

The Festivals of Opet, the Valley, and the New Year

Their socio-religious functions

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For my parents

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Abbreviations

Below are listed abbreviations to be used in this study, other than those listed in *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*, which was edited by Otto and Helck (1975). Numbers in bold refer to the dated records presented at the end of this study as Appendix 1. References to museum collections are indicated in abbreviated forms for the sake of the page limitation. In particular, those in possession of the Cairo Museum are to be understood as belonging to either Journal d'Entrée (JE) or Catalogue General (CG).

2PA: second-priest of Amun

A: Amenhotep

Abusir: Abusir series published by the Czech Institute of Egyptology, 1977-, Praha.

App.: Appendix

DB: Deir el-Bahari

DeM: Deir el-Medina

Epag.: Epagomenal Days

F.: Festival

Façade: Epigraphic Survey, *The façade, portals, upper register scenes, columns, marginalia, and statuary in the colonnade hall*, OIP 116, Chicago, 1998.

HP: high-priest

HPA: high-priest of Amun

Khonsu: Epigraphic Survey, *The temple of Khonsu*, OIP 100-, Chicago, 1979-.

KRI: K. Kitchen, *Ramesside inscriptions*, 8 vols, Oxford, 1975.

Kheruef: Epigraphic Survey, *The tomb of Kheruef*, OIP 102, Chicago, 1980.

LD: R. Lepsius, *Denkmaeler aus Aegypten und Aethiopien*, 12 vols, Berlin, 1849.

MH: Medinet Habu

MH: Epigraphic Survey, *Medinet Habu*, OIP 8-, Chicago, 1930-.

MHC: Medinet Habu calendar

NY: New Year

Opet: Epigraphic Survey, *The festival procession of Opet in the colonnade hall*, OIP 112, Chicago, 1994.

R: Ramses

RIK: Epigraphic Survey, *Reliefs and inscriptions at Karnak*, OIP 25-, Chicago, 1936-.

T: Thutmose

TIP: Third Intermediate Period

Wb: A. Erman and H. Grapow, *Wörterbuch der aegyptischen Sprache*, 7 vols, Leipzig, 1926.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1. Introduction

1.1.1. Aim

This study will focus on and examine three Theban festivals in the New Kingdom. In doing so, I aim to shed additional light both on the dynamics of the interaction between the god, king, and those present, and on religious and social benefits that the festival participants gained from these celebrations. The processional appearance of the god, made by both land and river, was one of the main features of Egyptian celebrations. It was when an ostentatious journey was taking place, including royal excursions, expeditions, and the transport of magnificent monumental objects, that a wider audience than that usually limited to designated individuals could witness and access to the divine and/or the royal; a spectacle and public ceremony being performed in a broader arena.¹

Looking at public display, I will begin my exploration with the Opet Feast because it involved the barque processions of the Theban triad on both the paved street and the Nile between the temples of Karnak and Luxor. These temples were located in the residential area of Thebes, and the processions appeared in a setting accessible to any who sought the earthly image of Amun. Reciprocal relations between the god/king and people were more clearly visible at public celebrations. The underlying purpose was to distribute benefaction from the divine/royal to the subjects, often expressed in the forms of *ʕnh* 'life' and *ṯ3w n ʕnh* the 'breath of life',² in order to promulgate the legitimacy of their authority as a world ruler.³ People were requested to follow the world order *Maat*,⁴ which had been established since time immemorial and maintained in the succession of rulers by upholding piety, allegiance, social responsibilities, and goodness. This was partly achieved through oracular sessions during the Opet Festival in order to deliver the divine power by more effective means through lego-judicial process.

Such a socio-religious function may argue for the possibility that other celebrations also incorporated

divine-human reciprocity, but in different forms. Hence, for reasons presented in 1.1.3, I select both the Festivals of the Valley and the New Year to compare their performative and theoretical domains with those of the Opet Feast. The former two celebrations are particularly significant regarding the mortuary cult that also encompasses the realm of the dead, and broader geographical locations including western Thebes, thus providing more idealized and theoretically all-embracing contexts.

1.1.2. Research background

The mythological, theological, and ideological aspects of formal Egyptian religion have long drawn attention not only from scholars, but also from the general public. However, our knowledge of social, economic, and public sides of religiosity is limited.⁵ Studies of the characteristics of festivals witnessed by a wider audience are few; Černý's (1927) work on the cult of Amenhotep I at western Thebes, and more recently Jauhainen's (2009) on those celebrated at Ramesside Deir el-Medina. Despite a narrow range of corpus included, the latter work is significant in focusing on the functions, rather than the meanings, of celebrations.

Some textual evidence bears witness to larger celebrations that took place not only within a single community, but also inter-communally, involving different social, ideological strata, ranging from the divine and crown to the dead. Gods and the king revealed themselves from temples or the palace. Hence, P. BM 10059 (recto, XVI, 1-4), an Eighteenth Dynasty prophylactic document, described a person wishing to attend festive excitement at Thebes, where Amun, the king, and people were all present.⁶ By involving people in acting as part of normative occasions, festivals functioned as a vehicle for converging and consolidating society. In particular, official celebrations embodied social order in their modality, periodicity, and publicness. These characteristics enhanced commitment and participation on the part of the general public to affirm self-identification as social and

¹ Baines 2006: 271-6; Stadler 2008: 3.

² Assmann 1983b: 178-80.

³ Assmann (1983b: 250-63) also proposes that the god embodied three essential elements of light, water, and air. This triad of divine nature was also evident in the descriptions of the king's role in the Middle Kingdom, but its canonical formulation was completed in the Twentieth Dynasty, when each element was equated to heaven, the underworld, and earth.

⁴ Teeter 1997: 89-90.

⁵ Studies of popular religion, for example, broadly began in 1960s, one of the major works being Fecht's (1965), and have since made some progress in certain areas, such as votive objects, magical practices, pilgrimages, oracles, and prophylaxes. See Baines and Froot 2011: 1-3, and Baines 1991: 184-5, n. 163 for references to earlier works. Among the earliest authors, who explored the popular aspect of religion, were Erman (1911), who first coined the term 'persönliche Frömmigkeit', Breasted (1912: 344-70), and Gunn (1916). Also see Sadek (1987) for a more recent and general study of popular religion.

⁶ Leitz 1999: 82, pl. 41.

cultural beings. This is what Baines and Yoffee (1998: 236) defines as one of the components of ‘high cultures’ that were essential to civilizations but possessed by the elite only. They (ibid., 234) stress the inequality and exclusiveness of the high culture that overrode the ‘moral economy’ sustained only in small communities.⁷ Quite differently, Richards (2000: 39 and 43–5) demonstrates that the high culture was emulated and exploited by non-elites by the Middle Kingdom, when they benefited from its accessibility and participation in the system that was geared to the moral economy.

Despite the significance of religious celebrations with regard to their public aspects and functions as a social bond, few studies have explored Egyptian festivals individually. Some major scholarly works on certain celebrations are still referred to on a frequent basis, but most of them are now almost half a century old, and seem to require some revision, further supplementation with recent discoveries, and new interpretations (see the research history section of each following chapter). New Kingdom Theban festivals can be explored in far greater details than those celebrated at other cities of any period. This owes a lot to the geographical extent of Thebes defined by intact large temple remains and still visible processional routes, coupled with considerable progress in documentation of temple reliefs and tomb paintings in recent years.

Due to the lack of archaeological and textual evidence related to the general public as is the case for other ancient cultures, my exploration confines itself largely to examining elite performances. When ‘people’ are referred to, I use the word to designate social classes belonging not only the inner elite group, which is a decision-making body, but also broader and more marginal groups including lower elites, such as local officials, lay priests, and scribes, as well as those who do not own an official title but belong to the machine of state administration, such as soldiers, workmen, and perhaps skilled foreigners.⁸ The peculiar absence of, or little attention to, burials for non-elites in Egyptological literatures is coined by Richards (2005: 51–3) as the ‘Tomb Problem’, largely resulting from (the) negligence on the part of scholars. She argues for a possibility to obtain more insight into, for instance, the middle class in the Middle Kingdom by integrating archaeological and textual evidence more extensively. My theoretical approach does not rule out this possibility, and in some cases ‘people’ may broadly mean non-divine beings encompassing the royal to the lowest classes of society. This is my hypothesis and a possible area for future research to seek that all the populace had access to the divine to variable extent and was part of the mortuary

landscape; ritual performances and the ownership of burials.

1.1.3. Selection of the festivals to be examined in this study

One might gain the impression that the Egyptians were fond of having many religious celebrations performed throughout the year. The classic image of a pious people, portrayed for example by Herodotus (*Histories* II, 58–9), may or may not represent reality.

The incomplete yet most detailed Medinet Habu calendar lists eight monthly festivals and, at least, 25 annual ones (Appendix 1). This shows that out of 365 days, more than 180 days were spent for celebrations during the reign of Ramses III, if eight monthly feasts are also taken in consideration (8x12=96). Given that these festivals lasted more than one day, the Egyptian year was undoubtedly awash with religious events. One may wonder whether or not these feasts involved the majority of society in merrymaking, bringing other economic and social activities to a halt.

If the number of consumed divine offerings is taken as an indicator of the scale of each festival, several festivals recorded in the Medinet Habu calendar can be considered to be important occasions. The number of major feasts can be narrowed down to six as listed below when those commemorating historical achievements made by Ramses III are excluded, and some performances are considered part of a series of rituals comprising a single feast.

1. Opet Festival (II Akhet–III Akhet);
2. Khoiak Festival (IV Akhet–I Peret);
3. Festival of the Two Goddesses (I Peret);
4. Festival of Lifting-Up the Sky (II Peret–III Peret);
5. Festival of Entering the Sky (III Peret–IV Peret);
6. Valley Festival (II Shemu).

Comparing the offering quantities and durations, the Festivals of Opet and Khoiak stand out. P. Harris I (XVIIa, 3–5) records that Ramses III established new endowments for ‘monthly and annual festivals’ at Thebes. However, only the Opet Festival and the celebration of his accession anniversary are specified.⁹

Other significant evidence for the Theban celebrations is a private statue of a Horsaaset, dated to the Twenty-Second or Twenty-Third Dynasty, found at Karnak temple.¹⁰ The text carved on this statue is of a unique

⁷ Also see Baines 2013: 7–8 for the limitation and exclusiveness of the high culture.

⁸ For a brief summary of social hierarchies, see Frood 2010b: 476.

⁹ Erichsen 1933: 21; Grandet 1994, vol. 1, 246.

¹⁰ Statue Cairo 42210 discovered from the cachette of Court I at Karnak (PM II², 150; Jansen-Winkel 1985, vol. 1, 63–82, vol. 2, 462–69; *idem* 2007, vol. 2, 234; Spalinger 1996, 74).

nature because it includes some festivals that are not normally included in private festival lists. It records:

1. His Beautiful Festival of *wꜣ nꜣr* the ‘Opening of the God’ (error for *wꜣy-rꜣp.t* ?);
2. His Beautiful Festival at *ip.t rꜣsy.t* ‘Southern Opet’;
3. His Beautiful Festival of *nꜣhb-kꜣ.w* ‘Nehebkau’;
4. His Beautiful Festival of *nb wꜣꜥ n nm nꜣsw.t* (reading uncertain);
5. His Beautiful Festival of *ꜥb ꜥnꜣsw* the ‘Khonsu Festival’;
6. His Beautiful Festival of *ꜥb in.t* the ‘Valley Festival’;
7. His Beautiful Festival of *ip(.t) ꜥm.t=s* ‘Ipe(t), Her Mistress’.

These seven festivals, when the statue of Horsasaset received divine offerings originating from Amun of Karnak, seem to be listed in calendrical order, roughly corresponding to:

1. I Akhet;
2. II Akhet–III Akhet;
3. IV Akhet–I Peret;
4. III Peret ? (Festival of Amenhotep I ?);
5. I Shemu;
6. II Shemu;
7. IV Shemu.

The Festivals of Opet and Khoiak were still of some importance in the Ptolemaic Period. The geographical list carved on the sanctuary of Edfu temple, dated to the time of Ptolemy VI, records all the Egyptian nomes as well as their principal towns and representative local festivals. For the Theban nome,¹¹ four celebrations are specified: the Festivals of Opet, Khoiak, I Shemu, and II Shemu, the last two of which are likely to be associated with the Feasts of Khonsu and the Valley.¹² A geographical list parallel to this is attested from scattered hieratic papyri discovered at Tebtynis, where the Theban festivals are written as: ‘II Akhet, Amenopet, II Shemu, Khoiak.’¹³ At face value, four festivals are referred to here. However, they are not listed in chronological order and the first two entries might represent one and the same event. Thus, it cannot be securely confirmed how many celebrations are recorded here. Be that as it may, ‘II Akhet’ and ‘II Shemu’ most probably represent the Festivals of Opet and the Valley.

Hence, Thebes was traditionally regarded as embracing at most four feasts by later times. This was perhaps the case for the New Kingdom, including the Festivals of Opet and the Valley. These celebrations were

considered to be a pair, as seen in some textual and pictorial evidence that records them in remarkable juxtaposition (1.3.3).¹⁴ From the New Kingdom onwards, the civil months in which the two festivals fell were named after these festivals—*pꜣ-n-ip.t* ‘the (month) of Opet’ and *pꜣ-n-in.t* ‘the (month) of the Valley’—and, despite their later emergence and local origins, these designations survived in the Coptic month names, Phaophi and Payni. These two festivals represented life and death respectively, and had inverse characteristics in some respects, particularly in the orientations of their processional routes (south and west) and associations with the seasonal cycle (the Nile’s increase and recession).¹⁵ The significance of the Festivals of Opet and the Valley is also indicated by the larger amount of evidence relating to them, compared with other festivals.

Lastly, the New Year celebration will be included in this volume, instead of the Festivals of Khoiak and I Shemu, for the following four reasons. First, abundant evidence is available to explore this celebration of the New Kingdom although only the Ptolemaic-Roman Period has been a focus of scholarly works. Second, it is manifest that the New Year Feast embraced rituals parallel to those performed at the Sed Festival and the Khoiak Festival, both of which celebrated the renewal of the kingship and were so deeply embedded in Egyptian ideology that they were ubiquitously referred to in literature and representations.¹⁶ Therefore, it is not surprising to find many characteristics of the New Year in association with these age-old royal celebrations (4.2.1.2 and 4.3.3). Third, fiscal functions of the New Year are evident and it boasted about a wider range of activities than the Khoiak Feast, to which several studies have already been devoted.¹⁷ Fourth, unlike the Khoiak

¹⁴ Red Chapel (Lacau and Chevrier 1977, vol. 1, 154–204, vol. 2, pl. 7; Burgos and Larché 2006, vol. 1, 43–53, 59–65, 95–9, and 108–14); Great Hypostyle Hall at Karnak (Nelson 1981, pls 258–9 and 262–3); Medinet Habu (MH III, pl. 138, col. 36; Nelson and Hölscher 1934, 12 for translation). Also see the southern interior wall in the first court of the temple of Medinet Habu, where we find the ‘window of appearance’ sandwiched between two doorways, each depicting the Valley Festival and the Opet Festival (MH II, pl. 239; MH IV, pl. 237). In a text from the tomb of Amenemheb (TT 85), who was in charge of the royal barge, he is referred to as taking part in the Festivals of the Valley and Opet (PM I-1², 172 (7)).

¹⁵ Fukaya 2007, 99–104.

¹⁶ Leitz 1994a, 428; Spalinger 1994b, 303–4.

¹⁷ Loret (1882, 1883, and 1884) published three articles on this feast. He essentially focused on translating inscriptions accompanying the scenes of the Osiride rituals at Dendera. This text was later compiled with other parallels from different Ptolemaic temples by Junker (1910). The first attempt to explore the Khoiak Festival in its own right was made by Wohlgemuth (1957). Chassinat (1966) examined mythical rituals performed at Dendera. Following this, Gaballa and Kitchen (1969) primarily investigated the Medinet Habu reliefs depicting the Sokar Festival and covered principal, but not all, textual and pictorial evidence from the Old Kingdom to the New Kingdom to delineate the sequence of this festival. Mikhail (1983) devotes his thesis to liturgical texts with regard to the sacred performances of the festival. His overview of the relation between the myth and ritual is particularly useful. More recently, Graindorge-Hérel (1992, 1994,

¹¹ *Edfou I*, 338: 5–9, XV, pl. 9, b. Spalinger (1992, 14) maintains that the entries may represent month names, rather than festivals.

¹² Klotz 2012, 39, n. k.

¹³ PSI inv. I 2+P. Carlsberg 54+P. Tebt. Tait Add. 1 a–f+P. Berlin 14412i (Osing and Rosati 1998, 33; Osing 1998, 268; Klotz 2012, 34).

celebrations, the Festival of I Shemu is far less attested (to) and difficult to catch a glimpse.¹⁸ A difficulty lies in singling out this feast from surviving evidence. There was more than one celebration that fell in I Shemu: the Festivals of Min (966, 987, 1041, and 1060), of Amun (979, 986, and 1037), of Renenutet (961–2 and 966), and of Khonsu (1014). The first two feasts were probably one and the same event, and called the ‘Festival of I Shemu’ because both were associated with the new moon. However, another issue remains regarding the recondite identities of Amun and the ithyphallic god Min. It is only Gauthier (1931) and Bleeker (1956) who endeavored to examine the Min Festival, but many difficulties still lie in the highly theological association of Amun with Min and their numerous representations, which often alternate in consecutive scenes.¹⁹ Whether Min was worshipped in his own right or possessed a distinctive form of cult at Thebes also remains in the realm of conjecture, although Ricke (1954) identified a temple to the north of the Mut precinct of Karnak with a temple devoted to Min.²⁰ The festival of the goddess Renenutet was associated with the harvest and, according to the Medinet Habu calendar, fixed to I Shemu 1 (962). The cult of Khonsu is far more elusive. Although I Shemu was called *p3-n-hnsw* ‘the (month) of Khonsu’, a feast celebrated exclusively for this moon god is hardly attested in texts (the aforementioned statue of Horsaaset and 1014, both dating from after the New Kingdom). It cannot be ruled out that his festival overlapped with the Min Feast in their lunar natures. However, full moon festivals, which are, unlike new moon celebrations, hardly attested with a specific date, are also known to have fallen in I Shemu from two sources of the Ptolemaic Period (1063–4). Hence, it is difficult to conclude whether these celebrations were associated with one another and, if so, in what way.

1.1.4. Material evidence and methodological approaches

In search of surviving evidence of the Festivals of Opet, the Valley, and the New Year, three large corpora are essential to this study. First, temple reliefs and inscriptions are the main sources of information about

and 1996) has published a few works on subjects relating to this feast. She places her emphasis broadly on the theological aspects of the god Sokar and the relevant Osiride myth and rituals, performed not only in IV Akhet, but also in other months. Finally, Klotz (2012, 392–98) explores this celebration at Roman Thebes, focusing on a significant role played by Mentu of Armant.

¹⁸ Following Legrain (1900), Kruchten (1989) compiles graffiti left at the Akh-menu, most of which are dated to the Third Intermediate Period, and demonstrates that the appointment of priests and officials took place at Karnak temple during this festival.

¹⁹ Other minor studies on the Min Feast are: Müller (1906), Lacau (1953), Wessetzky (1984), and Feder (1998) on the ritual of the *s^ch^r shn.t* ‘erecting the *shn.t*-pole’, a characteristic of the cult of this god; Jacobson (1939, 28–40) on the relation between Min and the kingship; Munro (1983) on the tent sanctuary of Min; Moens (1985) on the origin and meaning of Min’s stairway; Defossez (1985) on lettuces figured beside Min.

²⁰ PM II², 275–6.

official rituals pertaining to the cults of Amun and the kingship. In particular, Karnak is of prime importance because the three celebrations took place there, but each perhaps in a distinctive precinct. Processions departed this temple for Luxor to the south at the Opet Feast, and for Deir el-Bahari to the west at the Valley Feast. This is represented in the distribution and orientations of reliefs depicting the two celebrations within Karnak (1.3.3). This also proves true for New Year representations and textual references located in the northern area of Karnak. Their locations, which may represent the direction of Heliopolis seen from Thebes, are corroborated by certain Heliopolitan traits of this celebration (4.3.5.1). By combining various characteristics underlying ritual performances, myth, ideology, and ideals with archaeological evidence, such as temple sites and processional routes, more secure evidence can be obtained in order to locate a hitherto unspecified depiction representing a given celebration. I will use this approach in the hope that further insights into other celebrations may be gained for future research.

Second, representations in the Theban private tombs are related to mortuary cults and several of them are relevant to the Festivals of the Valley and the New Year, when a banquet was performed by a family for the dead. Iconographic features and phraseology are relatively uniform and it is difficult but not impossible to locate representations depicting these festivals. Unlike spacious temples, tombs had only a limited space and thus representations were often amalgamated or highly standardized. Their orientations alone, for example, can hardly signify a subject depicted. My approach towards the tomb representations of the Festivals of the Valley and the New Year is therefore based on weighing the occurrence of certain characteristics against one another rather than seeking exclusive elements. Hence, I attempt to tabulate them to see which element is more attested for which festival. This is only possible for Thebes, where more than 400 private tombs survive in a limited area.

Third, further insights can be given by compiling dated records of religious events together with other different sources, including work journals. Such a scholarly attempt was previously made by Schott (1950), who collected 160 textual records. One can draw more accurate pictures by developing his method. Hence, my examination will broadly count on my own concordance (Appendix 1), which contains about 1400 dated records listed in chronological order. This approach enables us, for example, to identify a cluster of events that fall within a particular time of the year with a festival which is known only from temple calendars. By combining several isolated texts in this way, one can first glimpse a wider context of a given

celebration. This is particularly useful for locating celebrations associated with the lunar cycle, whose dates were usually not recorded because they varied from year to year. The popular and functional aspects of the Theban festivals are evidenced by short accounts of a number of ostraca and graffiti chiefly discovered on the West Bank of Thebes. They record, for instance, visits of high officials, reward givings, and deliveries of divine offerings at festivals, and thus bear witness to an administrative and social link between a community and the state, plus an ideological link between the god and people.

1.2. Overview of Egyptian calendrical systems and festivals

Just as in our own time, Egyptians had various designations for festivals, depending on their nature, location, scale, significance, etc. The word *hb* was usually used in texts, but *wp* could also mean ‘festival’ from the New Kingdom onwards.²¹ Wilson (1997, 224) says that *wp* had originally denoted *wpy-rnp.t* the ‘New Year’ and later became a verb ‘to celebrate (a festival)’, development akin to *sd* which derived from *hb sd* the ‘Sed Festival’ but came to denote ‘to celebrate’ as a verb (ibid., 973). However, one may bear in mind that *wp* was used to denote the beginning of each civil month in accounting texts in the Old and Middle Kingdoms.²² While *hb* was used to refer to a specific festival in its own right, *wp* was perhaps a term for regular celebrations in general, or their recurrence. Hence, a *wp* is rarely attested with a specific date, except O. Ashmolean 70, dated to I Peret 1 in the time of Ramses IV (570). It may refer to the Khoiak Feast, but it is not impossible that it simply marks the beginning of the month, when a festival usually took place.

Festivals that were celebrated on a large scale were called *hb.w n p.t n t3 tp rnp.t* ‘annual festivals of the sky and of the land’²³ or *hb m t3 dr=f* the ‘festival in its entire land’.²⁴ The conceptualization of the entire world involved in these festivals gives rise to another category of celebrations that are smaller in scale and designated differently. Due to the limitation of sources, little is known about such festivals, particularly local ones.²⁵

²¹ *Wb* I, 304, 12–3; Jauhainen 2009, 243–6.

²² For the Old Kingdom, see Abusir X, 127 and 151 (Reneferef archive) and Posener-Kriéger and de Cenival 1968, pls 36, 40, 50, and 84 (Neferirkare archive). For the Middle Kingdom, see James 1962, pl. 17 A (a papyrus from Deir el-Bahari). In one of the Heqanakht papyri, *wp* appears as a regular supply at the beginning of each decade (James 1962, 33, pl. 6 A, col. 32; Allen 2002b, 17, pl. 30, l. 32). For other references, see Dunham 1938, 5, n. 9.

²³ First attested in the Second Intermediate Period (Hannig 2006, vol. 2, 1642, 20076).

²⁴ 190, 753, 1063–4, 1416, etc. P. Leiden I 344 (recto, XIV, 4), dated to the Nineteenth Dynasty, includes unclear signs that may be read as *hrw hb t3* (Enmarch 2005, 55 for transcription and photograph; *idem* 2008, 238 for transliteration and translation).

²⁵ Some local festivals are known, such as the ‘*dsr-t3* Festival’

Even major sites, such as Memphis, Heliopolis, Asyut, and those in the Delta, have been severely reduced by environmental changes and urban development.²⁶ As a result, apart from the Medinet Habu calendar, temple calendars survive mainly from the Ptolemaic-Roman Period. These later sources tell us that the festival calendar was called either *rn n hb.w* the ‘name of the festivals’ or *rh hb.w* the ‘list of the festivals’.²⁷

During the Old Kingdom, some celebrations took place at the interval of several years, such as the Sokar Festival celebrated every six years,²⁸ and the less-known ‘Festival of *d.t*’ at the interval of an unspecified period.²⁹ The former feast later came to be performed annually. Hence, the Sed Festival remained the only celebration that had a long cycle of 30 years.³⁰ Little is known of festivals celebrated at the interval of less than a year, apart from the Decade Ritual celebrated every ten days (3.2.2) and a few monthly festivals based on the lunar cycle. In the Medinet Habu calendar, lunar festivals are listed first, followed by civil-based celebrations. The former are called *hb.w n p.t hpr* the ‘festivals of the sky that occur’ and the latter *hb.w tp tri* the ‘seasonal festivals’.³¹

1.2.1. Monthly festivals

The earliest surviving lunar celebration is the one that took place on day 6, which is recorded on the Palermo Stone.³² The Pyramid Texts mention the 1st, 2nd, 6th, 7th, and 15th lunar days, on which rituals were performed.³³ The private offering formulae appear to attest the 1st and 15th days more often than other lunar celebrations.³⁴

The number of lunar days recorded in the Lahun papyri of the Middle Kingdom is limited. The most often recorded are the 1st, 2nd, and 15th days, as well as the less frequent 4th day.³⁵ Spell 557 of the Coffin Texts is

evidenced by two Old Kingdom graffiti at el-Kab (Vandekerckhove and Müller-Wollermann 2001, vol. 1, 41 and 47; Strudwick 2005, 162). The festival of the god Dewen-Anwy (*Dwn-nwy*) is attested in a letter to the dead (P. MFA 04.2059), dated to the First Intermediate Period, from Naga ed-Deir (Simpson 1999, 393–4).

²⁶ Minor festival lists are known for the cities of: Buto under Thutmose III (Bedier 1994a); Sais under Ptolemy III (Grenfell and Hunt 1906, vol. 1, 138–57); Tanis, dated to the first century AD (Griffith and Petrie 1889, 21–5, pls 9–15); Abydos under Thutmose III and Ramses II; Tod perhaps under Ramses III; Armant possibly under Thutmose III; Elephantine under Thutmose III (see el-Sabban 2000 for these last calendars). Also see 1.1.3, for geographical lists of later periods which include local celebrations.

²⁷ Grimm 1994a, 18.

²⁸ Gaballa and Kitchen 1969, 15, n. 1.

²⁹ Wilkinson 2000, 102.

³⁰ Hornung and Staehelin 2006, 39–40.

³¹ *MH* III, pls 148 and 152.

³² Wilkinson 2000, 153; Krauss 2006, 386.

³³ PT 373, Pyr. 657b–c; 408, Pyr. 716a–b; 437, Pyr. 794a–b; 552, Pyr. 1260a; 610, Pyr. 1711b; and 684, Pyr. 2056c.

³⁴ Barta 1968, 10.

³⁵ Luft 1992, 27, 37, 40, 45, 52–3, 59, 112, etc. The significance of the

unique in nature because it specifies ‘six festivals of eternity’ to be performed for the deceased, namely, the 4th day, 8th day, *msy.t, w3g, ihhy*, and the Sokar Feast.³⁶ A list from the tomb of Khnumhotep at Beni Hasan records the 1st, 2nd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 15th, and 29th lunar celebrations.³⁷

The Medinet Habu calendar attests the 1st, 2nd, 4th, 6th, 10th, 15th, 29th, and 30th days.³⁸ Stela Cairo 34002, dated to the time of Ahmes, records the 1st, 4th, 5th, and 6th lunar festivals, as well as the *h3k*-Festival, Wag Festival, and Thoth Festival to be celebrated *m tp tri r^c nb* ‘seasonally, every day’.³⁹ The idiom *tp tri* was probably a general term for feasts that were regularly celebrated in accordance with any calendrical cycle.⁴⁰

It is evident that the 1st and 6th remained the most significant days in the New Kingdom. Thutmose III specifies only them for his new endowments to Karnak.⁴¹ Scenes of these celebrations were represented in the Great Hypostyle Hall of Karnak.⁴² The new moon celebration seems to have been the most important of all lunar celebrations. It was documented not only in liturgical literature but also in administrative and calendrical records as corresponding to the Festivals of Mentu (2.2.1) and Min (987). The 6th festival is attested in the Pyramid Texts⁴³ and the Coffin Texts⁴⁴ as taking place at *hr-^ch3*, a location identified by Jacq (1993, 20) with the old city of Cairo.⁴⁵ Our knowledge of full moon celebrations before the Greek-Roman Period is very limited.⁴⁶ There are only two dated historical accounts attesting a ceremony on a full-moon day: a contract-making between the god Min and a member of the *pat* on IV Akhet 25 in the First Intermediate Period among the Koptos Decrees (513), and an oath-taking before Khonsu on II Shemu 13 in year 12 of Amasis (1105).

It is hardly surprising to find in texts many references to the four consecutive days (29th, 30th, 1st, and 2nd) over the transition of the month, because a religious celebration usually took place on these days. Hence, every beginning of the month was prognosticated to be ‘good, good, good’ in the calendars of lucky and unlucky

days.⁴⁷ Among such striding celebrations are the well-known Festival of Lifting-Up the Sky from II Peret 29 to III Peret 1 (775, 781, and 788), and the Festival of Entering the Sky from III Peret 29 to IV Peret 1 (868, 874, and 887), both from the New Kingdom onwards. Festivals of this type often entailed the symbolism of death and resurrection. For instance, the Sokar Festival took place from the end of IV Akhet, followed by the *k3-hr-k3* celebration on I Peret 1, when Horus was considered to succeed his dead father Osiris.⁴⁸ Such symbolism appears not only at the turn of months, but also over the transition from one year, season, or week to another, and perhaps even within a single festival.

Remnants of lunar time-reckoning within the civil calendar may also be seen in the sitting of the Wag and Thoth Festivals in the middle of I Akhet (4.2.3.1 and 4.2.3.2). They are thought to have originally been feasts for the lunar New Year. The arbitrary use of the lunar cycle for the civil one is visible in some civil-based celebrations, which always fall in a particular civil month but begin on a specific lunar day. For example, the Opet Feast evidently began on a new moon day under Thutmose III (2.2.2).

1.2.2. Annual festivals

Apart from temple calendars and mortuary texts, Old-Kingdom accounting papyri may be of some interest regarding rituals that were actually performed. The Abusir archives attest the Wag-, Thoth-,⁴⁹ Sokar-,⁵⁰ Sed-,⁵¹ Min-,⁵² and new moon celebrations.⁵³

Among Middle-Kingdom sources, Hepdjef, count of Asyut in the time of Senusret I, was particularly eager to address his contracts with his local temple in order to request that festival offerings be duly delivered to his tomb. This noble man, therefore, stressed upon *hrw.w 22 hw.t-ntr* ‘22 days of the temple’, which most probably refers to the number of festivals.⁵⁴ Amenhotep I’s fragment from Karnak describes the sums of offerings that were dedicated to Amun as amounting to 50.⁵⁵ This may also represent the number of festivals because each celebration appears to have been given one offering. The fragmentary offering list of Thutmose III, located to the south of the granite sanctuary at Karnak, records 60 festivals or festival days, 28 of which

4th day remains unclear, but it is known that the *mmh.t* took place on that day (Spalinger 1992, 7).

³⁶ CT VI, 158m–159a.

³⁷ Newberry 1898, pl. 24.

³⁸ MH III, pls 148–50; Parker 1950, 11–2; Spalinger 1998a, 242.

³⁹ Urk. IV, 27: 4–7; Spalinger 1996, 11.

⁴⁰ Gardiner 1952, 21, n. 2.

⁴¹ A passage to the south of the sanctuary (PM II², 106 (329); Urk. IV, 177; el-Sabban 2000, 19) and his annals (Urk. IV, 747: 7).

⁴² Nelson 1949, 333; *idem* 1981, pls 206 bottom and 228.

⁴³ PT 493, Pyr. 1062.

⁴⁴ CT VII, 221m–n [1004].

⁴⁵ For the significance of the 6th day feast, see Barta 1969.

⁴⁶ Note that strictly speaking, the full moon varies from 13.73 to 15.80 after the conjunction because of the elliptic orbit of the moon (Parker 1950, 6). This may explain the significance of the new moon as a more reliable marker. For demotic sources containing references to full moon festivals, see M. Smith 1993, 54, n. c.

⁴⁷ Porceddu, Jetsu, Markkanen, and Toivari-Viitala 2008, 329.

⁴⁸ Gaballa and Kitchen 1969, 57–74.

⁴⁹ Abusir X, pls 11–2.

⁵⁰ P. Louvre E 25416, C, verso (Posener-Kriéger and de Cenival 1968, pl. 13).

⁵¹ P. Berlin 15726, verso (Posener-Kriéger and de Cenival 1968, pl. 88, B).

⁵² P. Berlin 15723, recto (Posener-Kriéger and de Cenival 1968, pl. 82, col. b).

⁵³ P. Louvre E 25279, recto (Posener-Kriéger and de Cenival 1968, pl. 5, col. f).



⁵⁴ PM IV, 26 (10–11); Griffith 1889, pl. 7, col. 284.

⁵⁵ Spalinger 1992, 22, pl. IV.

are associated with lunar festivals.⁵⁶ Another list of the same king, located at the Akh-menu, includes 54 seasonal celebrations.⁵⁷ The incomplete Medinet Habu calendar lists eight monthly festivals and more than 25 annual festivals (Appendix 1). In the time of Psametik I, the total number of festivals or festival days was 50.⁵⁸

1.2.3. Designation and structure of festivals

The phrase *hb nfr n ntr* is attested in the Old Kingdom, but it seems to be a term denoting celebrations in general.⁵⁹

The new expression  *hb=f nfr n X* ‘his beautiful festival of X’ came to be used for standardizing the designation of festivals by the Twelfth Dynasty and continued into the Ptolemaic-Roman Period.⁶⁰ The stela of Sehetepibre, deputy overseer of the seal in the time of Amenemhat III, originating from Abydos, refers to Osiris and Upwaut, for each of whom are performed ‘his first beautiful festivals of Akhet’ (*hb.w=f nfr.w tpy.w 3h.t*).⁶¹ A theophoric designation associated with Amun is known from a graffito of Neferabed, a wab-priest of Amun, and a stela of Mentuhotep, a wab-priest of Bastet, both dated to the Twelfth Dynasty (3.2.1). The former refers to a river journey of Amun to the ‘valley of Nebhepetre (Mentuhotep II)’ and reads: *hb.w=f tpy.w smw* ‘his first festivals of Shemu’. All these Middle Kingdom records have  and refer to more than one celebration performed for a specific god. This may argue for the existence of *hb.w=f nfr.w tpy.w pr.t*, which however is hitherto unknown. The earliest theophoric designation of a single event is attested on a stela of Iutjeni, chief of the ten of Upper Egypt, also dating from the Middle Kingdom, recording *hb=f nfr n hn.t* ‘His (Amun’s) Beautiful Festival of Procession’ (3.2.1). In all probability, such was applied to other gods in different cities, although surviving evidence is too little to produce a general picture.

The full designation of the Opet Festival *hb=f nfr n ip.t* is first evidenced in Hatshepsut’s Red Chapel.⁶² It is not uncommon to observe that this format was employed for celebrations of Mut and Khonsu, who formed the Theban triad with Amun. Hence, the Opet Feast was also called ‘Her (Mut’s) Festival’.⁶³ In addition, the stela of

Merimaat, dated to the time of Ramses VI, refers to the goddess Maat, for whom the Opet Feast was celebrated, as: *M3.c.t s3.t R.c hry-ib w3s.t ir[.t] R.c hk3 idb.wy m hb=s nfr n ip.t* ‘Maat, daughter of Re, who dwells in Thebes, ey[e] of Re, ruler of the Two Banks, at Her Beautiful Festival of Opet’.⁶⁴ Likewise, the Valley Feast came to be called *hb=f nfr n in.t* perhaps by the Eighteenth Dynasty or earlier although the oldest surviving evidence is dated to the times of Ramses I and Seti I.⁶⁵

Egyptian festivals had a standard structure from the Old Kingdom. They consisted of an evening event and a morning event following it (Table 1).⁶⁶ However, quite to the contrary of what we might expect, the Pyramid Texts⁶⁷ and the Coffin Texts⁶⁸ describe the 6th and 7th day lunar festivals as a setting for a morning meal (*i^cw*) and an evening one (*msy.t*) respectively, not *vice versa*.⁶⁹ The aforementioned Middle-Kingdom tomb of Hepdjef at Asyut, first attests the night (*grh*) of the Wag Feast, followed by the main celebration next day (86 and 96). P. UC 32191, discovered in Middle-Kingdom Lahun, records some instances of *ih.t h3wy* the ‘offering of the night’ for the celebration of the *ssp-itrw* (421). *ih.t h3wy* or *ih.t hr h3w.t* the ‘offering on the altar’ was also the designation of the 5th lunar day.⁷⁰ A stone fragment discovered at Karnak, apparently Amenhotep I’s copy of a Middle-Kingdom festival list, refers to a performance called *h3w.t n.t hb=f[...]* the ‘altar of His Festival of []’ ahead of the ‘His Festival of the First Month [of Shemu]’ (1048). Thutmose III’s list at Karnak counts eleven occurrences of *ih.t h3wy n.t hb.w Imn* the ‘evening offering of the festivals of Amun,’ corresponding to the number of Amun’s annual festivals.⁷¹ These festivals apparently included the Festivals of the New Year (4.5.1), Wag (86 and 90), and Opet (233), whose evening events are elsewhere known. Because the Medinet Habu calendar contains separate entries for an evening ritual at some celebrations, they are likely to have required a distinct setting. It is not impossible that the evening ritual was identical with a drinking party, which also took place within the temple (4.6.1). P. Berlin 3115 (Text A, II, 1–18), dated to IV Peret 10 in year 8(?) of Ptolemy IX, lists fifteen different occasions throughout the year and those celebrated every ten days as *hrw.w n swr* the ‘days of drinking’, perhaps taking place at Medinet Habu (904).

⁵⁶ *Urk* IV, 176–7; Spalinger 1996, 4; el-Sabban 2000, 17–9.

⁵⁷ PM I-1², 126 (462); Gardiner 1952, 21, pl. 9 (gg).

⁵⁸ A lost text in TT 390 (PM I-1², 441 (4)); Champollion, *Not. descr.* I, 512 (upper).

⁵⁹ Coffins of Nefertjentet (Kanawati 1980, vol. 6, 63–4, pl. 16, fig. 32, e), of Ankhnes (Kanawati 1980, vol. 7, 53, pl. 12, fig. 41, a), of Qeri (Kanawati 1980, vol. 7, 53–4, pl. 14, b, fig. 41, c), all originating from Akhmim.

⁶⁰ See Jauhainen (2009, 246–54) for the use of *hb=f* and *p3y=f hb* to designate personal festivals performed at Deir el-Medina.

⁶¹ Stela Cairo 20538, sides III and IV (PM V, 45; Lange and Schäfer 1902, vol. 2, 150; Lichtheim 1973, vol. 1, 127 for partial translation and reference).

⁶² Burgos and Larché 2006, vol. 1, 47, Block 169, a.

⁶³ Opet, 29.

⁶⁴ Vernus 1975, 106.


⁶⁵ Tomb of Amenmes (TT 19): PM I-1², 33 (3); Foucart 1935, pl. 6; Figure 16.

⁶⁶ For a brief summary of the eve of feast, see Sayed Mohamed 2004, 139–46.

⁶⁷ PT 408, Pyr. 716a–b.

⁶⁸ CT III, 158c–159a [207].

⁶⁹ Spalinger (1993b, 164 (10)) argues that the sixth lunar festival took place in I Akhet and the seventh in II Akhet.

⁷⁰ *Urk* IV, 27: 5; Parker 1950, 11. The *h3wy* and *h3w.t* perhaps had the same implications and were sometimes used alternately because the Medinet Habu calendar attests *h3w.t* with the determinative of , which is usually employed for the *h3wy* (MH III, pl. 154, list 28).

⁷¹ PM II², 106 (329); *Urk* IV, 177; el-Sabban 2000, 19.

It was at this evening-morning transition that festivals played out the mythological death and resurrection of the world. This was evidently the case for the Festivals of Opet, the Valley, and the New Year.

1.2.4. Synchronicity of the civil calendar with the seasonal cycle in the New Kingdom

The Egyptian civil calendar did not accord with the natural cycle throughout most of its history—their perfect symphony occurred only twice in the native dynastic period of three thousand years. Detailed discussion on the complex calendrical systems is beyond the scope of this study, but it is useful to delineate how the natural cycle was in harmony with the civil calendar in the New Kingdom.⁷² Various documents attest natural phenomena, including the heliacal rising of Sothis and precipitation. In particular, those recording the dates of the Nile's inundation at Thebes are of significant value.

According to Peden (2001, 170, n. 217), there are 11 fully dated texts attesting the high-rise of the Nile (*h3y n p3 mw n h3py 3*), mostly originating from western Thebes of the Ramesside Period. The number is, in fact, 14 with additional evidence: seven cases in II Akhet and seven in III Akhet (Table 2). Two of them are securely dated to years 1 and 2 of Merenptah, each falling on III Akhet 3 (303) and II Akhet 3 (155). Thus, Janssen (1987, 136) suggests that dates that fall in II Akhet are likely to belong to the time of Ramses II, while those in III Akhet belong to the late Nineteenth Dynasty and later.

Thanks to observations of the Nile during about thirty years from 1873 before the Aswan Dam was completed in 1901, it is possible to determine when the inundation used to begin and culminate.⁷³ At Aswan the average day of the Nile's minimum level was 2 June (all dates refer to the Gregorian calendar hereafter unless otherwise indicated) and that of the culmination 6 September (Table 3). The flow of the Nile takes six to twelve days, depending on the quantity of the water (the more water, the faster the speed), to run from Aswan to Cairo,⁷⁴ thus approximately one to two days between Aswan and Thebes. As of 1300 BC (corresponding to

-1299 astronomical),⁷⁵ the heliacal rising of Sothis is calculated to have taken place on 18 July (Julian)/7 July (Gregorian) in the Memphite area and on 14 July (Julian)/3 July (Gregorian) in the Theban area. Given that in ideal terms the heliacal rising of Sothis occurred on I Akhet 1, at Thebes the Nile marked its minimum level on ca. IV Shemu 8, and the maximum level on ca. III Akhet 6. These dates were heralded by the Festivals of the Valley (3.2.3) and Opet (2.2.2) respectively. III Akhet 6, in particular, fell within the period of the Opet Feast, which was celebrated from II Akhet 19 to III Akhet 15 in the time of Ramses III (237).

This picture roughly agrees with a series of observations on the nilometer at medieval Cairo over 1200 years from the seventh century, which are meticulously studied by Popper (1951). In Cairo the Nile reached its maximum water level on 30 September on average, but could be varied between 8 September and 19 October.⁷⁶ Hence, at Thebes the maximum occurred on 22 September on average, but could be as early as 31 August. On the other hand, the Nile's minimum was observed on 8 June on average in Cairo.⁷⁷ Hence, it took place on about 1 June at Thebes.

Regarding the two aforementioned graffiti dated to the time of Merenptah, the Nile's water was supposed to increase in the first half of IV Shemu, and reach its maximum in the first half of III Akhet at Thebes in his time. This assumption does not contradict one of the graffiti dated to III Akhet 3 in year 1, whereas the other one dated to II Akhet 3 in year 2 may refer to an early arrival of the high-rise. It may be of some interest that some rock inscriptions at the West Bank of Gebel Silsila, 65 km north of Aswan, attest two dates pertaining to the Nile in the times of Ramses II (year 1), Merenptah (year 1), and Ramses III (year 6). They invariably refer to I Akhet 15 and III Shemu 15, when an offering ritual was performed for Hapi (78 and 1243). These dates may refer to the Nile's movements at Gebel Silsila in year 1 of Ramses II. It is likely that Merenptah and Ramses III simply copied Ramses II's original text.

In conclusion, the civil calendar accorded with the natural cycle at the beginning of the Nineteenth Dynasty.⁷⁸ This is also backed by the observation on the length of the day and night recorded in P. Cairo 86637 (verso, XIV), which is dated to the beginning of the Nineteenth Dynasty.⁷⁹ The civil calendar could be

⁷² To justify this fact, it would be sufficient to refer to Parker 1950, 51 and Depuydt 1997, 17 for the heliacal rising of Sothis. In the Egyptian time-reckoning, it was expected to occur on the civil New Year's Day. This ideal coincidence took place on 21 July (Julian) in AD 140, corresponding to 20 July (Gregorian) in AD 139. Taking this date as a cornerstone, ca. 1320 BC and 2780 BC are calculated to be the years of the beginning of the Sothic cycle (see Krauss 2006c, 445 for a slightly different result and a useful table of records). The present examination concerns 1320 BC only, which corresponds to the beginning of the Nineteenth Dynasty. Insofar as the New Kingdom is concerned, the heliacal rising of Sothis should have occurred between the first half of III Shemu and the beginning of III Akhet.

⁷³ Willcocks and Craig 1913, vol. 1, 184; Janssen 1987, 133.

⁷⁴ Willcocks and Craig 1913, vol. 1, 144, Table 70.

⁷⁵ Given that the *arcus visionis* of Sirius is 10° and the altitude of this star above the horizon is 3° (Gautschy 2011, 117–8).

⁷⁶ Popper 1951, 87–8.

⁷⁷ Popper 1951, 220. The Copts regarded 20 June (Julian) as the day of the beginning of the Nile's inundation, regardless of when it was actually observed (*ibid.*, 64–6). On that day the official measurement of the height of water level took place and the result was subsequently announced.

⁷⁸ Rose 1999, 89.

⁷⁹ Bakir 1966, pl. 44; Leitz 1989, 22–3; *idem* 1994a, vol. 2, pl. 44.

used within the minimal discrepancy of less than two months during the whole New Kingdom. This seasonal agreement provided religious celebrations with proper settings within the liturgical calendar. This must have had a considerable impact particularly on festivals associated with seasonal changes. Indeed, at the Opet Festival great emphasis was placed on the renewal of the kingship to be secured by the recurrent inundation. The New Kingdom might have seen a revision of old celebrations, which had been dislocated from the seasonal cycle over 1000 years, in order to re-locate them into the original contexts but in new forms.

1.3. Theban religiosity

1.3.1. Visits to Thebes of the king, vizier, and high officials

1.3.1.1. King and prince

It is well known that kings visited Thebes to celebrate major festivals (2.4.3). In particular, they were required to participate in the Opet Feast every year, as stated in Horemheb's decree.⁸⁰ In the chronicle of Osorkon (III), he is said to have visited Thebes three times a year, perhaps including a sojourn to perform this celebration.⁸¹ A key religious role played by the king is evident in the very common epithet *nb ir.t ih.t* the 'lord of the ritual', known from the Old Kingdom.⁸² In addition, *sšm hb* 'festival leader'⁸³ and *nb hb* the 'lord of the festival'⁸⁴ came to be used as part of royal epithets. The king's attendance to the festivals, however, could not always be coordinated particularly when he was in a remote place. Hence, members of the royal family or high officials would be sent to act on his behalf. When Osorkon (III) was a prince, he visited Thebes to participate in the Festival of I Shemu on I Shemu 11 in year 11 of his father Takelot II (988). He also bore the titles of the high-priest of Amun-Re and the general (*imy-r mš̄.w wr*).

1.3.1.2. Vizier and royal butler

Among high officials who acted on behalf of the king, the vizier was undoubtedly a key figure. His duties covered a wide range of state affairs from provision supplies and juridical decision-making to organizing

the army.⁸⁵ These tasks were primarily administrative, but did not exclude religious missions. For example, Paser under Seti I and Ramses II,⁸⁶ Rahotep under Ramses II,⁸⁷ Panehesy under Merenptah,⁸⁸ and Pinedjem II (925) held the office of the festival leader among other titles.⁸⁹

A letter written on O. Nash 11 (BM 65933), dated to the time of Ramses III, describes the workmen on the West Bank as expecting their lord (vizier) to come in order to perform a celebration, as follows:⁹⁰

p3y=f ii r di.t h̄y Imn m p3 [two groups lost]

His visit to cause Amun to appear at the [].

This account is unique in its clear reference to a religious ceremony.⁹¹ Viziers usually appeared in connection with the supervision of the work force serving the construction of royal monuments. The earliest evidence of such is O. MMA 23001.51, dated to year 45 of Thutmose III, discovered at Deir el-Bahari,⁹² but vizier's visits are chiefly attested in Ramesside ostraca from Deir el-Medina and the Valley of the Kings. Some documents record their administrative and religious tasks together.

O. Cairo 25538 (1117), dated to year 6 of Seti II, tells us that the vizier Pareemheb visited the Valley of the Kings:

h3.t-sp 6 3bd 2-nw šmw sw 16 hrw n ii ir.n imy-r niw.t ʔty P3-r̄-m-hb r šh.t 3bd 2-nw šmw sw 25 hrw n d3j n Imn r niw.t iw ʔty hr hd

Year 6, II Shemu 16: The day of a visit made by the city governor and vizier, Pareemheb, to the Field. II Shemu 25: The day of the river journey of Amun to the Town when the vizier travelled downstream.

Significantly, the reason of Pareemheb's visit to the West Bank is documented elsewhere on O. Cairo 25515 (1116). He is described as 'having ordered a scribe to

⁸⁰ Pflüger 1946, 263. For the royal attendance to the Opet Feast, see Fukaya 2012, 203. Exell (2009, 69–72) argues that Ramses II visited Thebes to attend the Valley Feast in an unknown year.

⁸¹ Caminos 1958, 78 and 117–8.

⁸² Hannig 2003, 612, 15234. For a detailed examination of the royal epithet *nb ir.t ih.t*, see Routledge 2001, 162–305.

⁸³ Seti I before he succeeded the throne (KRI II, 288: 8); Ramses III (MH III, pl. 138, col. 38; MH V, pl. 331, col. 6).

⁸⁴ Ramses II (KRI III, 106: 10; Schulman 1988, 35, fig. 18). Horemheb was called *ip hb=f* the 'head of his festival' (Opet, 35, pl. 94). Their prime religious role was reminiscent of the lector-priest, who was called *sšm hb.t* the 'leader of the festival proceedings' (Wb. III, 61, 4).

⁸⁵ Boorn 1988, 218, 250, and 283.

⁸⁶ KRI I, 298: 11.

⁸⁷ KRI I, 54: 13.

⁸⁸ KRI IV, 85: 10.

⁸⁹ Note that the first three viziers bore the title of the 'fan-bearer on the right of the king'. This title was not exclusively possessed by high-ranking individuals but could be given to lesser officials within the royal court (Eichler 2000, 126, n. 569). Two 'fan-bearers on the right of the king' are known to have had the title of the festival leader: Suemniut under Amenhotep II (Urk. IV, 1452: 5) and Maya under Horemheb (Urk. IV, 2163: 16).

⁹⁰ KRI V, 584: 1–2; Wente 1990, 50.

⁹¹ O. Turin 57168 also refers to an unnamed vizier in association with a festival (Lopez 1978, 31, pl. 75).

⁹² Hayes 1960, 44–5.

commission (*shn.t*) the workmen' on the very same date of II Shemu 16.⁹³ The 'river journey of Amun to the Town' most probably refers to the return travel to the East Bank of this god at the Valley Festival.

Tasks assigned to the vizier may be encapsulated in a series of journeys made by Neferrenpet, the well-documented vizier under Ramses IV. For instance, O. BM 50744 reads (939):

*h3.t-sp 5 3bd 4-nw pr.t sw 26 hrw pn ii in
imy-r niw.t t3ty Nfr-rnp.t r w3h mw iw=f rsi
p3 shn*

Year 5, IV Peret 26: This day of a visit by the city governor and vizier Neferrenpet to offer a libation when he inspects the assignment.

Some other evidence attests that the rite of *w3h-mw* is associated with a mortuary cult on the West Bank but took place on different days throughout the year (3.2.2). In addition, O. DeM 45, dated three years earlier, describes those who accompanied this vizier as (227 and 230):

*sw 17 K3-r3 s3 [a few groups lost] spr ir.n
imy-r niw.t t3ty Nfr-rnp.t r niw.t mit.t wdpw
nsw.t Hri wdpw nsw.t Imn-h^cw s3 Thj sw 18
iw=w ts r sh[.t] r gmgm sp-sn s.t sd.t hr n
Wsr-m3.^ct-(r^c)-stp-n-im[n]*

(Year 2, II Akhet) 17: Karo, son of []. The city governor and vizier Neferrenpet arrived at the Town, and so did the royal butler Hori and the royal butler Amenkhau, son of Tekhy. Day 18: they went up to the Fie[ld] really to discover the place and (to) cut the tomb of Wesermaat(re)-setepename[n].

The vizier's presence was required to make such an important decision on locating the future tomb of the reigning king. McDowell (1999, 207) regards the presence of the royal butlers as an indication of an attempt to maintain political power balance, because the king, whose residence was in the Delta at that time, was very mindful of the powerful counterpart in the south, a stronghold of the vizier and the priests of Amun. Royal butlers were often portrayed close to the king, holding fans for him at ceremonies.⁹⁴ When Ramses IV died four years later, Neferrenpet together

with four royal butlers and the high-priest of Amun supervised the final preparation for the burial of this king (1085).⁹⁵ Indeed, the date of our ostrakon may refer to a ceremonial occasion, which they participated in. If Ramses IV maintained the same tradition as Ramses III's, the eve of the Opet Festival would have taken place on II Akhet 18 (233). It is likely that the officials in question were sent on behalf of the king to attend the festival. It is also not impossible that they came to accompany the king who stayed elsewhere in the city.

Additional information is obtained from P. Turin 1891. It documented that Neferrenpet together with the royal butler Sethherwenemyef, the overseer of the treasury Mentuemtauy, and the butler Hori gave instructions to increase the workforce for the construction of the royal tomb according to a royal command, and that it took place on III Akhet 28 in the same year of Ramses IV (404). The date is shortly after the Opet Festival, which, according to P. Harris I, ends on III Akhet 15 under Ramses III (359). Hence, Neferrenpet seems to have stayed at Thebes over a month.

Neferrenpet and Sethherwenemyef are attested together in other documents, all dated to year 6 (Table 4). Graffito 790, located in a mountain at western Thebes, records that Neferrenpet visited 'the Town' on I Akhet 9 and 'the Enclosure of the Necropolis (*p3 htm n p3 hr*)' next day (59).⁹⁶ Sethherwenemyef accompanied the vizier on the first day, but the purpose of their visit was not specified. These two individuals are also attested in O. Cairo 25274 with the date I Akhet 12, on which they supervised works (68). Sethherwenemyef alone remained at Thebes, as evidenced by Graffito 2056, dated to II Akhet 7 (169). In addition, he is referred to in O. Cairo 25277, dated to II Akhet 19 (238). This time his physical presence is not entirely clear, but he sent a message (*h3b*) concerning two wooden chests. Yet, he is likely to have stayed in Thebes because he is reported in O. Cairo 25283 as having departed for the north on IV Akhet 21 (490). In the mean time, Neferrenpet sent his

⁹³ This text does not explain the detail of this commission but the death of Seti (II) nine months later on I Peret 19 is referred to on the other side of this ostrakon (650). This may rather argue for an urgent situation that the tomb of that king was to be completed as soon as possible in anticipation of his death.

⁹⁴ MH IV, pls 238, B and 240, A.

⁹⁵ Our knowledge is limited as to how many royal butlers concurrently served the king and where their bureau was located. Three royal butlers are portrayed accompanying Ramses IX at Karnak (PM II², 172 (505)). Their key roles are attested in P. Abbott (BM 10221), which records that the royal butler Nesamen acted as a superior judge to tackle the Great Robbery issue in the time of the same king (McDowell 1999, 195–8). He seems to have possessed a position higher than the city governors of Thebes and of western Thebes but less than the vizier. In principle, the vizier was the supreme judge when a regular juridical court was not able to settle a lawsuit and decided to hand it over to him (O. BM 65930 (1225); O. DeM 663 (KRI IV, 160–1); P. BM 10055 (KRI IV, 408–14); P. Geneva D 409+P. Turin 2021 (KRI VI, 738–42)).

⁹⁶ For a general introduction to the Enclosure of the Necropolis, see Ventura 1986, 83–106; *idem* 1987; Sturtewagen 1990, 938; McDowell 1990, 93–105; Burkard 2006. Koh (2005/2006) locates this building on the northeastern edge of Qurnet Murai, facing the Ramesseum. Similarly, Eyre (2009, 110) suggests its location at the northern entrance to Deir el-Medina.

message (*h3b*) to the workmen on I Peret 19, according to O. Cairo 25287 (651).⁹⁷

The tour of Neferrenpet and Sethherwenemyef in year 6 shows a pattern typical of high officials visiting Thebes. They travelled to Thebes during the Akhet season, particularly in II–III Akhet (Table 5). O. Cairo 25565 records that Sethherwenemyef visited western Thebes to reward the workmen on III Akhet 21 in year 5, followed by Neferrenpet's visit on IV Akhet 7 (456). As will be described in 2.5.5, reward-givings required a ceremonial setting. Such is represented in the tomb of Neferhotep, a divine father of Amun (TT 50), where the deceased is portrayed receiving a reward from the king Horemheb who is accompanied by the southern and northern viziers, the overseer of the treasury, and two royal butlers.⁹⁸

The Akhet season was also significant in the case of the previous vizier Ta, who served from year 16 to 32 of Ramses III. Dated records of his official visits to western Thebes are fourteen in number, including four ambiguous ones (Table 6).⁹⁹ Eight of them convey dates within either II Akhet or III Akhet. According to O. Berlin P 10633, he was promoted to be the vizier of Upper and Lower Egypt on II Akhet 23 in year 29, perhaps during the Opet Festival (2.5.3).

Remarkably, like II–III Akhet, many visits of high officials were made at the end of the year. They are not explicitly associated with a particular celebration, but rather linked to the investigation of tomb robberies that incessantly happened at the end of the Twentieth Dynasty. It is, however, not impossible that those officials visited Thebes to carry out various other tasks, perhaps including participation in the New Year Feast.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Neferrenpet is also recorded in O. Cairo 25300 and O. Cairo 25303 for day 17 and 22 in unknown months of Peret (KRI VII, 454: 14 and 455: 2).

⁹⁸ PM I-1², 95 (2, 1); Hari 1985, 16–9, pl. 6.

⁹⁹ In a chapel near the Queen's Valley, he is portrayed adoring Meretseger, Ptah, and Amenhotep I (PM I-2², 707, Chapel A; Sadek 1987, 72).

¹⁰⁰ High officials rarely visited Thebes in the Peret season. It may be of some interest to point out that the Medinet Habu calendar records eight celebrations for that month but only the *nhb-k3.w* Festival stands out in its large number of offerings (Appendix 1). It is difficult to confirm whether the particular inactivity in this season resulted from seasonal/agricultural patterns, which may have halted social and religious activities to some extent. The workforce at Deir el-Medina seems not to have been influenced by any of these patterns (Eyre 1987b, 176). However, the Peret season featured another aspect regarding mining expeditions. Many expeditions took place in the Shemu season during the Sixth Dynasty (Eichler 1993, 152). According to Eyre (1987b, 181), the Shemu season in that time roughly corresponded to the winter season, when there were precipitation in Syria and Palestine, and hence overseas campaigns had to cease.

1.3.2. Historical development of the religious city Thebes

The temple complex of Karnak dominates at the northeastern corner of the huge rectangular area of Thebes. This urban area was apparently defined by three processional routes, apart from the western border delimited by the barren mountains lying from the north to south.¹⁰¹

The earliest border probably appeared between Karnak and the corresponding position on the West Bank. Some tombs of the Old Kingdom are located at el-Tarif and those of the First Intermediate Period at el-Khokha (TT 185, 186, and 405).¹⁰² A small temple, dated to the early dynastic period, is also known to have stood on top of the so-called Thoth Hill, two kilometers north of the Valley of the Kings.¹⁰³ Intef I, II, and III of the Eleventh Dynasty were the first rulers who were interred at Thebes. By the time of Intef II, Amun of Karnak was already associated with the cult of Re.¹⁰⁴ At the same time, Hathor came to be worshipped as Re's consort, as evidenced by a text of that king's tomb.¹⁰⁵ It was by the time of Mentuhotep II that Karnak and the West Bank was visibly connected beyond the river. He built his funerary temple, Akhsut, at Deir el-Bahari and its causeway running towards Karnak.¹⁰⁶

Thebes expanded from this northern line towards the south during the following dynasties.¹⁰⁷ It was this east-west axis that defined the route of the Valley Festival. In contrast, the southern boundary extended between the temples of Luxor and Medinet Habu. Our knowledge of the history of these two sites before the New Kingdom is very limited.¹⁰⁸ The queen Hatshepsut is known to have

¹⁰¹ Kemp 1989, 203, fig. 71.

¹⁰² Arnold 1976. For potteries discovered in these areas predating the Old Kingdom, see Ginter and Kammer-Grothaus 1998. For the origin and landscape of the city Thebes, see Nims 1955; Vandorpe 1995, 219–20. Gabolde (1998, 159–62) suggests that the processional route between Karnak and Luxor existed in the time of Senusret I, based on the orientation of a restored relief of the Middle Kingdom court erected by that king at Karnak. Likewise, Hirsch (2004, 49) concludes that Senusret I had a complete plan of the city of Thebes, an idea followed by Gundlach (2010, 88–9), who proposes that the Theban quadrangle, formed by Karnak, Deir el-Bahari, Luxor, and Medinet Habu, existed in the Eleventh Dynasty, and that when Amun took over the role of Re at Thebes, the axis between Karnak and Deir el-Bahari emerged to bear resemblance to the geographical location between Heliopolis and Giza.

¹⁰³ Vörös 1998; *idem* 2003; Weeks 2000, fig. 1.

¹⁰⁴ The compound form Amun-Re is attested on a polygonal pillar of Intef II discovered at Karnak (Sethe 1929a, 11; Morenz 2003b; Ullmann 2005).

¹⁰⁵ Gundlach 2010, 88.

¹⁰⁶ Arnold 1974.

¹⁰⁷ Kondo 1999.

¹⁰⁸ Two Thirteenth Dynasty architrave fragments from the reign of Sobekhotep I may attest to the existence of a building at the site of Luxor temple before the New Kingdom (PM II², 338; Daressy 1926, 8). Ryholt (1997, 336, n. 1), however, maintains that these stone fragments do not testify to an earlier origin of that temple, but were transported from Karnak to be reused for a statue base (see Pammlinger 1992, 129, n. 201 for evidence from before the reign of Amenhotep III). Likewise, an altar of Senusret III discovered at Luxor is considered to

erected temples on these two sites, but it was only from the Ramesside Period onwards that the two sites were figuratively connected by the Decade Ritual (3.2.2).

The Opet Festival is first attested in the reign of Hatshepsut.¹⁰⁹ This festival linked Karnak to Luxor with a stone-paved processional street, aligned with six barque-stations, stretching over 2.5 kilometers, and defined the north-south axis of eastern Thebes. It is possible that this axis existed before the New Kingdom and extended (or emulated) later, because a procession took place between Karnak and Medamud, five kilometers northeast, at the Mentu Festival during the Second Intermediate Period (2.2.1). This earlier axis seems to have remained during the New Kingdom and might have been regarded as a bearing on Heliopolis (4.3.5.1). In fact, north Karnak was a setting for the New Year celebrations, whose association with the Heliopolitan cult was evident (4.5.2).

1.3.3. Orientations of reliefs depicting the Festivals of Opet and the Valley at Karnak

These axial components saw completion when Amenhotep III erected the temple of Luxor in its present form. He probably decided to locate this temple as a focal site connected to Karnak to the north and his own memorial temple on the West Bank. His building projects finally formed the Theban city area, perhaps first defined by Senusret I. Amenhotep III seems to have been well aware of the upcoming synchronization of the civil calendar with the natural cycle in a few generations for the first time in the past 1460 years (1.2.4). In anticipation that seasonal festivals would once again be celebrated in their original contexts, he established new religious foundations, resulted in the creation of some enormous temple structures. The temple of Karnak itself extended on these east-west and north-south axes during the Eighteenth Dynasty. Kings continued to add a new pylon to those built by

their predecessors. Each space between the pylons was enclosed by walls and called *wsh.t*. As a result, the unique appearance of the vast temple complex of Karnak was created by two series of open-air courts, extending towards the west and south.¹¹⁰

The two axes partly represented the Festivals of Opet and the Valley because temple reliefs depicting these festivals seem to have borne the same orientations as them. This conforms to the textual juxtaposition of these celebrations and is particularly true for the Great Hypostyle Hall of Karnak, where the two axes meet. In this hall, the scenes of the Opet Feast are carved on the west wall and those of the Valley Feast on the south and perhaps north walls (Figures 1–2).¹¹¹ This hall functioned as an entrance to Karnak in the times of Seti I and his son Ramses II. This was also the case with the Colonnade Hall of Luxor temple, where the Opet Feast had been represented on a grand scale (2.4.1), before Ramses II added the outer court to the then entrance to this temple. The easily accessible, prominent position of the representations of the feasts suggests an intention to appeal to wider audiences visiting the temples.¹¹²

originate from elsewhere (Hirsch 2004, 92). Regarding the foundation date of Karnak, scholars' opinions have been divided between the Old Kingdom and the reign of Senusret I, depending on how one interprets the statuettes representing Old Kingdom rulers that were discovered at that temple (Daumas 1967; Wildung 1969; Habachi 1974, 214). For general discussions on the foundation of Karnak temple, see Le Saout 1987; Franke 1990; Gabolde, Carlotti, and Czerny 1999; and Blyth 2006, 7–9.

¹⁰⁹ Callender (2002, 38–9) explains that Hatshepsut set up new religious foundations for the Festivals of Opet and the Valley, if not their origins. Keller (2005, 97) also posits that the queen took initiatives to restore religious festivals after the Hyksos age of 'Re's absence', as recorded at Speos Artemidos (*Urk. IV, 390: 9*). Allen (2002, 17), however, takes that account not as evidence of a historical event, but as a statement of the queen's accomplishment in removing the last traces of the devastation. It is clear that some new aspects of the royal cult were highlighted during the time of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III, when the former gained power over the latter and took the throne as a female king. She probably needed to promote the legitimacy of her succession to the throne and to propagandize it through various religious and architectural schemes (O'Connor 1998, 138; Teeter 1997, 14, n. 61).

¹¹⁰ Graindorge-Héreil (2002, 86) proposes that the north-south axis of Karnak already existed under Amenhotep I.

¹¹¹ Gaballa (1976, 153, n. 82) first presented a list of temple reliefs that depicts the Opet Festival. By revising Gaballa's work, Murnane (1982, 577, n. 15) located ten groups of representations at the temples of Karnak, Luxor, and Deir el-Bahari.

¹¹² Baines (2006, 276–87) cautions that only limited individuals entitled to enter temples were allowed to witness rituals therein, and that one should not interpret pictorial evidence and the size of buildings too literally to argue for any broad public participating in temples.

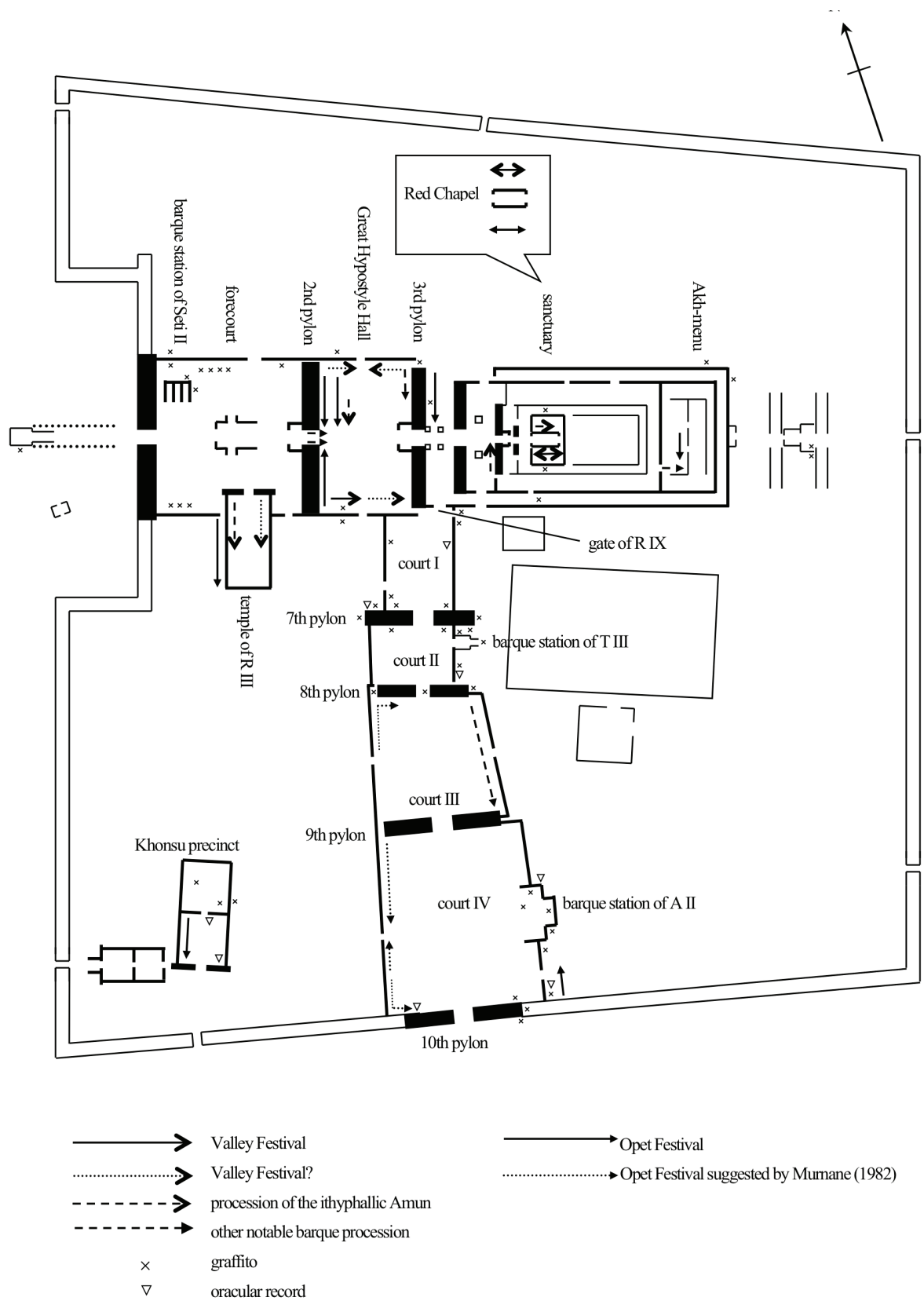


Figure 1. Locations of festival reliefs and graffiti within the Karnak temple.

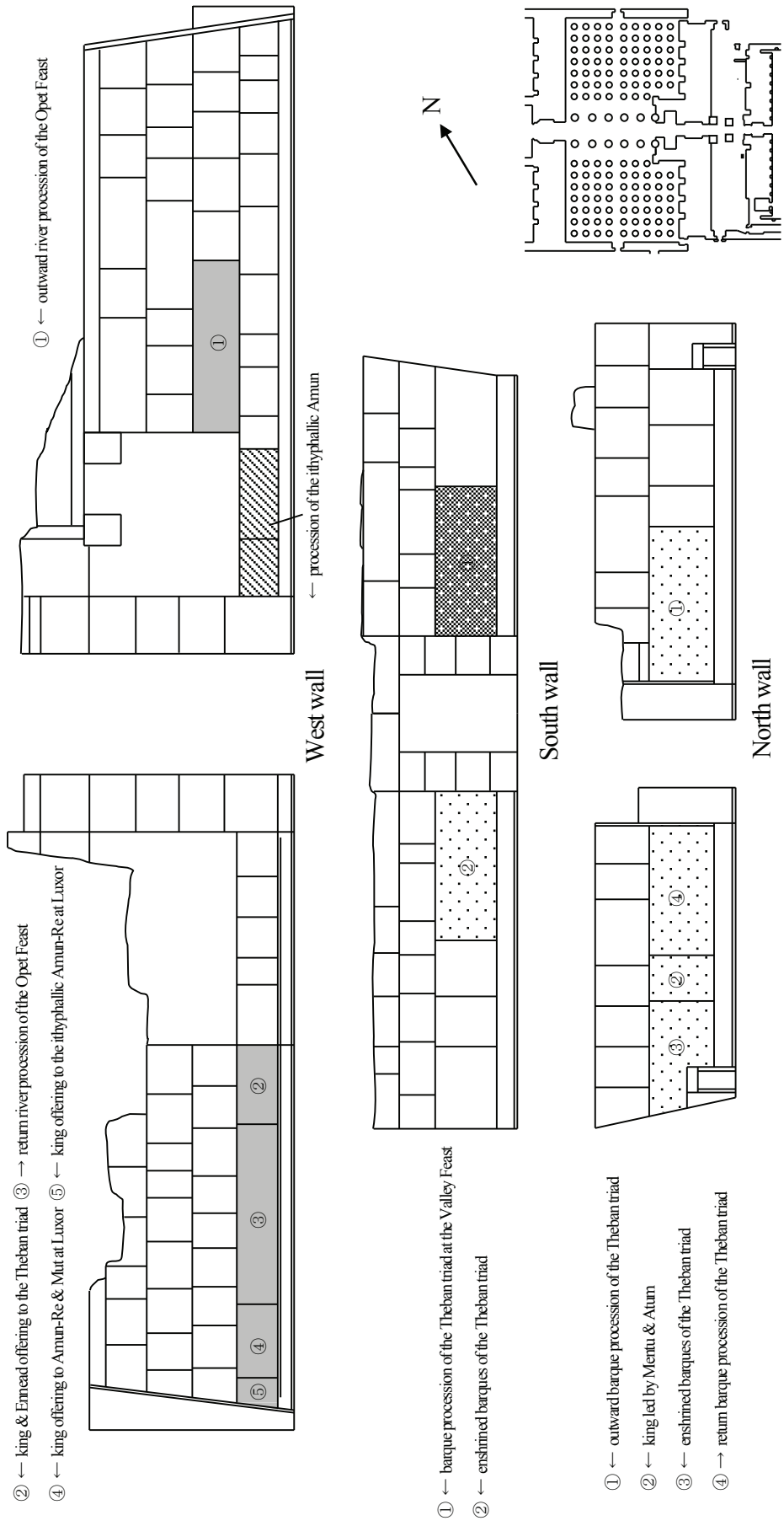


Figure 2. Elevation of the Great Hypostyle Hall at Karnak.