

Lasso and its Role as Nets in Religious Texts

By

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Many words referring to the action of 'to tie', or to the 'names of the tools' with which any undesirable things could be bounded, were used in the Egyptian texts.

These words could be classified into two categories, the first of which is the words that could be translated into 'bonds or fetters and as also 'to tie or to bind with ropes or bonds'.¹

The other is that which bears the meaning of 'to lasso or to capture / constrain with the lasso' next to the previous meaning and which is to be the focus of this study.

In his article, Ogdon has mentioned that 'lasso', which was a prehistoric 'weapon' as an element of the chase-equipment,² is one of the most recurrent means to paralyze the action of an enemy whether of this or the Otherworld; and this opinion depends on his interpretation of the word 'lasso' as 'any tied cord that binds'.

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¹ About the ropes and bonds with which the dead is bound see, *CT II 112c: I kA Tni.i nTtw.k I kA rdi.(i) n.k inTtw snfxfx 'O Bull, I lift up your bonds; O bull, I give to you your loosened fetters'; CT I 70 b-d: n DdH.t(w).k n xnr.t(w).k n inT.(tw).k 'you shall not be imprisoned, you shall not be restrained, you shall not be fettered'*. The verb qAs is one of the most recurrent words denoting this idea, cf. *PT 349a-350c*; as usually the objects of the verb are foes of the god Horus or the king: the god Seth is brought in qAs.f ; enemies are tied qAs in a ntt -rope, see Wilson, *A Ptolemaic Lexikon, A Lexicographical Study of the Texts in the Temple of Edfou, OLA 78* (Leuven 1997), p.1047. See two the fetters with which Apophis is hindered in *CT V 245c: smn inTw.f in nTrw 'his fetters have been made firm by the gods'*. For more about bonds, ropes, fetters see Zandee, J., *Death as an Enemy According to Ancient Egyptian Conceptions* (Brill, 1960), p. 78-80,108,125-132.

² LÄ III 938; Cf.fig.1 (Hunter Palette BM 20790) in: Ogdon, J.R., 'Studies in Ancient Egyptian magical Thought III. Knots and Ties. Notes on Ancient Ligatures', *DE 7* (1987), p. 29

So, the essential function of the lasso is to 'tie' the prey,³ to immobilize its movement, taking off its power, to become impotent and unable to act.⁴

Apart from that role; the present paper will mainly concern with 'lasso' as an instrument, used instead of the 'net', whereby one can catch.

So, according to that and, through studying texts and scenes, it can be concluded that Lassoes are confined and involved only in:

- I- Catching the Dead.
- II- Catching the Enemies of the Gods.

I- Catching the Dead.

The dangers that face the dead- being caught- are not confined to nets,⁵ but also to lassoes, one of the ways used by fishers, fowlers and catchers⁶ to receive fishes, birds, and animals.

The soul of the dead is exposed to be lassoed, as the case with the net, in many incidents, the first of which is:

³ Here we can recall the rite of lassoing the ngA-bull. In his study of hunting rituals, Otto suggested that the term ngA means 'lassoed cattle' who had been captured with the lasso ritually: See Otto, E., An Ancient Egyptian Hunting Ritual, *JNES* 9 (1950), p.164-177. This ritual is depicted in monumental proportions in the temple of Sety I at Abydos. In this relief we see the male upper Egyptian ngA-bull lassoed by the king Ramesses II, accompanied by the crown-prince who grasps the animal by the tail. In This rite which takes place before the god Wp-wAwt and titled as spH ngA TAy Smaw in nswt 'lassoing the male upper Egyptian ngA-bull by the king', he says: spH.i n.k ngA TAy Smaw 'I lasso for you the male upper Egyptian ngA-bull'. That day of finding a new ngA-bull is to be a day of happiness as it is evident from CT V 23j-24a: iw.n n.k imyw nwt hrw pw n spH ngA imnt nfirt m Haaw 'Those who are in the sky have come to you on that day when the ngA-bull was lassoed, while the Beautiful -West is in joy'. At Edfou (Wilson, *OLA* 78, p.552), the ngA-bull is one of the bulls was sacrificed in the temple to represent Seth as a wild bull. This was one of the most prestigious sacrifices

⁴ Ogdon, *DE* 7, p. 30.

⁵ See, Gad, M., 'Catching with Nets & Traps in Religious Texts.1-The origin of the Rite of catching the Enemies of the King', *ASAE* 86 (in print).

⁶ See Gad, M., 'Catching with Nets & Traps in Religious Texts 2- Names, Descriptions, Functions of Nets, Traps, Catchers & the Gods related', *BEM* 7 (in print).

A- Lassoing the Dead while Ascending to Heaven.

The dead always wishes not to get entangled into a lasso, lest he should be prevented from his ascension to the Hereafter.⁷ An ascension text of the *Pyramid Texts* starts with a speech of the goddess Nut. She asserts that her son, the king, is coming in peace, without being blocked:

n xry nDH⁸ Hr sA.f n xry xt Dwt Hr a.f

'On whose back no lasso has fallen, on whose arm nothing bad has fallen'.⁹

B- Inside the Realm of the Dead.

The soul of the dead could be exposed to be caught by a lasso, carried out through the demons, with whom the Netherworld is swarmed:

I spHt¹⁰ bAw m hrw m-Xnw dwAt

'O, you who lassoes the souls at the daytime in the interior of the Netherworld'.¹¹

So a god who is responsible for protecting the dead, is now threatening those demons saying:

⁷ Zandee, *Death as an Enemy according to Ancient Egyptian Conceptions*, p. 232.

⁸ Hannig, *GWB* 476 {17212}; it is not authenticated in Leitz, *Lexikon der Ägyptischen Götter und Götterbezeichnungen*, *OLA* 110 .

⁹ *PT* 1021c.

¹⁰ Cf. Beinlich, h., *Buch vom Ba* (Wiesbaden 200), S.67, n.2: where he approaches this word to sHAp 'Verbergen', to hide!

¹¹ Beinlich, *Buch vom Ba*, S.66, Zl. 81.

iy r spH nn di.i spH.k iy r wdi n.i nn di.i wdi.(k) iw.i r wdi
t(w) iw.i r spH t(w) iw.i m sA n NN

'O you who come to lasso, I will not let you lasso; O you who come to harm, I will not let (you) to do harm. I will harm you, and I will lasso you; for I am NN's protection'.¹²

A similar spell found on an amuletic papyrus dated back to the 25th Dynasty, where the potential enemies or rather the demons are not personified but identified.

This text links the action of lassoing with further sanctions that could be carried out on the sinners.

I spH nn spH.k Hm-nTr tpy n Imn sA - nsw @r-m - Axt i
wdi nn wdi.k r.f i awA nn awA.k sw i Sdi ib nn Sd.k HAty.f i sxm
nn sxm.k m awt.f

'O, he who lassoes, you will not lasso the high priest of Amun, the king's son Harmakhis (the son of Shabaka). O, he who injures, you will not injure him. O, he who robs, you will not rob him. O, he who tears out the heart, you will not tear out his heart. O, he who has power, you will not have power over his members'.¹³

¹² *BD CLI* (Budge II p.284). Translation: Faulkner, *BD*, p.148.

¹³ The demons are referred to in general terms as the one who lassoes and injures, cf. Klasens, A., An Amuletic Papyrus of the 25th Dyn., *OMORO* 56 (1975), p.25. a similar text published by Koenig, Y., Un revenant inconvenient? (Papyrus Deir el-Médineh 37), *BIFAO* 79 (1979), S. 118.

B.1- Using Lassoes to Assign the Sinners to the Places of Punishment.

In punishing the dead as evil-doers, the god @r-#nty-n-irty,¹⁴ in his demonic aspect, lassoes them in order to be assigned later to the slaughter places.

Therefore, in this case, the action of spH is a prelude to be slaughtered and being eaten for foes just as it may have been for cattle:¹⁵

i Ra nHm.k wi m-a nTr pw StA irw wnw inHw.f m
rmny mxAt hrw pf n Hsbt awA dd spHw m isftyw r nmt.f r dnt
bAw

*'O, Rea.... may you save me from that god whose shape is hidden and whose eyebrows are the two arms of the balance, on that day of reckoning the robbers, who puts lassoes on the evil-doers (to assign them) to his slaughter-house, to slay the souls '.*¹⁶

But the dead could be safe from that danger of being caught by a lasso when reciting the proper spell:

di.k Htp awt.f tmm m Xrt-nTr ky-Dd igrt iw.f nTry XAt.f
tm.tw iw.f wDA r xA-bjn n spH.f sw

'May you grant that all his members repose in the Necropolis: in other words, the Realm of the Dead. He is divine, his

¹⁴ About that god see Gad, M., *Blindness, its Social and Religious Conception in Ancient Egypt*, unpublished Master Thesis (written in Arabic), Cairo University, (1993), the 3rd chapter, p.222-418.

¹⁵ Wilson, *OLA* 78, p. 829. Cf. Zandee, *Death as an Enemy according to Ancient Egyptian Conceptions*. p.233

¹⁶ *Urk* V 55, 10-14. (= *CT* IV 299a-301a).

corpse is complete, he is saved from the 'Evil-place' (one of the places of judgment),¹⁷ and he does not lasso him'.¹⁸

B.2- Using Lassoes to Catch the Dead being a Repast for the King.

In a Cannibalistic passage, the dead fears that he could be caught with the lasso like a cow to be offered to the king, who eats men and gods, and through this way he appropriates their strength:

N pw wnm rmT anx m nTrw In xma wpwt imy kHAw
spH sn n N

'The king is one who eats men and lives on the gods It is the Grasper-of-top knots¹⁹ who is in kHAw?,²⁰ who lassoes them for the king'.²¹

II- Catching the Enemies of the Gods.

In the biography of *Rekhmire*, he speaks about the king depicting him with some qualities as: being the 'the god Rea, lord of the sky and, king of the two lands the black and red lands (coming) to his place, the Greats of which are subjugated to him, and too:

rmT nbt pat nbt rxyt nbt m hyhnw²² Hr spH pH sw Snt sw

¹⁷ See Gad, M., *Netherworld and its Location in the Ancient Egyptian Conceptions* (Ph.D. diss., Cairo University 2002, Unpublished thesis written in Arabic), p. 392-3.

¹⁸ *BD CLXV* (Lepsius, k., *Todtenbuch*, pl.79, 6-7).

¹⁹ 'Grasper-of-top knots' well illustrated by such pictures as Seti I smiting the enemy, whom he seizes by the hair of the head.

²⁰ Cf. imy kHAw translated as 'Kessel' in Leitz, *OLA* 110, VII S. 293

²¹ *PT* 400a, 401a; cf. Zandee, *Death as an Enemy according to Ancient Egyptian Conceptions*, p. 233

²² It is a variant of hnw : cf. *FCDME* 159.

'All men, all patricians, and all subjects are in jubilation when lassoing (catching with a lasso) those who dare to approach him, surrounding him'.²³

According to that, all people who might form a threat are to be the enemies, equated sometimes with demons as in a Late-period text:

%xm SmAyw n %xmt im.k spH tw imyw spHw di.n.tw
sDb n HAytyw rnpt

'(Now), the Nomads of Sekhmet have power over you, and those who are in spHw- fetters lasso you. Harm was given to the HAytyw²⁴ - demons of the year (at the epagomenal)'.²⁵

So, this idea of catching people with a lasso to become impotent and unable to act, deprived from their power lest not to hurt others; is the concept upon which the dead- classified as enemies- might be through this tool get punished.

As it is stated, there is a twofold judgment of the dead; the just are protected, and the sinners are punished.

So the dead who have sinned generally upon earth - being classified later when judged as 'enemies of the god Osiris or of the god Rea ', are, among other punishments, caught with a lasso and being taken to the slaughter places as cattle:

²³ *Urk IV 1075, 13 – 1076, 1*; the translation is little different from of that of

(سليم حسن، مصر القديمة، الجزء الرابع، الهيئة المصرية العامة للكتاب، القاهرة ١٩٩٣، ص. ٥٦٦)

²⁴ *HAytyw* as a kind of demons see Hannig, *GWB* 536 {19359}. This word could be derived from the word *HAyt* 'krankheit/ disease', thereupon the *HAytyw* are to be the demons who might cause people ill.

²⁵ Goyon, J.Cl., Les dernières pages des Urkunden Mythologischen Inhalts, *BIFAO* 75 (1975), p. 344[144]-345[145,12-14].

Ir.i sxrw n ntyw m DbAt s[p]H.i xftyw r @tmyt

'I take care of those who are in the Netherworld. I catch the enemies with the lasso for @tmyt- the Place of Destruction^{26, 27}.

A- Lassoing the Enemies of the God Osiris.


Lasso, as the net, might be also a tool with which the enemies of the god Osiris could be caught. Horus, the son and the defender is lassoing the enemies of his father:

hA Wsir ink sA.k @r iy.n.i spH.n.i n.k xftyw.k m wAw.sn

'O Osiris! I am your son Horus; I have come, having lassoed your enemies for you with their own ropes'.²⁸

One of those butchers, known as nmtyw represented in the upper register of the 5th hour of the *Amduat* and whose roles are to protect Osiris, is titled as : ann Hr spHwt *'that with turned face, who catches with a lasso'.²⁹*

Then gripping the god Seth and his gang could have been carried out not only by nets, but also with lassoes.

²⁶ This word is derived from the stem Htm  (Arab. حطم meaning to perish or to destroy) and could be compared to الحطمة, a name of the Hell, mentioned in Koran.

قارن سورة الهمزة (الآية ٤-٧): (كلا لينبذن في الحطمة، وما أدراك ما الحطمة)
:(Nay! Verily, he will be thrown into the crushing Fire .And what will make you know what the crushing Fire is), see: Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din Al-Hilali; Muhammad Muhsin Khān, *The Noble Qur'an, with an English transliteration and translation of the meanings*. Darusslam, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, p.723. Cf. Gad, *Netherworld and its Location in the Ancient Egyptian Conceptions*, p. 374-439.

²⁷ Piankoff, A., *Le Livre des Quererts, BIFAO XLI* (1942), pl. XI, 8, p.5.

²⁸ *BD CLXXIII* (Budge, III p. 65, n.28); Faulkner, *BD*, p.172.

²⁹ See Hornung, E., *Amduat*, Teil I Nr.354. Cf. Leitz, *OLA 110*, VI 270 where one of the protective gods in the retinue of Horus bears that epithet, spH (see *E V* 104, 9; X, pl.112).

The annihilation of the enemies of Osiris is good represented in the 7th hour of the *Amduat*, upper register (Fig.1 & 1a).

Here is Osiris seated on a throne under a canopy formed as a great cobra. His foes are in two groups, the first of which are beheaded and bound kneeling before him, titled as xftyw Wsir '*the enemies of Osiris*'. The second group is of three figures, described as wty '*the bound*';³⁰ lying on the ground and being lassoed by a standing god bears the title of nikw '*the one who punishes*'.³¹

The text accompanied the scene highlights the punishments executed against those enemies as a final destination, after being caught with those lassoes:

In Hm n nTr pn wt r Wsir XAkW r xnty-dwAt nTtw n awy.Tn ... Htm n bAw.Tn Nik Tn nikw m nkyt.f

'So says the majesty of this god: you who acted wickedly against Osiris, who rebelled against xnty-dwAt, the chains to your arms, destruction to your souls, the chastiser chastises you with his knife'.³²

The lasso also shared the role of the net in capturing the enemies of the nSmt – bark.³³

³⁰ Hornung, *Amduat*, Teil I S.121, n. 496-498; Teil II S.126.

³¹ Hornung, *Amduat*, Teil I, n. 499.

³² Hornung, *Amduat*, Teil I, S.121; Teil II S.128.

³³ The nSmt – bark is the sacred boat of the god Osiris, which carries his body to his burial in *Peqer*, destined for his final glorification in Abydos. This journey is an episode of the Osirian myth, in which the boat was attacked by the Sethian enemies. According to *CT V 227a-b*, this boat was the first Rea built. And *Peqer* is the name of a district in Abydos to which the god Osiris, in his bark, departed during his feast; see *Wb II 561, 6*. The burial district of Osiris in Abydos; now: Umm el Qaab.

i sby xft n nSmt HAYty sw m HAYt (Var. HAd sw m HAdt) snH sw m tm

'O, rebel, you the enemy of the nSmt - bark,, (Speech directed to the executioners) catch him with the HAYty - net (or the HAdt - trap), and bind him with the tm - lasso'.³⁴

B- Lassoing the Enemies of the God Rea.

Punishing Apophis, the eternal adversary of the sun-god Rea, being caught with a lasso, is evident too in the 7th hour of the *Amduat*, middle register (Fig.1 & 1b).

Facing the bark of Rea, on the prow of which stands the goddess Isis pronouncing incantations, the goddess %rqt-Htyt 'She who gives breath' and a god Hry-dsw.f 'he who is over his knives', have lassoed Apophis whose body is transfixed with knives. Behind are four goddesses, whose functions are referred through their epithets.³⁵

The purpose of that action shows up, apparently, through the text accompanied:

wdi.xr %rqt-Htt spHw m tp @ry-dsw.f di.f spHw nykt m rdwy.f m-xt nHm Ist @kA-smsw pHy.f m HkAw.sn

'Then the goddess %rqt-Htyt 'She who gives breath' places lassoes on the head, and the god @ry-dsw.f 'He who is over his knives', he puts lassoes (whose names) of nykt 'The punitive' on his

³⁴ Goyon, J.Cl., 'Textes Mythologiques 1. «Le Livre de Protéger la Barque du Dieu»', *Kêmi* XIX (1969), 52; (NY col. 36, 13-37, 1).Cf. p. 64 (D. col. 32).

³⁵ dmDyt ;dmyt ; nykt ; Hmyt "she who unites; she who cuts; she who wounds; she who destroys".

feet after having Isis and 'The Great magician' deprived his strength through their magic'.³⁶

Conclusion:

Lasso, in its role as nets, carries only the name %pH referring to the action of catching and so the tool itself; apart from using the word nDH in one case and tm in another case as a name of the lasso-rope.

The word %pH may be a causative of pH 'to cause to reach' of a rope.³⁷ Other texts use this word with a more extended meaning, to become a general term for 'to capture' or 'to constrain'.³⁸

Lasso has been used as nets in many roles but on a smaller range, and in a very small number of texts.

Unlike the texts that show the role of the nets that have been developed through different periods, lassoes have been confined only on two roles, the first of which focused on the obstruction of the deceased to reach the heaven, being in one case as a repast for the king and assigning the sinners to the Place of Destruction. The second concerned in punishing the enemies of the god Rea and of the god Osiris.

³⁶ Hornung, *Amduat*, Teil I S.125; Teil II S.133, n.9. Cf. *E IV 237*, 13 where the king while slaying Apophis: spH ibw wnp xftyw m dnn.f '(he) lassoes hearts and pierces foes in his hand'. spH has become a general term for to 'capture or to constrain', see Wilson, *OLA 78*, p.829.

³⁷ Wilson, *OLA 78*, p. 829. In a corrupted text (*CT III 395b*), there is an appeal to a catcher with a lasso: I spHw....irr.k m nTr 'O you who lassoedact as a god?'.
³⁸ Wilson, *OLA 78*, p. 829.

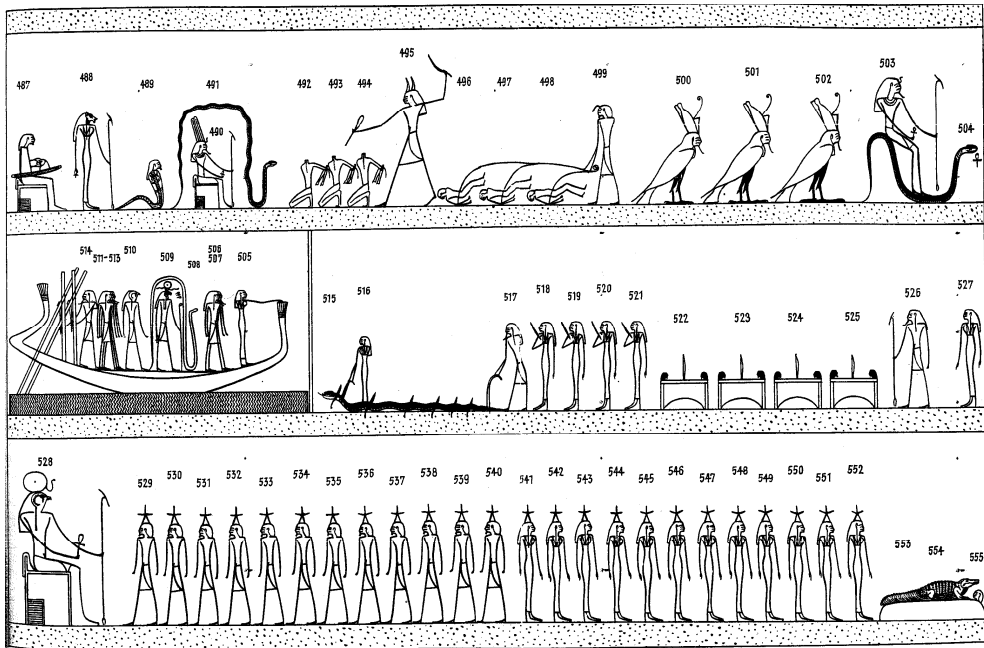


Fig.1

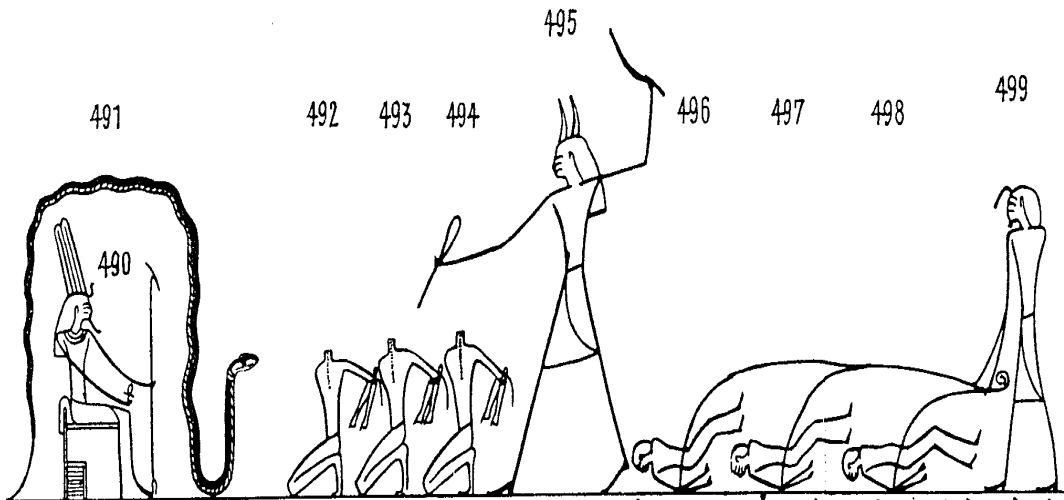


Fig. 1a

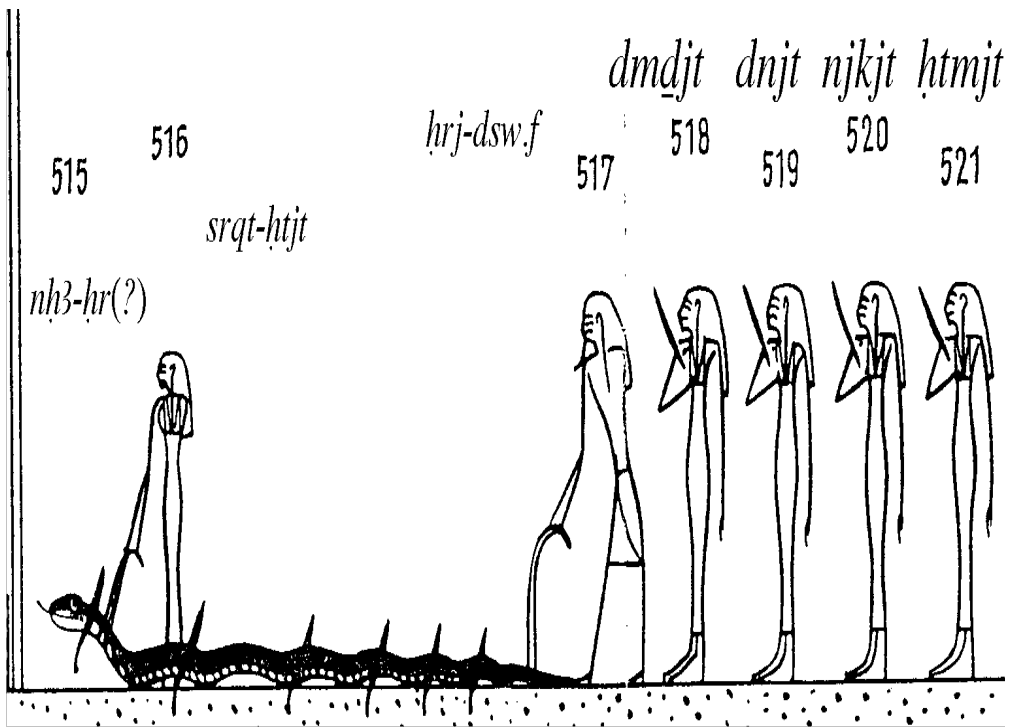


Fig. 1b