



## Journal of Association of Arab Universities for Tourism and Hospitality (JAAUTH)

journal homepage: <http://jaauth.journals.ekb.eg/>



# The Guiding Gods of Ra's Nightly Solar Bark in the Underworld

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## ARTICLE INFO

## Abstract

### Keywords:

The Guiding Gods;  
Underworld;  
Solar Bark;  
Nightly Journey.

**(JAAUTH)**  
**Vol.28, No.2,**  
**(2025),**  
**pp.480 – 515.**

Ra's Nightly Solar Bark, or Solar Boat is a central concept in ancient Egyptian mythology, representing the Ra's journey through the underworld, or Duat, each night. This journey was believed to be essential for Ra's rebirth and his continued illumination of the world.

In ancient Egyptian mythology, some gods played the role of guides and protectors of Ra's nightly journey through the Duat (Underworld) without being physically aboard the Solar Bark. These gods often acted from outside the boat.

The Guiding Gods, those who weren't physically on the boat but acted as star-gods guiding or towing the Solar Bark, gate guardians, hour guardians, or environmental allies in the underworld realms.

In the Underworld Books, the guiding gods appear in a number of scenes in the tombs of the Valley of the Kings; these gods had a specific form and role in the Underworld.

This study aims to describe the scenes of the guiding gods and analyses their roles and aspects. To achieve the aims of the study, the researcher will employ a descriptive analytical methodology, describing scenes in which the guiding gods make an appearance and analyzing the appearance of the guiding gods and texts.

### Objectives of the study:

The aim of the study is to investigate the relationship and functions of the guiding gods in the underworld journey in the Book of Amduat and the Book of the Gates. The study will achieve the following objectives:

1. Identify and classify the guiding gods in the underworld journey who accompany the solar god Ra on his nightly journey through the underworld (Duat).
2. Explore the specific functions and symbolic roles of the guiding gods within the solar bark, including their protective, guiding, or navigator duties.
3. Examine textual and iconographic sources such as The Book of Amduat and the Book of The Gates that depict on the tomb wall scenes or reference the guiding gods of Ra's Nightly Solar Bark in the Underworld.
4. Investigate the connection between the guiding gods and the concept of Maat, emphasizing how order is maintained against chaos during Ra's passage through the

Duat. Understand how these roles reflect broader themes in Egyptian religion and funerary beliefs.

#### 5. Analyzing their symbolic roles and attributes.

### Methodology

The methodology involves a mixed-discipline (abdicative) approach, combining analytical and descriptive methods to investigate The Guiding Gods of Ra's Nightly Solar Bark in the Underworld. This involves:

- Data Collection: Gathering high resolution images and translations of texts from various sources.
- Iconographical Analysis: Detailed study of the visual elements, noting stylistic features and symbolic motifs.
- Textual Analysis: Translating and interpreting hieroglyphic texts, comparing different versions.

### Previous Studies

1. Alexandre Piankoff, *"The Tomb of Ramesses VI"* (1954).
2. Theodor Abt and Erik Hornung, *"Knowledge for the Afterlife"*, (1999).
3. Assmann, J. *Death and Salvation in Ancient Egypt*, (2001).
4. Roberson, J.A. *The Awakening of Osiris and the Transit of the Solar Barques*, (2013).
5. Lucarelli, R. *A Solar-Ship Voyage: The Ancient Egyptian Religion*, (2024)

### Introduction

In ancient Egyptian religion, the journey of the sun god Ra through the underworld was a central element of cosmology and funerary belief. Each night, Ra travelled through the Duat, the mysterious realm of the dead, aboard the Solar Bark, also known as the Night Bark or Mesketet,<sup>1</sup> accompanied and guided by a group of guiding gods, battling the forces of chaos and darkness.<sup>2</sup> This nightly journey was essential for the rebirth of the sun each morning. This journey was vital for the renewal of life and the rebirth of the sun each morning.<sup>3</sup> The Guiding Gods appear in various configurations depending on the specific funerary text or period.<sup>4</sup>

They act collectively to ensure the Solar Bark moves safely through each of the twelve hours of the night.<sup>5</sup> Key to this perilous journey was a group of divine beings who served as guides, protectors, and navigators. These guiding gods played vital roles in ensuring the success of Ra's journey, helping him overcome obstacles, defeat Apophis, and maintain the balance of Maat.<sup>6</sup>

These gods had a specific and main role: guiding the bark, defending it from enemies like the serpent Apophis (Apep), preparing the path ahead, and welcoming the souls of the righteous. To aid and protect Ra in this perilous journey, a divine crew of gods and spiritual

<sup>1</sup> Allen, JP *The sun god's journey through the Netherworld*, Schweizer, 2004, p. 115.

<sup>2</sup> Horning, E., *the Ancient Egyptian Books of the Afterlife*. London 1999, p. 56.

<sup>3</sup> Kreikamp, D., *AMDUAT The Great Awakening*, Oxford, 2021, p.32.

<sup>4</sup> Roberson, J. A., 'The royal funerary books: the subject matter of scenes and texts' in Wilkinson, R. H. and Weeks, K. R. (eds), *The Oxford handbook of the Valley of the Kings*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, pp. 316-320.

<sup>5</sup> Guerra Méndez, C., *Snaks Iconography in The Egyptian Book of Gates*, University of Liverpool, 2022, p.47.

<sup>6</sup> Abitz, F., *Knowledge for the Afterlife: The Egyptian Amduat- A Quest for Immortality*, Zurich, 2003. pp. 11 15.

beings accompanied him during tow Ra's nightly solar bark.<sup>7</sup> The Guiding Gods appear, towing the divine crew of gods, including Isis, Nephthys, Hathor, Hu, Sia, Seth, and many others, each contributing to the cosmic order and the triumph of light over darkness.<sup>8</sup>

### I. The Guiding Gods as star-gods guidance The Solar Bark

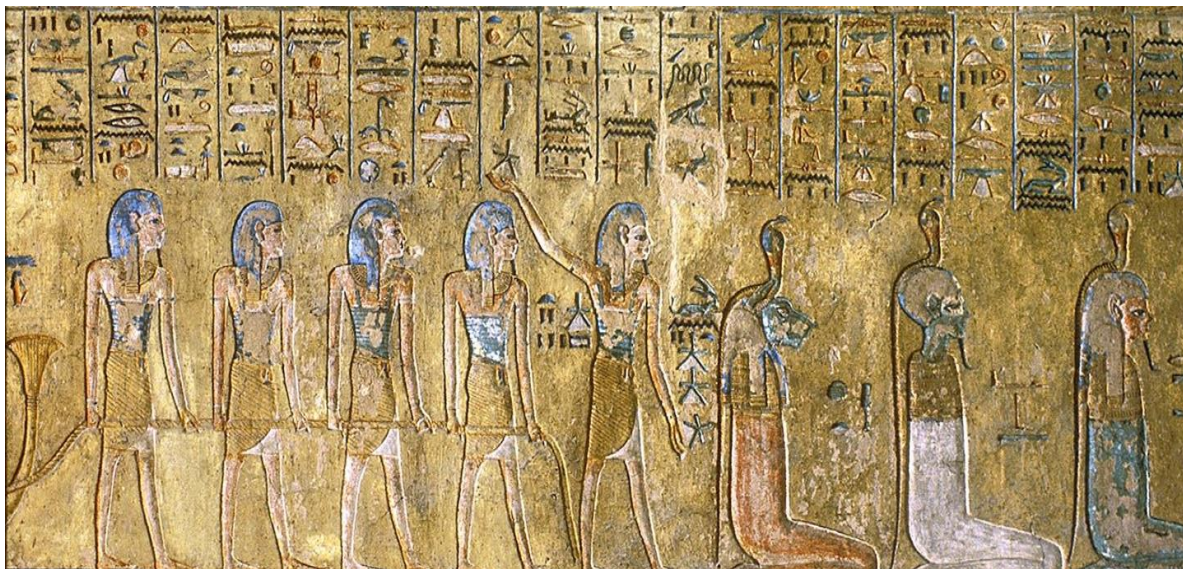


Fig. 1, The Guiding God identified by the star with Gods of the Underworld *dw3tyw* Carrying a Rope of Nightly Solar Bark, The Book of the Gates, Eleventh Hour, Tomb of Thutmose III, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty.

(Lucarelli, R. *A Solar-Ship Voyage: The Ancient Egyptian Religion*, 2024, p.74)

Doc. n. °: 1.

#### Monument:

- (1) Tomb of Thutmose III, Thebes, KV 34 (XVIII<sup>th</sup> dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, left wall.
- (2) Tomb of Amenhotep II, Thebes, KV 35 (XVIII<sup>th</sup> dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, right wall.
- (3) Tomb of Amenhotep III, Thebes, WV 22 (XVIII<sup>th</sup> dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, right wall.
- (4) Tomb of Horemheb, Thebes, KV 57 (XVIII<sup>th</sup> dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, left wall.
- (5) Tomb of Ramesses I, Thebes, KV 16 (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), burial chamber, right wall.
- (6) Tomb of Sety I, Thebes, KV 17 (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), entrance wall, right side.
- (7) Sarcophagus of King Sety I (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), exterior part, right corner.
- (8) Tomb of Merenptah, Thebes, KV 8 (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), burial chamber, right wall.
- (9) Tomb of Ramesses IV, Thebes, KV 2 (XX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), sarcophagus

<sup>7</sup> Horning, E., *the Ancient Egyptian Books of the Afterlife*. London 1999, p. 56.

<sup>8</sup> Assmann, A., *Death, and Salvation in Ancient Egypt*, translated from German by D. Lorton, Ithaca, and London, 2005, p. 109.



chamber, left wall.

- (10) Tomb of Ramesses VI, Thebes, KV 9 (XX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), first corridor, left wall.

### Description:

The scene has the representation of goddesses who are identified as the hours themselves, identified by the stars above their heads as an element of guidance for Nightly Solar Bark. Besides, the spiral shape of the rope's end might refer to the cyclic process of this journey. At the same time, some identified them as depictions of the circumpolar stars since they are described as those “*who do not know perishing,*” and these stars never disappear below the horizon, but they eternally circle around the pole.<sup>9</sup> (Fig. 1)



Fig. 2, The Guiding Gods identified by the stars carrying a rope of Nightly Solar Bark with Gods of the Underworld *dw3tyw*, The Book of the Gates, Eleventh Hour, Tomb of Thutmose III, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty.

(After, Castel Ronda, E. *Diccionario de signos y símbolos del Antiguo Egipto*, 2025, p.79)

**Doc. n. °:** 2.

- Monument:**
- (1) Tomb of Thutmose III, Thebes, KV 34 (XVIIIth dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, left wall.
  - (2) Tomb of Amenhotep II, Thebes, KV 35 (XVIIIth dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, right wall.
  - (3) Tomb of Amenhotep III, Thebes, WV 22 (XVIIIth dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, right wall.
  - (4) Tomb of Horemheb, Thebes, KV 57 (XVIIIth dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, left wall.
  - (5) Tomb of Ramesses I, Thebes, KV 16 (XIXth dynasty), burial chamber, right wall.
  - (6) Tomb of Sety I, Thebes, KV 17 (XIXth dynasty), entrance wall,

<sup>9</sup> Lucarelli, R. *A Solar-Ship Voyage: The Ancient Egyptian Religion*, London, 2024, p.70

right side.

- (7) Sarcophagus of King Sety I (XIXth dynasty), exterior part, right corner.
- (8) Tomb of Merenptah, Thebes, KV 8 (XIXth dynasty), burial chamber, right wall.
- (9) Tomb of Ramesses IV, Thebes, KV 2 (XXth dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, left wall.
- (10) Tomb of Ramesses VI, Thebes, KV 9 (XXth dynasty), first corridor, left wall.

### Description:

The scene has the representation of four gods holding four stars and carrying a rope. They are called “star-gods” and tow a boat.<sup>10</sup> This might be connected to the idea of time gods as guides in the underworld journey.<sup>11</sup> (Fig. 2)

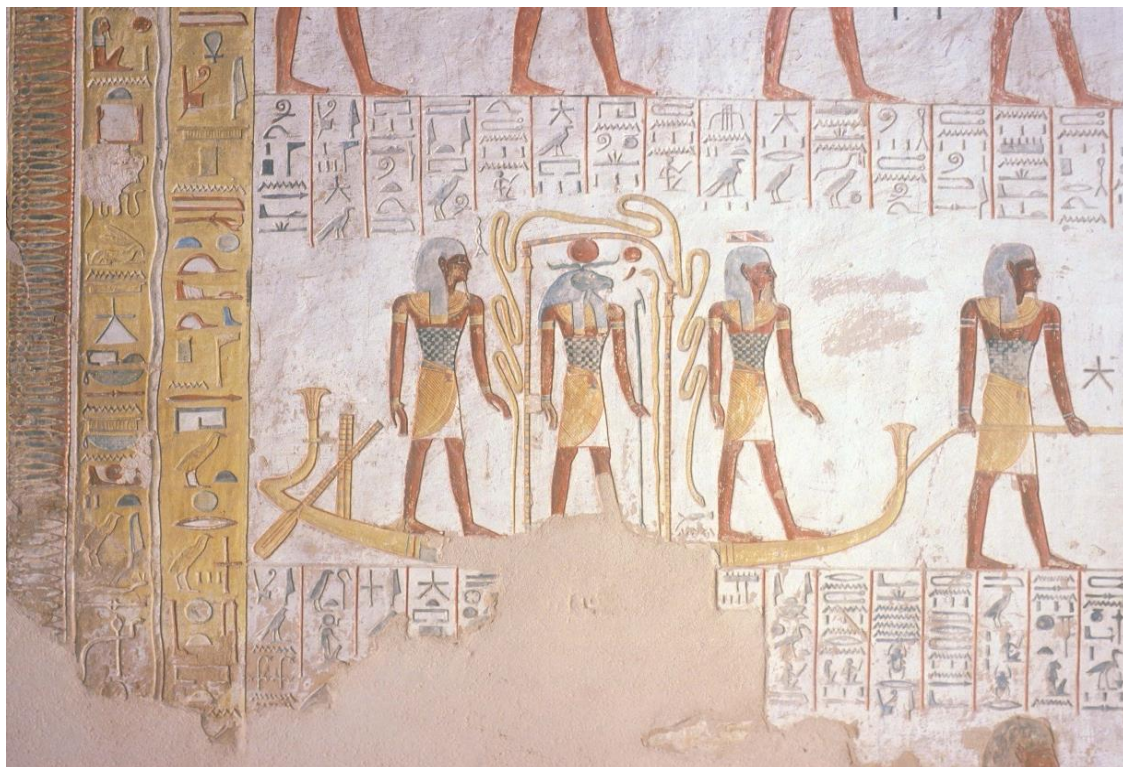


Fig. 3, The Guiding God identified by the star carrying a rope of Nightly Solar Bark with the Crew of the Solar Bark Hu and Sia with the Mehen serpent, The Book of the Gates, fifth hour, Tomb of Merenptah, 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty.

(After, Zahi Hawass, *The Royal tombs of Egypt*, p. 46)

<sup>10</sup> Taylor, J., *Death and the Afterlife in Ancient Egypt*, Chicago, 2001.p.170

<sup>11</sup> Wilkinson, R. H., *Reading Egyptian art: a hieroglyphic guide to ancient Egyptian painting and sculpture*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1992, p.52.

**Doc. n. °:** 3.

- Monument:**
- (1) Tomb of Thutmose III, Thebes, KV 34 (XVIIIth dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, right wall.
  - (2) Tomb of Amenhotep II, Thebes, KV 35 (XVIIIth dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, left wall.
  - (3) Tomb of Amenhotep III, Thebes, WV 22 (XVIIIth dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, left wall.
  - (4) Tomb of Horemheb, Thebes, KV 57 (XVIIIth dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, right wall.
  - (5) Tomb of Ramesses I, Thebes, KV 16 (XIXth dynasty), burial chamber, right wall.
  - (6) Tomb of Sety I, Thebes, KV 17 (XIXth dynasty), entrance wall, right side.
  - (7) Sarcophagus of King Sety I (XIXth dynasty), exterior part, left corner.
  - (8) Tomb of Merenptah, Thebes, KV 8 (XIXth dynasty), burial chamber, right wall.
  - (9) The Osirion, Abydos (XIXth dynasty), entrance corridor, left wall.
  - (10) Tomb of Ramesses IV, Thebes, KV 2 (XXth dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, left wall.
  - (11) Tomb of Ramesses VI, Thebes, KV 9 (XXth dynasty), first corridor, left wall.

**Description:**

The scene displays the guiding god towing the Solar Bark with the crew of the Solar Bark.<sup>12</sup> identified by the stars as an element of guidance for Nightly Solar Bark, and these stars never disappear below the horizon, but they eternally circle around the pole.

This might be connected to the idea of time gods as guides in the underworld journey.<sup>13</sup> (Fig. 3).

<sup>12</sup> Wilkinson, R. H., London: Thames and Hudson, 1992, p.58.

<sup>13</sup> Lucarelli, R. London, 2024, p.74





Fig. 4, The Guiding God identified by the star carrying a rope of Nightly Solar Bark with the Crew of the Solar Bark Hu and Sia with the Mehen serpent, The Book of the Gates, fourth hour, Tomb of Sety II, 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty.

(After, Zahi Hwass, *The Royal tombs of Egypt*, p. 44)

**Doc. n. °:** 4.

- Monument:**
- (1) Tomb of Thutmose III, Thebes, KV 34 (XVIIIth dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, right wall.
  - (2) Tomb of Amenhotep II, Thebes, KV 35 (XVIIIth dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, left wall.
  - (3) Tomb of Amenhotep III, Thebes, WV 22 (XVIIIth dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, left wall.
  - (4) Tomb of Horemheb, Thebes, KV 57 (XVIIIth dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, right wall.
  - (5) Tomb of Ramesses I, Thebes, KV 16 (XIXth dynasty), burial chamber, right wall.
  - (6) Tomb of Sety I, Thebes, KV 17 (XIXth dynasty), entrance wall, right side.
  - (7) Sarcophagus of King Sety I (XIXth dynasty), exterior part, left corner.
  - (8) Tomb of Merenptah, Thebes, KV 8 (XIXth dynasty), burial chamber, right wall.
  - (9) The Osirion, Abydos (XIXth dynasty), entrance corridor, left wall.
  - (10) Tomb of Ramesses IV, Thebes, KV 2 (XXth dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, left wall.
  - (11) Tomb of Ramesses VI, Thebes, KV 9 (XXth dynasty), first corridor, left

wall.

- (12) Tomb of Ramesses VI, Thebes, KV 9 (XXth dynasty), first corridor, left wall.

### Description:

The scene represents the guiding god towing the crew members of the Solar Bark Hu and Sia with the Mehen serpent, identified by the stars as an element of guidance for the Nightly Solar Bark.<sup>14</sup> (Fig. 4)



Fig. 5, The Guiding God identified by the star carrying a rope of Nightly Solar Bark with the Crew of the Solar Bark Hu and Sia with the Mehen serpent, The Book of the Gates, fourth hour, Tomb of Horemheb, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty.

(After Coleman, *The Enigmatic Netherworld Books of the Solar-Osirian Unity*, 2009, p. 53)

**Doc. n. °:** 5.

- Monument:**
- (1) Tomb of Thutmose III, Thebes, KV 34 (XVIIIth dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, right wall.
  - (2) Tomb of Amenhotep II, Thebes, KV 35 (XVIIIth dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, right wall.
  - (3) Tomb of Amenhotep III, Thebes, WV 22 (XVIIIth dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, right wall.
  - (4) Tomb of Horemheb, Thebes, KV 57 (XVIIIth dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, right wall.
  - (5) Tomb of Ramesses I, Thebes, KV 16 (XIXth dynasty), burial chamber, right wall.
  - (6) Tomb of Sety I, Thebes, KV 17 (XIXth dynasty), entrance wall, right side.

<sup>14</sup> Roberson, J.A. *The Awakening of Osiris and the Transit of the Solar Barques*, London, 2013, p.112



- (7) Sarcophagus of King Sety I (XIXth dynasty), exterior part, right corner.
- (8) Tomb of Merenptah, Thebes, KV 8 (XIXth dynasty), burial chamber, right wall.
- (9) The Osirion, Abydos (XIXth dynasty), entrance corridor, left wall.
- (10) Tomb of Ramesses IV, Thebes, KV 2 (XXth dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, left wall.
- (11) Tomb of Ramesses VI, Thebes, KV 9 (XXth dynasty), first corridor, left wall.

### Description:

The scene represents the guiding god towing the crew members of the solar bark Hu and Sia with the Mehen serpent, identified by the stars as an element of guidance for the nightly solar bark during the advance of the solar bark in the underworld.<sup>15</sup> (Fig. 5)

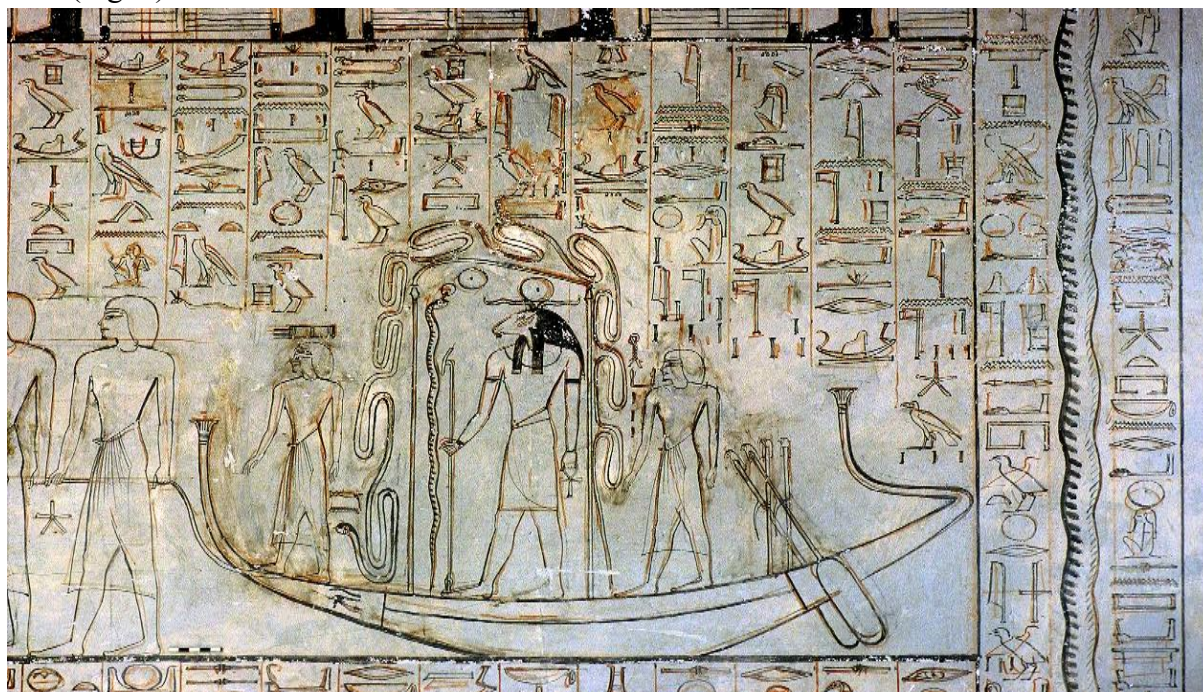


Fig. 6, The Guiding God identified by the star carrying a rope of Nightly Solar Bark with the Crew of the Solar Bark Hu and Sia with the Mehen serpent, The Book of the Gates, third hour, Tomb of Horemheb, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty.

(After Coleman, *The Enigmatic Netherworld Books of the Solar-Osirian Unity*, 2009, p. 53)

<sup>15</sup> Assmann, J. *Death and Salvation in Ancient Egypt*, London, 2001, p.109

**Doc. n. °:** 6.

- Monument:**
- (1) Tomb of Thutmose III, Thebes, KV 34 (XVIIIth dynasty), (13) sarcophagus chamber, right wall.
  - (2) Tomb of Amenhotep II, Thebes, KV 35 (XVIIIth dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, left wall.
  - (3) Tomb of Amenhotep III, Thebes, WV 22 (XVIIIth dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, left wall.
  - (4) Tomb of Horemheb, Thebes, KV 57 (XVIIIth dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, right wall.
  - (5) Tomb of Ramesses I, Thebes, KV 16 (XIXth dynasty), burial chamber, right wall.
  - (6) Tomb of Sety I, Thebes, KV 17 (XIXth dynasty), entrance wall, right side.
  - (7) Sarcophagus of King Sety I (XIXth dynasty), exterior part, left corner.
  - (8) Tomb of Merenptah, Thebes, KV 8 (XIXth dynasty), burial chamber, right wall.
  - (9) The Osirion, Abydos (XIXth dynasty), entrance corridor, right wall.
  - (10) Tomb of Ramesses IV, Thebes, KV 2 (XXth dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, left wall.
  - (11) Tomb of Ramesses VI, Thebes, KV 9 (XXth dynasty), first corridor, left wall.
  - (12) Tomb of Ramesses IX, Thebes, KV 6 (XXth dynasty), first corridor, left wall.

**Description:**

The scene represents the guiding god towing the crew members of the Solar Bark Hu and Sia with the Mehen serpent during the advance of the Solar Bark in the underworld, identified by the stars as an element of guidance for the nightly solar bark.<sup>16</sup> (Fig. 6)

<sup>16</sup> Lucarelli, R. London, 2024, p.79





Fig. 7, Guiding Gods with stars on their heads, Book of Amduat, seventh hour, Tomb of Sety I, 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty.

(After, Zahi Hwass, *The Royal tombs of Egypt*, p. 73)

**Doc. n. °:** 7.

- Monument:**
- (1) Tomb of Horemheb, Thebes, KV 57 (XVIII<sup>th</sup> dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, right wall.
  - (2) Tomb of Ramesses I, Thebes, KV 16 (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), burial chamber, right wall.
  - (3) Tomb of Sety I, Thebes, KV 17 (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), side chamber Jb, rear wall.
  - (4) Sarcophagus of King Sety I (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), exterior part, right corner.
  - (5) The Osirion, Abydos (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), entrance corridor, right wall.
  - (6) Tomb of Ramesses IV, Thebes, KV 2 (XX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, left wall.
  - (7) Tomb of Ramesses VI, Thebes, KV 9 (XX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), first corridor, left wall.



**Description:**

The scene has the representation of goddesses who are identified as the hours themselves, identified by the stars above their heads as an element of guidance for the Nightly Solar Bark.<sup>17</sup>

These circumpolar stars the basis for the symbolism never set, making them perfect emblems of eternity, orientation, and divine continuity. (Fig. 5)



Fig. 8, The Guiding God identified by the star Carrying a rope and pulled out of the mummiform deity, Book of Amduat, sixth hour, Tomb of Sety I, 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty.  
(After, Hornung, *The Egyptian Book of Amduat*, p.209)

<sup>17</sup> Piankoff, A., 'Vallée des rois à Thèbes-Ouest, la tombe No 1 (Ramsès VII)' ASAE  
Quack, A., *Apopsis, Nabelschnur des Ra*, SAK 34, Paris, 2006 p.24.


**Doc. n. °:** 8.

- Monument:**
- (1) Tomb of Horemheb, Thebes, KV 57 (XVIII<sup>th</sup> dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, left wall.
  - (2) Tomb of Ramesses I, Thebes, KV 16 (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), burial chamber, right wall.
  - (3) Tomb of Sety I, Thebes, KV 17 (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), entrance wall, right side.
  - (4) Sarcophagus of King Sety I (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), exterior part, right corner.
  - (5) The Osirion, Abydos (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), entrance corridor, right wall.
  - (6) Tomb of Ramesses IV, Thebes, KV 2 (XX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, right wall.
  - (7) Tomb of Ramesses VI, Thebes, KV 9 (XX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), first corridor, right wall.

### Description:

The scene shows the guiding god within the ties that form the ropes, and among the guiding gods can be distinguished twelve stars.<sup>18</sup> The twelve stars represent the twelve hours of the nighttime in which these individuals transformed. The fact that *Aqen* was associated with Solar Bark and travel may be another reference to the sun's journey.<sup>19</sup> (Fig. 8)

One of the scenes depicts the guiding god carries a double-twisted rope fastened around the neck of a mummiform God identified with *Aqen* ("Aqen"), represented in the 6th hour Upper Register. On some occasions, it appears spelled as "*iqn*," an action that is related

to the same being.<sup>20</sup> The concept of *nḥḥ*  (V38-N25- V38)<sup>21</sup> related to the creation of the hour relation with the guiding god and related to the double-twisted rope. *pe*.<sup>22</sup> (Fig. 6)

The text mentions that the guiding god is pulled out of the mouth of the mummiform deity; however, it shows it tied around his neck. According to the text, *ndrw n. tn mʿnnw(j) šdj.n.tn m r3 ʿqn* ("Grasp for yourselves the double-twisted which you have pulled out of the mouth of Aqen!").<sup>23</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Lucarelli, R. London, 2024, p.80

<sup>19</sup> Feder, F., 'The Legend of the Sun's Eye: Córdoba: CNERU, 2013, p.46.

<sup>20</sup> Abitz, F., 2003. pp. 11 15.

<sup>21</sup> Gardiner Egyptian Grammar sign list, p. 545.

<sup>22</sup> Wilkinson, R. H., *Symbol & magic in Egyptian art*. London, 1994, p.24.

<sup>23</sup> Guerra Méndez, C., 2022, p.51.

## II. The Guiding Gods towing The Solar Bark:



Fig. 9, The Guiding Gods towing a rope of Nightly Solar Bark with Gods of the Underworld *dw3tyw*, The Book of the Gates, second hour, Tomb of Horemheb, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty.

(After Zahi Hawass, *The Royal tombs of Egypt*, p. 50)

**Doc. n. °:** 9.

- Monument:**
- (1) Tomb of Horemheb, Thebes, KV 57 (XVIII<sup>th</sup> dynasty), Burial chamber J, front wall.
  - (2) Tomb of Ramesses I, Thebes, KV 16 (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), burial chamber, right wall.
  - (3) Tomb of Sety I, Thebes, KV 17 (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), entrance wall, right side.
  - (4) Sarcophagus of King Sety I (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), exterior part, right corner.
  - (5) The Osirion, Abydos (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), entrance corridor, right wall.
  - (6) Tomb of Ramesses IV, Thebes, KV 2 (XX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, left wall.
  - (7) Tomb of Ramesses VI, Thebes, KV 9 (XX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), first corridor, left wall.

### Description:

The scene represents the guiding gods towing the crew member of the solar bark Hu and Sia with the Mehen serpent. Except for the 1<sup>st</sup> hour, the boat is towed by four guiding gods who pull a rope tied to the tow of the boat.<sup>24</sup> The Solar Bark, although it is not evident, shows a symbolic relationship between these ropes and certain snakes since they are sometimes associated with the concept of time to refer to the sun god's night journey.<sup>25</sup> (Fig. 9)

<sup>24</sup> Hoffmann, N., 'Reading the Amduat', ZÄS 123, 1996, p.40.

<sup>25</sup> Hornung, E. and Abt. T., *The Egyptian Book of Gates*. Zurich: Living Human



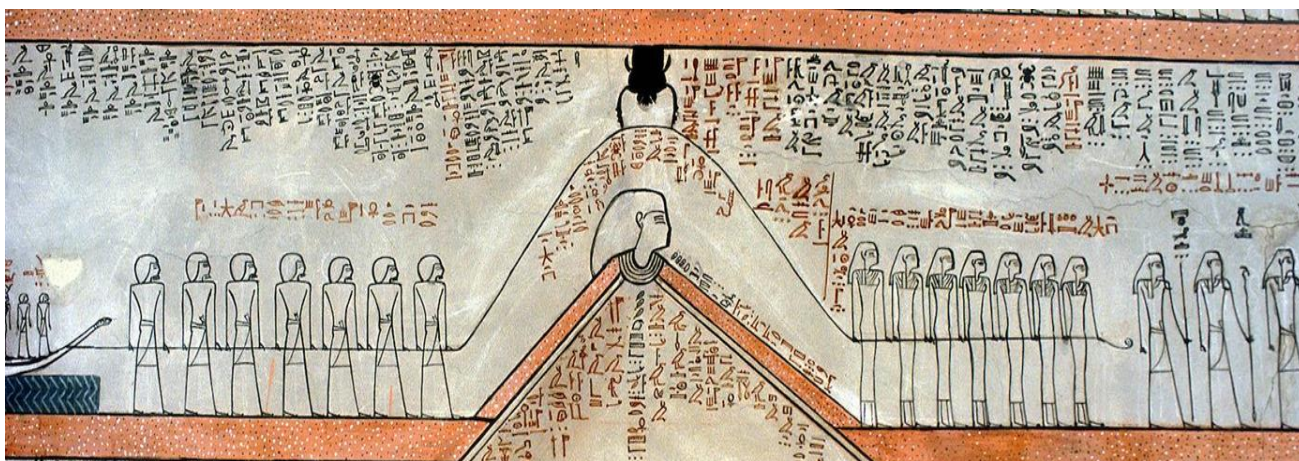


Fig. 10, The Guiding Gods towing a rope of Nightly Solar Bark during the advance of the sun god in the underworld, The Book of Amduat, fifth hour, Tomb of Amenhetep II, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty.

(After, Coleman, *The Enigmatic Netherworld Books of the Solar-Osirian Unity*, p.162)

**Doc. n. °:** 10.

- Monument:**
- (1) Tomb of Horemheb, Thebes, KV 57 (XVIII<sup>th</sup> dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, right wall.
  - (2) Tomb of Ramesses I, Thebes, KV 16 (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), burial chamber, right wall.
  - (3) Tomb of Sety I, Thebes, KV 17 (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), entrance wall, right side.
  - (4) Sarcophagus of King Sety I (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), exterior part, right corner.
  - (5) The Osirion, Abydos (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), entrance corridor, right wall.
  - (6) Tomb of Ramesses IV, Thebes, KV 2 (XX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, right wall.
  - (7) Tomb of Ramesses VI, Thebes, KV 9 (XX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), first corridor, right wall.

### Description:

The scene has the representation for a more symbolic depiction of the guiding gods towing Solar Bark is attested in the lower register of the 11<sup>th</sup> hour, where 12 goddesses called “the hour goddesses who tow” carry a rope that ends in a spiral shape.<sup>26</sup> (Fig. 10)

Heritage Publications, 2014, p.19.

<sup>26</sup> Piankoff, A., ‘Vallée des rois à Thèbes-Ouest, la tombe No 1 (Ramsès VII)’ ASAE

Quack, A., *Apopsis, Nabelschnur des Ra*, SAK 34, Paris, 2006 p.24.

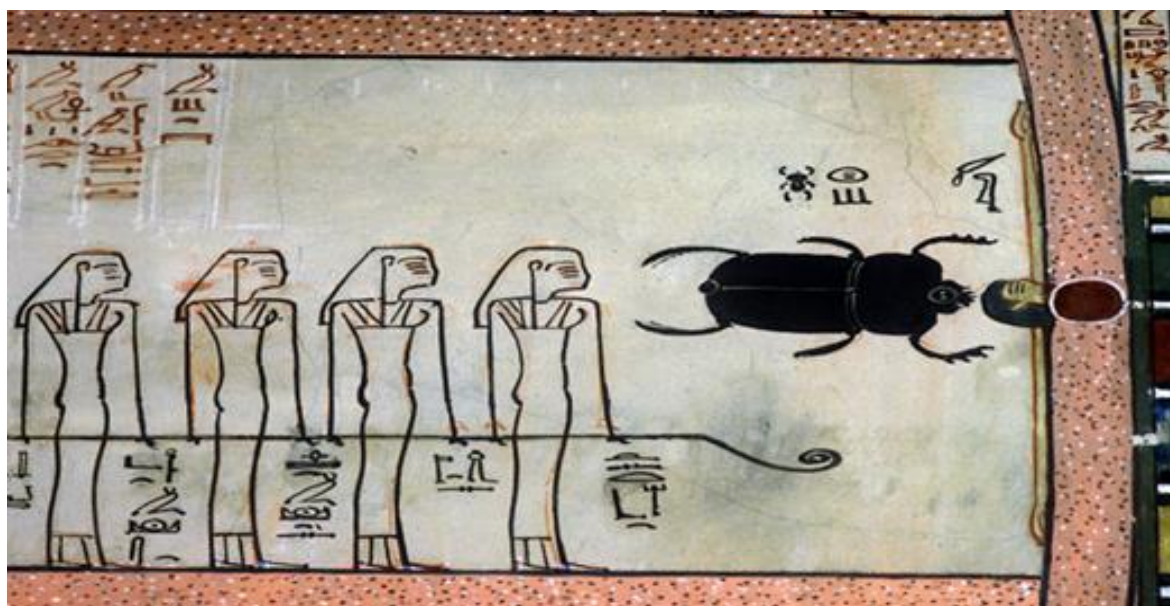


Fig. 11, The Guiding Gods towing a rope of Nightly Solar Bark, The Book of Amduat, eighth hour, Tomb of Ramses V/VI, 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty

(After, Hornung, *The Egyptian Book of Amduat*, p. 65)

**Doc. n. °:** 11.

- Monument:**
- (1) Tomb of Horemheb, Thebes, KV 57 (XVIII<sup>th</sup> dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, right wall.
  - (2) Tomb of Ramesses I, Thebes, KV 16 (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), burial chamber, right wall.
  - (3) Tomb of Sety I, Thebes, KV 17 (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), entrance wall, right side.
  - (4) Sarcophagus of King Sety I (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), exterior part, right corner.
  - (5) The Osirion, Abydos (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), entrance corridor, right wall.
  - (6) Tomb of Ramesses IV, Thebes, KV 2 (XX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, right wall.
  - (7) Tomb of Ramesses VI, Thebes, KV 9 (XX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), first corridor, right wall.

### Description:

The scene has the representation of an action that is related to the guiding gods during the advance of the Solar Bark in the underworld. Indeed, the statements of the middle register of the 8<sup>th</sup> hour mention the necessity of these deities to progress in the underworld, and the ending offering formula reaffirms their importance.<sup>27</sup> (Fig. 10), (Fig. 11)

<sup>27</sup> Lucarelli, R. London, 2024, p.81

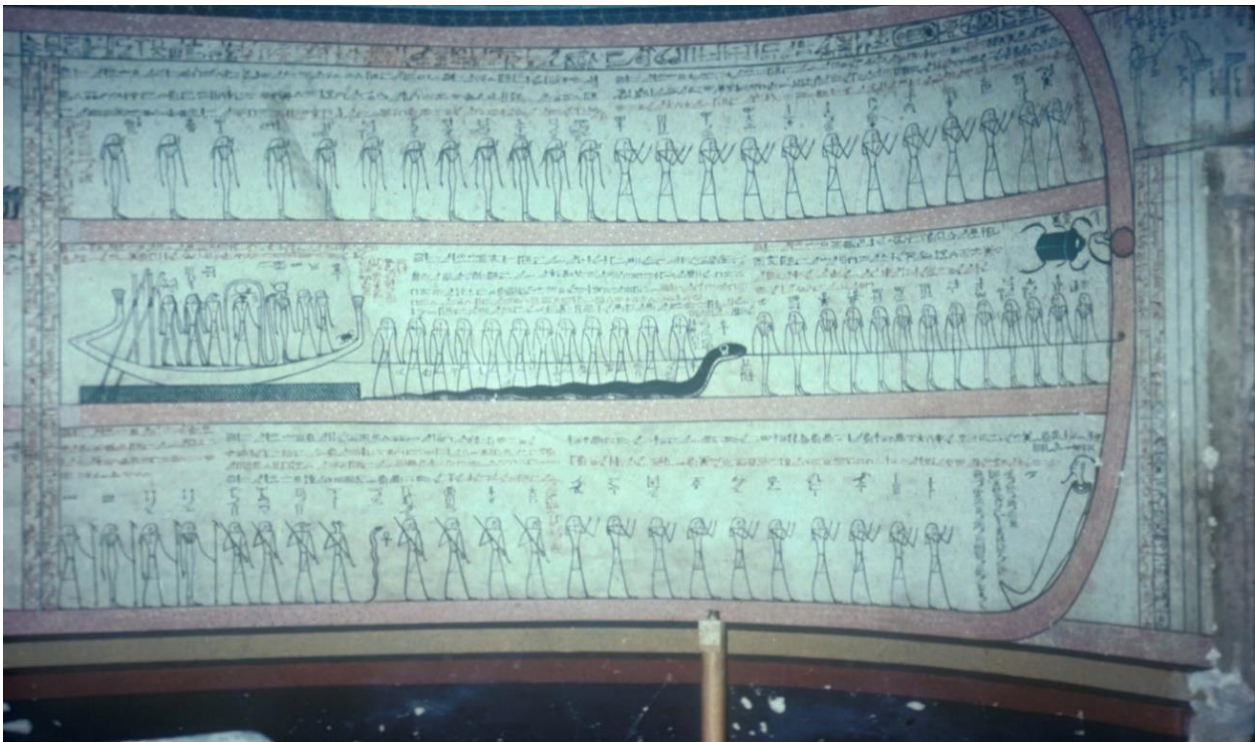


Fig. 12, The Guiding Gods towing a rope of Nightly Solar Bark with Gods of the Underworld *ḏw3tyw*, The Book of Amduat, tenth hour, Tomb of Thutmes III, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty.

(After, John Coleman Darnell, *Fribourg-Göttingen*, 2021, p. 146)

**Doc. n. °:** 12.

- Monument:**
- (1) Tomb of Horemheb, Thebes, KV 57 (XVIII<sup>th</sup> dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, right wall.
  - (2) Tomb of Ramesses I, Thebes, KV 16 (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), burial chamber, left wall.
  - (3) Tomb of Sety I, Thebes, KV 17 (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), entrance wall, right side.
  - (4) Sarcophagus of King Sety I (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), exterior part, right corner.
  - (5) The Osirion, Abydos (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), entrance corridor, front wall.
  - (6) Tomb of Ramesses IV, Thebes, KV 2 (XX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, left wall.
  - (7) Tomb of Ramesses VI, Thebes, KV 9 (XX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), first corridor, left wall.



**Description:**

The scene has a depiction of the guiding gods towing the Solar Bark during the advance of the Nightly Solar Bark with the Gods of the Underworld *ḏw3tyw*.<sup>28</sup> (Fig. 12)

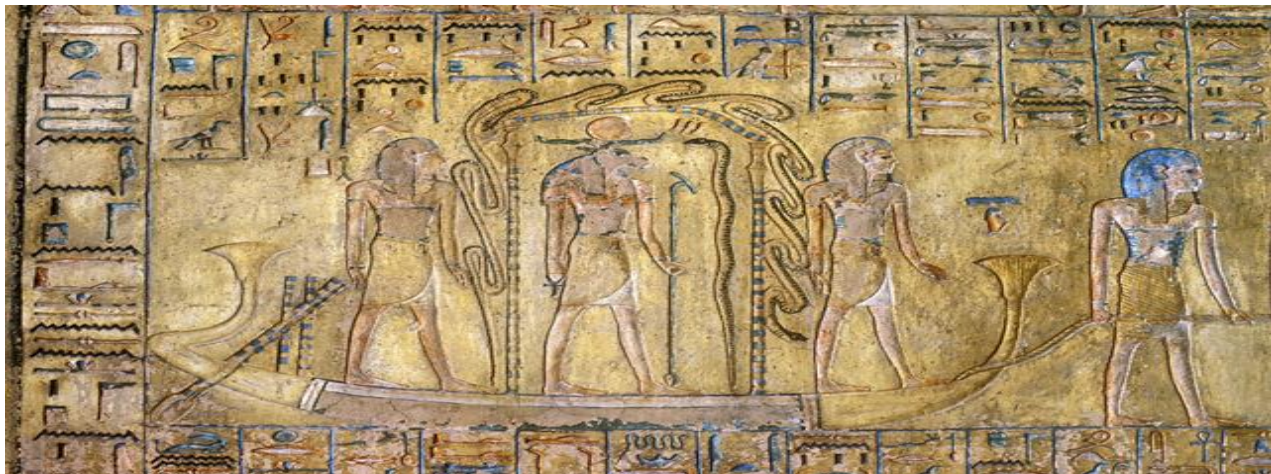


Fig. 13, The Guiding God towing a rope of Nightly Solar Bark with the Crew of the Solar Bark Hu and Sia with the Mehen serpent, Eleventh Hour, Tomb of Thutmose III, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty.

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

**Doc. n. °:** 13.

- Monument:**
- (1) Tomb of Horemheb, Thebes, KV 57 (XVIII<sup>th</sup> dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, right wall.
  - (2) Tomb of Ramesses I, Thebes, KV 16 (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), burial chamber, right wall.
  - (3) Tomb of Sety I, Thebes, KV 17 (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), entrance wall, right side.
  - (4) Sarcophagus of King Sety I (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), exterior part, right corner.
  - (5) The Osirion, Abydos (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), entrance corridor, front wall.
  - (6) Tomb of Ramesses IV, Thebes, KV 2 (XX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, left wall.
  - (7) Tomb of Ramesses VI, Thebes, KV 9 (XX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), first corridor, left wall.

**Description:**

The scene has the representation of the guiding god Tows the member Crew of the Solar Bark Hu and Sia with the Mehen serpent. (Fig. 13).

<sup>28</sup> Horning. E., *The ancient Egyptian Books of the Afterlife*, London 2007, p. 26.

According to the text:<sup>29</sup>

*st3w.tn n.j hryw nwh hmw.tn r qrrt nww* (“May you tow for me, carriers of the rope, and may you turn back at the cavern of Nun”); *jw wdnw n.sn tp t3 m t3w nwh m wj3* (“Whoever makes an offering to them on earth will tie the rope in the (solar) barque”) *wnw st3w ʿq3 ʿnnw* (“Open you who tow when the serpent rope is straight!”) *wnwwt st3ywt; šzp.sn nfrt n(t) wj3 r st3 rʿw m nwt* (“They receive the tow rope of the barque to tow Re in heaven [Nut]”), (Fig. 13)

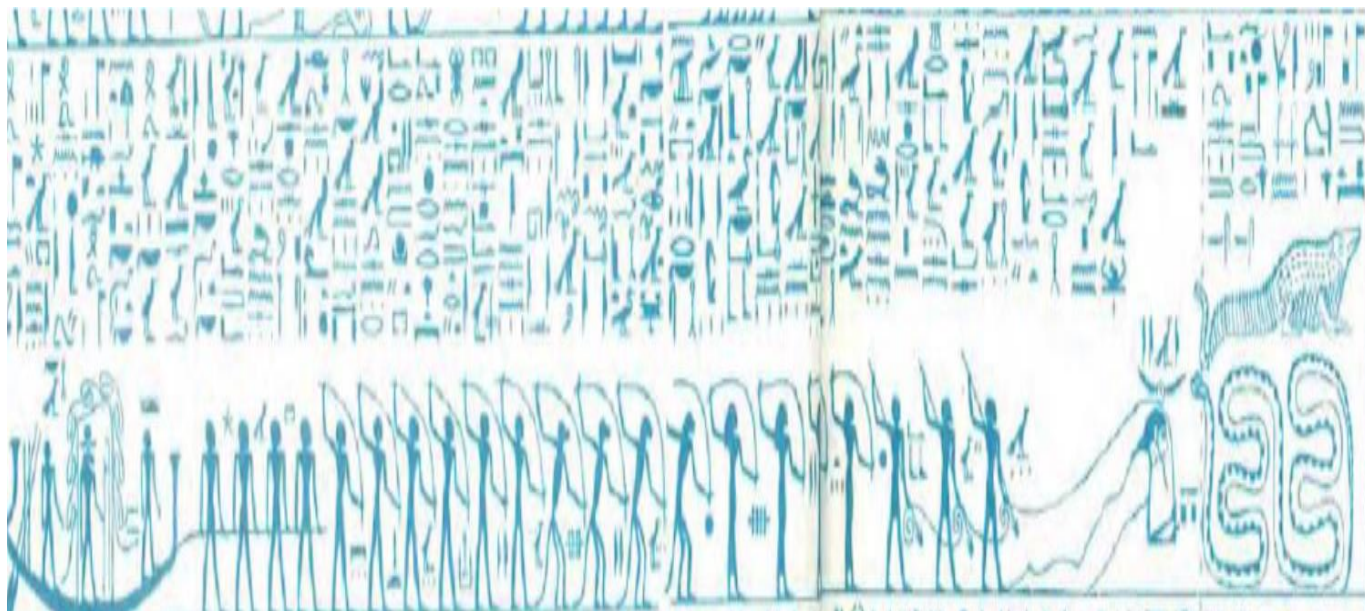


Fig. 14, The Guiding God towing a rope of Nightly Solar Bark with the Crew of the Solar Bark Hu and Sia with the Mehen serpent and groups of deities holding ropes and nets, The Book of the Gates, Sety I's sarcophagus, 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty.

(After, Guerra Méndez, C., *Snaks Iconography in The Egyptian Book of Gates*, p. 63)

**Doc. n. °:** 14.

- Monument:**
- (1) Tomb of Horemheb, Thebes, KV 57 (XVIII<sup>th</sup> dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, front wall.
  - (2) Tomb of Ramesses I, Thebes, KV 16 (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), burial chamber, right wall.
  - (3) Tomb of Sety I, Thebes, KV 17 (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), entrance wall, right side.
  - (4) Sarcophagus of King Sety I (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), exterior part, right corner.
  - (5) The Osirion, Abydos (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), entrance corridor, right wall.
  - (6) Tomb of Ramesses IV, Thebes, KV 2 (XX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, left wall.

<sup>29</sup> Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, Berkeley, 1973, p.16.

- (7) Tomb of Ramesses VI, Thebes, KV 9 (XX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), first corridor, left wall.
- (8) Tomb of Ramesses IX, Thebes, KV 6 (XX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), first corridor, left wall.

### Description:

The scene depicts the guiding god towing a rope of Nightly Solar Bark with the crew of the Solar Bark Hu and Sia with the Mehen serpent and groups of deities holding ropes and nets.

There are 3 groups of deities holding nets: 6 men (“who work charms”), 4 monkeys (“who protect Ra”), and 4 goddesses (“who protect Ra”). These kinds of deities holding nets are associated with the protection of Ra by the magic located in their nets from Apophis at the end of the register.<sup>30</sup>

The net is easy to relate to the action of capturing creatures. The presence of nets in the underworld to protect the dead from nets spread out between sky and earth. After them, three gods armed with spears and called “those who bear spears” grasp a rope that is held by a half-lying god called “the old one.” The three gods guard the rope in front of Apophis, who is depicted as a multi-coiled serpent, and the crocodile šššš, whose tail ends in a snake.<sup>31</sup>

The three gods guard the rope, which is depicted as a spiral form, to prevent Apophis from approaching the Nightly Solar Bark. might interpret this spiral as the lifetime of the sun god associated with “the old one,” which must be protected from the serpent.<sup>32</sup>

Apophis is not depicted with a looped body.<sup>33</sup> In this case Apophis mainly represents the chaos destroyed, mainly with the enchantment of the deities with nets.<sup>34</sup> (Fig. 14)

However, there is not a direct mention of the crocodile, which, being on the opposite side, could be acting as a guardian or apotropaic deity against Apophis depicted over it.<sup>35</sup>

This interpretation is supported by the usual representation of crocodile gods as guardians in the underworld. Besides, a crocodile appears as an emissary of solar power toward the edges of the cosmos. Thus, this representation could be interpreted as an extension of Ra's punishing power over chaotic forces. On the other hand, the snake at the end of its tail seems to show an equivalence with

<sup>30</sup> Wilkinson, R. H., 1994, p.24.

<sup>31</sup> Redford, D. B., ‘snakes’ The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt. vol. 3. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2001 p. 7.

<sup>32</sup> Redford 2001, pp. 296-299.

<sup>33</sup> David, R., London, 2002, p. 97.

<sup>34</sup> Guerra Méndez, C., 2022, p.60.

<sup>35</sup> Roberson, J. A., ‘The royal funerary books: the subject matter of scenes and texts’ in Wilkinson, R. H. and Weeks, K. R. (eds), The Oxford handbook of the Valley of the Kings. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016., p.80



Apophis' head and therefore the chaotic forces.<sup>36</sup> (Fig. 14)

At the same time, some identified them as depictions of the circumpolar stars since they are described as those “*who do not know perishing*,” and these stars never disappear below the horizon, but they eternally circle around the pole.<sup>37</sup> (Fig. 14)



Fig. 15, The Guiding God towing a rope of Nightly Solar Bark with the Crew of the Solar Bark Hu and Sia with the Mehen serpent, The Book of the Gates, ninth hour, Tomb of Ramses V/VI, 20<sup>th</sup> Dynasty.

(After, Zahi Hawass, *The Royal tombs of Egypt*, p. 41)

**Doc. n °:** 15.

- Monument:**
- (1) Tomb of Horemheb, Thebes, KV 57 (XVIII<sup>th</sup> dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, right wall.
  - (2) Tomb of Ramesses I, Thebes, KV 16 (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), burial chamber, right wall.
  - (3) Tomb of Sety I, Thebes, KV 17 (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), entrance wall, front wall.
  - (4) Sarcophagus of King Sety I (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), exterior part, right corner.
  - (5) The Osirion, Abydos (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), entrance corridor, front wall.
  - (6) Tomb of Ramesses IV, Thebes, KV 2 (XX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, left wall.
  - (7) Tomb of Ramesses VI, Thebes, KV 9 (XX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), first corridor,

<sup>36</sup> Wüst, R. A. J., 2000, pp. 163-190.

<sup>37</sup> Lucarelli, R. London, 2024, p.82

left wall.

- (8) Tomb of Ramesses IX, Thebes, KV 6 (XXth dynasty), first corridor, left wall.

### Description:

The scene depicts the guiding god as the Shining Ones towing a rope of Nightly Solar Bark with the crew of the Solar Bark Hu and Sia with the Mehen serpent.<sup>38</sup> (Fig. 15)



Fig. 16, The Guiding God towing a rope of Nightly Solar Bark with the Crew of the Solar Bark Hu and Sia with the Mehen serpent and groups of deities in front of the second gate, The Book of the Gates, third hour, Tomb of Ramses IV, 20<sup>th</sup> Dynasty.

(After, Zahi Hawass, *The Royal tombs of Egypt*, p. 42)

**Doc. n °:** 16.

- Monument:**
- (1) Tomb of Horemheb, Thebes, KV 57 (XVIII<sup>th</sup> dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, right wall.
  - (2) Tomb of Ramesses I, Thebes, KV 16 (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), burial chamber, right wall.
  - (3) Tomb of Sety I, Thebes, KV 17 (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), entrance wall, right side.
  - (4) Sarcophagus of King Sety I (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), exterior part, right

<sup>38</sup> Lucarelli, R. London, 2024, p.84

corner.

- (5) The Osirion, Abydos (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), entrance corridor, right wall.
- (6) Tomb of Ramesses IV, Thebes, KV 2 (XX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, left wall.
- (7) Tomb of Ramesses VI, Thebes, KV 9 (XX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), first corridor, left wall.

### Description:

The scene has the representation of the Guiding God towing a rope of Nightly Solar Bark with the Crew of the Solar Bark Hu and Sia with the Mehen serpent and groups of deities in front of the second gate.<sup>39</sup> (Fig. 16)

### III. The Guiding Gods holding the measuring rope:



Fig. 17, The Guiding Gods carrying the measuring rope, The Book of the Gates, ninth hour, Tomb of Sety I, 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty.

(After, Hornung, *The Egyptian Book of Gates*, p.144)

<sup>39</sup> Piankoff, A., 'Vallée des rois à Thèbes-Ouest, la tombe No 1 (Ramsès VII)' ASAE 55, 1958, pp. 145–156.



**Doc. n. °:** 17.

- Monument:**
- (1) Tomb of Horemheb, Thebes, KV 57 (XVIII<sup>th</sup> dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, right wall.
  - (2) Tomb of Ramesses I, Thebes, KV 16 (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), burial chamber, right wall.
  - (3) Tomb of Sety I, Thebes, KV 17 (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), entrance wall, right side.
  - (4) Sarcophagus of King Sety I (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), exterior part, right corner.
  - (5) The Osirion, Abydos (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), entrance corridor, front wall.
  - (6) Tomb of Ramesses IV, Thebes, KV 2 (XX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, left wall.
  - (7) Tomb of Ramesses VI, Thebes, KV 9 (XX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), first corridor, left wall.

### Description:

The scene has the representation of the guiding gods carrying the measuring rope during the advance of the Nightly Solar Bark. Ropes represented as an icon of lifetime may relate to the concept of rebirth, which is carried by several guiding gods.<sup>40</sup> (Fig. 17) According to the text “*Those who supervise the measuring rope in the west*”. This may refer to the duration of time from which the deceased benefits especially in the scenes of measurement of the underworld fields during advance of Nightly Solar Bark.<sup>41</sup> (Fig. 16) (Fig. 17)



Fig. 18, The Guiding God carrying the measuring rope, The Book of the Gates, ninth hour, Tomb of Sety I, 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty.

(After, Hornung, *The Egyptian Book of Gates*, p.145)

<sup>40</sup> David, R., *Religion and Magic in Ancient Egypt*, London, 2002, pp. 312-322.

<sup>41</sup> Roberson, J. A., 2016, pp. 316-320.

**Doc. n °:** 18.

- Monument:**
- (1) Tomb of Horemheb, Thebes, KV 57 (XVIII<sup>th</sup> dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, front wall.
  - (2) Tomb of Ramesses I, Thebes, KV 16 (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), burial chamber, right wall.
  - (3) Tomb of Sety I, Thebes, KV 17 (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), entrance wall, right side.
  - (4) Sarcophagus of King Sety I (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), exterior part, right corner.
  - (5) The Osirion, Abydos (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), entrance corridor, right wall.
  - (6) Tomb of Ramesses IV, Thebes, KV 2 (XX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, left wall.
  - (7) Tomb of Ramesses VI, Thebes, KV 9 (XX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), first corridor, left wall.

### Description:

The scene has the representation of the guiding god carrying the measuring rope during the advance of the nightly solar bark.<sup>42</sup> (Fig. 18)

According to texts god Ra is identified with those “who carry the double rope which measures lifetime”. *hryw nwh n jmnt sšmyw 3hwt n 3hw šzp n. tn nwh ndr n. tn st3yw 3ht nj jmntyw* (“You who carry the rope of the West, who allocate plots to the blessed Akh-spirits, receive for yourselves the rope and seize hold of the field-measurer of those of the West!”).<sup>43</sup> (Fig. 18)

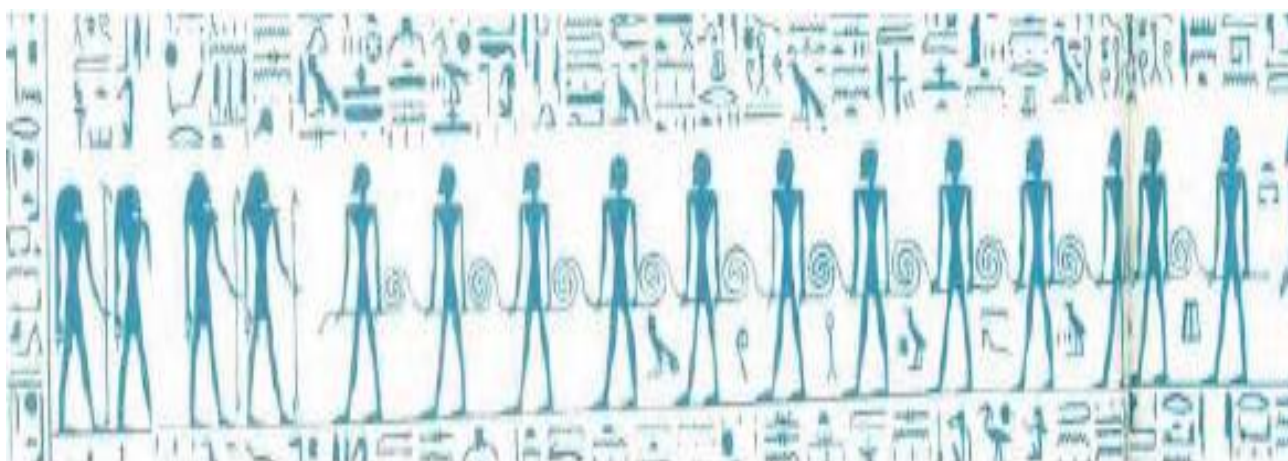


Fig. 19, The Guiding God carrying the measuring rope, The Book of the Gates, ninth hour, Sety I's sarcophagus, 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty.

(After, Guerra Méndez, C., *Snakes Iconography in The Egyptian Book of Gates*, p.48)

<sup>42</sup> Roberson, J. A., 2016, pp. 316-320.

<sup>43</sup> Horning. E., 2001, p.32.

**Doc. n °:** 19.

- Monument:**
- (1) Tomb of Horemheb, Thebes, KV 57 (XVIII<sup>th</sup> dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, front wall.
  - (2) Tomb of Sety I, Thebes, KV 17 (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), entrance wall, right side.
  - (3) Sarcophagus of King Sety I (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), exterior part, right corner.
  - (4) The Osirion, Abydos (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), entrance corridor, right wall.
  - (5) Tomb of Ramesses IV, Thebes, KV 2 (XX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, left wall.
  - (6) Tomb of Ramesses VI, Thebes, KV 9 (XX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), first corridor, left wall.

### Description:

The scene has the representation of twelve guiding gods carrying the measuring rope, probably as a reference to the 12 hours of the night, carrying “*the measuring rope in the fields of the Duat*”. The same meaning may be this time as a benefit to the *Akh*-souls of the underworld, whose survival depends on measuring “plots” of the Duat through this rope.<sup>44</sup>

This is said by the sun god himself, who refers to the rope, whereas the time component may also be identified in the 12 carriers mirroring the 12 hours of the night.<sup>45</sup> (Fig. 19) The four gods with *Ankh* and *Was* signs which follow the scene are called “*Those who supervise the measuring rope in the west*” so may be understand them as a sort of divine foremen whose task is to supervise and organize the works and protect the carriers as it is mentioned in the text.<sup>46</sup> (Fig. 19)

<sup>44</sup> David, R., London, 2002, pp. 312-322.

<sup>45</sup> Branch, B., *Field Guide to the Snakes and Other Reptiles of Southern Africa*. Sanibel Island: Ralph Curtis Publishing, 1988, p. 62.

<sup>46</sup> Abitz, F., *Knowledge for the Afterlife: The Egyptian Amduat- A Quest for Immortality*, Zurich, 2003. pp. 11 15.



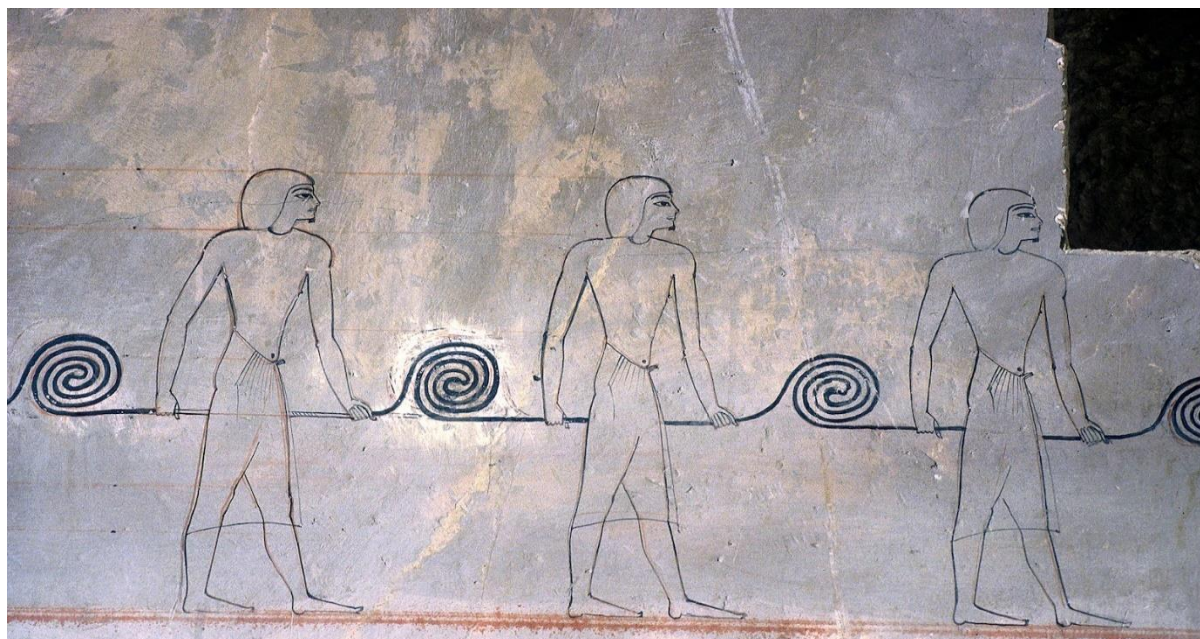


Fig. 20, The Guiding God carrying the measuring rope, The Book of the Gates, fifth hour, Tomb of Horemheb, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty.

(After Zahi Hawass, *The Royal tombs of Egypt*, p. 49)

**Doc. n °:** 20.

- Monument:**
- (1) Tomb of Horemheb, Thebes, KV 57 (XVIII<sup>th</sup> dynasty), Burial chamber J, left wall.
  - (2) Tomb of Ramesses I, Thebes, KV 16 (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), burial chamber, right wall.
  - (3) Tomb of Sety I, Thebes, KV 17 (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), entrance wall, right side.
  - (4) Sarcophagus of King Sety I (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), exterior part, right corner.
  - (5) The Osirion, Abydos (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), entrance corridor, front wall.
  - (6) Tomb of Ramesses IV, Thebes, KV 2 (XX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, left wall.
  - (7) Tomb of Ramesses VI, Thebes, KV 9 (XX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), first corridor, left wall.

**Description:**

The scene has the representation of the guiding gods carrying the measuring rope during the advance of the Nightly Solar Bark. Ropes, which are carried by guiding gods represented as an icon of a lifetime, may relate to the concept of rebirth.<sup>47</sup> (Fig. 20)

<sup>47</sup> Roberson, J. A., 2016, pp. 316-320.

#### IV. The Guiding Gods holding a measuring tool of time:

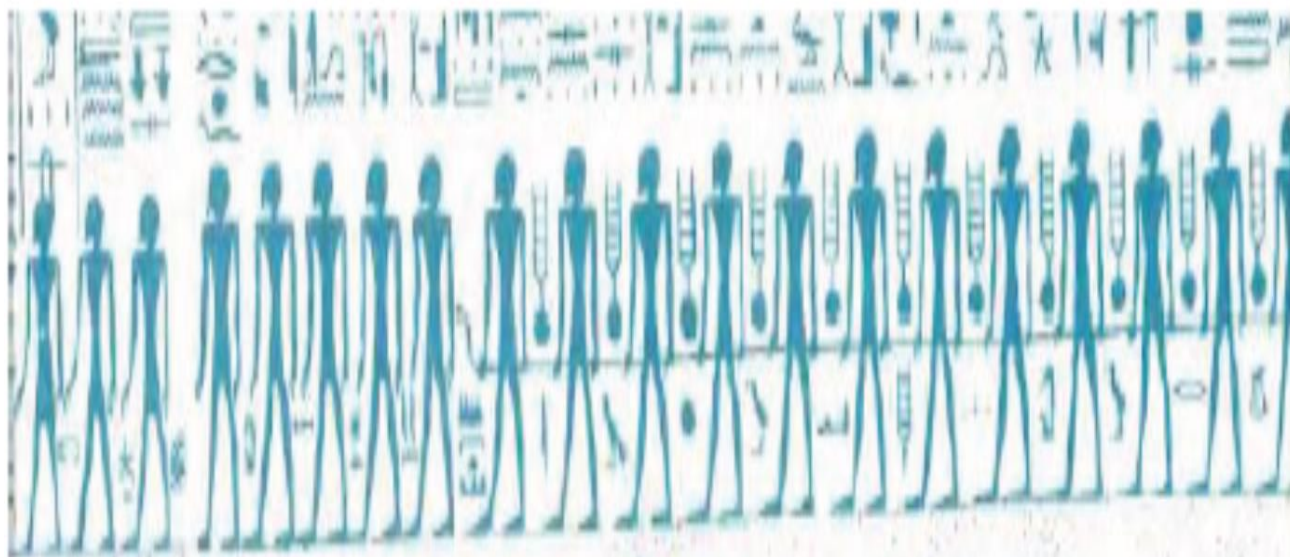


Fig. 21, The Guiding God carrying an icon of lifetime, Sety I's sarcophagus, The Book of the Gates, fifth hour, 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty.

(After, Guerra Méndez, C., *Snaks Iconography in The Egyptian Book of Gates*, p.50)

**Doc. n °:** 21.

- Monument:**
- (1) Tomb of Horemheb, Thebes, KV 57 (XVIII<sup>th</sup> dynasty), Burial chamber J, left wall.
  - (2) Tomb of Ramesses I, Thebes, KV 16 (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), burial chamber, right wall.
  - (3) Tomb of Sety I, Thebes, KV 17 (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), entrance wall, right side.
  - (4) Sarcophagus of King Sety I (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), exterior part, right corner.
  - (5) The Osirion, Abydos (XIX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), entrance corridor, front wall.
  - (6) Tomb of Ramesses IV, Thebes, KV 2 (XX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), sarcophagus chamber, left wall.
  - (7) Tomb of Ramesses VI, Thebes, KV 9 (XX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), first corridor, left wall.
  - (8) Tomb of Ramesses IX, Thebes, KV 6 (XX<sup>th</sup> dynasty), first corridor, left wall.

**Description:**

The scene has the representation of the guiding gods holding a measuring tool of time as an icon of lifetime during the advance of the Nightly Solar Bark.<sup>48</sup> (Fig. 21)

The interpretation of this rope as an icon of lifetime is supported by the depiction of the lower register of the same hour, where twelve Guiding Gods identified with “those who carry the lifetime in the west” are carrying a huge serpent



with solar disks crowned by a sign (P16)<sup>49</sup> often used to express “lifetime” between them the main character of this snake is the representation of the time of tonight with the carriers representing the 12 nocturnal hours since “*they are those who establish the lifetime and fix the days in the Ba-souls who are in the West and (those who are) condemned to the Place of Destruction.*”<sup>50</sup>

In the 5<sup>th</sup> hour Lower Register, according to the text, *d3d3t jmy(t) dw3t ntsn wdw htm zšw m ḥw n b3w hntyw jmnt* (“Council which is in the Duat. They are those who order destruction and register lifetime for the Ba-souls who are in the West.”<sup>51</sup>

In the same scene, Ra identifies them with those “*who carry the double rope that measures lifetime*”. This refers to a relationship between the upper and lower registers and perhaps between the snakes and the measuring ropes, since the snake is provided with the quality of measuring and likely regenerating lifetime.<sup>52</sup>

However, in this case it measures both “*the Ba-souls who are in the West and (for those who are) condemned to the Place of Destruction*” displaying an ambivalent role.<sup>53</sup>

The eight deities in front of it are related to the management of the destruction of the damned and the measuring of the time. Perhaps as the foremen of the upper register, they must organize the tasks of measuring and punishment that this snake carries out on the Place of Destruction.<sup>54</sup> (Fig. 21)

<sup>48</sup> Abitz, F., Zurich, 2003. pp. 13 17.

<sup>49</sup> Gardiner Egyptian Grammar sign list, p. 546.

<sup>50</sup> Redford, D. B., ‘snakes’ The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt. vol. 3. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2001, p.7.

<sup>51</sup> Horning. E., 2001, p.34.

<sup>52</sup> Guerra Méndez, C., 2022, p.42.

<sup>53</sup> David, R., London, 2002, pp. 312-322.

<sup>54</sup> Horning. E., 2007, p. 48.



## V. Analysis

Through the previous scenes, many ideas and inquiries could be realized concerning The Guiding Gods of Ra's Nightly Solar Bark in the Underworld through The Book of Amduat and the Book of The Gates. These would mainly concentrate on:

### V.1. Ra's Nightly Journey & Solar Bark

- The Solar Bark (or Mesketet) symbolizes Ra's vessel in his nightly journey through the Underworld. (Figs. n° 1-6)
- This cyclical journey was crucial for cosmic renewal the rebirth of the sun each morning. (Figs. n° 7,8)
- The bark is metaphorical and not a literal craft; it's the medium of Ra's resurrection, surrounded by mythological defenders. (Figs. n° 9-16)

### V.2. Books of the Underworld: Amduat & Gates

- The study heavily draws from The Book of Amduat and The Book of the Gates; funerary texts etched in tombs of the Valley of the Kings.
- These books feature iconographic depictions of:
  - Gods towing the bark using ropes. (Figs. n° 1-8)
  - Gods carrying ropes, nets, or measuring tools, often confronting serpent forms of chaos. (Figs. n° 1-6), (Figs. n° 17-20)
- Each hour of the night is ritualized with roles distributed among gods, goddesses, and hybrid beings. (Figs. n° 7-8)

### V.3. Monumental Evidence

The study meticulously catalogs the appearances of the Guiding Gods across:

- Tombs from the 18th to 20th dynasties (e.g., Thutmose III, Sety I, Ramesses VI).
- Structures like the Osirion at Abydos.
- Sety I's sarcophagus with detailed underworld scenes. Each scene corresponds to specific hours of the night, highlighting the progression through time and space in Duat.

### V.4. Cosmic Symbolism: Ropes, Stars, and Serpents

- Ropes represent time, guidance, and divine connectivity. (Figs. n° 1-6), (Figs. n° 17-20)
- Stars on gods' heads signify navigation and *imperishability* (i.e., eternal cycles). (Figs. n° 1-8)
- Serpents, both protectors (*Mehen*) and enemies (*Apophis*), embody duality in cosmic energy. (Figs. n° 1-8), (Figs. n° 17-20)

### V.5. Maat vs. Isfet (Order vs. Chaos)

- The Guiding Gods collectively maintain Maat, ensuring Ra's safe passage. (Figs. n° 17-20)
- Through magic, spiritual warfare, and ritualized cooperation, they repel *Isfet* (chaos) embodied in Apophis. (Figs. n° 1-8), (Figs. n° 17-20)

### V.6. Spiritual & Theological Significance

- These Gods are archetypes of cosmic stability. (Figs. n° 1-20)
- Their rituals and roles reflect Egyptian religious views on rebirth, protection, time, and judgment. (Figs. n° 1-8), (Figs. n° 17-20)
- The measuring rope symbolizes allotment of lifetime to the souls in the afterlife. (Figs. n° 17-20)

### V.7. Guiding Gods: Their Role and Nature

- Not aboard the Solar Bark, these gods act externally, guiding or towing the bark through the Underworld.
- They manifest in various forms:
  - Star-gods (linked with circumpolar constellations that never set). (Figs. n° 1-8)
  - Hour Goddesses (symbolizing each of the 12 hours of night). (Figs. n° 7-8)
  - Towers of ropes or holders of measuring tools. (Figs. n° 1-6), (Figs. n° 17-20)
- Their presence reinforces cosmic order (Maat) and resistance to chaos, especially against the serpent Apophis (Apep). (Figs. n° 12,14)

**Table 1**

The role and nature of guiding gods

Element	Symbolism	Role
Star atop head	Imperishable guidance (circumpolar constellations)	Cosmic navigation. (Figs. n° 1-8)
Ropes & nets	Temporal and magical binding tools	Towing, measuring, capturing chaos. (Figs. n° 1-6), (Figs. n° 17-20)
Mehen serpent	Protective serpent coiled around Ra	Defense against chaos. (Figs. n° 1-8)
Measuring rope	Lifetime measurement in the Duat	Allocation of time and land to Akh spirits. (Figs. n° 17-20)
Hour Goddesses	Temporal goddesses of each night hour	Towing and timing rituals in the underworld. (Figs. n° 7-8)

**Table 2**

The Similarities and Differences of guiding gods across the tombs

<b>Tomb / Dynasty</b>	<b>Similarities (Shared Roles &amp; Traits)</b>	<b>Differences (Unique Aspects)</b>
Thutmose III (KV34, 18th Dynasty)	- Star-gods guiding the bark through circumpolar constellations. Tow ropes symbolize time & eternal cycle. - Protective role against chaos.	- Emphasis on the <i>Hour Goddesses</i> with stars on their heads. Scenes show spiral ropes as cosmic cycles.
Amenhotep II (KV35, 18th Dynasty)	- Guiding gods towing Ra's bark with ropes. Appear as external navigators, not crew members.	- Iconography highlights symbolic "time gods" as rope carriers. Special focus on transition between night divisions.
Amenhotep III (WV22, 18th Dynasty)	- Protective role continues. - Use of ropes, nets, and stars.	- Depictions stress circumpolar star symbolism as "imperishable."
Horemheb (KV57, 18th Dynasty)	- Guiding gods tow bark with Hu, Sia, and Mehen serpent. Associated with hour divisions.	- Scenes emphasize measuring rope as icon of lifetime. Introduces gate-protecting roles.
Sety I (KV17, 19th Dynasty + Sarcophagus)	- Multiple roles: star-gods, hour goddesses, rope carriers. Guard Ra's bark and repel Apophis.	- Unique emphasis on measuring ropes allocating land/time to Akh-spirits. Net-holding deities protecting Ra.
Merenptah (KV8, 19th Dynasty)	- Guiding gods linked with circumpolar stars. Continue towing Ra's bark.	- Shows Hu and Sia alongside guiding gods. Emphasizes eternal rotation of stars.
Ramesses I (KV16, 19th Dynasty)	- Rope-towing and star-gods guiding function maintained.	- Small-scale depictions compared to others.
Ramesses IV (KV2, 20th Dynasty)	- Guiding gods towing bark and using ropes. Protective against Apophis.	- Scenes of "Shining Ones" towing bark. Introduces greater focus on gate rituals.
Ramesses VI (KV9, 20th Dynasty)	- Emphasizes collective towing and rope symbolism. Same star-God symbolism persists.	- Rich iconography with nets, ropes, and serpents. Highlights eternal cosmic time with spiral ropes.
Osirion, Abydos (19th Dynasty)	- Guiding gods present as rope carriers and protectors. Support Ra's bark indirectly.	- Special integration with Osirian afterlife theology.



From these tables and inquiries could be realized concerning The Guiding Gods of Ra's Nightly Solar Bark in the Underworld through The Book of Amduat and the Book of The Gates. These would mainly concentrate on:

• **Similarities across all tombs**

- Guiding gods always act *outside* the solar bark.
- Common symbols: stars (imperishable guidance), ropes (time), nets (magic/protection), serpents (order vs. chaos).
- Core mission: securing Ra's safe passage and preserving *Maat*.

• **Differences across tombs**

- 18th Dynasty: More emphasis on astral guidance (circumpolar stars, hour goddesses).
- 19th Dynasty: Introduction of measuring ropes (allocating lifetime & land to Akh-spirits).
- 20th Dynasty: Expansion of protective rituals (nets, shining ones, serpents, cosmic cycles).

**Conclusions:**

- The guiding gods, though not on Ra's Nightly Solar Bark, are integral to his survival. They form a kind of cosmic navigation system and security protocol embedded within the Underworld itself.
- Ra's journey was impossible without their cooperation, and their actions ensured the victory of light over darkness not by riding the boat, but by shaping the very world it sailed through.
- The guiding gods of Ra's Nightly Solar Bark were more than mythological figures; they were personified forces of wisdom, protection, time, magic, and order, essential to the survival of the cosmos.
- Their unified effort in defeating chaos each night reaffirmed Maat, ensuring the sun would rise again for the gods and for humanity.
- They act collectively to ensure the Solar Bark moves safely through each of the twelve hours of the night in the Underworld journey.
- The main role of the Guiding Gods was guidance and protection for the Nightly Solar Bark during the advance through the Duat (Underworld) without being physically aboard the Solar Bark.
- It is noticed that from the appearance of the guiding gods, there is a symbolism of courage in darkness, the collaborative nature of divine power, and spiritual transformation through ordeals.

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## الآلهة المرشدة لمركب رع الليلي في العالم الآخر

روفائيل رزق الله روفائيل

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### الملخص

### معلومات المقالة

البارك الشمسي الليلي لرع، أو القارب الشمسي، هو مفهوم مركزي في الأساطير المصرية القديمة، يمثل القارب الشمسي لرع في رحلته عبر العالم الآخر، أو الدوات، كل ليلة. كان يُعتقد أن هذه الرحلة ضرورية لولادة رع من جديد واستمراريته إضاءته للعالم. في الأساطير المصرية القديمة، لعبت الآلهة المرشدة دور المرشدين والحماة لرحلة رع الليلية عبر الدوات (العالم الآخر) دون أن يكونوا موجودين جسديًا على القارب الشمسي. غالبًا ما تصرفت هذه الآلهة من خارج القارب. في كتب العالم الآخر، تظهر الآلهة المرشدة في عدد من المناظر في قبور وادي الملوك؛ كان لهذه الآلهة شكل ودور محدد في العالم الآخر. الآلهة المرشدة، الذين لم يكونوا موجودين جسديًا على القارب ولكنهم تصرفوا كآلهة نجوم توجه أو تجر القارب الشمسي، حراس الأبواب، حراس الساعات، أو حلفاء بيئين في عوالم العالم الآخر. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى وصف مناظر الآلهة المرشدة وتحليل أدوارها وأبعادها.

**الكلمات المفتاحية**  
الآلهة المرشدة؛ العالم الآخر؛ المركب الشمسي؛ الرحلة الليلية.

**(JAAUTH)**  
المجلد 28، العدد 2،  
(2025)،  
ص 480-515.