



PROCESSIONS OF THE PRIESTS OF THE EASTERN STAIRCASE AT EDFU TEMPLE

Ahmed Khalafallah Safina

Archaeology Department, Faculty of Arts, New Valley University

E-mail : Aks00@fayoum.edu.eg

ABSTRACT

This study examines processions of the priests depicted on both sides of the eastern staircase of Edfu Temple by detailing their iconographies, names, roles, and ranks at the time of the New Year festival. It aims to clarify the similarities and differences between the processional activities on both sides to understand the ritual events that took place in this staircase. The same priests completed their ritual duties on the western descending staircase, returning to the crypt. The priestly ritual activities performed in the ascending staircase include: Opening the way to the heaven and defeating the threatening enemies, Presenting cloths such as coloured linens, Burning and providing the aromatic ointments, Performing simultaneously the libations and the censuring, Carrying the portable chapels of Hathor and Horus. The study declared that the roles and regulations ordering the priests on New Year's Day are differed, both in their ascending and descending from Dandera Temple.

KEYWORDS

Edfu Temple, Eastern stairway, New Year's Day, priests.

المخلص

تتناول هذه الدراسة موكب الكهنة المُسجل على جداري السلم الشرقي بمعبد إدفو من خلال تحليل مناظرهم وأسمائهم وادورهم ورتبهم الوظيفية خلال إحتفال رأس السنة ، كما تهدف الدراسة إلى إبراز أوجه التشابه والاختلاف بين الموكبين على جداري السلم في محاولة للتعرف على طبيعة الطقوس الشعائرية التي كانت تُؤدى أثناء الصعود لسطح المعبد ، كما يهدف العمل إلى تتبع الكهنة محل الدراسة أثناء النزول على السلم الغربي في محاولة للتعرف على جميع الأدوار التي مارسها كل كاهن خلال الإحتفال ، كذلك معرفة القواعد التي كانت تحكم توزيع وترتيب الكهنة أثناء الصعود والنزول ، هذا وتضمن نشاط الكهنة على السلم الشرقي عدد من الطقوس الشعائرية مثل شعائر فتح الطريق نحو السماء والتصدي لقوى الشر، طقوس إطلاق ونثر حبات البخور والمواد العطرية ، تقديم الملابس والأردية الملونة ، حرق البخور وإطلاق المياه، حمل النواويس المقدسة لكلاً من حتحور وحورس ، هذا وتظهر الدراسة ان القواعد المتبعة في توزيع الكهنة أثناء الصعود والنزول مختلفة عن تلك المعروفة بمعبد دندرة .

الكلمات الدالة

معبد إدفو – السلم الشرقي – إحتفال العام الجديد – الكهنة .

INTRODUCTION

According to the dedicatory inscriptions, the construction of the temple of Horus at Edfu began in the tenth year of the reign of Ptolemy III (about 237 BC) and was completed in 57 BC under Ptolemy XII Auletes.¹ In Edfu Temple, the New Year Festival *wpt-rnpt* “Opener of the year” was an annual rededication of the god and the divine Ennead through *hnm-itn* rituals. Once a year, the First Festival started on the 30th of Mesore, the last day of the year, until the fifth day of the New Year, 5th of Thoth.² The *hnm-itn* rituals were performed on the first day of the month Thoth in a small kiosk built on the temple’s roof for this purpose. The temple roof is reached by two dimly lit staircases, an eastern winding one designed to lead from the crypt to the feast place, *St hb tpy* “the seat of the first feast”,³ and a descending western one to return the statues of the gods to their resting places in the crypt.⁴ The eastern staircase⁵ which makes a series of 90 degrees’ turns, has two entrances. The first one is located in the Offerings Hall,⁶ and the other is in the north-eastern side of the Second Hypostyle Hall (Fig. A).⁷ It is noteworthy that the different designations used to refer to the eastern staircase are focused into three essential points as follows;

A) Horus of the Behdety, the main god of the temple and the one referred to in the New Year’s Day *hnd i3bt*⁸ *pw nt 3ht n 3hty* “this is the eastern staircase of the Horizon of the Horizon god”,⁹ *t3-rd nt ʿpy ntry* “the staircase of the divine winged disk”,¹⁰ *hnd wr nt hnty itrity* “the great staircase of the foremost of the Double Sanctuary”,¹¹ *t3-rd i3bt nt s3b šwt* “the eastern staircase of the dappled plumage”,¹² *hnd wr Hr nbw* “the great staircase of Horus of Gold”.¹³

B) The main function of the eastern staircase was, at the time of the New Year, to lead up to the kiosk where the statute of the god was rejuvenated and revitalised: *rd hwt.f r hnm itn in Bhdty* “the staircase of his temple for uniting the sun disk by the Behdety”,¹⁴ *rd pw nt*

¹ Fairman, H.W, *Worship and Festival*, BRL 37 (1954-1955), 167. Thiers, C., *Le Pharaon Lagide « Bâtitseur »*, *Analyse Historique de la Construction des temples à l’époque Ptolémaïque*, 1997, 502.

² Wilson, *Ptol. Lexikon*, 635.

³ *Wb*, III 57 (23); De Wit, C., “Inscriptions dédicatoires du temple d’Edfou”, *CdE* 36, 1961, 305; Kurth, D., *Treffpunkt der Götter. Inschriften aus dem Tempel des Horus von Edfu*, Zürich, 1994, 75. Traunecker, C., “Les ouabet des temples d’el-Qal’a et de Chenhour”, 75. This feast was a national festival in all temples but the best-known details come from Edfu and Dendara temples. Alliot, M., *Le culte d’Horus à Edfou au temps des Ptolémées*, IFAO, 303-433; Cauville, S., *Dendara: Les fêtes d’Hathor. Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 105. Leuven, 2002, 35-49. Goyon, *Confirmation du pouvoir royal au Nouvel An*, Le Caire, 1972.

⁴ See the most important study about crypts, Traunecker, C., “Cryptes connues et inconnues des temples tardifs”, *BSFE*, 129, (1994), 21-46. Lacau, P., “Notes sur les plans des temples d’Edfou et de Kom Ombo”, *ASAE* 52 (1952), 215-228

⁵ For an ideal temple, Eldamaty, M. “Die Treppe des Hinaufsteigens zum Dach des Tempels von Dendera im Neujahrfest”, *Le Caire*, 2003, 171. For the translations of staircases of Dendera see Rickert, A., *Das Horn des Steinbocks Die Treppen und der Dachkiosk in Dendara als Quellen zum Neujahrfest*, Harrassowitz, 2019; El Kordy Z. & El Shal, O., “Les escaliers de Dendara (Traduction)”, *Bulletin of the Egyptian Museum* 3 (2006), 34-69.

⁶ U-W according to Chassiant, *Edfou*, I, 579-580.

⁷ *Edfou*, I, 557-558.

⁸ Compare the right sign, *Edfou*, 579, 9.

⁹ *Edfou*, I, 549, 2.

¹⁰ *Edfou*, I, 549, 8.

¹¹ *Edfou*, I, 549, 8.

¹² *Edfou*, I, 579, 9.

¹³ *Edfou*, I, 579, 9.

¹⁴ *Edfou*, I, 554, 16.

ts r hrt “this staircase of rising up to the sky”.¹ *cr nt pr hr.f* “the staircase of coming forth upon it”;² *B-rd pn r ts tp-hwt* “this staircase is for rising to the roof of the temple”.³

C) The priests go up to the roof of the temple through this staircase: *rd n ts tsy* “the staircase of making priests ascending”.⁴

The number of steps is mentioned three times: *nprr.f 85*; *tnw.f 85* “its flight of stairs is 85”.⁵ 85”.⁵ This is counted from the steps of the entrance of the Offerings Hall without the additional five steps from the entrance of the Second Hypostyle Hall. However, these five are tallied in other instances: *nprr.f irw m rpyt 90* “all its stairs are 90 steps”.⁶ Small windows pierced the staircase’s walls to dimly illuminate the way of priests who performed the rituals annually.⁷

The festive procession of the eastern staircase is composed of priests who carry different ritual objects for the celebration of the New Year’s Day. They are shown ascending and passing through the staircase to access the roof. The procession’s general decorative programme refers to similar ritual activities on both sides, with a few differences. By the end of this paper it will be clear that that roles and regulations ordering the priests on New Year’s Day are differed, both in their ascending and descending from Dandera temple.

1- Iconographies of the priests on the two sides of the eastern staircase

A) The left side

Fifteen priests are shown on the left wall of the eastern staircase. With shaven heads, all are portrayed wearing a long garment with a stiff belt tied under their chest⁸ and sandals on their feet. Eight of them carry standards.⁹ Unfortunately, the first one is almost destroyed, and parts of his upper and lower parts remain. The chief lector priest is seen marching behind them with his tablet covered in ritual formulae.¹⁰ In his back, a pair of priests are shown with boxes of clothes and divine adornments.¹¹ Behind them come four priests, the first one holding two vessels of libation and incense. In contrast, the second one marches in his back, holding a vessel of charcoal and dropping pellets of incense to be burned.¹² At the

¹ Edfou, I, 549, 9.

² Edfou, I, 549, 9.

³ Edfou, I, 579, 9.

⁴ Edfou, I 579, 9.

⁵ Edfou, I, 549, 9-10; 549, 4.

⁶ Edfou, I, 579, 9.

⁷ It was called “the window of the Great Place (Edfu)”. These windows were the path between the earth and the heaven where Horus’s *ba* entered and came forth, Edfu, VI, 152, 2. Torches are used as another source of light during festivals, Sauneron, S., *Villes et légendes d’Égypte* (§ XXX-XXXIII), *BIFAO*, 69 (1971), 51-53.

⁸ The priests’ clothes on the western staircase are portrayed similarly without distinguishing elements, Edfou, IX, pl. XXXVII a.

⁹ Fifteen standard-bearers are portrayed on the western side of the straight western staircase, see Edfou, IX, XXXVII a. Sixteen standard-bearers occurred on the Eastern side, Edfou, IX, pl. XXXVII d.

¹⁰ The western wall of the straight staircase shows two priests preceding between him and the standard-bearers, Edfou, IX, pl. XXXVII b, while the eastern wall depicts one priest between him and the descending standard-bearers, Edfou, IX, pl. XXXVII e.

¹¹ The western wall of the straight staircase shows one of these priests as the first priest descending behind the standard-bearers Edfou, IX, pl. XXXVII b. The eastern wall depicts him once in the exact opposite place, Edfou, IX, pl. XXXVII e.

¹² These two priests are seen in a similar depiction before the portable chapel-carriers on both sides of the western staircase, Edfou, pl. IX, pl. XXXVII e.

end of the procession, the third and fourth priests are carrying a portable chapel which contained the statue of Hathor, lady of Dendera¹ (Fig. B).

B) The right side

Eighteen priests² are shown on the right wall of the staircase. The first group consists of nine priests bearing standards with the same details above.³ The second starts with the lector priest marching upstairs at the head with his tablet. Behind him, more priests are walking, four of them holding vessels of incense in their right hand and shaking sistra with the other.⁴ Two others follow, one of them carrying a vessel for libation and one for incense, while the other priest is burning incense. Two priests complete the procession by carrying the portable shrine of Horus (Fig. C).⁵

2- Names and roles of the priests on both sides of the eastern staircase

A) The standard-bearers

The standard-bearers on the left side			The standard-bearers on the right side	
	Their names	Their standards	Their names	Their standards
1	<i>Imy-r Bḥdt</i> “Overseer of Edfu”	<i>Imy-wt</i> “Imey-wet”	<i>ḥm Ḥr n Bḥdt</i> “The Servant of Horus in Edfu”	<i>Wpwʒwt</i> “Wepwawet”
2	<i>ḥry-nst</i> “The one who is upon the throne”	<i>Ḥꜣpy</i> “Hapy”	<i>ghms</i> “The sacred falcon”	<i>Ḥr Bḥdty</i> “Horus the Behdety”
3	<i>Nbi-ḥꜣw</i> “The one who fashions the limbs”	<i>spdw</i> “Soped”	<i>[ḥm]-ghms</i> “[The servant of] the sacred falcon”	<i>Ḥr ḥr wd.f</i> “Horus who is upon his lotus” ⁶
4	<i>Imt.f</i> “Imtetef”	<i>šsr</i> “the arrow”	<i>[Šw sʒ-Rꜥ]</i> “[Shu son of Re]” ⁷	<i>bʒ</i> “the Ram”
5	<i>ḥʒ</i> [Ha..?]	<i>Idt snw</i> “the second cow”	<i>Imy-P</i> “The one who is in Pe”	<i>Šw sʒ-Rꜥ</i> “Shu son of Re”
6	[...]	<i>Idt ḥmt</i> “the third cow”	<i>Wr-P</i> “The great one of Pe”	<i>Ḥnsw</i> “Khensu”
7	[...]	<i>Idt fdw</i> “the fourth cow”	<i>Try-ḥʒt</i> “The one who is in the front”	<i>Ḥʒp</i> “the Apis bull”
8	---	---	<i>Msnty</i> “The harpooner”	<i>Ḥnmw</i> “Khnum”
9	---	---	<i>wnp</i> “The stabber”	<i>Srk</i> “the scorpion”

According to the bandeau inscription or frieze on the right side, the New Year’s procession appears to have started with *ḥry wsrt it.f* “the bearer of the staff of his father”.⁸ This title suggests its holder was a prominent individual, maybe the king, who presided over the

¹ The western wall of the straight staircase shows four priests carrying the portable chapel of Horus and six for the portable of Hathor, Edfou, IX, pls. XXXVII b, XXXVII e.

² Additionally, four figures of offering-bearers played the same role as *ḥry-štʒw* priests, carrying four boxes of of cloths and divine adornments on the left side, Fig. C, 10-13.

³ Edfou, I, 563-564, pl. XXXVII J.

⁴ They are not listed on the western staircase but they were a part of the New Year’s festival at Dendera before Shesmu and Tayet, Dendera, VII, pls. DCLXX, DCLXXXIV, DCLXXXV, DCCLII, DCCLIX, DCCLXXIX, DCCLXXXV.

⁵ Edfou, I, 569-571. pl. XXXVIII n-o.

⁶ Here Horus is equated with Nefertum.

⁷ Edfou, I, 538, 6; pl. XXXVII a.

⁸ Edfou, I, 555, 2.

standard-bearers as he is shown at the head of the procession on the right side.¹ Below him, nine standard-bearers in front of the ascending procession on the right side (Fig C 1-9)² while only eight proceeded the procession on the left side (Fig B 1-7).³ Their standards consisted of divine insignia or the hieroglyphic sign representing the god's or goddess's name⁴ at the top of the standard's carrying pole.⁵ Both sides' reliefs and inscriptions repeat the wish for the unobstructed progress of processions up the staircase by removing all obstacles and enemies that might befall the god before the act of rejuvenation to enable the renewal of the deity.⁶ The textual analysis indicates that the principal recurring theme is "crushing the enemies" or "the threat of enemies". Some of these threatening forces are the rage which the gods may be provoked into, causing disturbances and inflicting serious injuries upon them. It was thus seen as dangerous and unsettling. This rage had to be driven away or removed as indicated in texts: "there is no rage",⁷ "pass without anger in your heart",⁸ "come [in] peace".⁹

Carrying the standards at the New Year's Day meant to repel impurities ritually. Different texts mention: "there is no impurity",¹⁰ "there is no impurity in your way",¹¹ "I purify your stairway from all impurity and evil",¹² "your way is purified from impurity",¹³ "the sky is purified from the impurity of Seth",¹⁴ "I cut off [the dirt]",¹⁵ "I veer away from impurity",¹⁶ "I purify your way to the heaven of the lord, I cense your path against every impurity and evil, I clean your body from dirt".¹⁷

Furthermore, the ritual destruction of Seth and Apophis, and their various guises is intended explicitly for bearers of standards stating "the one who swallows millions (Seth)¹⁸ and deficient¹⁹ will not go around you"²⁰, "I am sharp²¹ for you, Apophis be as ashes"²² "I

¹ At Dendera, the procession is started by the king at the head of the standard-bearers with a standard of *ʿḫt-dj* sign. The text states *mdw šps nty spʿt tn* "the noble standard of this nome", Dendera, VII, 178 (12-14), pl. DCLXVII.

² Edfou, IX, XXXVIII j.

³ Edfou, IX, XXXVIII a, b, c.

⁴ Angelique Corthals studied the gods on the standards, Corthals, A., *The Procession of the New Year in the Staircases at Edfu and Dendera*, 211-219.

⁵ Curto, S., *Standarte*, *LÄ V* (1984), 1255-1256; Wildung, D., *Götterstandarte*, *LÄ II* (1977), 713.

⁶ Particularly during the five epagomenal days. For the magical rites of protection from the dangerous forces, see Žabkar, L.V., *Hymns to Isis in her Temple at Philae*, Hannover-London, 1988, 121-123; Germond, P., *Sekhmet et la protection du monde*, Genève, 1981, 207-212. Cauville, S., *Dendara. Les fêtes d'Hathor*, (OLA 105), Leuven, 2002, 121-140.

⁷ Edfou, I, 556, 9.

⁸ Edfou, I, 557, 1.

⁹ Edfou, I, 564, 9.

¹⁰ Edfou, I, 556, 16.

¹¹ Edfou, I, 556, 14-16.

¹² Edfou, I, 564, 1-2.

¹³ Edfou, I, 557, 4.

¹⁴ Edfou, I, 557, 8.

¹⁵ *Wb. V* 312, (7), 193 (14).

¹⁶ Edfou, I, 557, 11.

¹⁷ Edfou, I, 556, 13-14.

¹⁸ As a title of Seth, see Wilson, *Ptol. Lexikon*, 153.

¹⁹ *nd*, *Wb* 1, 207 (7-8).

²⁰ Edfou, I, 556, 9.

²¹ The priest impersonates Soped, who is carried on his standard. This title is closely linked with "sharp of teeth", a vivid epithet of a bird of prey, see Hart, G., *Dictionary of Egyptian Gods and Goddesses*, London, 1986, 151.

²² Edfou, I, 556, 16-17.

receive the flesh of Ash (Seth) and trouble does not succeed (reach) to my city”,¹ “The snake and the one who strikes the faces do not exist”,² “I destroy the crocodile (Seth) in front of your way, may you overthrow over him in the Land with the mace of your majesty”,³ “the standards are for purifying the way and for making him rest in his heaven to unite the sun disk”.⁴ This practice comes from the belief that the standard-bearers may ritually destroy the forces of chaos or any negative external influences.

Attention has also been given to open the pathway to heaven where the rites of the union with the sun disc took place. This idea is expressed in different places as “Those who are upon their standards⁵ are in the right and the left hands to [make] you traverse to your sanctuary with life and dominion”,⁶ “Those who are upon their standards are carried [on] their staves to open the way for him and to drive the enmity away”,⁷ “their standards are for opening the pathway for him to see his sun disk as his dung ball”,⁸ “the standards are in in front of him to open the way for him to his shrine”.⁹

The invocation of Horus to motivate him to ascend and pass the temple parts to his heaven, where the ritual activities of the union with the sun disc took place, was done by the standard-bearers: “go fast to the heaven in front of your sanctuary”,¹⁰ “go to your horizon, that you may illuminate Mesen with your rays”,¹¹ “ascend to the sanctuary with the Ennead who are behind you to give the light and to illuminate the darkness, I protect his *Ba* in the day the New Year”,¹² “receive your roof to unite the sun disk, pass the land”.¹³

In light of the texts mentioned above, standard-bearers had mainly two roles: the destruction of the enemies, and the opening of the pathway to heaven, the procession’s final destination.

A) The lector priests

Below standard-bearers, lector priests read out the rituals from their tablets on both sides (Fig. B 8, C 14). The left side texts define him as “*Wenema*”¹⁴ who is presiding the Throne of Gods (Edfu), he is Thoth who protects Egypt”.¹⁵ The accompanying text mentions his central role in the procession by reciting the festival’s ritual book of falling the foes and trampling the enemies. His tablet is described as “the tablet in his hand from silver with all hieroglyphs of the god’s speech to worship you, the praise is to worship your *ka* and to drive away the foe from your way”.¹⁶

Further titles are recorded with this priest on the right side, such as *hry-hb hry-tp wr n Wtst sš hry-tp wr n md3t-ntr n St-wrt* “the Lector priest, the great chief of Wetjeset, the Scribe,

¹ Edfou, I, 557, 1-2.

² Edfou, I 557, 12.

³ Edfou, I, 564, 6-7.

⁴ Edfou, I, 554, 10-11.

⁵ *tpyw i3t.sn* is a designation of the gods or the signs upon the standards’ staves.

⁶ Edfou, I, 549, 15.

⁷ Edfou, I, 555, 4.

⁸ Edfou, I, 551, 9.

⁹ Edfou, I, 580, 1-2.

¹⁰ Edfou, I, 564, 4.

¹¹ Edfou, I, 563, 9.

¹² Edfou, I, 557, 12-13.

¹³ Edfou, I, 557, 4-5.

¹⁴ An epithet of Thoth, Wilson, *Ptol. Lexikon*, 229.

¹⁵ Here the priest impersonates Thoth in his role, Wilson, *Ptol. Lexikon*, 479.

¹⁶ Edfou, I, 557, 14-17, pl. XXXVIII c.

the great chief of the Book of the god in the Great Place (Edfu)". He played an essential role during the rites performed just before dawn on New Year's Day, as he is the one "who leads the rituals before the Throne of Gods (Edfu) with the great secret spells of entering the roof of the Temple by reciting the ritual book". The accompanying text provides crucial information about this task "I have received the tablet of silver and gold inscribed with spells of the god ritual and the secret hymns of entering the roof of the temple which are recited from it for the good one and the great one by the great books of uniting the sun disk (which) are inscribed on a writing board and a ritual book, spells of falling your enemies, I have read them as spells, I have recited before you, I have read from the book to fall your foe on your path, I have opened the praises ritual of your majesty to pacify your heart before your sky, I have praised the uraeus which shines before you, Hathor, the great one, lady of Dendera, I make your statue settle with your ba in the heaven with the Ennead who are behind you, I have praised [to make you] rest in the Pure place¹ with the secret spells of of the roof which are established forever and endured forever while circumpolar stars upon the earth every day, he brings the Lector priest, the great chief of your nome carrying the secret spells of your majesty with the tablet of silver and [gold] [.....] upon him".²

A close inspection of the texts of this priest mentioned at Edfu and Dendera reveals this priest always follows the standard-bearers.³ He thus appears to have shared with them the purification rituals by reciting the protective spells against the dangers and negative external influences threatening the statue of the god and the other deities who were in a weak state.⁴

A) The priests carrying boxes of clothes and divine adornments

A pair of priests are shown below the lector priest with four boxes of clothes and divine adornments on the left side (Fig. B 9,10).⁵ The first one is called *hry-št3w wn hnty Nst-ntrw* "the chief of secrets, who is before the Throne of Gods (Edfu)". The accompanying text points to his role "I give the cloth of Horus, the great victor, I hold the garment⁶ of the Falcon image, I raise it to the Place of the First Festival in order to hide his image from them".⁷ The priest marching behind him is *hry sšt3.w ikr.w m-k3b Pr-hc* "the excellent chief of secrets in the House of Appearance (Edfu)". His role is recorded: "I proceed to every sanctuary, amulets in my hand, the necklace holding in the other hand, I tie on the *s3w*-amulets of the Falcon in the Great Place (Edfu), I make the throat of the Falcon festive, he brings for you the masters of secrets in your city carrying clothes and amulets, the beautiful *hd.t*-white and the *w3d.t*-green clothes are in their hands, the great *wḏ3*-amulets⁸ upon their

¹ According to Alliot, it is a depiction of the kiosk where this ceremony occurred, Alliot, M., *Le culte d'Horus à Edfou*, 419-420; Coppens asserted that there is no indication that the kiosk was ever known as waabet, Coppens F., *The Wabet, The Wabet: Tradition and innovation in temples of the Ptolemaic and Roman Period*, Prague, 2007, 56.

² Edfou, I, 567, 18-19, 586, 1-8

³ Edfou, IX, pls. XXVII b, XXXVIII c; Dendera, VII, pls. DCXIX, DCLXXXIV, DCCII, DCCLXXIX.

⁴ Sekhmet and her messengers were the main dangers at this time, see Raven, M.J., "Charms for Protection during the Epagomenal Days", in J. van Dijk (ed.), *Essays on Ancient Egypt in Honour of Herman te Velde*, (Egyptological Memoirs 1), 1997, 275-285.

⁵ Edfou, I, 558, 1-3; Edfou, I, 558, 5-9.

⁶ This cloth is used to dress or hide the falcon image in the sanctuary, Wilson, *Ptol. Lexikon*, 1040.

⁷ Edfou, I, 558, 1-3; pl XXXVIII c.

⁸ For *wḏ3* as a term of different amulets such as the *s3w*-amulets and the *w3x*-necklace see Graefe, E., "König und Gott als Garanten der Zukunft nach Inschriften der griechisch-römischen Tempel", in W. Westendorf (ed.), *Aspekte der spätägyptischen Religion*, (GOF IV/9), Wiesbaden, 1979, 71-77.

hands, *irti*- blue¹ and *idmi*- dark red cloth are hidden in their chapels to raise the divine body to be festive with what they hold”².

The procession on the right side is slightly different as four figures marching after the offering-bearers in the same role (Fig. C 10-13). The first one of the four is portrayed as a lady, embodying the goddess Serket, followed by someone embodying the god Shesmu carrying two vessels in their hands.³ The accompanying texts refer to the variety of aromatic substances offered, such as *hkn/ti-šps* ointments, *bsn* natron, *ihm/sntr/3tf* incense, and *ntyw* myrrh as the excretion of the eye of Re, Horus, and Osiris.⁴ The other two figures are a lady and a man carrying one or two cloths strips folded in half. The inscription indicates six types of linens *ntri*, *št*, *mrt*, *wbt*, *db3 n Rnnwt*, *3bw-ntr*. The linens are also coloured “the beautiful *irti*-blue and the *idmi*-dark blue in her hand to hide your uraeus with them”,⁵ “he adorns your image with *ntry*-cloth, the *hdt*-white and the *w3d*-green”.⁶

A) The priests performing censuring and libation

On the left side, two priests perform the censuring and the libation below the priests mentioned earlier (Fig. B 11,12). Their names are *h3ty-^c-m-ht hnty hwt Hr nht* “*h3ty-^c-m-ht* priest in the Mansion of Horus Victorious”,⁷ and *h3ty-[^c]-wr hnt wr nht* “*h3ty-[^c]-wr* priest before the Great Strength (Edfu)”.⁸ The main role of the first one is to hold the libation in the *snbt*-ewer and perform the purification rites in front of the god’s statue: “The *h3ty-^c-m-ht* priest in the Mansion of Horus Victorious sees the god in Pe and presents ewer”.⁹ The second priest also played an essential role by burning and sprinkling incense: “incense for your flesh, its smell is for your nose, the incense (sprinkling) upon your limbs to make your limbs be green with its scent”.¹⁰

One of the texts sheds light on their roles as “He brings the priests for you carrying a vessel of *hms*-incense and a bowl of gold to purify your path with floodwater, to cense your way with incense and to sanctify your roads with great sanctity in order to join heaven with earth before his light”.¹¹ In consequence, simultaneously performing a libation and censuring were used to revitalise the gods who were in an inactive position and drive off the impurities and evils of the past year.

On the right side of the staircase, two priests performing a censuring and a libation are also shown before the companies carrying the portable chapel of Horus (Fig. C 19-20). The first one is called *h3ty-^c imy-r hmw-ntrw snw n St- wrt* “the count, the overseer of the second

¹ *irti*-red or blue, see Egberts, A., In Quest of Meaning. A Study of the Ancient Egyptian Rites of Consecrating the Meret-chests and Driving the Calves, (Egyptologische Uitgaven VIII/1–2), Leiden, 1995, 139-142. The presence of these four clothes strongly evoke the performance of the Ritual of Opening the Mouth. See Otto, E., Das ägyptische Mundöffnungsritual, Wiesbaden, 1960. 112-114, 116-119, 112-114. Goyon, J.C., Rituels funéraires de l’ancienne Egypte, (LAPO 4), Paris, 1972, 141-146.

² Edfou, I, 558, 5-9; pl XXXVIII d.

³ Schemu and Tayet as fellow-deities of the lector priest were the main traditions at Dendera version, see Dendera, VII, pl. DCLXIV, DCLXXXIV.

⁴ Edfou, I, 566, 1-9; See also Philae, I, 54; Elshahat, Y., Ptolemaic and Roman vessels of scented oil from Kiman Faris-Krokodilopolis, *Shedet*, 8 (2021) . 98-110.

⁵ Edfou, I, 566, 12-13. These clothes were also offered to the gods and fellow-deities during the epagomenal days. Edfou, V, 359, 5.

⁶ Edfou, I, 566, 17.

⁷ Edfou, I, 558, 13.

⁸ Edfou, I, 558, 15.

⁹ Edfou, I, 558, 13-14.

¹⁰ Edfou, I, 558, 15-16.

¹¹ Edfou, I, 558, 17-18.

hmw-ntrw priests of the Great Place (Edfu)”¹ He is the one “who sees the beauty of those in Edfu, I bring the ewer, I give the bowl, I give it from my hand to purify the path of the Behdety and to make divine your way of the Falcon in the Great Place (Edfu) with the Ennead who are behind him and to purify the eastern staircase of Edfu [form] all evil”² The second priest is *h3ty-c imy-r hmw-ntrw nhp n Msnt* “the count, the overseer of the first *hmw-ntrw* priests of Mesen”. He also had the right to enter the crypt and to see the secrets on New Year’s Day as he stated: “I enter the secrets of those in Wetejest (Edfu), burning incense. Recitation, I burn the incense for your ka in front of all gods, Horus of the Behdety, the great god, lord of the sky, the Upper Egypt incense is brought to enter your nostrils, the *pd*-incense is for the head and all limbs, the ba is over you toward the scent of your majesty, the incense, the libation jar and the strips of cloths”³.

B) The Carriers of the Portable Chapels of Hathor and Horus

Both processions were decorated with the carriers of a portable chapel of Hathor and Horus. These priests are called *Smrw* “the Companions”⁴ On the left, two priests carry the portable chapel with the statue of Hathor (Fig B 13,14). The text states: “The Companions of the Eye of Re raise the lady of Dendera, they enter carrying the female falcon in Edfu, O the bearers of the golden one of the gods, raise the lady of all gods, go to the crypt in the Mansion of the Falcon to bear the great one in the Great Place (Edfu), go forth and carry the noble one, the strong one at her festivals at the beginning of the season, who is exalted of the Ennead at knowing their forms, children of Horus are called with their names, *Khenty-Khaty*, this god, and his children are equipped with nine stand cloth, O bearers carry the noble one, the strong one, O priest of Hathor, the great one, the priests of Upper Egypt of lady of *Iat-di*, raise the lady of the sky every day, the musicians of the uraeus of Re appease her majesty as a lady of Dendera, attentive when you carry the great one, (when) your sandals trample guard (your) footsteps, protect the Eye of Re when you carry her fear, all the Gods bring her dignity in your hearts, she supplies your bodies from her throne”⁵.

The right side shows two priests carrying the portable shrine of Horus (Fig. C 21, 22). The text states: “The Companions of the child raise Re, the great one, they enter carrying the image of the falcon, the bearers carry the *drty*-falcon, they carry the *gmhs*-falcon in Wetjeset, they ascend to the heaven, the winged disk is upon their hands within chair (box) of gold, they go carrying the god in his shrine in his festivals, they are completed here raising this god, his followers are behind him, the lord of the two lands is over their heads to see his father, his courtiers are equipped, O carriers, carry Behdety, the divine fathers carry Hor-akhty, *hm-gmhs* priest of the falcon of the golden one, *hm-Hr* priest of the beautiful Horus, the great *hry-nst* priests in House of Horus of Horuses, the greats of Pe in the great Pe, attentive when you carry the falcon, behold he is Re upon the Earth, make whole of your arms, guard your footsteps, do not give more than his stride, behold [he] appears to proclaim good things and to give life to Egypt”⁶.

C) Four priests with vessels of incense and sistra

The right side has four priests marching behind the lector priest with an incense vessel in one hand and a sistrum in the other (Fig. C 15-18). This differs from the scene on the left.

¹ Edfou, I, 569, 11.

² Edfou, I, 569, 11-13.

³ Edfou, I, 569, 14-16.

⁴ Edfou, I, 559, 16-17; 560, 1-5, pl. XXXVIIIe; Edfou, I, 571, 5-11, pl. XXXVIII O.

⁵ Edfou, I, 559, 16-17; 560, 1-5, pl. XXXVIIIe. One of the texts mentions *smrw psd hr tw3 nb ntrw* “the Companions are shining when they carry the lord of the Gods”, Edfou, I, 549, 14.

⁶ Edfou, I 571, 5-11, pl. XXXVIII O.

The short accompanying text with the first two priests declares their duties at the time of the New Year as “[...] purify your body [...]. I have made [...] in my two hands to cense”.¹ The third and fourth priests state more about their roles: “I have held the sistrum, I have grasped the lapis lazuli, I appease your majesty with my hands [...] your body with what comes forth from your two eyes, I make your heart strong [...]”. “I have given you the vessel of silver and gold, I have held the sistrum from [...], to purify your body with products of the Eye of Re to drive away all rage with the sistrum [...]”.²

3- The Eastern Stairway Priests on the western staircase

Most of the priests who participated in the priestly activities on the ascending staircase continued their tasks on the descending western one as indexed in the following table.

the eastern staircase			the western staircase			
Left side Priests names	Ritual objects	Fig.	Eastern side	western side	Fig.	
1	<i>Imy-r Bḥdt</i>	<i>Imy-wt</i> standard	B 1	<i>ḥꜥpy</i> standard	<i>srḳ</i> standard	D 11, E 10
2	<i>ḥry-nst</i>	<i>Ḥꜥpy</i> standard	B 2	<i>spdw</i> standard	<i>Ḥr wp ḥꜥd t3wy</i> standard	D 12, E 11
3	<i>Nbi-ḥꜥw</i>	<i>spdw</i> standard	B 3	<i>pḏt</i> standard	<i>šḥm n Inpw</i> standard	D 13, E 12
4	<i>im3tt.f</i>	<i>šsr</i> standard	B 4	<i>Idt 3</i> standard	<i>Isds</i> standard	D14, E13
5	<i>ḥ3 ?³</i>	<i>Idt 2</i> standard	B 5	unknown	unknown	unknown
6	[...] ⁴	<i>Idt 3</i> standard	B 6	unknown	unknown	unknown
7	[...]	<i>Idt 4</i> standard	B 7	unknown	unknown	unknown
8	<i>ḥry-ḥb</i>	Ritual tablet	B 8	Bears title (<i>imy-r Bḥdt ḥꜥd sḥ mḏ3t-nṯr</i>) Ritual tablet	Bears title (<i>sḥ mḏ3t-nṯr</i>) Ritual tablet	D 18, E 18
9	<i>ḥry-št3 wn ḥnty Nst-nṯrw</i>	Two boxes	B 9	Bears title (<i>ḥry sḥt3 iḳr m ḳ3b Pr-ḥꜥ</i>) Two boxes	Bears title (<i>ḥry sḥt3 wn ḥnt nst nṯrw.f</i>) Two boxes	D 17, E 16
10	<i>ḥry sḥt3.w iḳr.w m-ḳ3b Pr-ḥꜥ</i>	Two boxes	B 10			
11	<i>ḥ3ty-ḥ-m-ḥt ḥnty ḥwt Ḥr</i>	<i>snbt</i> -ewer & incense vessel	B 11	Libation ewer & incense vessel	Bears title (<i>ḥ3ty-ḥ3 snw n imyw Msn</i>) Libation ewer & incense vessel	D 20, E 21
12	<i>ḥ3ty-[ḳ] wr</i>	Incense vessel	B 12	Incense	Bears title (<i>ḥ3ty-ḥ3</i>)	D 21, E 22

¹ Edfou, I, 568, 13-15.

² Edfou, I, 569, 1-4.

³ The name of this priest is worn out. Only the signs *ḥ3* (M15) and *t* (X1) remain. We are not able to identify him exactly, but he may be the *3nḳ*-priest.

⁴ The title of this priest has also gone missing. He may be a *msnty*-priest. The closest parallel to him occurs on both sides of the eastern staircase in Dendera. He is portrayed as the thirteenth priest carrying the cow standard and has the priestly title *ḥm nṯrt n irt-Rḥ* “the priest of the goddess, Eye of Re”. In the descending procession on the western wall, he is defined as *šḥp ḥmt.s* the “priest of the golden one”, Dendera, VII, 193,13.

	<i>hnt wr nht</i>			vessel	<i>imy-r hmw ntr tpy n Wtst</i>) Incense vessel	
13 - 14	<i>smrw</i>	Portable chapel	B 13- 14	Bear title (<i>Msw-Hr</i>) Portable chapel	Bear titles (<i>Msw-Hr</i> <i>Wtsw-R^c</i> <i>Hnty-Hty</i>) Portable chapel	D 22-27, E 23-26
Right side Priests names		Ritual objects	Fig.	The western staircase		
				Eastern side	western side	Fig
14	<i>hm Hr n Bhd</i>	<i>Wpw3wt</i> standard	C 1	<i>wpw3wt mh</i> <i>hrp n pt</i> standard	<i>wpw3wt sm^cw hrp</i> <i>t3wy</i> standard	D 1, E 1
15	<i>ghms</i>	<i>hr Bhdty</i> standard	C 2	<i>dhwty</i> standard	<i>Hr</i> standard	D 2, E 2
16	[<i>hm</i>] <i>ghms</i>	<i>Hr hr wd.f</i> standard	C 3	<i>Nfr-tm snsn ntr</i> standard	<i>Hr hr w3d.f</i> standard	D 3, E 3
17	[<i>sw s3-R^c</i>]	<i>b3</i> standard	C 4	<i>b3</i> standard	<i>b3</i> standard	D 4, E 4
18	<i>Imy-P</i>	<i>sw s3-R^c</i> standard	C 5	<i>Tfnwt</i> standard	<i>sw s3-R^c</i> standard	D 5, E 5
19	<i>Wr-p</i>	<i>Hnsw</i> standard	C 6	<i>Mr-wr</i> standard	<i>Hnsw</i> standard	D 7, E 6
20	<i>Try-h3t</i>	<i>h3p</i> standard	B 7	<i>s3st</i> standard	<i>ssr</i> standard	D 8, E 7
21	<i>Msnty</i>	<i>Hnmw</i> standard	B 8	<i>nh k3 nsw / ps3</i> <i>kf</i> standards	<i>H3p</i> standard	D 6-9, E 8
22	<i>Wnp</i>	<i>srk</i> standard	C 9	<i>mr-wr / Imy-wt</i> standards	<i>Hnmw</i> standard	D 7-10, E 9
23	<i>Nbwt Ntrw.</i>	Linen	C 10	changed by two priests <i>hry-s3t3</i> with two boxes and <i>hm Ghms</i> with two vessels	changed with <i>hry</i> <i>s3t3.w</i> carrying two boxes and two priests <i>hk3t</i> and <i>hry-nst</i> with two vessels	Not existed
24	<i>Ssmw</i>	Aromatic substances	C 11			
25	<i>Srkt.</i>	Linen	C 12			
26	Mal without title	Aromatic substances	C 13			
27	<i>hry-hb</i>	Ritual tablet	B 14	Ritual tablet	Ritual tablet	D 18, E18
28	Without title	Incense vessel & sistrum	B 15	Not existed	Not existed	Not existed
29	Without title	Incense vessel & sistrum	C 16	Not existed	Not existed	Not existed
30	Without title	Incense vessel & sistrum	C 17	Not existed	Not existed	Not existed
31	Without title	Incense vessel & ewer of libation	C 18	Not existed	Not existed	Not existed
32	<i>h3ty-^c imy-r</i> <i>hmw-ntrw</i> <i>snw.</i>	Libation ewer & incense vessel	C 19	Libation ewer & incense vessel	Libation ewer & incense vessel	D 20, E 21
33	<i>h3ty-^c imy-r</i> <i>hmw-ntrw</i>	Incense vessel	C 20	Incense vessel	Incense vessel	D 21, E 22
34	<i>smrw</i>	Portable chapel	C 21- 22	Portable chapel	Portable chapel	D 22-27, E 23-26

4- Analysis of the decorative scheme of the priests and their completion tasks on the western staircase.

A) The standard-bearers

A glance at the aforementioned table clearly reveals that the artist of Edfu who designed the priests reliefs has been divided the standard-bearers into two groups on both sides of the eastern staircase. The first group is headed by the *hm n Bhd*-priest followed by *ghms*, *hm ghms šw s3 R^c*, *imp-P*, *wr-P*, *iry-h3t*, *msnty* and eventually *wnp* on the right wall, while the other group is presided by the *Imy-r-Bhd* and followed by *hry-nst*, *nbi h^cw*, *imtt.f*, *3nk*, *msnty* on the left. During the descending stage on the western staircase the artist was keen to vary the former decorative scheme by forming two similar processions on both sides. This is seen by depicting *Imy-r Bhd*-priest and his followers standing behind the *hm-Hr-n-Bhd*-priest and his groups. Also it becomes clear that the standards held by the priests on the eastern wall of the western staircase were the nine ones shown on the right side of the ascending staircase (*wp3w3t*, *hr Bhdty*, *hr hr wd.f*, *b3*, *šw s3-R^c*, *Hnsw*, *H3p*, *Hnmw*, *Srk*) and three from the left side (*imy-wt*, *šsr*, *idt 2*) additionally to four standards are shown for the first time (*Hr wp š^cd t3wy*, *šhm Inpw*, *Isds*, *idt 1*). Similarly, the rest of the standards on the left side (*h^cpy*, *spd*, *idt 3*, *idt 4*, *imy-wt*), two standards from the right (*wpw3w3t*, *b3*), and eight new standards (*dhwty*, *nfr-tm sns ntr*, *Tfnwt*, *Mr-wr*, *S3t*, *psš kf*, *pdt*, *sgmh*) were those of the descending priests on the western wall (Fig. D 1-16; E 1-15).

The textual evidence of the standard-bearers repeatedly invokes Horus' return to his resting place in the crypt,¹ the Temple,² the Sanctuary,³ the city,⁴ the birth couch,⁵ and every shrine in all the temples.⁶ They indicate that the pathway is open and led by their group "I open your pathway, I illuminate the two lands of the god",⁷ "I bring your road".⁸

Some texts witness that the New Year's celebration embraced the main goal of the Sed Festival, both of which celebrated the successful regeneration and rejuvenation of the god and kingship "lord of the gods, sit upon the throne of your majesty",⁹ "the one who comes forth from the heaven, your throne is before Egypt",¹⁰ "go to your throne, the herdsman, the Throne of Re (Edfu) greets your seeing".¹¹ Furthermore the texts in this section indicate that this festival regularly took place within and outside the temple where a multitude of believers would have the opportunity for closer contact with the god: "walk to your city which is sprinkled with gold",¹² "the two hands of prayers praise your coming".¹³

A) The lector priest

The western wall shows the lector priest following the *hry s3t3* and *Stm* priests. The text indicates that he is "the scribe of the book of the god, clearest of speech, who recites the

¹ Edfou, I, 538, 10; 543, 4.

² Edfou, I, 538, 6; 543, 10; 539, 7-8; 543, 13-14.

³ Edfou, I, 538, 4; 542, 13; 538, 14; 539, 11.

⁴ Edfou, I, 543, 2. 539, 3-4. 543, 16.

⁵ Edfou, I, 539, 2.

⁶ Edfou, I, 542, 14.

⁷ Edfou, I, 538, 1-2.

⁸ Another translation is given by Wilson as: *my n.i mtn.k m-^c nfy niwt* "I take ? your road from those cities", Wilson, *Ptol. Lexikon*, 429.

⁹ Edfou, I, 542, 9.

¹⁰ Edfou, I 538, 8.

¹¹ Edfou, I, 543, 6.

¹² Edfou, I, 543, 2; pl. XXXVII d.

¹³ Edfou, I, 542, 11; pl. XXXVII d.

ritual and pacifies the god with his spells”.¹ He is also represented on the eastern wall before the chief of the secrets with the titles “the overseer of Edfu, the scribe of the book of the god”.² He was the one who opened the ritual of singing to Horus (Fig. D 18; E 18).³

B) The priests carrying boxes of cloths and divine adornments

On the western wall, one of these priest, *hry št3w* is the first behind the king and the queen (Fig. D 17; E 16). He is “the chief of secrets who is in the Throne of Gods (Edfu), who gives the noble clothes”.⁴ He appears again on the eastern wall preceding the lector priest with the title “Excellent chief of secrets in the House of Appearing (Edfu)”.⁵

C) The priests performing censuring and libation

On the western wall, these two priests are shown before the carriers of the portable chapel (Fig. D 20-21; E 21-22). One of them is depicted holding two vessels, one with floodwater and the other burning incense. The priest is called *h3ty-ꜥ snw n imyw Msn* “the second count of those who are in Edfu”, being the one “who pours a libation to Re in his place, who purifies his house with fresh water”.⁶ The second priest is seen holding a vessel with charcoal and burning pellets of incense. The text defines him as: *h3ty-ꜥ imy-r hmw ntr tpy n Wtst* “the count, the overseer of the priests, the chief of Edfu”. He is the one “who burns incense for the image of Re, who purifies his house with incense”.⁷

The same western staircase wall shows these two priests again in front of nine others carrying the portable chapels of the deities. The short text of the first one, the tenth member in the descending procession, reads *w3t.fr dw* “his way from the evil” remains.⁸ The text of the second priest, as the eleventh member, is “burning incense to the noble falcon image of Horus in front of his house, his incense to your nostrils”.⁹ These two priests are shown again on the eastern wall of the western staircase with the same details, without inscriptions.¹⁰

D) The Carriers of the Portable Chapel of Hathor and Horus

The eastern wall’s scene shows four priests impersonating the children of Horus carrying and supporting the portable chapel¹¹ on their hands with a rope passed around their shoulders (Fig. D 22-25; E 23-26). The accompanying text labels their group as “the children of Horus carry their two divine brothers, all of them raise the heaven”.¹² The western wall calls them “the children of Horus, the carriers of the great Re and the children of *Khent-Khety*, their arms with them to reach him to the roof”.¹³

¹ Edfou, I, 540, 5; pl. XXXVII b.

² Edfou, I, 544, 8; pl. XXXVII e.

³ Edfou, I, 568, 4.

⁴ Edfou, I, 540, 1; pl. XXXVIIb.

⁵ Edfou, I, 544, 7; pl. XXXVIIe.

⁶ Edfou, I, 540, 8; pl. XXXVIIb.

⁷ Edfou, I, 540, 9-10; pl. XXXVIIb.

⁸ Edfou, I, 539, 20; pl. XXXVIIc. It is slightly worn away.

⁹ Edfou, I, 540, 1-2; pl. XXXVIIc.

¹⁰ Edfou, I, 544; pl. XXXVIIb.

¹¹ The processional texts depict it as “It has four posts of gold and at the corners to which a hanging of fine linen is attached”, Edfou, I, 554,7. Alternatively, one of the texts describes the chapel as “the chair of rest” Edfou, I, 554,7.

¹² Edfou, I, 544, 12-13; 560, 1-5; pl XXXVIIe.

¹³ Edfou, I, 450, 11-12.

5- The Priests' ranks on the New Year's Day

The texts along both sides of the eastern staircase deserve further attention regarding the priests' ranks demarcated by their respective status.

1- *Itw-ntrw* "Gods' Fathers". This class of priests participated with other priests to the New Year's Day activities around the chapel to expose and rejuvenate the cult statue of Horus through his union with the sun disc.¹ One reads "the *hmw-ntrw* priests are his followers, *itw-ntrw*-priests around him and the *h3tyw*-priests surround his chapel for uniting with the sun disc on the day of the New Year".² They shared with the other priests the god's purification rites when they crossed the temple.³ At the same time, they accompanied the companies carrying the portable sacred chapel of Horus.⁴

2- *Wcbw 3w* "the great *wabes*". The eastern staircase texts contain references to the great *wabes* as "they were on the staircase every day".⁵ Once in a while, they performed the purification rituals by accompanying the senior purifier priest by pouring water and burning incense at the New Year.⁶ They played an essential role by entering the divine mound (the crypt) to perform an offerings' rituals.⁷ Another text clarifies that they entered the crypt in the Isle of Rage to see the mysteries of the god.⁸ They are depicted carrying a sistrum in one hand and precious material in the other, during ritual activities.⁹

3- *H3tyw* "the *h3tyw*-priests". They are associated with *itw-ntrw* around the chapel to revive and rejuvenate the cult statue with his *ba* and the sun disc on New Year's Day.¹⁰

4- *Hmw-ntr* "priests". This rank seems to be more obvious on New Year's Day.¹¹ They are associated with Hathor as: *hmw-ntrw n Ht-Hr* "the priests of Hathor", *hmw-ntrw smw n nbt i3t-di* "the priests of the south of lady of *Iat-di*".¹² They are also linked with Horus and his city: *hmw-ntrw n Bhd* "the priests of Edfu/the Behdety",¹³ *hmw-ntrw wrw nw sp3t.k* "the great priests of your nome".¹⁴ Furthermore, the texts indicate that two groups of these priests served under the supervision of a *h3ty-c* priest.¹⁵

5- *Hntyw-sh n St-ntrwy*. Those "who are before the shrine of the Place of the Two Gods (Edfu)".¹⁶

6- *Sm* "the *Sem*-priest". This priest occurred once in the staircase despite having a prestigious role in driving away foes.¹⁷ He may be one of the reasons that led Fairman to

¹ Edfou, I, 549, 4.

² Edfou, I, 549, 2-3; 579, 12.

³ Edfou, I 568, 11-12.

⁴ Edfou, I, 571, 9.

⁵ Edfou, I, 549, 13.

⁶ Edfou, 558, 2.

⁷ Edfou, 558, 6-7.

⁸ Edfou, 558, 11-12.

⁹ Edfou, 568, 17-18.

¹⁰ Edfou, I, 549, 4.

¹¹ This came as "*hmw-ntrw* priests in his right and left", Edfou, 554, 9. Also as *hm-ntrw* priests surround him in the right and the left on all ways", Edfou, I, 580, 2-3; "*hmw-ntrw* priests [...] without stopping", Edfou, I, 579, 10.

¹² Edfou, I, 560, 3.

¹³ Edfou, I, 569, 7.

¹⁴ Edfou, I, 568, 17.

¹⁵ Edfou, I, 569, 11-14.

¹⁶ Edfou, I, 569, 7.

¹⁷ Edfou, I, 555, 16-17.

suggest that the ceremonies of the New Year included the ritual of the opening of the mouth.¹

Conclusions

At Edfu, The priests' ritual activities on both sides of the eastern staircase were for Hathor and Horus simultaneously, rather than for two separated processions. The priests performed the ritual activities for the two gods, as clearly seen through the texts devoted to them in both sides. In summary, the priestly ritual activities performed in the ascending staircase include :

- A) Opening the way to heaven and defeating the threatening enemies by the standard-bearers supported by the protective spells recited by the lector priests.
- B) Presenting cloths including coloured linens (*hd.t*-white, *w3d.t*-green, *irti*-blue, *idmi*-dark) with six types of clothes (*ntri*, *št*, *m^crt*, *w^cbt*, *db3 n Rnnwt*, *3bw-ntr*) and different kinds of protective amulets (*s3w* and the great *w^d3*-amulets) by *hry sšt3.w*-priests and two ladies embodying the goddess Serket.
- C) Burning and sparkling the aromatic ointments (*hkn/ti-šps*, *bsn natron*, *ihm/sntr/3tf* incense) and *ntyw* myrrh by priests and two gods embodying the god Shesmu.
- D) Performing the libations and the censings simultaneously by *h3ty-^c-m-ht* priests and *h3ty-[^c] wr* priests.
- E) Carrying the portable chapels of Hathor and Horus by *smrw*-companions. The portable chapel of Horus usually occupies the right wall of the staircase, with his counterpart Hathor on the left one.

The two staircases of Edfu had their local characteristics which differed from Dandera on the New Year's Day:

A) The standard-bearers were divided by the artist into two groups during ascending the eastern staircase. The number of priests on the left side amounted to seven standard-bearers while the right side extended to nine, allowing the king to preside on the right. The descending procession through the western staircase were rearranged into two similar groups. The nine standard-bearers were followed by the seven priests. New standards appeared when going down, which were not seen in the ascending staircase. So they were only the standards of the descending.

B) Focusing on the other priests, some appeared only when going up but not descending, such as the four marching priests behind the lector priest with a vessel of incense in one hand and a sistrum in the other (Fig. C 15-18). As a result, the musical performance for the descending procession was passed on to the queen, who is facing the portable chapel with her whole body and shaking two sistra.

C) Examining the priests "the Chief of secrets" and "the Excellent Chief of secrets" who are following each other on the left wall of the eastern staircase (Fig. B 9,10), they are separated on both sides of the descending staircase. This distribution due to symmetry and the wish to show the two descending processions as exactly mirrored in their iconographies, such as seen in Dendera.

Of interest that the eastern staircase provides a detailed overview than on the western one. On the eastern staircase, the standard-bearers' roles are more aggressive to drive off

¹ Fairman, H.W, *Worship and Festival*, BRL 37 (1954-1955), 187.

impurities, evil and negative external influences, especially during the epagomenal days. This can be seen also in the detailed speech of the lector priests on the eastern staircase than the titles on the descending one. The reason behind that is appropriating to the weakened state of the god in the days preceding the New Year's Day and therefore they need supported forces.

There are many details about the coloured clothes and adornments which the priests carried on the ascending staircase while the texts were silent on the descending ones.

The king always heads the decorative side that contains the portable chapel of Horus in ascending and descending staircases, while the other side is presided by a standard-bearer.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alliot, M., *Le culte d'Horus à Edfou au temps des Ptolémées*, BdE XX/I, Le Caire: Imprimerie de l'Institut français d'Archéologie orientale, 1954.
- Cauville, S., *Dendara. Les fêtes d'Hathor*, (OLA 105), Leuven. 2002, 121–140.
- Cauville, S. *et al.* *Dendara [V]: Les fêtes d'Hathor, Composition hiéroglyphique*, OLA 105, Leuven & Paris: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2002.
- Chassinat, É. *Le temple d'Edfou, Tome I*, MMAF X, Le Caire: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1892.
- Chassinat, E. & Daumas, F, *Le Temple de Dendera, Vols VI-VIII*, Le Caire, 1965-1978.
- Coppens F., *The Wabet, The Wabet: Tradition and innovation in temples of the Ptolemaic and Roman Period*, Prague, 2007.
- Curto, S., *Standarte*, *LÄ V* (1984), cols.1255 1256.
- De Wit, C., “Inscriptions dédicatoires du temple d’Edfou”, *CdE* 36, 1961, p. 56–97, and 277–320.
- Elshahat, Y., *Ptolemaic and Roman vessels of scented oil from Kiman Faris-Krokodilopolis*, *Shedet*, 8 (2021) . 98-110.
- Egberts, A., *In Quest of Meaning. A Study of the Ancient Egyptian Rites of Consecrating the Meret-chests and Driving the Calves*, (Egyptologische Uitgaven VIII/1–2), Leiden, 1995, 139-142
- El Kordy Z. & El Shal, O., “Les escaliers de Dendara (Traduction)”, *Bulletin of the Egyptian Museum* 3 (2006), 34-69
- Eldamaty, M. “Die Treppe des Hinaufsteigens zum Dach des Tempels von Dendera im Neujahrfest”, *Le Caire*, 2003, 171.
- Erman, A., Grapow, H. (1926-1963): *Wörterbuch des ägyptischen Sprache*, vols. I-VII, Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag.
- Fairman, H.W, *Worship and Festival*, *BJRL* 37, 165–203.
- Germond, P., *Sekhmet et la protection du monde*, Genève, 1981, 207-212.
- Goyon, J.C., *Confirmation du pouvoir royal au Nouvel An*, *BdE* 52, Cairo., 1972.
- _____, *Rituels funéraires de l’ancienne Egypte*, (LAPO 4), Paris, 1972, 141-146.
- Graefe, E., “König und Gott als Garanten der Zukunft nach Inschriften der griechisch-römischen Tempel”, in W. Westendorf (ed.), *Aspekte der spätägyptischen Religion*, (GOF IV/9), Wiesbaden, 1979, 71-77.
- Hart, G., *Dictionary of Egyptian Gods and Goddesses*, London, 1986.
- Kurth, D., *Treffpunkt der Götter. Inschriften aus dem Tempel des Horus von Edfu*, Zürich, 1994.
- Lacau, P., “Notes sur les plans des temples d’Edfou et de Kom Ombo”, *ASAE* 52 (1952), 215-228
- Otto, E., *Das ägyptische Mundöffnungsritual*, Wiesbaden, 1960.
- Raven, M.J, “Charms for Protection during the Epagomenal Days”, in J. van Dijk (ed.), *Essays on Ancient Egypt in Honour of Herman te Velde*, (Egyptological Memoirs 1), 1997, 275-285.

- Rickert, A., Das Horn des Steinbocks Die Treppen und der Dachkiosk in Dendara als Quellen zum Neujahrsfest, Harrassowitz, 2019.
- Sauneron, S., Villes et légendes d'Égypte (§ XXX-XXXIII), *BIFAO* 69 (1971), 51-53.
- Traunecker, C., "Cryptes connues et inconnues des temples tardifs", *BSFE*, 129 (1994) 21-46.
- _____, "Les ouabet des temples d'el-Qal'a et de Chenhour" in D. Kurth (ed.), 3. *Ägyptologische Tempeltagung. Systeme und Programme der ägyptischen Tempeldekoration*, (ÄuAT 33.1), Wiesbaden, p. 241–282.
- Wildung, D., Götterstandarte, *LÄ* II (1977), 713.
- Wilson, P. (1997): A Ptolemaic Lexikon. A Lexicographical Study of the Texts in the Temple of Edfu, OLA 78, Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters en Departement Oosterse Studies.
- Žabkar, L. V., Hymns to Isis in her Temple at Philae, Hannover–London, 1988, 121-123.

PLATES

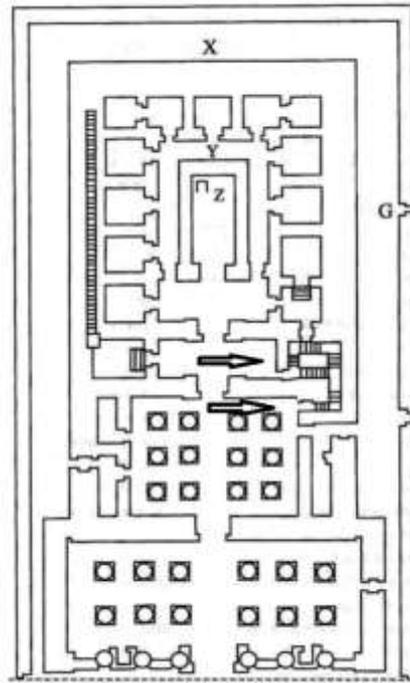
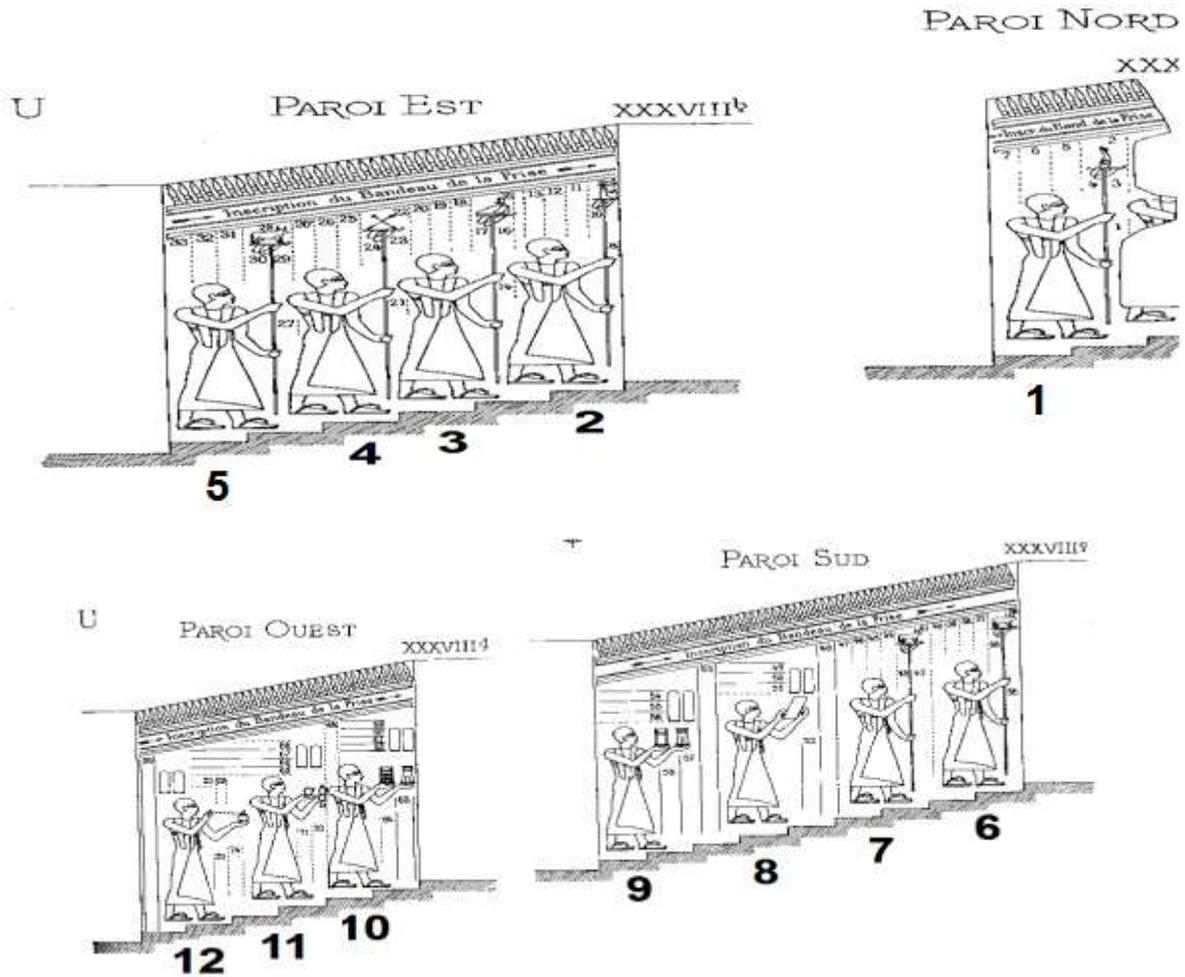


Fig. A. The two entrances of the Eastern staircase



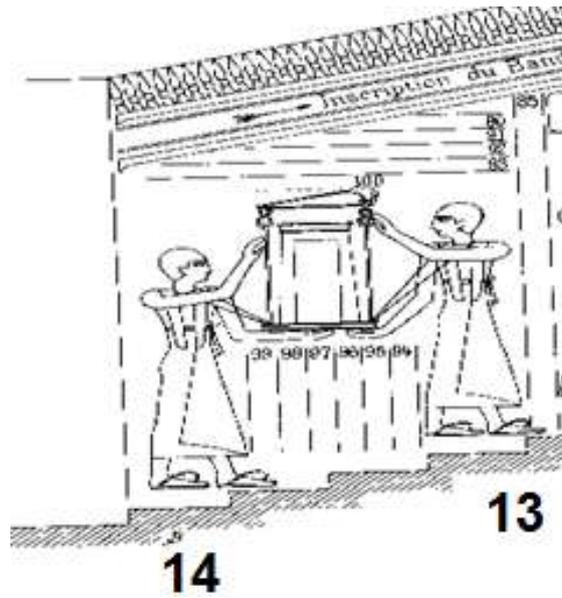
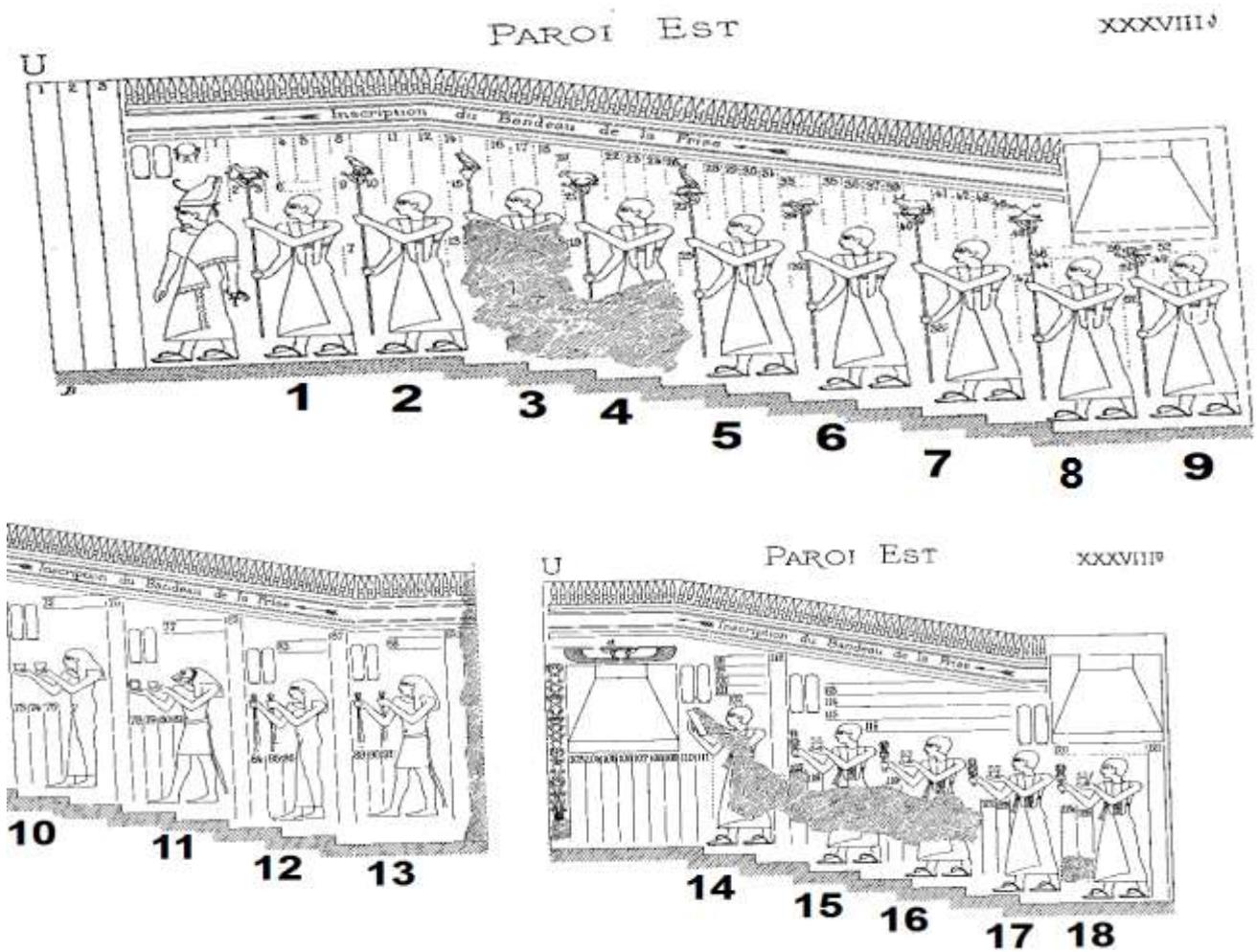


Fig. B. The left side of the Eastern staircase
Edfou, IX, XXXVIIIa - XXXVIIIi.



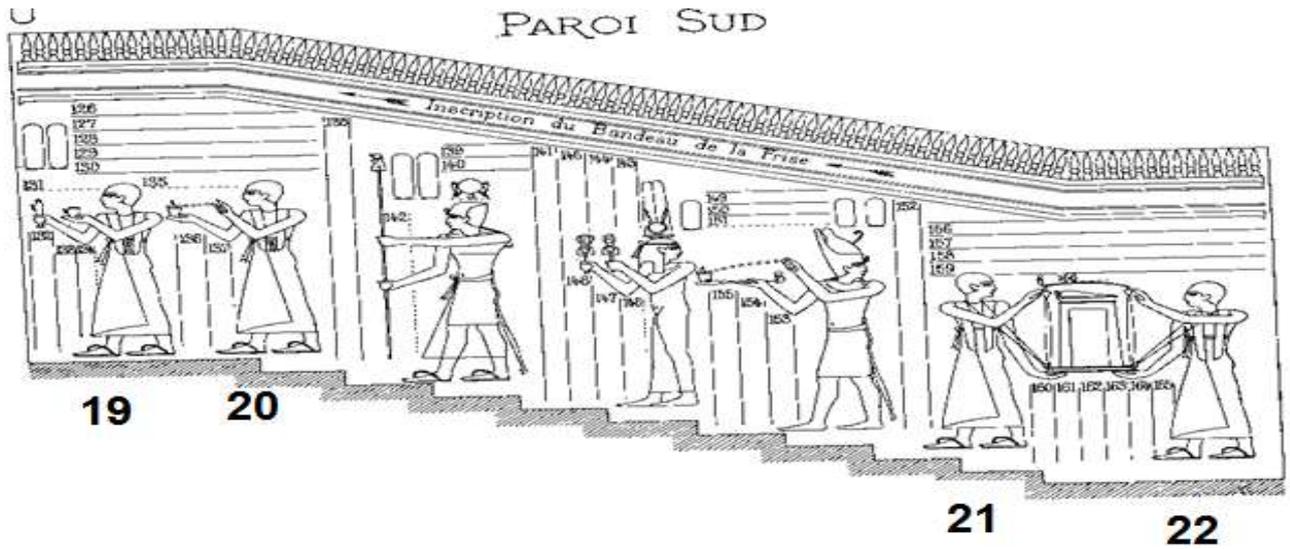


Fig. C. The right side of the eastern staircase
Edfou, IX, XXXVIIIj - XXXVIIIs

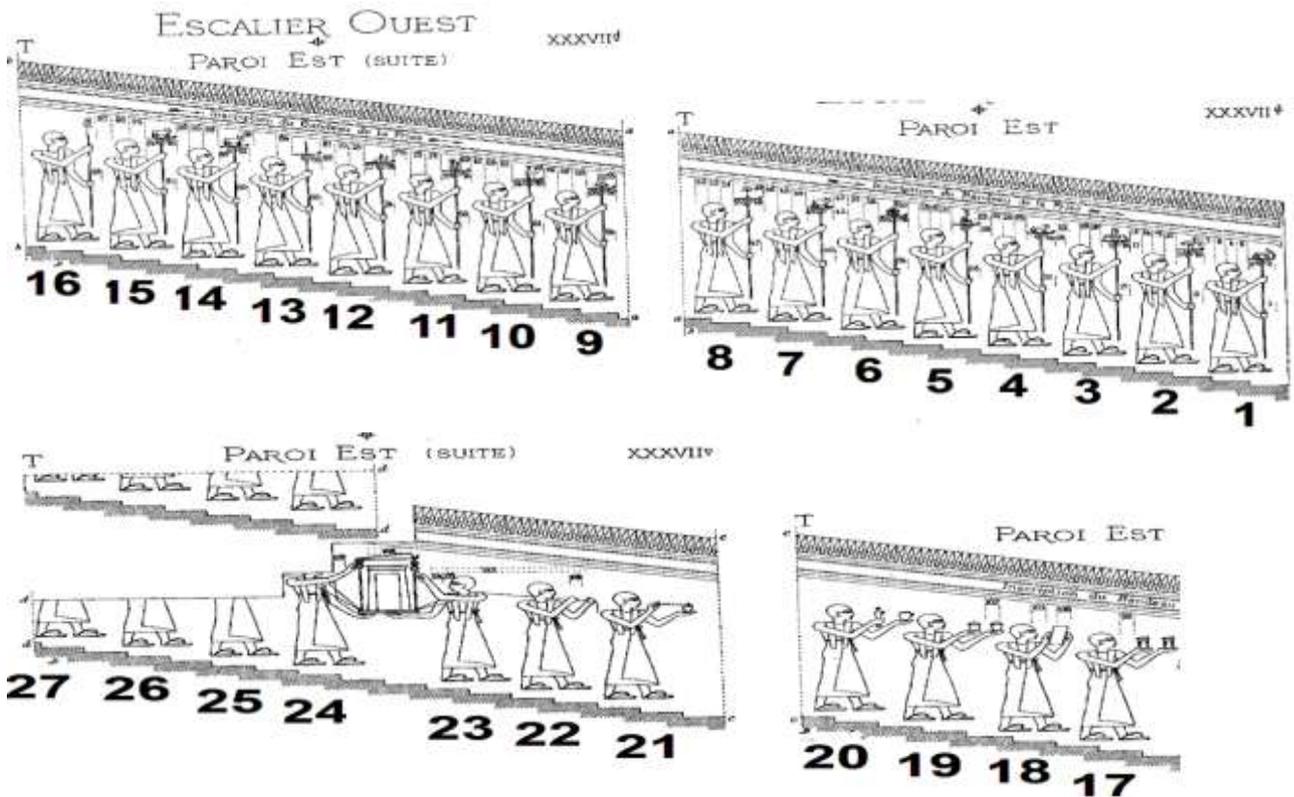


Fig. D The western staircase, the eastern side, Edfou, XXXVII d-f

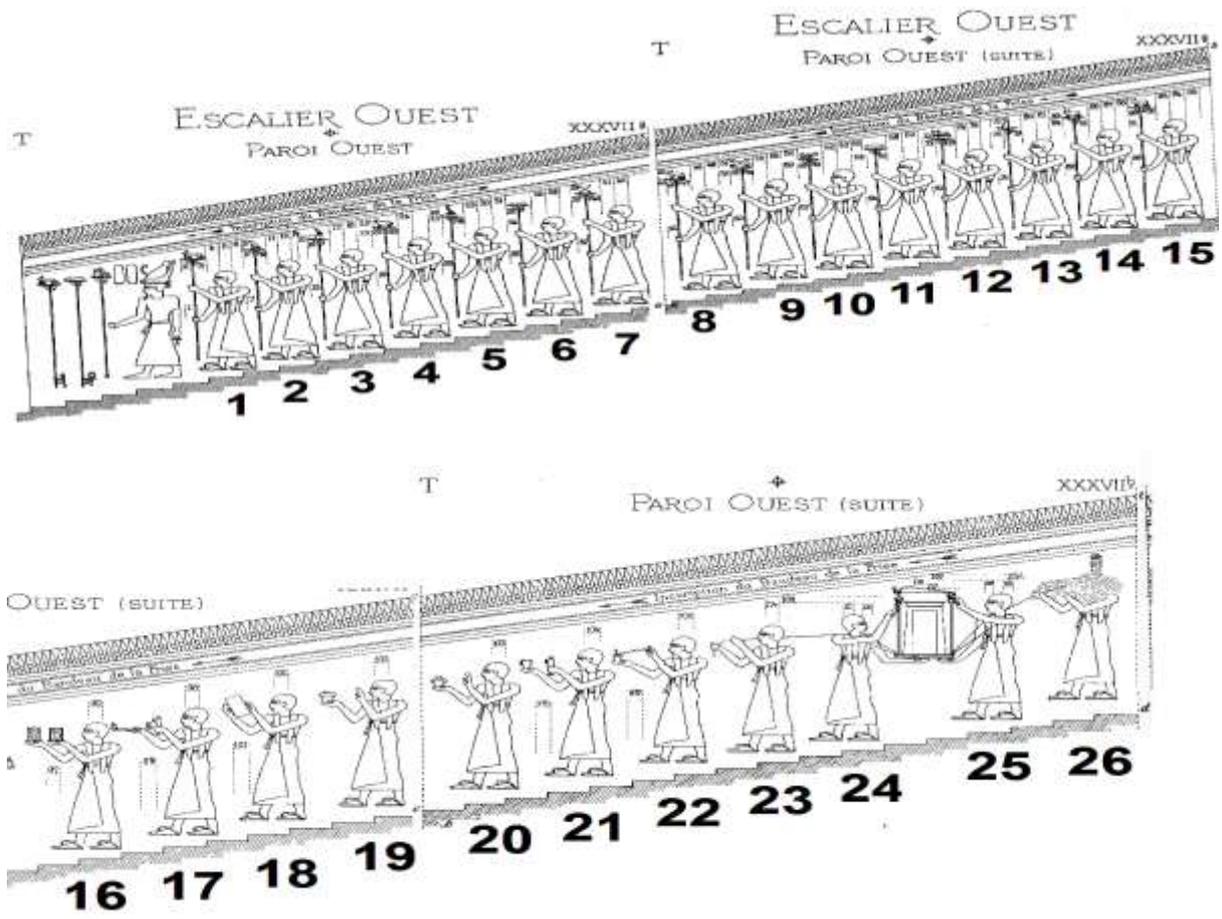


Fig. E. The western staircase, the western side, Edfou, XXXVII a-b