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Horus Joins the Barque of Cosmic Authority

Observations Regarding Aspects of Coffin Text Spell 148

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COFFIN TEXT SPELL 148 is significant for the office of ancient Egyptian kingship in that it relates the birth of Horus, the metaphysical aspect of the mortal ruler,¹ and establishes his position among the group of entities representing concepts essential to pharaonic rule: those who together constitute the company in the primeval barque. The text opens with a statement by Isis that she is pregnant with the seed of Osiris which she has shaped to become her son, the god to be foremost of the Ennead and ruler of the land as heir to his grandfather, Geb. Atum then acknowledges that Isis is pregnant with the seed of Osiris, and Isis informs the other gods that Atum has guaranteed the protection of her son, the Falcon who is to dwell in the land of his father, Osiris. Isis then requests a place for her son – now born and named Horus – in the primeval barque. But there has been some uncertainty, in modern interpretations, regarding the translation of this section of the text.

The passage of interest was translated by Faulkner to read:²

... he has prepared his own place, being seated at the head of the gods in the entourage of the Releaser(?).

O Falcon, my son Horus, dwell in this land of your father Osiris in this your name of Falcon who is on the battlements of the Mansion of Him whose name is hidden. I ask that you shall be always in the suite of Rē' of the horizon in the prow of the primeval bark for ever and ever.

Isis goes down to the Releaser(?) who brings Horus, for Isis has asked that he may be the Releaser(?) as the leader of eternity.

From this reading it seems to be implied that Isis wished her son to join the company of the barque to take the role of the one understood by Faulkner to be the 'Releaser' – a translation reliant on his reading of the sign group in question as *wh*.³ That Faulkner envisaged this

¹ M. Gilula ("An Egyptian Etymology of the Name of Horus?", *JEA* 68, 1982, p. 264) described the text as being 'concerned with Horus and his claim to the throne of Egypt.' For further detailed discussion of elements of Spell 148 establishing Horus, in his name of *Bik hry znbw hwt 'Imn-rn* – the 'Falcon who is upon the battlements of the mansion of Him-whose-name-is-hidden' – as constituting an essential aspect of 'the earthly king of Egypt', see *ibid.*, p. 263-264.

² R.O. FAULKNER, "The Pregnancy of Isis", *JEA* 54, 1968, p. 41; *id.*, *The Ancient Egyptian Coffin Texts I*, Oxford, 2004, p. 126 (§221-222).

³ *Id.*, "The Pregnancy", p. 43, n. 24; Faulkner also offers a possible alternative reading of 'Redeemer' for this sign group.

writing as a reference to a character who held a specific role, presumably within the company of the ‘primeval bark’, is apparent from his subsequent assessment of the passage: ‘Isis is declared to have gone to the Releaser(?), whoever he may be, to claim his office for her son...’.⁴ Faulkner’s uncertainty regarding the nature of the ‘Releaser’, and the role he performed, is apparent – and this segment of text has received other interpretations.

Gilula read the passage as:⁵

... he will have occupied his own place and will be seated at the head of the gods in the entourage of *Wh*‘. O Falcon, my son Horus, dwell in this land of your father Osiris in this your name of Falcon who is on the battlements of the Mansion of Him-whose-name-is-Hidden, and I shall ask that you shall be in the suite of Rē‘-Akhety and in the prow of the primeval bark for ever and ever.

Isis goes down to the *Wh*‘ which brought Horus after Isis had asked that he will be in the *Wh*‘ as leader of eternity.

Yet again, there is some uncertainty as to what, precisely, is being recounted in the text. In the first instance it seems that someone – as indicated by ‘he’, a person Gilula suggests may be Horus himself⁶ – will join the entourage of *Wh*‘. This in itself is somewhat ambiguous in that it could mean that *Wh*‘ is a character, one who has an ‘entourage’, or, alternatively, it could mean that *Wh*‘ is a thing, possibly a conveyance, which itself has an ‘entourage’. The latter possibility seems to be confirmed by the subsequent passage in which it is said that ‘Isis goes down to the *Wh*‘ which brought Horus’ – the use of ‘which’, as opposed to ‘who’, tending to indicate the *Wh*‘ to be something in which Horus had been conveyed. This option seems to be confirmed in the final section of the passage, which was translated: ‘...Isis had asked that he [Horus] will be in the *Wh*‘ as leader of eternity’. However, this assessment is confounded in that Gilula offers an alternative version for this extract: ‘Or: “that he will be *wh*‘ [*sic*] and leader”’.⁷

Borghouts discussed the particular aspects of Coffin Text 148 of interest here in his consideration of the merging of Horus and Seth and the related ‘problem of the double-faced god, named *hr.wy.fy*’.⁸ A complete and continuous translation of the passage is not given; however, sections relevant to the present discussion which relate to Isis’ promise are translated:⁹

... to ensure Horus’s position among the gods manning the sun-bark. She wants him to sit “at the front of the gods, in the entourage (*šnw.t*) of the Unfurler”. ... the “prow of the primeval bark of eternity and endless space” is what Isis thinks fitting for her son ... and Isis asked that he would be “the Unfurler, the guide (*sšmw*) of eternity”.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁵ M. GILULA, “Coffin Texts Spell 148”, *JEA* 57, 1971, p. 14-15. In a later rendition of this passage (R.O. FAULKNER, *Coffin Texts* I, p. 126 [§221-223]), it is clear from a reference in the notes that Faulkner was aware of Gilula’s translation of the text yet, nonetheless, he follows his own earlier version, as presented above.

⁶ M. GILULA, *op. cit.*, p. 18, n. 33.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 19, n. 38.

⁸ I am grateful to Tony Leahy for bringing this article to my attention.

⁹ J.F. BORGHOUTS, “The Magical Texts of Papyrus Leiden I 348”, *OMRO* 51, 1970, p. 138.

From these short translated sections it seems clear that, like Faulkner, Borghouts was certain that the sign group of particular interest, which he transliterated as *wh'w*, represented a character in the entourage of the 'sun-bark', the only significant variation being that he described this character as the 'Unfurler', although he does admit: 'What the Unfurler should unfurl is not immediately clear'. Having further considered this role in relation to the *hr.wy.fy*, Borghouts posed the question as to whether it may be assumed that 'the *wh*'s function consists of unfurling the landing-ropes of the prow and the stern' – a question regarding which he provided no convincing answer.¹⁰

In a further translation of the spell, O'Connell interpreted the section here of interest as:¹¹

... he made his own place having sat down as the foremost of the gods in the entourage of the *Wh'*: 'O Falcon, my son Horus, settle down in this land of your father Osiris with this your name of "Falcon", over the ramparts of the Mansion of The-Hidden-of-Name. Let me ask that another may be in the suite of Rē'-Akhety in the prow of the primeval bark for ever and ever'.

Isis descended to the *Wh'*, [with] Horus being brought [along]. Isis [then] asked that he might be in the *Wh'* as ruler for eternity.

Here it seems that little advance has been made in determining the precise position desired for the newly-born Horus as again the term *Wh'* is not translated. Nonetheless, it does seem clear that O'Connell consistently viewed the *Wh'* to be a conveyance: as confirmed in a subsequent note in which he argued that the term was 'likely to be a proper noun which perhaps refers to the primeval bark of the entourage of Rē'-Akhety'; in this I suspect that he was correct as it explains – as O'Connell himself noted – 'the use of the ship and divine determinatives and its usage in the three occurrences in this spell'.¹² What does remain questionable however is the persistence, throughout the considered studies, in the reading of a particular, and repeated, sign group as *wh*.¹³ – a circumstance which has likely resulted in the noted uncertainties in translation. An alternative option is presented here: that the group should in fact be read *wi3 hrp*.

In demonstrating the validity of the present argument it is of some note that there has been general agreement regarding one section of the studied text which does contain a direct reference to a barque: the request made by Isis that – as shown in fig. 1 – Horus be *m šmsw r'-3ht m-h't wi3 p3wty n nhh dt*, which may be translated: 'in the following of Re of the horizon, at the head of the primeval barque for time and eternity'.¹⁴ That Horus be given a

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 138-139.

¹¹ R.H. O'CONNELL, "The Emergence of Horus: An Analysis of Coffin Text Spell 148", *JEA* 69, 1983, p. 74-75.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 80.

¹³ Here one may consider whether *wh'* would in such circumstances be appropriate as a conveyance suitable for Horus. The term was often used to express notions associated with fishing; moreover, there do not seem to be any recorded examples, in lexicons in general use, in which *wh'* was written with the determinative of a seated god – which would hardly be appropriate for a fishing vessel, although certainly appropriate for a barque of power.

¹⁴ In respect of the terminal phrase regarding the duration of Horus' assignment to the solar barque it is of note that in the cited passages both Faulkner and Gilula translate 'for ever and ever' whereas Borghouts interprets *nhh dt* as 'eternity and endless space'. As will be discussed below, such interpretations follow conventional translations of *dt* and *nhh*. For recent research into the meaning of the *dt-nhh* duality – resulting in the here preferred translation of *nhh dt* as 'time and eternity' – see St.R.W. GREGORY, "On the Horus Throne in *dt* and *nhh*: Changeless Time and Changing Times", in Cl. Jurman, B. Bader, D.A. Aston (eds.), *A True Scribe of Abydos. Essays on First Millennium Egypt in Honour of Tony Leahy*, OLA 265, Leuven, 2017, p. 159; *id.*, *The*

specific role within the entourage of this barque seems to be the focus of the whole of the studied section of text; and the vessel itself is that perhaps more generally referred to as the ‘sacred bark’.¹⁵ a boat frequently represented in hieroglyphic writing by Gardiner sign P3 – shown at fig. 2 – and transliterated *wi3*.¹⁶



Fig. 1. From Coffin Text Spell 148 – a request that Horus be assigned to the primeval barque; after CT II, 222a (S1C^b).

However, the nature of the vessel depicted in this passage is not immediately apparent from the orthography as it is presented.¹⁷ Nonetheless, as pointed out by Gardiner himself, when depicted in graphic representation the details shown in the drawing of sign P3 ‘vary greatly in different cases’.¹⁸ That the sign group generally translated ‘primeval bark’ has been read as *wi3* in the context of Spell 148 is confirmed by O’Connell’s transliteration;¹⁹ the high status of this vessel is recognized in the text itself, the context being such that it is quite clear that this vessel is none other than the barque of the sun.²⁰



Fig. 2. Gardiner sign P3, generally read as *wi3*.

Ancient Egyptian Notions of dt and nh from the Beginning: Concepts of Existential Dualism in Pharaonic Ideology and Beyond (working title, forthcoming). See also Fr. SERVAJEAN, *Djet et neheh. Une histoire du temps égyptien*, OrMonsp 18, Montpellier, 2007.

¹⁵ In lexicons, the sign – Gardiner sign P3 – is often given the meaning ‘sacred bark’ as, for example in A.H. GARDINER, *Egyptian Grammar*, Oxford, 1957³, p. 560; and in FCD, 56. L.H. Lesko ([ed.], *A Dictionary of Late Egyptian I*, Providence, 2002², p. 92) offers ‘sacred bark, boat, ship, barge’; J.P. Allen (*Middle Egyptian: An Introduction to the Language and Culture of Hieroglyphs*, Cambridge, New York, 2000, p. 439) gives the sign the meanings ‘sacred boat’ and ‘sacred bark’, although he subsequently merely translates ‘bark’ (*ibid.*, p. 456). In this paper, the term ‘sacred’ is eschewed as it tends to express religious connotation not apparent in the original text: a text which rather appears to present mythology expressing metaphysical concepts primarily related to the ideology of pharaonic rule. Here the translation ‘primeval bark’ reflects the additional adjective qualifying the vessel: *p3wtj*.

¹⁶ A.H. GARDINER, *op. cit.*, p. 560; FCD, 56; L.H. LESKO, *op. cit.*, p. 92. In *Wb I*, 271, 8-272, 2, and J.P. ALLEN, *op. cit.*, p. 456, a similar sign is shown for *wi3*, although in these cases the depictions lack the steering oar shown in P3, and thus more closely resemble the boat signs as depicted in Spell 148 discussed here.

¹⁷ The graphic representation of the boat shown in fig. 1 is common to the four versions of the text in which the sign group is clearly depicted; in two of those representations – as shown in CT II, 222a (S1C^a and S1C^b) – the vessel is followed by a single stroke determinative indicating that the signs do in fact refer to a vessel of some kind.

¹⁸ A.H. GARDINER, *op. cit.*, p. 499. J.P. Allen (*op. cit.*, p. 439) also notes variations in the representation of *wi3*, showing examples of the variants to include signs ‘P30’ and ‘P34’, both of which lack a steering oar.

¹⁹ R.H. O’CONNELL, *op. cit.*, p. 75 (§222a).

²⁰ Another generally accepted descriptor used in translation of *wi3*, as shown for example by J.F. Borghouts’ (*op. cit.*, p. 138) reference to this vessel as the ‘sun-bark’; *Wb I*, 271, 8, offers a translation of *wi3* as ‘das Schiff der Sonne’.

Of particular significance, in the context of the present discussion, is that the orthography of the *wīȝ* shown at section 222 §a [fig. 1] of de Buck's rendering of the text bears a close resemblance to all occurrences of the boat appearing in the sign group transliterated *wh*ˁ or *wh*ˁw in other sections of the spell, and variously translated 'Releaser', 'Redeemer', 'Unfurler', or merely left as the transliterated form, *Wh*ˁ. The only difference in visual representation being the slight variation in the shape of the boat's central structure which, as indicated in fig. 3, is generally more rounded than that of the vessel appearing in fig. 1.²¹ This difference alone, bearing in mind the variety in graphic representation noted above, should not in itself suggest that a different type of vessel was being described. Perhaps of greater significance – in that it does encourage a reading different from *wīȝ* – is that where read as *wh*ˁ the boat sign is not accompanied by the single determinative stroke – as shown in fig. 1 – but often with a sign showing a forearm. Nonetheless, there are a number of other points which militate against *wh*ˁ being the correct interpretation.



Fig. 3. The general shape of the vessel in sign groups of Spell 148 and read *wh*ˁ.

The questioned sign group occurs on three occasions in the studied passage: a section of the spell being known from a total of six iterations – although the relevant signs cannot be read clearly in every case. Nonetheless, it is firstly noticeable that in the twelve instances in which the boat sign is clearly depicted, in no case does the sign normally associated with a writing of *wh*ˁ – Gardiner sign P4, as shown in fig. 4a²² – occur. Rather the vessel is always depicted with the high and recurving prow and stern more consistent with a drawing of sign P3; although again, with the noted variation in presentation of signs showing ships or boats of any kind, little can be made of this point alone.



Fig. 4a. The sign group usually shown in the writing of *wh*ˁ.



Fig. 4b. The general appearance of the writing in nine iterations of the group appearing in Spell 148 and read *wh*ˁ.

It is perhaps of greater significance to note that in only two instances does the sign group contain the forearm – Gardiner sign D36 as appearing in fig. 4a – generally associated with a

²¹ Here it may be of note that, having had no access to the original coffins, I am reliant on the hieroglyphic texts as reproduced by A. de Buck. However, this would also appear to be the case for other interpreters of this material, as declared, for example, by R.H. O'Connell (*op. cit.*, p. 66).

²² This sign is shown in writings of *wh*ˁ in *Wb* I, p. 348, 2-351, 8; A.H. GARDINER, *loc. cit.*; *FCD*, 66; J.P. ALLEN, *op. cit.*, p. 439; L.H. LESKO, *op. cit.*, p. 107-108. Faulkner, Erman and Grapow and Allen do show also some variant writings depicting higher prow and stern posts.

writing of *wh*'.²³ On a further nine occasions Gardiner sign D40 is used, in which the forearm is shown with the hand grasping a stick – as shown in fig. 4b. Yet while this sign group may be read as *wh*',²⁴ it is questionable as to whether the line drawings given by de Buck were intended to represent sign D40, or whether it should be read as a writing of sign D44: a forearm with the hand holding a 'b3 sceptre which may be read *hrp*, a term which has been held to encompass notions of superiority, control, command, authority, and like concepts.²⁵ That the latter should be the preferable reading is suggested by the writing on the coffin of *Msh*t from Siut on which – as shown in fig. 5 – *hrp* is written more fully.²⁶ And here it is of note that it is known elsewhere for *hrp* to be written with a sign group including sign D40 rather than D44.²⁷ Moreover, it is pertinent to the present argument that one commentator does appear to have interpreted the final signs in the group as *hrpw*, 'helmsman' – albeit while maintaining that the vessel itself should be read *wh*', 'Unfurler', and interpreting the signs together as indicating that, in this particular iteration of the text, 'Isis wanted to invest her son with two functions'.²⁸



Fig. 5. The fullest writing of the questioned sign group as depicted on the coffin of *Msh*t; after CT II, 221b (S1C^a).

Barguet read the passage in question as:²⁹

... Il a fixé sa place lui-même, siégeant en tête des dieux parmi les courtisans de Celui-qui-a-cessé-de-commander.

« Bravo, mon fils Horus! Installe-toi dans ce pays de ton père Osiris, en ce tien nom de Faucon-qui-est-sur-les-crêneaux-du-Château-de-Celui-dont-le-nom-est-caché; je demande que tu sois parmi les suivants de Rê de l'horizon, à l'avant de la barque du Primordial, à toujours et à jamais ».

Isis vient vers Celui-qui-a-cessé-de-commander, qui a emmené Horus, car Isis a demandé qu'il soit avec Celui-qui-a-cessé-de-(commander), comme Idole éternelle.

²³ Sign D36 is used in the majority of the writings of *wh*' appearing in the lexicons listed in note 22, *supra*; however, of the examples appearing in Spell 148 this writing only appears in CT II, 222b and c (S1C^a).

²⁴ Examples of sign groups including D40 in the writing of *wh*' occur in, for example, *Wb* I, 348, 3-349, 15; *FCD*, 66; L.H. LESKO, *loc. cit.*

²⁵ For such references see, for example, *Wb* III, 328, 2-19; *FCD*, 196; L.H. LESKO, *op. cit.*, p. 372.

²⁶ CT II, 221b (S1C^a). In relation to this iteration, J.F. Borghouts ("The Magical Texts", p. 138) pointed out that 'Unfurler ... *wh*'w, is followed in one text only (S1C^a) by *hrpw*, "helmsman", and he draws the conclusion that this 'one version suggests that Isis wanted to invest her son with two functions'. However, in the overall context of the passage, this interpretation does not appear entirely convincing. It may be argued that the iteration in question indicates that Horus was to be appointed to the barque as 'helmsman', however, were such the case it is unlikely that the appropriate sign group would be written *wh*'w *hrpw*, but rather *hrp-wi3* – a term which has been recognized as meaning 'Steuermandes im Sonnenschiff' (*Wb* III, 329, 1): 'helmsman in the solar-barque.'

²⁷ Examples of this writing of may be seen, for example, in *Wb* III, 328; *FCD*, 196; J.P. ALLEN, *Middle Egyptian*, p. 465; L.H. LESKO, *A Dictionary*, p. 372. Further, it is of note – particularly in consideration of the signs read as *wh*' from text shown in CT II, 221b and c (S1C^a) – that A.H. Gardiner (*Egyptian Grammar*, p. 454) noted that D36 may also be used as a substitute – in both hieratic and hieroglyphic script – for D44.

²⁸ See note 26 *supra*.

²⁹ P. BARGUET, *Les textes des sarcophages égyptiens du Moyen Empire*, LAPO 12, Paris, 1986, p. 435.

This, to some degree, echoes the interpretations of Faulkner and Borghouts in that Barguet views the signs here questioned as being a reference to a functionary of the primeval barque. However, in apparently reading the forearm element of the group as *hrp* – which he seemingly translated as the infinitive ‘commander’, ‘to command’ – he has avoided the need to posit the existence of a ‘Releaser’ or ‘Unfurler’. Nevertheless, while no transliteration is given, it is apparent that he too has read the boat sign as *wh*’, with the meaning ‘to release’, and concluded that together the signs *wh*’ *hrp* describe one ‘released from’ or one having ‘relinquished’ command.

Barguet’s translation is appropriate to the implied transliteration yet is, nonetheless, questionable on other counts. Firstly, one might enquire as to the identity of the character relinquishing the command in favour of Horus. Here it is of note that the wider context of the spell presents Horus as the earthly ruler and heir of his grandfather, Geb, and father, Osiris, as well as – as claimed by Horus himself in a subsequent section of the text – having prevailed over his rival, Seth. It seems possible that any of these characters may be considered as previously having the ‘command’ to be passed to Horus; yet as each are mentioned by name in the text there seems no good reason to consider that their identity would be concealed within the somewhat cryptic designation *wh*’ *hrp*. Moreover, it does not seem likely, *contra* Barguet, that having attained the position requested by Isis, Horus be ‘avec Celui-qui-a-cessé-de-(commander), comme Idole éternelle’. I will argue that a more satisfactory interpretation may result from a reading of the sign group as *wi3 hrp*, and it is remarkable that as it occurs elsewhere in the corpus of Coffin Texts the sign group has been so read by both Faulkner and Barguet; of particular note in this respect are their respective interpretations of Spell 151.

It is not Horus but the deceased who is said to leave the tomb and take his seat in a barque. Initially this vessel is variously described, across six known iterations, as either *wi3*, *wi3 ntr*, or *wi3 r*,³⁰ and it is clear therefore that it should be understood as the ‘barque of the sun god’. The vessel is mentioned in other sections of Spell 151, although its orthographic representation is far from consistent. However, one particular iteration is of interest to the present argument – that depicted on the coffin of *hntn*, a woman from the region of Siut, as shown in fig. 6a. Faulkner makes it clear in a note that he bases his translation on this particular writing, and that he does in fact read part of this sign group as *hrp*. The resemblance of this group to that shown in fig. 5 is remarkable yet, on this occasion, Faulkner did not give the translation ‘Releaser’, but apparently read *wi3 hrp*, and offered the translation: ‘Bark of the Controller’.³¹ It is further of note that where, in relation to Spell 148, Barguet read the group shown in fig. 5 as ‘Celui-qui-a-cessé-de-commander’, in relation to Spell 151 he interpreted the similar group, as shown in fig. 6a, as ‘la barque du commandant’³² – thus again, seemingly reading not *wh*’ *hrp*, as earlier, but *wi3 hrp*.

³⁰ CT II, 259a.

³¹ R.O. FAULKNER, *Coffin Texts* I, p. 131 (§259) and n. 12 = CT II, 259b.

³² P. BARGUET, *op. cit.*, p. 134. It is of note that in translating Spell 148, P. Barguet (*op. cit.*, 434) indicated that he favored iteration S1C^a and in relation to Spell 151 (*op. cit.*, p. 133) he showed a preference for S14C; in each case the selected iterations show the fuller writing of *wi3 hrp* as shown in fig. 5 and 6a.



Fig. 6. Barques in sign groups in Spell 151. After *CT II*, 259b.

Coffins: a: S14C; b: B3Bo; c: Sq3Sq; d: B2Bo.

It is of further interest that in a second iteration of this section of the spell – as shown in fig. 6b – the sign group is the same as that occurring on nine occasions in relation to Spell 148: the boat sign accompanied by the forearm with stick (D40) as depicted in fig. 4b. Here it seems reasonable to infer, from their relative positions in the writing of Spell 151, that both the group at 6a and at 6b referred to the same vessel; from this it seems reasonable to infer that both groups may be read *wīȝ hrp*; moreover, this circumstance provides some justification for reading such groups as *wīȝ hrp* – should the wider context allow – wherever they appear in the corpus of coffin texts.

Two further iterations of the relevant section of the spell describe the vessel with orthography as depicted at fig. 6c and 6d. Clearly, this writing cannot with any confidence be read as *wīȝ hrp* and it seems that here, as in a number of iterations in the opening section, *wīȝ rʿ* – ‘the barque of the sun’ – should be read. Nonetheless, there is a clear possibility that the same vessel was meant in each rendering of the spell. This conclusion is strengthened in that the writing of *wīȝ hrp* shown in 6b and the writing of *wīȝ rʿ* depicted in 6d occur in similar positions in the text in each separate iteration of the spell as it was inscribed on two coffins intended for the same woman, *ḥdwtḥt* of the el-Barsha region. Therefore, one may reasonably draw the conclusion that the barque of the controller was none other than the barque of the sun by another name, and in all cases, a barque of some authority.

Further support for the hypothesis presented here, particularly regarding the reading of the sign group used in Spell 148 as shown at fig. 4b, occurs in Spell 239: a spell which mentions the journey of the deceased, as Osiris, to the Island of Fire where he lands in the region of the horizon in company with ‘those who are in the barque’.³³ In the three known iterations of this spell the hieroglyphic text shows a group of signs resembling those depicted in fig. 7. Here the single stroke determinative – Gardiner sign Z1 – makes it clear that a vessel of some kind was meant, the precise nature of that vessel likely being determined by the final sign in the group – in fact the final sign of the spell – the forearm holding a stick. However, neither Faulkner nor Barguet appear to have taken this sign into consideration: the former gave the translation ‘the Bark’,³⁴ the latter similarly provided, ‘la barque’.³⁵



Fig. 7. The writing of the barque as depicted at the end of Spell 239; after *CT III*, 322i.

³³ *CT III*, 322i.

³⁴ R.O. FAULKNER, *op. cit.* I, p. 189 (§322).

³⁵ P. BARGUET, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

That both Faulkner and Barguet appear to have given little weight to the inclusion of sign D40 in the writing in question may result from de Buck's note to the effect that, in each iteration, it is 'a division mark'.³⁶ Here one may consider that this would be unusual in that there is little to suggest that sign D40, or any similar sign, was normally used as such a marker in the Coffin Text corpus – or indeed that division marks were regularly used at all. Moreover, the writing of the group in fig. 7 bears close resemblance to the writing in a number of the examples mentioned above – including the nine examples in Spell 148 as represented in fig. 4b – a circumstance which in itself seems to confirm D40 is here part of the signs to be read and, as the final sign of Spell 239, it must be read in conjunction with the boat. The sign group might therefore be taken at face value and read *wi3 nht*; however, as in earlier iterations, it seems that sign D40 may again be used here for D44 and therefore one may be justified in reading *wi3 hrp* – and in either case the group may be translated 'barque of authority'. The wider context may also support this reading in that having described their journey in the barque the deceased ends in a manner enhancing their own status: they arrive at the land in the region of the horizon not in any boat, but in the *wi3 hrp*: a vessel suitable for the sun and, it seems, for one thinking of themselves as Osiris.

The final text of particular relevance to the present argument is Spell 332, in which it becomes clear that *wi3 hrp* was indeed an appropriate appellation for the barque of the sun. This short spell begins with the principal character, a female entity who claims multiple identities – including those of both Hathor and Isis – stating that she is in a barque. In the closing remark she claims to be the one *sšwt r' r m' ndt*,³⁷ 'who raises up Re to the morning barque'. Thus it seems reasonable to infer that it is indeed the sun barque that is being described throughout. In this context it is remarkable that, in the opening passage of the spell, the entity outlines one of her roles as being *nbt hpt m wi3 hrp*,³⁸ 'mistress of the oar in the barque of authority'. Here the orthography – as depicted in each of the two known iterations of the spell as shown at fig. 8a and fig. 8b – is such that, with the inclusion of sign D44 in one example and the complete phonetic spelling of *hrp* in the other, *wi3 hrp* is clearly a legitimate reading; moreover, the fact that variant writings clearly occurred, as here, adds some weight to the notion that the questioned writings in Spell 148 are but further examples of such variation and may indeed be read *wi3 hrp*.



Fig 8a. *wi3 hrp* in Spell 332; after CT IV, 177b (G1T).



Fig 8b. *wi3 hrp* in Spell 332; after CT IV, 177b (A1C).

It remains to give some consideration as to what was being said about the barque of the sun in the instances in which the descriptor *wi3 hrp* was used. In relation to its appearance in Spell 332 it does seem that on this occasion, despite the note of de Buck indicating that sign D44

³⁶ CT III, 322, n. 5*.

³⁷ CT IV, 178c-e.

³⁸ CT IV, 177b.

might rather be read as D40,³⁹ both Faulkner and Barguet read *wi3 hrp* and translated that to mean ‘Bark of Governance’ and ‘barque du Commandeur’ respectively.⁴⁰ When seemingly reading *wi3 hrp* for the group as it appeared in Spell 151, as outlined above, those scholars respectively translated ‘Bark of the Controller’ and ‘la barque du Commandant’. Thus, even where *wi3 hrp* has been recognized, its interpretation has not been entirely consistent.

Clearly barque, or ‘bark’, is suitable as a translation of *wi3* in that it differentiates the vessel from any other type of boat, and in a manner acknowledging the generally accepted convention that a vessel regarded as belonging to, or being for the use of, some deity or high ranking official should be so determined. To be decided is the value of *hrp* – the precise meaning conveyed when it is used to qualify a barque. The term is generally understood to convey notions of command, authority, and superiority; however, it has to be accepted that it may be difficult to give any accurate translation by use of any single word in use in modern Western languages. Nonetheless, some word or phrase approximating the original meaning may be found with closer consideration of context; and here the circumstances appertaining to the vessel as it appears in Spell 148 may be informative.

In the section cited above it is of note that what Horus was to join was not just the barque, but its ‘entourage’, and the nature of this group may have bearing on the term used to describe their conveyance; however, Spell 148 itself gives little information regarding the identity of any individual characters other than to imply – in Isis’ request that Horus be *m šmsw r ‘-3hṯy* – that its principal was a manifestation of Re himself. A remark in Spell 1126 suggests that it may not be possible to determine the full compliment with any certainty in that it tells of the crew of Re *n rh tnw*, ‘whose number is unknown’;⁴¹ nonetheless, some constructive inferences may be drawn. The frequent use of the seated god determinative does indicate the transcendent nature of the boats crew. Moreover, the description in Spell 148 marking the barque as ‘primeval’ allows the inference that the vessel came into being at the earliest point in history which, from the ancient Egyptian perspective, may relate to the time of creation. It therefore appears that members of the crew were likely to have been among the most ancient entities of Egyptian mythology. This conclusion receives some support from remarks in Spell 286 which describe the *p3wtj*, ‘primeval ones’, as witnessing the separation of sky and earth,⁴² an event which itself may reasonably be attributed to the moment of creation: an event recognized in Egyptian cosmology as the First Time.

That the solar barque came into being at, or soon after the time of creation is indicated in Spell 335, from which it appears that the principal character in the barque should be perceived as Atum-Re. In the opening passages of the spell Atum states that he was first alone as the waters of the abyss before arising from the horizon as Re, whereupon he commanded that a

³⁹ Here it may be noted that in relation to the writing of *wi3 hrp* as it appears in fig. 8a, A. de Buck (*CT IV*, 177) drew attention to the forearm holding the ‘b3 sceptre, sign D44, indicating in a note a preference for reading the sign as D40; however, he offered no further explanation in support of this preference and, in light of the circumstances outlined in the present discussion, it seems that D44 is the correct reading – and was likely intended by the original author.

⁴⁰ R.O. FAULKNER, *op. cit.* I, p. 256 (§177); P. BARGUET, *op. cit.*, p. 522.

⁴¹ The text is similarly interpreted by P. BARGUET, *Les textes des sarcophages*, p. 661; R.O. FAULKNER, *Coffin Texts III*, p. 166 (§457). Hieroglyphic text in *CT VII*, 457i.

⁴² The text is similarly interpreted by P. BARGUET, *op. cit.*, p. 452; R.O. FAULKNER, *op. cit.* I, p. 214 (§36-37). Hieroglyphic text in *CT IV*, 36f.

ship be built for the gods: the ship here described as *ḥꜣt*, a ‘warship’.⁴³ That this craft is none other than the solar barque may be inferred, for example, from Spell 815 in which the deceased appears to emulate the creative act in their going forth from the abyss as Horus, travelling to the horizon in the night-barque, and in the day-barque in the company of Re-Atum.⁴⁴

Returning to Spell 335, it may be deduced that two of the primeval companions in the solar barque were Hu and Sia, entities described in that text as being with Atum ‘the whole of every day’.⁴⁵ Further, in identifying another crew member it is apposite to recall the aforementioned protagonist of Spell 332, the female entity identifying herself as both Hathor and Isis: *nbt ḥpt m wꜣḥ ḥrp*, the ‘mistress of the oar in the barque of authority’ – one who might otherwise be determined as the ‘Mistress of the Boat’.⁴⁶ Here it is of note that, in Spell 331, Hathor is described as *pꜣwty*, the primeval one, and one who came into being ‘before the sky was fashioned’.⁴⁷ And perhaps the most informative spell in determining the solar crew is Spell 1128 wherein it is stated, with direct reference to the night barque, that: ‘The company which is in the bow is Isis, Seth and Horus. The company which is in the stern is Hu, Sia and Re’.⁴⁸ Thus it seems that the central characters of the solar ‘entourage’ may be determined, if only in part. Moreover, that certain of these figures long remained associated with the barque of Atum-Re is evident from later imagery: an example being a scene depicted in the solar court of the monument constructed for Ramesses III at Medinet Habu, Western Thebes.



Fig. 9. The barque and crew of Atum; solar court, monument of Ramesses III, Medinet Habu (photograph by the author).

⁴³ The text is similarly interpreted by P. BARGUET, *op. cit.*, p. 564; R.O. FAULKNER, *op. cit.* I, p. 262 (§184-194). Hieroglyphic text in CT IV, 194a.

⁴⁴ P. BARGUET, *op. cit.*, p. 42-43; R.O. FAULKNER, *op. cit.* III, p. 7 (§14). Hieroglyphic text in CT VII, 14h-o.

⁴⁵ Similar translations were offered by P. Barguet (*op. cit.*, p. 566) and R.O. Faulkner (*op. cit.* I, p. 263 [§230]). Hieroglyphic text in CT IV, 230a-b. Further reference to Hu and Sia being members of the solar crew may be found, for example, in Spell 647 (CT VI, 269e; P. BARGUET, *op. cit.*, p. 481; R.O. FAULKNER, *op. cit.* II, p. 222 [§269]).

⁴⁶ CT IV, 177b. R.O. Faulkner (*op. cit.* I, p. 256 [§177]) translated this role as ‘mistress of the oar in the Bark of Governance’; P. Barguet (*op. cit.*, p. 522) read ‘la maîtresse de la barre dans la barque du Commandeur’.

⁴⁷ CT IV, 172h and 174b; the text was similarly interpreted by both P. Barguet (*op. cit.*, p. 521) and R.O. Faulkner (*op. cit.* I, p. 255 [§172] and 256 [§174]).

⁴⁸ CT VII, 458e-l; the text was similarly interpreted by both P. Barguet (*op. cit.*, p. 661) and R.O. Faulkner (*op. cit.* III, p. 166 [§458]).

In this New Kingdom portrayal of the solar barque – shown at fig. 9 – the central character, seated within his booth, is Atum. Horus is not in the prow but positioned at the steering oar, with Hu and Sia completing the company in the stern. At the prow is Ma‘at, with a female companion identified in the caption above as the ‘Mistress of the Barque’ – a figure who may, from the horns and solar disk of her headdress, be identified as either Isis or Hathor;⁴⁹ the female entity recognizable as the ‘Mistress of the Oar’ of Spell 332. Completing the company in the bow, on this occasion, are Thoth and Wepwawet.

What is remarkable about this crew is that each of its members is a pictorial representation of an essential attribute of kingship. The origin of kingship was the creator – here represented in the form of the demiurge of Heliopolitan cosmology, Atum, from whom the concept of kingship itself – in the form of Horus – was passed to the mortal king who, on his accession to the throne, became the living embodiment of the Horus *kꜣ*. The notion of kingship is evident in the scene in that both Atum and Horus wear the dual crown of Upper and Lower Egypt. Sia and Hu represent two of the abstract qualities requisite for the office of kingship, perception and the spoken creative word⁵⁰ – the power of command – respectively. With regard to the Mistress of the Barque, she may be regarded as both Hathor and/or Isis – in either case the mother and protector of Horus, and thus of the king – and represents the female aspect of kingship. Further, as is clear from her role as described in Spell 332, the Mistress of the Barque acts as a guiding force and one who establishes power. The company in the bow of the boat is completed by Ma‘at, Wepwawet, and Thoth.

Thoth was the entity most closely associated with powers of the intellect, and particularly with notions of law and justice: qualities essential to beneficial rule.⁵¹ The name ‘Wepwawet’ may be interpreted as the ‘opener of the ways’ and, as an aspect of kingship, may be seen as one who represents the military prowess of the ruler: one who may progress by conquest, or otherwise have power over his enemies.⁵² Ma‘at, who stands in the prow of the barque, represents the function of the entourage as a whole: the maintenance of universal order, the perfect balance in the universe at its moment of creation: the First Time. It was the purpose of kingship to maintain that balance, and it was towards that goal that Horus – with the aid of his crew – was steering the barque.

The scene as a whole is therefore somewhat allegorical: it presents the cosmic origins of kingship, the goal of that office, and the attributes required of one striving to achieve that goal, *ma‘at* – a concept which formed the basis of pharaonic ideology. It is in this context that

⁴⁹ From the Eighteenth Dynasty onwards the throne symbol commonly forming part of the headdress of Isis is often replaced by the horns and solar disc (R.H. WILKINSON, *The Complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt*, London, 2003, p. 148).

⁵⁰ For further discussion of Hu and Sia as attributes of the sun god, and therefore of his son and heir, the king, see J.A. WILSON, *The Culture of Ancient Egypt*, Chicago, 1956, p. 103; R.H. WILKINSON, *op. cit.*, p. 110 and 130; R. ASSEM, “The God *Hw* – A Brief Study”, *SAK* 41, 2012, p. 21-22.

⁵¹ For further discussion of Thoth in relation to kingship, particularly in relation to the royal accession as described in Coffin Text Spell 313, see R.O. FAULKNER, “Coffin Texts Spell 313”, *JEA* 58, 1972, p. 91; see also R.H. WILKINSON, *op. cit.*, p. 215-216. With regard to Thoth and his association with kingship and the activities of the House of Life, see St.R.W. GREGORY, *The ancient Egyptian notions of *ḏt* and *nḥḥ** (forthcoming).

⁵² On this aspect of Wepwawet – and his role as one who went before the king in ritual processions – see R.H. WILKINSON, *op. cit.*, p. 191. With regard to this deity as representative of the power of the king over the breath of life, and of the king’s power to invoke capital punishment, see also M-A.P. WEGNER, “Wepwawet in Context: A Reconsideration of the Jackal Deity and its Role in the Spatial Organization of the North Abydos Landscape”, *JARCE* 43, 2007, p. 147-148.

the vessel itself may be described as *wi3 hrp* and, in the sense that it relates to pharaonic ideology, perhaps Faulkner came closest to a suitable reading of that title, in reference to the vessel as it was described in Spell 332, in translating ‘Bark of Governance’. However, it is not precisely governance that is portrayed in the scene. Rather the crew of the solar barque represents a characterization of the metaphysical ideals underlying notions of governance; these were the atemporal ideals of the realm of *dt*, brought into being by the universal creative force which realized temporal reality from the atemporal potential of the primordial abyss at the First Time. Those ideals formed the metaphysical template for pharaonic rule in the physical world of *nḥḥ* and were assimilated by a mortal ruler in their coalescence with the Horus *k3*, the immortal aspect of each successive mortal king:⁵³ that which acted as the metaphysical conduit through which the ideal of kingship may be manifest in temporal reality and thereby rule in the real world throughout time. From this perspective, the image in fig. 9,⁵⁴ showing only the transcendent epitomes of some of the desirable attributes of governance, may be described as the ‘barque of cosmic authority’. It is to this vessel that Horus is appointed in Spell 148. Moreover, the distinction in ancient Egyptian thought between the metaphysical ideal and physical reality is also apparent in Spell 148 in references to the role Horus was to undertake as part of the crew: the role variously described as ‘leader of eternity’, ‘ruler of eternity’, ‘guide of eternity’, and ‘Idole éternelle’.

It will have been noted that there are two apparent temporal references in the published translations of the studied passage as set out above. Firstly, Isis asks that Horus be in the prow of the primeval barque *n nḥḥ dt*, ‘for ever and ever’.⁵⁵ Secondly, in the following sentence, Isis asks that Horus may be in the barque *m sšmw nḥḥ*, ‘as leader of eternity’.⁵⁶ These translations appear satisfactory when following the long-accepted convention that *dt* and *nḥḥ* are, for the purposes of general translation, to be read as virtual temporal synonyms. However, as has been recently argued,⁵⁷ these terms may rather relate to the existential duality apparent in the ancient Egyptian understanding of reality: a duality consisting of the atemporal and eternal condition of *dt* and the temporal continuity of *nḥḥ* – conditions which relate to the metaphysical conceptual realm and the realm of physical reality respectively. And if this meaning of *dt* and *nḥḥ* is allowed, a different interpretation may be given to the

⁵³ For detailed interpretation of the central section of the discussed text (CT II, 221c-e) see M. GILULA, “An Egyptian Etymology”, p. 263-264), who concluded that the mythology surrounding Horus and his claim to the throne was an essential aspect of the establishment of ‘the earthly king of Egypt’.

⁵⁴ For further discussion of this scene see St.R.W. GREGORY, *Herihor in Art and Iconography: Kingship and the Gods in the Ritual Landscape of Late New Kingdom Thebes*, London, 2014, p. 110-111.

⁵⁵ This translation being preferred by R.O. Faulkner (“The Pregnancy”, p. 41), M. Gilula (“Spell 148”, p. 15), and R.H. O’Connell (“The Emergence”, p. 75). P. Barguet (*Les textes des sarcophages*, p. 435) similarly translated ‘à toujours et à jamais’.

⁵⁶ Here following the translations of M. Gilula (*loc. cit.*) and R.O. Faulkner (*Coffin Texts* I, p. 126 [§222]).

⁵⁷ A study of these terms has indicated that the two existential states recognized by the ancient Egyptians as *dt* and *nḥḥ* are comparable to those described in Platonic philosophy, particularly in the *Timaeus* wherein the physical reality as experienced by humankind, that which moves in accordance with time, is described as being but a semblance of another ideal and atemporal state. In subsequent philosophy, Boetius designated these existential conditions as ‘sempiternity’ and ‘eternity’ respectively (St.R.W. GREGORY, “On the Horus Throne”, p. 159; St.R.W. GREGORY, *The ancient Egyptian notions of dt and nḥḥ* [forthcoming]); see also Fr. SERVAJEAN, *Djet et neheh*, p. 90.

passage – one which may better reflect the notions expressed in the passage from the perspective of its original author – which may then be read:⁵⁸

221a-b



irī.n.f st.f ḏs.f ḥms m ḥnt ntrw m šnwt wīz ḥrp

he has made his own place, being seated as the foremost of the gods in the entourage of the barque of (cosmic) authority.

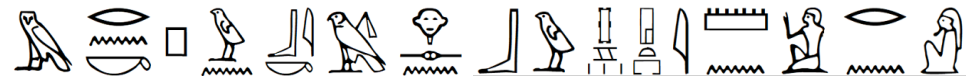
221c-d



bik sz.i ḥr ḥms r.k m t3 pn n īt.k wsīr

O Falcon, my son Horus, dwell in this land of your father Osiris

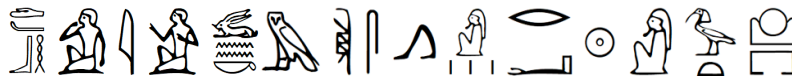
221e



m rn.k pw n bik ḥr snbw ḥwt imn rn

with this your name of Falcon-upon-the-battlements-of-the-mansion-of-the-Hidden-of-Name.

221f -222a



dbḥ.i wnn.k m šmsw r'-zḥt

I ask that you shall be in the following of Re of the horizon,

222a



m-ḥ3t wīz p3wty n nhḥ dt

at the head of the primeval barque during (real) time and (atemporal) eternity.

⁵⁸ Here the hieroglyphic text presented is essentially that reproduced in *CT II*, 221a-222c. The text is taken from coffin S1C^a, with minor adjustments based on the further iterations only where necessary to provide what appears to be the most accurate representation of the text.

Isis goes down to the barque of (cosmic) authority which will carry⁵⁹ Horus

and Isis asked that he shall be in the barque of (cosmic) authority as the director of (real) time.

⁵⁹ Here (*contra* Faulkner, Gilula, and O’Connell) it seems that, as Horus is only here assigned to the barque, it is inappropriate to suggest that it is the vessel that has brought him. Rather *ini* may be read as ‘carry’, and, appearing in the form of an active imperfective participle, as expressing a degree of futurity (A.H. GARDINER, *Egyptian Grammar*, p. 287 [§370]); the notion of futurity, or at least a sense of duration, being further indicated in the writing of the existential verb *wnn* in the following section.

Résumé :

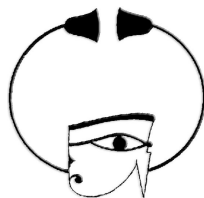
Le texte reconsidéré dans cet article, tiré de la formule 148 des *Textes des Sarcophages*, est important pour la définition de la fonction de la royauté dans l'Égypte antique. Il relate la naissance d'Horus, l'aspect métaphysique du souverain mortel, et établit sa position dans le groupe d'entités dont chacune incarne un concept essentiel à la domination pharaonique : celles qui, ensemble, constituent l'équipage de la barque primordiale.

Abstract:

The text reconsidered in this paper, taken from Coffin Text Spell 148, is significant for the office of ancient Egyptian kingship in that it relates the birth of Horus, the metaphysical aspect of the mortal ruler, and establishes his position among the group of entities each of which represents a concept essential to pharaonic rule: those who together constitute the company in the primeval barque.

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