.<sup>49</sup> The "classic" order of the two cardinal points will therefore be West-East<sup>50</sup>. Plutarch even attributes to the Egyptians the orientation facing West<sup>51</sup>.

The cardinal points are thus divided into two pairs whose components have their traditional place. To enumerate the whole, the Egyptians observe the distinction of the axes and place the fluvial before the solar, which gives:

<sup>43</sup>Cf. De Meulenaere, *Herodotos over de 26ste dyn .*, 41-42; Griffiths, *ASAE* 53, 144-149.

<sup>44</sup>Wb. I, 30, 12; 322, 15.

<sup>45</sup>See in particular Lepsius, *ZAS* 3, 12-13; Sethe, *oc*, 202-203. - In New Kingdom statuary, couples are most often represented with the man to the right of the woman, cf. Vandier, *Manuel III*, 439 and 441. This arrangement is not observed in earlier periods. On three occasions, Mycerinus is figured with Hathor on his right and the personification of a nome on his left, but in the Boston group Hathor has the king on his left and the nome of the Hare on his right, although this latter either small, cf. Vandier, *oc*, *Album*, pl. 4.

<sup>46</sup>CT II, 150g-i; see Kees, *Totenglauben* 2, 60

<sup>47</sup>Zandee, *Death as an Enemy*, 161. Cf. P. Beatty VIII v0, 4, 1; Yesterday. *Ostr.* I, 7, 5.

<sup>48</sup>Morenz, *ZAS* 82, 63-65.

<sup>49</sup>Wb. I, 205, 16.

<sup>50</sup>See below, p. 75, one example among many others where this order is observed although the course of the sun is evoked. The fact remains that the opposite order (East-West) is frequently encountered.

<sup>51</sup>From *Iside*, 32; see Chabas, *Bibl. Egyptological* 10, 225-226; Tallqvist, *Himmelsgegenden und Winde*, 119 and 122; Christopher, *ASAE* 48, 157-158. The goddess Nut and the cow in the sky have their heads on the sunset side, cf. above, p. 71, ri, 7. Note again that the West can occupy the first place among the cardinal points: cf. eg.: *Pyr.* 470b, 1588b-f, 1593b-d, 1598a-c, 1603b-d. Nevertheless Plutarch's assertion seems suspect. One wonders if the "sacred lament" of which he speaks and in which one sings that Osiris was born on the left and perished on the right does not in reality relate to the solarized Osiris, which would bring us back to the southern orientation (left - East, right - West). The glossator will have interpreted its source according to the Osiris-Nile and to do this identified the South where the river is born with the left, the North where it is lost in the sea with the right, the West thus becoming the point of target.

South-North-West-East. Transpositions are not rare<sup>52</sup> and the series can also receive complements. The "center of the earth" ( *ḥrj-ib t3* ) is<sup>53</sup> sometimes added to it and there is the rare expression: the "five parts" (of the world)<sup>54</sup>; elsewhere top and bottom or heaven and earth are added<sup>55</sup>. These developments will not lead to the constitution of a homogeneous and durable system of five or six<sup>56</sup> directions of space like those known to the Americanists. The Egyptians stick to the number four, a number considered sacred and which expresses the idea of totality<sup>57</sup>. To emphatically say "the whole earth", they use in recent texts the expression "the four of the earth"<sup>58</sup>.

The traditional order of districts is commonly observed in the enumerations of gods, human races, countries<sup>59</sup>; the limits of a lot or a building are often indicated in this order<sup>60</sup>; it is found when gods hasten to the four horizons to announce the arrival of the king<sup>61</sup> or when Amun turns in all directions to secure world domination for the pharaoh<sup>62</sup>. Universalist rites, such as the release of birds or the shooting of arrows, are repeated successively towards the South, the North, the West and the East<sup>63</sup>.

Each cardinal point has its own associations; some of them have already been indicated above. To learn more, consider this Ptolemaic example

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<sup>52</sup>We thus pass West-East before South-North; numerous examples in the Pyramid Texts, no doubt for religious reasons, cf. Pyr. 164--166; 464a; 470b; 554bc, etc. The pairs retain their internal cohesion. Side reports are relatively less frequent; we observe e.g. the South-West, North-East combination in the decoration of temples, cf. Sethe ap. Borchardt, *s* (a) *3ḥu-Re*<sup>c</sup> II. Text, 74-75. During the New Kingdom, there were many and varied disturbances.

<sup>53</sup>Wb. III, 138.4; in reality, in these examples, it is a question of "those who are in the center of the earth", distinguished from Westerners, Easterners, etc. In the topography of Egypt, the notion of the center is used in a particular way; to the South opposes the North (Delta) which is subdivided into West, East and "middle islands" (Central Delta), cf. pap. Ermitage 1116 A v<sup>o</sup>, 71, 75, 81-84, 88 sq. ; Wb.III, 137, 21; I, 47, 10; II, 408, 9. In the New Kingdom, after the four cardinal points or the four countries which represent them, one sometimes names the "islands in the middle of the sea", that is to say the Aegean islands. , examples in Vercoutter, *Egypt and the Aegean World*, 136-138.

<sup>54</sup>Urk. IV, 1239, 17

<sup>55</sup>Eg. Champollion, *Notes descr* . I, 212; II, 96---97; Medinet Habu, pl. 102, 1-19; Edwards, *Oracular Amuletic Decrees* II, pl. 2.54--55; Junker, ZAS 43, 116. Cf. Pyr. 1522a-b; y. Berlin P. 1269 r 0 , 2-3.

<sup>56</sup>Or seven, adding up all the possibilities.

<sup>57</sup>Sethe, *Von Zahlen und Zahlworten* , 31-33; De Wit, CoE 32/63, 35-39.

<sup>58</sup>This turn of phrase is also used for the sky or a specific country, Wb. I, 71, 2-4; Edfu III, 232, 14; Champollion, oc I, 112; Benedite, Philae, 64.5; Sauneron, RoE 15, 62.

<sup>59</sup>See below, p. 76---78; see also the description of the giant ox, supra, p. 71.

<sup>60</sup>Eg. Urk. IV, 2109, 19-22; Louvre C 297; stele Berlin 14998; Brit stele. Mus. 808; see Edfu VI, 117, 4; for demotic examples, cf. Couroyer, RB 68,528. See also four-door enumeration, Gardiner, JEA 24, 167.

<sup>61</sup>Pyr. 152-160.

<sup>62</sup>Champollion, oc, II, 96-97; *Reliefs and Inscr. at Karnak* , pl. 21b, 1-14.

<sup>63</sup>Gauthier, *The Feasts of the God Min*, 215-220 (in one example, East precedes West); Prisse, Mon. eg., pl. 33. Cf. Esna V, 296

indicating the vastness of the world: "South to the wind ( *t3w* ), North to darkness ( *kkw* ), West to (the place where) your disc sets, the East to (the place where) it rises"<sup>64</sup>. The wind, constantly mentioned to mark the limit of the South<sup>65</sup>, would be the boreas<sup>66</sup> and it should be understood: "as far as the North wind goes"<sup>67</sup>. Total darkness surrounds the world<sup>68</sup>, but it is not surprising to find darkness named especially about the North<sup>69</sup>. An Amarna definition of the northern limits gives the "light of the solar disk" ( *shd-wt(n)itn* )<sup>70</sup>, i.e. "as far as the light reaches". The extreme point to the north is where the light stops and where the night begins. Always for the same direction it is not uncommon to say: "The North to the ends of the sea" ( *w3d-wr* )<sup>71</sup>, by which we must understand, not the coasts of the Delta, but the opposite shores of the Mediterranean, lost in the distance. To shorten, we can omit South and North and say: "to the limits of the wind and the sea"<sup>72</sup>. The west and east of this world are naturally bounded by sunset and sunrise as seen in the quoted Ptolemaic text<sup>73</sup>. Moreover since the Middle Kingdom, the East is sometimes called the "rising" ( *wbnw* )<sup>74</sup>.

The relationship between the cardinal points and specific colors was not systematized among the Egyptians as in some other civilizations<sup>75</sup>. We hesitate to mention the names of aquatic surfaces, such as the "Great Black" ( *Km-wr* ) which designates the Bitter Lakes<sup>76</sup>, located for the Egyptians in the North, and the "Great Green" ( *W3d-wr* ) because this it is used indifferently for all the seas<sup>77</sup>. White is symbolic for Upper Egypt and red for Lower Egypt because the two kingdoms were distinguished by crowns of these colors<sup>78</sup>. The "red" [surface] is also the desert west and

<sup>64</sup>Edfu VII, 85, 16-86, 1.

<sup>65</sup>Wb. V, 351, 8; Hintze, ZAS 87, 39.

<sup>66</sup>or *Boreas*, in mythology: "north wind" (note from the author of this PDF).

<sup>67</sup>Grapow, *Bildl. Ausdrücke*, 42. On the North wind, the most important for the Egyptians, Stricker, *De overstroming van de Nijl*, 10 sq. ; De Wit, *CoE* 32/63, 25 sq.

<sup>68</sup>Cf. Hornung, *Studium Generale* 18, 78, with the bibliography.

<sup>69</sup>Wb. V, 143, 7. - The nocturnal sun traverses the subterranean regions located in the North and the diurnal sun sails in the southern sky, cf. Sethe, *Altäg. Vorstellungen vom Lauf der Sonne*, 7 and 25-26; compare Huisman, *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung* 71, 99-100.

<sup>70</sup>Sandman, *Texts from the Time of Akhenaten*, 8, 12. 14.

<sup>71</sup>Hintze, *Le*. - For the Egyptians, the North is aquatic; see above, p. 70, on the "marshy back" *phws tht shrsterize it*; see Wb. I, 539, 3-4, the expressions *phw* of the sea", *phw* of the water". The name of the Asian *3m.w*, race of the North, is explained by the play on words: *3mw* "is great the water...", Maystre-Piankoff, *Le Livre des Portes* I, 275. The very names of the North and Lower Egypt are taken from the root *mhj* "to drown, flood, swim", etc. Compare *Pyr.* 802a-b.

<sup>72</sup>*P.* Berlin 3056 v 0, 8, 11-12.

<sup>73</sup>For a somewhat different formulation, cf. eg. Brugsch, *Reise*, pl. 13.

<sup>74</sup>Wb. I, 294, 8; *RoE* 5.255. On the "rising" hapax *ly*, cf. Morenz, ZAS 82, 63-64.

<sup>75</sup>Especially in China and America; some traces elsewhere; see Huisman, *oc*, 98-99; Granet, *Chinese Thought*, 87 sq. ; Soustelle, *The Cosmological Thought of the Ancients. Mexicans*, 68-75.

<sup>76</sup>Wb. V, 126, 4.

<sup>77</sup>Wb. I, 269, 12-17; see Kees, *Farbensymbolik*, 436.

<sup>78</sup>Kees, *oc*, 434 sq.

east of Egypt<sup>79</sup>, itself called the "black" for the hue of its silt<sup>80</sup>. These examples, taken from among the most banal, show that there is no precise assignment of colors to directions. In certain rites four colors intervene, which is due to the sacred value of the number; the relation noted in this connection with the spaces seems secondary<sup>81</sup>. Egyptian thought pays little attention to this type of correspondence.

There is more to say about the distribution of human races and countries according to the cardinal points<sup>82</sup>. The easy solution consists in calling the peoples and the countries according to the names of the directions<sup>83</sup> or to resort for the West and the East to the names of the mythical regions, *M3nw* where the sun sets and *B3h* where it rises<sup>84</sup>. The difficulties begin when one wants to find real correspondents for the four regions; because, for the Egyptians, Asia is above all Palestine and Syria accessible by the isthmus of Suez and the Mediterranean; these lands belong to the North and, under these conditions, the Pharaonic State has no valid neighbors in the East. Moreover, the oldest list of Barbarians contains only three groups: The *Ṛwn.wt* in Nubia ( *štj* ), the Mneu *Mntw* in Asia ( *št.t* ), the *ḥ3.tjw-ᶜ* in Libya<sup>85</sup>. The enumeration follows the normal order of neighborhoods (S-N-O), which makes the absence of Orientals all the more noticeable. We will try to fill this gap on the occasion of changes and revisions to the nomenclature. For the South, we call for example the Nubians *Nḥšj.w*<sup>86</sup> or the country of Kush<sup>87</sup>; for the North, Asians *ᶜ3m.w*<sup>88</sup> or the country of Réténou<sup>89</sup> or *ḥ3rw*<sup>90</sup> or the "red (earth)" ( *dšr.t* )<sup>91</sup>. In the West, the *tmḥ.w*<sup>92</sup>, then the *Pjt*<sup>93</sup> replace

<sup>79</sup>Wb. V, 494, 5-11; see below, p. 77, on the "red earth" designating more specifically the northern regions.

<sup>80</sup>Wb. V, 126-127.

<sup>81</sup>Kees, oc., 470-479. - I am not dealing here with the question of the relationship between regions and months or hours. These combinations were introduced into Egypt from Babylonia only in the 6th-5th centuries BC, cf. Parker, *A Vienna Dem. pap. on Eclipse and Lunar-Omina*, 5-34; yet the Egyptians never clearly distinguished the notions of time and space, cf. Cerny, *ASAE* 42, 343-345.

<sup>82</sup>Subject addressed by Brugsch, *Die altag. Volkert afel*, 29-45.

<sup>83</sup>Urk. IV, 17, 1; P. Beatty IX v 0 B, 12.4; P. Salt 825, 15, 2-3; Parker, oc, 43.

<sup>84</sup>Eg. Junker, *Z.A.S* 43, 116; Wb. I, 422; II, 29. We know that *B3h*, before being located in the East, was a western mountain, Gardiner, *Onom.* I, 118\*.

<sup>85</sup>Sethe ap. Borchardt, *š (a) 3ḥ (u) -Re* II. Text, 72-73; see TC VI, 268 e.

<sup>86</sup>Eg.: the Middle Empire bewitchment texts of Berlin, Saqqara and Mirgissa, Sethe, *Die Achtung feindlicher Fürsten*, 25; Posener, *Princes and Countries*, 25; Piankoff, *The Book of Day and Night*, 51; Maystre-Piankoff, *The Book of Doors* I, 272 and 277.

<sup>87</sup>Eg. Sandman, oc, 37.1; Uriah IV, 1656, 6; Edfu VI, 133, 11.

<sup>88</sup>Same references as for *Nḥšj.w*; Wreszinsky, *Atlas* II, 182; Edfu VI, 1e.

<sup>89</sup>Eg. Urk. IV, 1094, 8.

<sup>90</sup>Eg.: Vercoutter, *Egypt and the Aegean World*, 137; Sandman, 1e

<sup>91</sup>And var., e.g.: *Medin and Rabou*, pl. 102, 8-9; *Reliefs and Inscr. at Karnak*, pl. 21b, 6-7; *Edfu* II, 28b, 18; 65, 14.

<sup>92</sup>Eg. Middle Kingdom bewitchment texts; Maystre-Piankoff, oc, 273 and 279; Edfu VI, 133, 11.

<sup>93</sup>Edwards, *Oracular Amuletic Decrees* II, pl. 3, 36; 25, 67; etc



the *ṯhnw.jw*, but in place of the Libyans we can put the Cretans<sup>94</sup>. To represent the deficient East, recourse is had in particular to the land of Punt<sup>95</sup> or to the *Mḏḗj.w*<sup>96</sup> or in the country of *ššsw*<sup>97</sup>; these solutions are not very happy because the land of spices like the homeland of the *Mḏḗj.w* are attached to the southern space, and Transjordan, home of the *ššsw*, to the North.

A satisfactory result is obtained only in cases where one wants to review all the races or countries and not only the foreigners because it is then necessary to mention the Egyptians. To do this, it is probably sufficient to add Egypt to the four regions<sup>98</sup>. It is more in keeping with the symbolism of numbers to express the totality by four names. Besides, three names cover all the Barbarians: we will add the Egyptians. Know where to place them. For understandable reasons, they are entitled to first place<sup>99</sup>, but tradition dictates that it is reserved for southerners and these bring in their wake the northerners and the westerners. Moreover, Easterners are, as we have seen, difficult to find and, after all, Egypt is located to the east of Libya. Still, certain documents of the canonical type list, in order: the Nubians (aka Nubia), the Asians (aka Asia), the Libyans (aka Libya) and finally the Egyptians (aka the Egypt<sup>100</sup>).

This classification intrigued me; trying to understand it led me to research, the results of which I have briefly explained to you.

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<sup>94</sup>Eg. Uriah IV, 1094, 9; see 616, 1-2.

<sup>95</sup>Eg.: Uriah IV, 1094, 7; 1657, 2; Medinet Habu, pl. 102, 14-15; *Reliefs and Inscr. at Karnak*, pl. 21b, 12-13. J. Assmann compares texts like Neugebauer-Parker, *Eg. Astronomical Texts I*, 44-46.

<sup>96</sup>Piankoff, *The Book of Day and Night*, 51; this text provides a good example of the distinction between the southern *Nḥsj.w* and the *Mḏḗj.w* of the eastern desert of Nubia, cf. Z.A.S 83, 38-43. In the *Book of Night*, the four barbarian races are represented by captives; next to it stand two groups of free men: the Egyptians called "men of the Black Country" (*rmṯ.w Km.t*) and the foreigners called "men of the Red Country" (*rmṯ.w dšr.t*), an expression that encompasses all barbarians. The situation is therefore more complex than is commonly thought. It seems that two traditions are juxtaposed, one unfavorable to foreigners, the other favorable and close to what we see in the *Book of Doors*, which also knows the binary distribution of humanity (*Km.t - dšr.t*), cf. Maystre-Piankoff, *oc I*, 273

<sup>97</sup>From Ramesses II: Vercoutter, *Ie.*; Wreszinski, *Ie.*; Edfu VI, 134.1. I borrow these examples from the doctoral thesis of the 3rd Cycle, defended by R. Givéon at the Sorbonne, in 1962, and still unpublished: *Les Bédouins Shosou des documents égyptiens*.

<sup>98</sup>Eg. P. Salt 825, 15, 2-3.

<sup>99</sup>Eg. Maystre-Piankoff, *oc*, 272 and 275; v. Bissing, *Denkmaler*, 33A; it is not impossible that, on this relief of Mentouhotep II, the Egyptian was moved from the last place to the first to be the one struck by the king; the traditional theme would have been adapted in this way to historical reality because the reunifier of Egypt mainly fought his compatriots. In this case, the example would be added to the following.

<sup>100</sup>Eg. Middle Kingdom bewitchment texts; Prisse, *Mon. eg.*, pl. 32, 1. Order modified in Edwards, *Ic: Asiatics, Nubians, Libyans, Egyptians*.

