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edited by

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Introduction

After a successful eleventh conference being held in Leiden University (The Netherlands), the twelfth Current Research in Egyptology conference returned to the United Kingdom to be hosted by Durham University in March 2011. The conference gathered both speakers and attendees from all corners of the world. The aim of the 2011 conference was to highlight the multidisciplinary nature of the field of Egyptology. Papers in these proceedings reflect this multidisciplinarity, with research based on Archaeology, Linguistics, Cultural Astronomy, Historiography, Botany, Religion and Law, amongst others. By means of one or several of these disciplines, contributors to this volume approach a broad range of subjects spanning from Prehistory to modern Egypt, including: self-presentation, identity, provenance and museum studies, funerary art and practices, domestic architecture, material culture, mythology, religion, commerce, economy, dream interpretation and the birth of Egyptology as a discipline.

Abd El Gawad is approaching the royal names of the first three Ptolemies as one of the various modes of presentation used by the royal figures. The paper offers an insight on the issue of royal image management and the actual audience of the archaeological evidence.

Amery reflects on how the current means of assessing antiquities at the point of export is not sufficient for determining the value of archaeological artefacts. This is done through an analysis of fragments of offering scenes attributed to the Old Kingdom tomb of Pehenuka.

Backhouse is examining the images of women on beds and in pavilions at the tombs of Deir El Medina. These scenes are created by the workmen for their own purposes and do not normally appear in the formal repertoire of Egyptian art.

Brady offers an approach towards the study of the divine myths from the perspective of cultural astronomy. The paper focuses on a particular star phase type showing the sequence of its observed movements and how it bears a strong parallel to the narrative of the ascension of the king in the Pyramid Text.

Chauhan Field investigates the role of the Seven Hathors during the New Kingdom, whom seem to have a more particular role and function within the Egyptian pantheon than the many other deities who exist in groups of seven or hebdomads.

Clark is tracing the early development of tomb security in Ancient Egypt from the Late Palaeolithic (*c.* 21000–12000 BC) until the end of the Naqada IIIA period (*c.* 3300–3150 BC). The main aim of Clark's paper is to examine, by tracing the development of tomb architecture from the Predynastic Period onwards, whether many of the architectural elements that were incorporated in Egyptian tombs were a consequence of the need to protect the burial, rather than the result of monumental or religious considerations.

Correas-Amador explains the manner in which an ethnoarchaeological study of modern mudbrick houses can help re-establish the link between material and context, an essential connection to achieve a holistic understanding of ancient Egyptian domestic architecture.

Deglin presents a status report on the possibility of the existence of wood exploitation in ancient Egypt through our current botanical knowledge and a re-examination of particular textual and iconographic sources.

Fernández Negro is following the steps of Antonio Bernal de O'Reilly in Egypt in order to highlight the legacy he left in his book *In Egypt* where he provided his own outlook on the history of ancient Egypt, a historical contribution that silenced the echoes of European influences in Spain.

Heikkinen is exploring the influence of Christianity on burial practices in Middle Egypt through archaeological evidence. The paper discusses in detail the various shifts in burial practices during the period from 400 to 640 AD.

Laporta is discussing why Hatshepsut was crowned as king, providing a re-examination of the usurpation of Tuthmosis III and attempting to find some answers to the confusing question of why Tuthmosis III retained Hatshepsut's courtiers and followed her building programme.

Liesegang is exploring the phenomenon of personal religion in the Ramesside Period, from the "Poem" of Ramses II through to the Prayers of Ramses III. This is done through examining the related literary evidence in an attempt to shed some light on the relationship between the king and the god.

Lightbody is looking into the use of Egyptian royal encircling symbolism, represented by the shen ring. The paper describes how and why this symbolism was incorporated into royal artworks, architecture, decoration and rituals.

Millward is addressing the mechanism of mourning in New Kingdom Egypt. The paper focuses on the New Kingdom tombs of the Theban elite, more specifically, on the wall decoration contained within these superstructures.

Norris is giving an account of a project to trace the provenance of one cartonnage and how it came to be found at the Welshpool Museum in Wales.

Pignattari is reporting on her current research on an organic group of Middle Kingdom stelae (1987–1759 BC), forming the main part of a corpus of documents belonging to a functionary called Djaf-Horemsaf, chief of at least three expeditions to the turquoise mines of Serabit el-Khadim, in Sinai, in the years 6, 8 and 9 of Amenemhat IV(1772–1763 BC).

Prada is providing an insight on ancient Egyptian oneiromancy and demotic dream books. The paper reveals the wealth of unpublished sources on this topic which clearly show strong links between the demotic and the earlier *oneirocritica*.

Schiller is following the activities of the merchants and their trade in an Egyptian harbour as well outlining possible problems encountered in the trade connections of New Kingdom Egypt with the Eastern Mediterranean area.

Stewart is seeking to frame the problem of myth in Ancient Egypt by surveying the definitions and approaches of more general myth studies, attempting to provide mediation between the divergent opinions in Egyptology concerning myth.

Tamorri suggests that deviant burials in Predynastic Egypt do not necessarily reflect social exclusion or rejection, but are likely to be merely another burial type in a wide repertoire of burial practices.

Velasco Pírez is looking into female hippos, whose form was adopted by several goddesses in the Egyptian pantheon. Some of these gods have two names while others remain anonymous; the paper attempts to resolve the question of how many hippo goddesses the Egyptian pantheon had.

The twelfth meeting of the Current Research in Egyptology conference not only witnessed the gathering of the future names of Egyptology but also a reunion of Durham University's Egyptologists. This was reflected in the conference's keynote speakers Dr Toby Wilkinson, Dr Penny Wilson and Dr Karen Exell who presented the past, the present and the future of Egyptology tradition at Durham University. Dr Wilkinson's arrival at a complex time within the Department of Archaeology helped ensure the successful continuation of Egyptology at Durham. As well as a renowned Egyptologist in her own right, Dr Penny Wilson has supervised a number of students that have gone on to become curators and lecturers at United Kingdom and overseas universities such as Dr Karen Exell, who was at the time of the conference the curator of Egypt and the Sudan at the Manchester Museum, University of Manchester. Through their work, it has been possible for many postgraduate students to undertake research on a wide range of Egyptological subjects.

The editors would like to thank the following institutions who kindly supported the Current Research in Egyptology XII conference: The Department of Archaeology at Durham University, Durham University's Graduate School, the Durham Centre for the Study of the Ancient Mediterranean and Near East, The Egypt Exploration Society, the North East Ancient Egypt Society, Oxbow Books, Durham Tourist Information Office and Durham Oriental Museum.

The editors would also like to thank Dr Penny Wilson, Dr Toby Wilkinson, Dr Kathryn Piquette, Dr Karen Exell, Ms Lyn Gatland, Mr Nico Staring, Dr Gillian Scott, Dr Stuart Weeks, Ms Rachel Grocke, Dr Campbell Price and Dr Angus Graham for chairing the conference sessions and stimulating vibrant discussions which will certainly boost current and future research in Egyptology.

The Editors
Heba Abd El Gawad, Nathalie Andrews, Maria Correas-Amador,
Veronica Tamorri and James Taylor

October 2011

The Egyptian ascension mythology of the Old Kingdom and the phenomenon of star phases

Bernadette Brady

From as earlier as the period of the ascension mythology of the Old Kingdom of Egypt humanity has created stories of divine beings. These beings are those who upon their deaths ascend to the gods or they are beings that act as intermediates between the gods and humanity. Generally an analysis of these stories takes the path of biblical studies, theological debate, or in the case of the Egyptian texts, a consideration of grammar and the acceptance of a lack of understanding of intention (Faulkner, 1969,viii). However, this paper offers an approach to these stories from the perspective of cultural astronomy and it examines the nature of one of these narratives with an understanding of naked eye astronomy and an awareness of the potential for astronomy to be mythopoeic.

The pyramid texts of the Old Kingdom are a body of work which are the oldest known collection of religious writings. James Allen (2005,1) lists ten known engraved tombs which contain pyramid texts. These texts are described by Samuel Mercer (1956,1) as being, 'remnants of much earlier literature than that of the historical period in Egyptian history.' As complete as these text are Raymond Faulkner (1969,v) points out that they pose problems for any translator as the mythological intent is obscure.

The actual subject matter of the pyramid texts is that of the journey of the deceased king to his after life, and is described by Mercer (1956,9-10) as:

> "... they [the texts] deal with the moral fitness of the deceased king, with his purification and embalming, with his divine parentage, his transformation into an eternal spirit, that is, his freedom from death, his declining in the West and rising in the East, his life as an imperishable star... they deal with his journey to the sky, by means of the boat of Rē', or on a ladder, or on the wings of Toth, ...'

The Kings of the Old Kingdom period held a cosmic position within their nation. They were living gods, born of divine parentage, and upon their death they had the right to re join the eternal circumpolar stars. This dual and cyclic role of the divine king in both the heavens and the earth is seen in Davis' (1977,165 -6) comments when he describes the role and power of the King in the following manner, 'In the ascent, the King re-enters the realms of celestial divinity and is given royal authority, just as he entered the world of men and was invested with similar authority.' The King's resurrection after death was considered essential for the continued well-being not only for the kingdom but for the entire cosmos. His actual divinity was defined by his unique procession of an immortal soul and his duality of existence was the subject of many utterances from the pyramid texts one example being, 'The spirit is bound for the sky, the corpse is bound for the earth', (§ 474) — Faulkner's translations are used throughout the text unless otherwise stated.

The narrative of the ascension myth follows a particular pattern. It begins with statements around the King's divine birth, and generally his own proclamation announcing that he cannot be lost to death, 'because I am a great one, the son of a great one, whom Nūt bore.'(§1145). From his divine birth he has the right to rule the mortal world as he will, after his resurrection, rule the cosmos.

The texts then speak of the King's death and his journey through the western horizon into the earthly Netherworld. However when in the Netherworld his sister Isis, also the star Sophis (Sirius) blocks the path of Osiris in claiming the dead king for the death, 'I am Isis; go behind me, O Osiris the King.' (§44). In some utterances Isis became pregnant by the dead King so she could give birth to the next divine figure, the next heir to the throne, 'Your sister Isis comes to you rejoicing for love of you. You have placed her on your phallus and your seed issues into her, she being ready as Sothis, and Har-Sopd has come forth from you as Horus who is in Sothis.' (§ 632).

The King begins his journey to the eastern horizon where he is destined to resurrect as a god. This is the birth place of the gods, and as the King himself states, 'I am ferried over thereon to yonder eastern side of the sky, to the place where the gods fashioned me, wherein I was born, new and young.' (§344) and, 'The King stands on the eastern side of the celestial vault, there is brought to him a way of ascent to the sky…' (§326).

From this point in the mythology we are repeatedly told that the king is a star, that the king is destined for the imperishable stars, and that he rises using a celestial ladder, step by step or that he has, 'soared to the sky as a heron, I have kissed the sky as a falcon' (§891-892). Or other texts have the King proclaiming, 'My head is a vulture; I will ascend and rise up to the sky. The sides of my head are the starry sky of the god;' (§1303). His ascent is described either by bird or ladder or the hand of Nūt, his mother. Whatever is his method of ascent his journey is always towards the celestial north, 'I ferry across in order that I may stand on the east side of the sky in its northern region among the Imperishable Stars, who stand at their staffs and sit at their East; I will stand among them,...' (§1000 – 1001).

The timing of the King's ascension is less clear. There are many lines of text that talk of the dawn light, rising in the dawn and being like the morning star. However there are other texts that appear to make contradictory statements, 'I am born in the night; come, for I am born'. (§714), and also, 'I was conceived in the night, I was born in the night, I belong to those who are in the suite of Rē', who are before the Morning Star'. (§132), and, 'May you traverse the sky, being united in the darkness; may you rise in the horizon, in the place where it is well with you.' (§152).

A longer passage reads,

> 'O King, free course is given to you by Horus,
> you flash as the Lone Star in the midst of the sky,
> you have grown wings as a great-breasted falcon,
> as a hawk seen in the evening traversing the sky.'
> (§1048-49).

Or the same passage in Allen's (2005,134) translation for found in the tomb of Pepi I:

> 'Ho Pepi! You will be given passage by Horus. You will wear the headband as the sole star in Nut's midst, your winds will grow as those of a big-breasted falcon, as a facon seen in the evening.'

Also other utterances have the king announce, ‘ I am a star which illumines the sky, I mount up to the god that I may be protected, for the sky will not be devoid of me and this earth will not be devoid of me for ever. I live beside you, you gods of the Lower Sky, the Imperishable Stars.’ (§1454 – 1455). Utterances such as this describe the king becoming a star which rises in the evening light. This star is located in the lower sky (the northern part of the sky) and he is destined to join the circumpolar stars.

Faulkner who, in 1969, published a translation of the Pyramid Text accepted that the ascent of the king occurred in the evening sky. However, he tentatively suggested that the Lone Star described as the king in his ascent was that of Venus as the evening star. He pointed out that the morning star of some texts, which seem to suggest the ascent occurring in the morning light would be referring to Phosphorus, Venus at dawn and the Lone Star (in Mercer’s translation this is named the ‘unique star’ while in Allen’s it is the ‘sole star’) belonged to a second set of texts, separate to the first, in which the Lone Star was Venus as Hesperus, setting in the west in the evening. He argued that the passage which likens the ascent of the King as a star which is like ‘a hawk seen in the evening traversing the sky’ (§1048) supported a western horizon setting Venus and that refrence to the east and the star rising were scribal errors. Faulkner (1966,160-1) implies however that this suggestion is simply because he cannot see any other potential candidate for the King’s bright star.

However, the sheer repetition of the words, ‘eastern horizon’, and ‘rising’ in the text does tend to suggest that this is the intended meaning; at least the translators leave us in little doubt. The King having died goes to the west. With the help of others, amongst whom is his sister the star Sophis (Sirius), he moves to the eastern horizon where he rises as a bright star. This bright star then joins the circumpolar stars representing the eternal or imperishable gods.

The simple fact is that this is exactly what some stars do, they set in the west and after a period of time they will rise just after sunset and then for a length of time varying from days to months depending on the star, they will act in the manner of a circumpolar star, thereby being seen to join the imperishable stars.

The Forgotten Star Phase-Types

Star phases are clouded with a great deal of misinformation and most people, including many scholars, assume that there are only two ways that the stars move: that a star is either circumpolar, or a star will rise and set and sometimes disappear from view from the night sky. There are in fact three ways that a star can move for a given location, but before discussing this forgotten phase it is worth noting the possible reasons for this confusion. The source of this omission can, most likely, be traced back to the emergence of Greek astronomy.

Goldstein and Bowen (1983,331) argue that from the period of Hesiod (active around 700 BC) to the time of Eudoxus (c. 408 – c.347 BC) Greek astronomy was focused on the construction of star calendars. These calendars, or later the parapegmata, were unconcerned with the nuances of star phase types. If a star was selected as a date marker it was done so for its ability to be, for example, the morning rising star at a key time of the year. It was of little interest if later in the year, when another star became the morning rising star that that star behaved very differently. Practicality was the motivation of these calendars, not accuracy of the understanding of naked-eye astronomy. This can be seen in Hesiod *Works and Days* where he used the stars as an instrument of common cultural knowledge in order to blend seasons, calendar and labours.

Hesiod (2006,19) linked grape picking to the rising of Arcturus before the dawn light 'But when Orion and Sirius come into mid-heaven, and rosy-fingered Dawn sees Arcturus, then cut off all the grape clusters…' while harvesting and ploughing were linked to the Pleiades (Hesiod, 2006,13), 'When the Pleiades, daughters of Atlas, are rising, begin your harvest, and your ploughing when they are going to set. Forty nights and days they are hidden and appear again as the years moves round, when first you sharpen your sickle.' Hesiod thus referred to one type of star phase — the disappearance for a period of time from the night sky — but for him its use of timing was important, not the need to acknowledge it as just one type of star phase. Indeed Hesiod's work reveals a sky put to work: a calendar that was freely available, non-location specific and perpetually consistent. Hesiod's star calendar actually freed the individual from tracking the date by observing the location of the rising or setting sun. Such solar observations were dependent on a location's specific view of the horizon and thus could not be transported to another location. A star calendar, however, would work over the entire area of the Greek world enabling merchant and sailor to move around the different kingdoms and still be able to observe the sky to ascertain the date. In this way the constellations may have had their mythology but Hesiod's use of the sky was a pragmatic focus on the farmer's, merchant's or sailor's view of the horizon. Users of a Greek star calendar were not required to know the difference between a morning rising star belonging to one type of phase and a morning rising star belonging to another, they only needed to note that the star *was* the morning rising star.

This stripped-down style of naked-eye astronomy evident in the Greek star calendars continued into the Roman era. When Ovid (43 BC – 17/18 AD) produced his *Fasti*, the actual terms he employed for describing the different sun/star/horizon events show his unconcern or unawareness of the star phases (Keightley, 1839,206-7). Each one of Ovid's star rising or setting terms are ambiguous when applied to the actual star phase types themselves. Ovid used six terms for his calendar stars but in fact 16 terms are required if one is to clearly describe the star phases. Claudius Ptolemy (90 – 168 AD) however was aware of the different phases and wrote of them in his work *Phases of the Fixed Stars*; however, he did not name the different stages he only described them (Ptolemy, 1993,6). Ptolemy's work however was the exception and his astrological and astronomical texts were far more widely used than his calendar text. Hence when scholars sought to understand the star phases they appear to have turned to the traditional calendar texts of Hesiod and Ovid with their striped down star phasing descriptions.

Consequently in 1969 when Faulkner was struggling to place the contents of the pyramid texts into naked eye astronomy he, like most other scholars, seemed to be unaware of the different star phases and, not understanding that a set of stars can rise in the early evening light and take on the motion of circumpolar stars, preferred the idea of a bright setting Venus rather than a rising star.

Thus in describing the star phases and in order to avoid confusion this paper employs the following terms. The term *heliacal* is used <u>exclusively</u> for the transitional star/sun/ horizon events happening at sunrise, while the term *acronychal* is used <u>exclusively</u> for the transitional star/sun/horizon events that are happening at sunset. A transitional event is defined as an event in a star phase when a star's observed behaviour is moving to the next part of its phase. For the non-transitional events the terms morning rising or evening setting are used. The terms 'true' and 'apparent' are used as defined by Ptolemy, to distinguish from a sun/star/horizon event where the

star is exactly aligned with the sun (true) and that of a sun/star/horizon event where the star can still be seen (apparent).

Star Phase Types in brief

For any sub-polar latitude, there are three distinct groups of star movement visible in the night sky.

Group 1 Always visible **Never** rising or setting	Group 2 Always visible **Sometimes** rising or setting	Group 3 Sometimes visible **Sometimes** rising or setting

Group 1— Always visible, never rising or setting.
The first group are those stars that will be visible every night, for the whole night. These stars are never seen to touch the horizon and appear in the sky at sunset and will still be visible in the sky at sunrise. These stars are called Circumpolar Stars.

Group 3 — Sometimes visible, sometimes rising or setting.
This third group is generally assumed to be the only other group of visible stars. These stars have a pattern of returning to visibility in the night sky on a set date after a set period of invisibility (failing to rise during the night). Consequently at certain times of the year the star is not seen over the course of the entire night. This period of invisibility begins when the star is seen to set at sunset and it ends when the star is seen to rise at dawn. These stars can never act in a circumpolar-like manner and belong to the group or phase type named by Ptolemy as Arising and Laying Hidden (ALH). A star will belong to this ALH phase if in its position on the celestial sphere it is located on the opposite side of the ecliptic to that of the observer. These stars were referred to in the Pyramid texts as the Unwearying stars (Faulkner, 1966,157). Unwearying because they followed a perpetual pattern of entering the Netherworld and 'dying' to be born again some weeks or months later, and this pattern to be repeated every year. These stars were tied to the mortal world of eternal repetition of life and death probably because they, when visible, were always seen to touch the horizon, the mortal world, at some time in the night.

Group 2 — Always visible, sometimes rising or setting.
This group consist of stars which may rise or set at some time in the night, yet will be visible for every night throughout the year. At a set date a star from this group will appear to act like a circumpolar star. It will be visible in the night sky at sunset and will fail to set by the time of the following dawn. This circumpolar-like behaviour begins when the star is seen to rise at sunset and ends when the star is seen to set at dawn. This group or phase type contains the stars that Ptolemy defined as undergoing a period of Curtailed Passage, (CP). A star will belong to the CP phase if in its position on the celestial sphere it is located on the same side of the ecliptic to that of the observer but was still low enough in declination that it was not a circumpolar star.

Both star phase types of ALH or CP appear to be mythologized within the Egyptian Pyramid Texts but it is stars that belong to the CP phase, that embrace all of the components of the ascension mythology of the king.

The star's observed behaviour for the CP phase is as follows:

Stage 1: The star is seen to be setting during the night, eventually at a set date in the year the star will be just seen to set at sunset (Apparent evening settings for CP phase type). However unlike other stars that are seen to set at sunset and thus enter the Netherworld, and begin a period of invisibility for a series of night, these stars of the CP phase will instead appear to 'die' on the western horizon but will then appear to deny death by rising again later on that *very same* evening.

Potentially from the Egyptian mythological perspective, such a star has overcome death.

Stage 2: The star will then continue to set and then rising again later in the same night but each rising will be at an earlier time each successive night until finally it is seen to be rising at sunset. (Apparent acronychal rising for CP phase-type).

Stage 3: At the next sunset the star appears in the eastern night sky having *already* risen and stays above the horizon for the whole night – acting like one of the circumpolar stars.

Stage 4: Successive nights reveal the star becoming visible at sunset in a position higher in the sky, appearing to move upwards into the sky in a series of steps.

Thus the star that has already defied death by not disappearing into the Netherworld, has now rose in the north east, like a great bird, or on a ladder. It proceeds to ascend to the heavens, step by step and is observed to behave like a circumpolar star.

Stage 5: Over the course of weeks or months the star will slowly begin to move to a position lower in the west before the light of the rising sun floods the sky. Eventually a night comes where the star is seen to set just before the sun rises. (Apparent heliacal setting for the CP phase-type).

Here the divine star is being incarnated into mortal flesh. Davis (1977,166) suggests that 'the ascent to the solar Hereafter is a return journey'. For the Egyptians this may be reflected in the promise of the birth of Horus from the womb of Sophis, the dead King's sister.

As the year progresses the star moves into setting at sunset – the apparent evening setting as described in Stage 1.

Thus the movement of stars which belong to this phase produce a phenomenon which is identical to that described in the pyramid text of the king's ascension to the sky as a star. Thus if the argument of this paper is accepted and the ascension myth of the king is considered the mythologizing of the curtail passage (CP) star phase then the next question is; which star or stars would best fill Faulkner's quest for the Lone Star?

At the latitude of Egypt all stars that lie north of the ecliptic will undergo the CP phase describe above. However some stars will have curtailed passage and behave like a circumpolar star for only a few days, while others may maintain their curtailed passage for some weeks some

even a few months. However there is one star that is very bright, and for the period of 2400 B.C.E. maintained it circumpolar-like behaviour for 80 days and was linked, through the horizon, with Sirius. This star is Vega, with a magnitude of 0.3, in the constellation the Lyra. It was also known to the Greeks as the Great Swooping Vulture who carried the souls of the dead to the other world.

At the time of the creation of the pyramid texts every year in early May, Vega and Sirius would have been seen together on the horizon *(see figure 1).* Sirius would have been setting and this marked the beginning of its journey into the Netherworld as it would not be seen again for around 45 days. However at the same time Vega would have been rising and beginning its ascent to the circumpolar stars.

There are other bright stars that could strongly compete for the title of Lone Star but none have such a mythic and naked-eye astronomy relationship to Sirius. Notwithstanding this tantalising star and mythology parallel, the aim of this paper is not however to suggest an identity of Faulkner's Lone Star or Allen's sole star or Mercer's unique star but rather to illustrate the potential mythopoeic nature of the star phases themselves.

Additionally this style of myth, where a divine being descends or ascends from the heavens was not exclusive to the Egyptians. They appear in the Greek concept of the *theioi Andres*, men who are born as immortals of a divine parent and whose life was deemed virtuous or of great service to mankind. Upon their death they ascended to the heavens (Talbert, 1975,421-2).

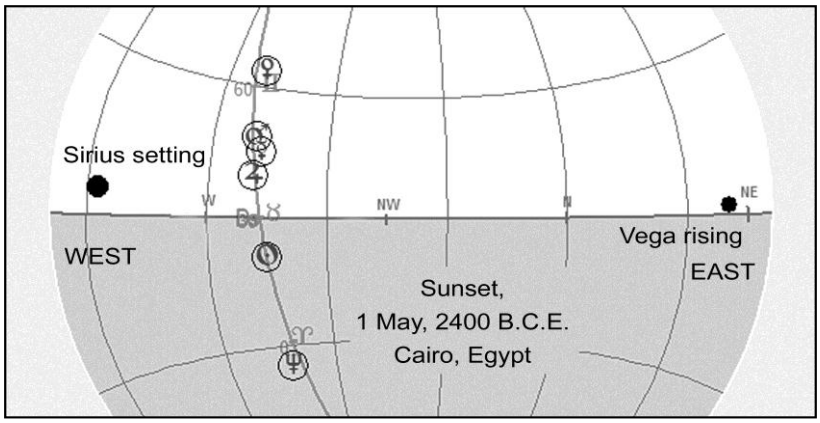

Figure 1 – Sunset for 1 May 2400 B.CE. for the latitude of Cairo. Vega and Sirius are both on the horizon. Sirius is entering the Netherworld on the western horizon beginning it period of 45 days of invisibility while Vega is rising on the eastern horizon and begins it period of acting like a circumpolar star.

Diodorus of Sicily ([1939]) summed this up when he spoke of Hercules,

> As regards the gods… men of ancient times have handed down to later generations two different conceptions: certain of the gods, they say, are eternal and imperishable… But the other gods, we are told, were terrestrial beings who attained to immortal honour and fame because of their benefactions to mankind, such as Heracles,… and the others who were like them.

Where the idea of men becoming gods was not acceptable within a given theology then as Nordell (1889,342) states, emerging from the Babylonian and Jewish traditions we find angels. Special beings who may or may not have wings, who sit on the hand of God and carry his message to the world of mortals:

> 'Praise the Lord from the Heavens, … praise him, all his angels … Praise him Sun and Moon, praise him all you shinning stars… ' Ps 148:2 (1972).

Or from the New Testament,

> 'The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom.' Luke 16:22.

This paper has focused on one particular star phase type showing that the sequence of its observed movements bears a strong parallel to the narrative of the ascension of the king in the Pyramid Text. Additionally, by reconstructing the night sky for the period of the Pyramid Text a sequence of rising and settings can be observed which involved the bright stars Sirius and Vega. Sirius, known to the Egyptian as the star Sophis was associated with Isis while later the Greeks saw Vega as a great vulture who carried souls to the heavens. Consequently based on the visual evidence of the movement of the stars as well as the mythological themes this paper has argued that the ascension myth of the king is in part a mythic description of this star sequences. Furthermore this stellar theology may also be the seed within the Greek notion of humans that become gods and later the idea of a star's movements contributing to the origins of the doctrine of angels or intermediate beings who move between the mortal world and the heavens. Allen (2005,1) considers the religious themes within the Pyramid Text as having a strong link to the biblical world. By acknowledging a link between Ptolemy's star phase of CP (curtailed passage) and the mythology of the ascension of the king then the sky itself becomes one of the cultural vehicles for the transmission of these religious myths.

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