

Contacts with the dead in Pharaonic Egypt

Ritual relationships and dead classification

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In Pharaonic Egypt, the importance of the relationships with the dead is well known. One of the evidences is the huge economic investment in funerary architecture and in the perpetuation of the mortuary cult. Another proof consists in all the documents talking about the involvement of the dead in the earthly affairs, for good or evil. Thanks to the communication by Mr Moreno Garcia, we have seen how Egyptian dead could have good influences on the human destinies. They could also have bad influence, since they are regarded as responsible for illnesses, death (in particular child death), family troubles, or even nightmares.

At my turn, I would like to carry on that topic of the relationships between livings and dead.¹ My point is to propose a global approach, to consider all the relationships in order to see how they are organized to form a system. To my point of view, the relations with the dead in Pharaonic Egypt are particularly relevant considering the Egyptian perception of the Invisible, since they are significant part of it and since they reveal the importance for Ancient Egyptians to constantly regulate contacts with other world.

I. Terminology and classification of the dead

The starting point of my discussion would be the terminology relating to the dead and so the question of their classification by the Ancient Egyptians. This is an interesting question that will lead us to the identification of the criteria retained for that classification. Was it essentially a distinction of substance or more like a distinction of experience?²

¹ Subject of my thesis: “La Peur du mort. Nature et structures des relations entre les vivants et les morts dans l’Égypte pharaonique”, under the direction of Prof. Jean-Claude Grenier, Montpellier III, July 2003.

² I borrow the words to L. Godfrey, *Divinity and Experience. The Religion of the Dinka*, Oxford, 1961, p. 155.

1. Designations of the dead as a collective group

In Ancient Egyptian, several expressions and words are used to talk about the dead. First, we find collective expressions (Those-who-come-before *tp(y).w-ꜥ*,³ “Those-who-are-before” *imy.w-bꜥh*,⁴ “Those-who-are-there” *nty.w jm*,⁵ “Those-who-don’t-exist” *iwtj.w* ”⁶). Usually, these are plural designations referring to the dead as a whole community as opposed to the community of the livings. They emphasise on their remoteness in time and space. They are usually not involved in statements referring to personal relationships of one particular living with one particular dead, and so will not retain our attention.

2. Dead as *ꜥh* or *mwt*

In case of personal relationship between the livings and the dead, two terms are used: *ꜥh*  and *mwt* . They are in fact the terms of most current use to talk about the dead. They can be used in plural to refer to the dead as a group, as well as in singular to refer at one dead in particular considered as *ꜥh* or *mwt*. Often, the two terms appear as a couple referring to the whole community of the dead. This occurrence is particularly relevant since it suggests that the Ancient Egyptians consider that all the dead can be divided in two groups: the *ꜥh.w* and the *mwt.w*. The first impulse is to understand them as designations of good dead/bad dead, but it is of course not that simple.

a) The dead as *ꜥh*

The word *ꜥh* referring to the dead is attested during all the history of the Ancient Egypt. It has been associated with two roots: one *ꜥh*  referring to a notion of effectiveness –being *ꜥh* (for his master, a god...) is being effective, useful–, and maybe another one, but writing

³ *Wb* V, 283, 7-16; D. Meeks, *AnLex* 1, 77.4781; 2, 78.4556.

⁴ *Wb* I, 73, 16-19.

⁵ *Wb* II, 355, 9; N. Yamazaki, *Zaubersprüche für Mutter und Kind. Papyrus Berlin 3027, Achet. Schriften zur Ägyptologie* 2, Berlin, 2003, p. 14 (r^o 4-5); P. Vernus, « *Omina* calendériques et comptabilité d’offrandes », *RdE* 33, 1981, p. 99, n. ao.

⁶ D. Meeks, *AnLex* 1, 77.0176.

with different hieroglyphs, \mathfrak{Lh}  referring to a notion of luminosity.⁷ The claim of an etymological derivation of \mathfrak{Hh} from \mathfrak{Lh} is still in debate (thought unconvincing),⁸ but as Fl. Friedman remarks in one of her studies of the notion “a firm association between the two in the texts is, however, clear.”⁹ The meaning of \mathfrak{Hh} is well studied by different scholars.¹⁰ Related to the term \mathfrak{Hhw} , magical power of the gods, talent of the craftsman or skilfulness of the writer, it appears particularly in collections of funerary spells that accompany the dead in the tomb, in funerary inscriptions, tales and magical spells in which it can refer to enemies or to protective genius. It is then conventionally translated “glorious spirit”, “transfigured spirit” or “effective spirit”. The \mathfrak{Hh} is then an effective state of existence for the dead, reached principally thanks to the performance by the livings –in particular the son heir– of specific rites –the glorification ritual, called in Ancient Egyptian \mathfrak{Sshw} , literally “to make \mathfrak{Hh} ”¹¹– that allow him to recover the use of his senses and the capacities to travel between to the different spheres (the world of the gods, the world of the livings and the underworld) and have influence on them. He can then appear benevolent or malevolent to the livings; theoretically in accordance with his judgement on their actions.

b) The dead as *mwt*

We turn now to the second term of the classification of the dead, the term *mwt*. Considering its etymology, the term derives from the verb *mwt*. It simply means “to die”. *Mwt*, or the feminine form *mwt.t*, is thus literally “The-one-who-is-dead”.

If *mwt* seems a neutral term, it is used very carefully in funerary books, because there is a linguistic taboo on it¹² in ritual context, since pronouncing or writing a term is somehow giving existence to the reality meant. So, in funerary spells, the deceased is never said *mwt*.

⁷ Fl. Friedman, « The Root Meaning of \mathfrak{Hh} : Effectiveness or Luminosity », *Serapis* 8, 1985, p. 39-46; K. Jansen-Winkeln, “‘Horizont’ und ‘Verklärtheit’: Zur Bedeutung der Wurzel \mathfrak{Hh} ”, *SAK* 23, 1996, esp. p. 205-208.

⁸ See loc. cit.

⁹ Fl. Friedman, *On the Meaning of AKH (\mathfrak{Hh}) in Egyptian Mortuary Texts*, UMI Dissertation Services, Ann Arbor, 1981, p. 50-51.

¹⁰ See especially R.J. Demarée, *The \mathfrak{Hh} iqr n R' Stelae. On Ancestor Worship in Ancient Egypt*, *EgUit* 3, Leiden, 1983, p. 189-278.

¹¹ J. Assmann, « Egyptian Mortuary Liturgies », dans S. Israelit-Groll (ed.), *Studies in Egyptology Presented to Miriam Lichtheim I*, Jerusalem, 1990, p. 1-45; J. Assmann, M. Bommas, *Altägyptische Totenliturgien I. Totenliturgien in den Sargentexten des Mittleren Reiches*, Heidelberg, 2002, p. 29-38.

¹² N. Guilhou, “La mort et le tabou linguistique dans l'Égypte ancienne”, in J.-M. Marconot, S.H. Aufrère (eds), *L'interdit et le sacré dans les religions de la Bible et de l'Égypte. Actes du colloque Montpellier, le 20 mai 1998*, Montpellier, 1999, p. 69-114.

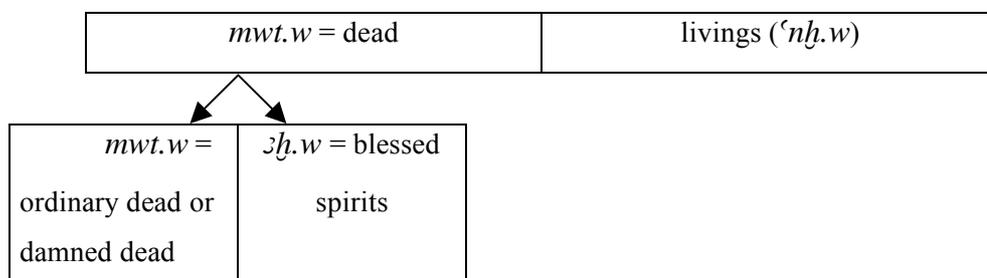
The risk will be to condemn him to the second death that the spells try to avoid. On the contrary, the term is regularly used to talk about the potential enemies of the dead. In that context, it is well known that *mwt.w* refers to damned dead as opposed to the *ꜥh.w*, the blessed dead who succeed the post-mortem judgment.¹³

We find the term in other contexts with other meanings: in magical spells to designate dead enemies, sometimes in connection with *ꜥh.w*, but sometimes in connection with living enemies (*hfty.w ꜥnh.w mwt.w*),¹⁴ in literary texts¹⁵ or in calendars of feasts.¹⁶

3. Polysemy of *mwt* and meaning of the couple *ꜥh* / *mwt*

All these occurrences show the polysemy of the term *mwt*. *Mwt* has three meanings.

1. In its more general sense, it refers to all the dead, indistinctly, as opposed to the community of the livings.
2. In a more limited sense, it means the ordinary dead, individually less revered than the *ꜥh.w*.
3. Finally, in a very restricted sense, it refers to the damned dead, deliver to the nonexistent, as opposed to the blessed dead, the *ꜥh.w*, victorious of the second dead.



On the other side, the term *ꜥh* appears to have a semantic field rather consistent. The distinction between *ꜥh* and *mwt* must then be understood through linguistic distinction between a marked term and an unmarked term.¹⁷ *Mwt* is an unmarked term since it firstly refers to a crude observation, “he-who-is-deceased,” not alive anymore. *ꜥh* is, on the contrary,

¹³ E. Hornung, *Ägyptische Höllenvorstellungen*, *ASAW* 59/3, 1968, p. 34-36; D. Meeks, “Le salut en Égypte”, in *Supplément au Dictionnaire de la Bible* XI, 1987, col. 495.

¹⁴ R.K. Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, *SAOC* 54, Chicago, 1993, p. 14, n. 631 and p. 184, n. 855.

¹⁵ D. MEEKS, *AnLex* 1, 77.1920.

¹⁶ Chr. Leitz, *Tagewählerei. Das Buch ḥꜣ.t nḥḥ pḥ.wy d.t und verwandte Texte*, *ÄgAbh* 55, 1994, p. 160, 263-264.

¹⁷ I thank Bernard Mathieu who suggested me this distinction in the course of my research thesis in Montpellier III University .

a marked term considering the ritual, since the *ꜥh* is first of all the beneficiary of the ritual *sꜥh.w* performed during the funeral and re-enacted during feasts. It consequently connotes a specific ritual framework where must take place the relationships with the livings.

II. THE DUALISTIC CLASSIFICATION IN THE LETTERS TO THE DEAD

This is particularly clear in texts concerning interactions between the living and the dead, and especially in the so-called “letters to the dead”. I sum up the main features of the genre. This corpus, known since the publication of the first documents by A.H. Gardiner and K. Sethe in 1928 as “Letters to the Dead,”¹⁸ contains about fifteen documents from the end of the Old Kingdom (around 2200 B.C.) to the VIIIth century B.C.,¹⁹ but most of them belong to a period of 500 years between the end of the Old Kingdom and the XIIth dynasty of the Middle Kingdom (around 2200-1750 B.C.). This is the real period of the genre, since all the documents of that period are very homogeneous and share fundamental features in composition, motif and style of discourse.²⁰ The most important point in their composition is that the texts present themselves as official documents of the administration of family estates:

- 1) They use epistolary formula;
- 2) They designate themselves as official complaint procedure presented to the ancient responsible of the household, now dead.

Indeed some of the letters describe themselves as *tnw-r(ꜥ)* ,²¹ literally “count of the mouth”, “oral reminder”, a procedure attested, among others, in administrative archives of provincial estate. The procedure consists in recalling things done by the complainant and then asking the recipient to respect his proper duties. Another Egyptian

¹⁸ A.H. Gardiner, K. Sethe, *Letters to the Dead, mainly from the Old and Middle Kingdom*, Oxford, 1928.

¹⁹ Rich bibliography. Lately: M. O’Donoghue, “The ‘Letters to the Dead’ and Ancient Egypt Religion”, *BACE* 10, 1999, p. 87-104; H. Willems, in *Social Aspects of Funerary Culture*, 2001, p. 344-355; U. Verhoeven, “Funktion altägyptischer Briefe an Tote”, dans A. Wagner (ed.), *Bote und Brief. Sprachliche Systeme der Informationsübermittlung im Spannungsfeld von Mündlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit*, Nordostafrikanisch/Westasiatische Studien 4, Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, Bern, Bruxelles, New York, Oxford, Wien, 2003, p. 31-51; L. Gestermann, “IV. Ägyptische Briefe. Briefe in das Jenseits”, in M. Lichtenstein (Red.), *Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments. Neue Folge. Band 3. Briefe...* with literature.

²⁰ The features of the “letters to the dead” will be developed in a study of the corpus in preparation.

²¹ P. Vernus, “La position linguistique des Textes des Sarcophages”, in H. Willems (éd.), *The World of the Coffin Texts. Proceeding of the Symposium Held on the Occasion of the 100th Birthday of Adriaan de Buck. Leiden, December 17-19, 1992*, Leiden, 1996, p. 170-171.

designation of the letters to the dead is *i'nw*  “woe, plaint, appeal”.²² In wisdom literature or in a scene of count registration in a tomb from the XIth dynasty,²³ it is an appeal to the functionary or the estate administrator to mercy. Consequently, letters to the dead of Old/Middle Kingdoms seem to match with social organization of that period:²⁴ family estates with a lot of dependants headed by a male dignitary. The responsible of the estate has turned after death in a kind of “patron saint” of his ancient family estate. He needs the prosperity of the household for his food supply in offerings, and so has to protect his descendants and his dependants from illness and troubles. He also must take care of the unity of the estate and the birth of future heirs.

The letters to the dead are then some kind of official procedure, but since they are addressed to a dead person they are also a ritual performance. The letters to the dead not only present themselves as *tnw-r(3)* or *i'nw*, some designate also themselves as *pr.t-hrw* , “invocation-offerings,” the central part of the mortuary cult. The argumentation to push the deceased to act is simple: the letter is a reminder of the ritual performances regularly done by the livings. Moreover, the letter to the dead itself is not only a written text. It is a ritual performance. The letter, probably dropped off at the tomb,²⁵ was part of a funerary offering. The title *pr.t-hrw* of some letters testifies it, but also the material used for the inscription. The letters to the dead are inscribed in hieratic (the cursive Egyptian script) on different kinds of materials: piece of linen, piece of papyrus folded like letters, one ostrakon, a lost stele, but most of all libation bowls, plates or jar-stand in ceramic. It is not sure that offerings were really put in that inscribed objects, but the symbol is clear.

This is for a quick presentation of the older documents of the corpus. Those texts are of great importance for the study of the relationships between the livings and the dead, since they are not documents giving commentary or mythological exegesis on those relations. On the contrary, they take directly part to them. In that documents, one living calls upon a close deceased and asks him for help, because of an illness arisen within the household, or a

²² *Wb* I, 41, 11.

²³ K. BAER, « An Eleventh Dynasty Farmer's Letters to his Family », *JAOS* 83, 1963, p. 2 n. 5 (P.E. NEWBERRY, *Beni Hassan II*, p. 49 and pl. 7).

²⁴ See also the communication by J.C. Moreno-Garcia.

²⁵ See archaeological contexts of Qau bowl (infra, n. 26) and Papyrus Naga ed-Deir 3737 (W.K. SIMPSON, « The Letter to the Dead from the Tomb of Meru », *JEA* 52, 1966, p. 39-52 and pl. IX-X).

disputation concerning inheritance. In last analysis, another dead is always considered as first responsible for the trouble, even if livings are also involved. And it is, first of all, against that dead that the familiar deceased must act.

In these texts, the dead enemy is called *mwt*, while the prayed dead is called *ꜥh*. The use of the couple *ꜥh/mwt* in letters to the dead is thus particularly crucial. The familiar spirit called upon is instantly incorporated in a relational network established by a specific ritual performance, the *sꜥhw*. On the other side, the enemy, *mwt*, is de facto excluded from that network.

III. THE TWO PARADIGMS OF RITUAL RELATIONSHIPS OF *ꜥH* AND *MWT*

This lexical marginalisation does not allow however to say a thing about the possibility that the dead enemy could, in other contexts—or for other living individuals—could claim a *ꜥh* status. In magical spells, *mwt* can designate, as we have seen, all kind of dead (blessed dead and damned dead). The logical conclusion is that the distinction between *ꜥh* and *mwt* is not specifically a distinction of substance (for example good dead/bad dead) but merely refers to two distinct paradigms of relationships which are the frames of the interactions of one particular living with one or several dead.

1. The paradigm of *ꜥh*

For a better understanding of the paradigm of *ꜥh*, we must return to the letters to the dead, especially the older ones. Writing in crisis situation, they bring to light the mechanisms of the relationship between the living and the *ꜥh*. In those prayers, the living always begins by recalling to the family spirit solicited some ritual acts performed for him. We will take for example the Qau Bowl in the Petrie Museum (University College, London)²⁶. The bowl is inscribed on its two sides: on one side there is a letter for the dead father and, on the other side, a letter for the dead mother. The subject of the two inscriptions is the same. The living son, Shepsi, complains about a problem of inheritance causing, according to him, by the malevolent action of his dead brother—a brother with a proper burial however. He wonders then if his dead parents are aware of that fact and, if so, how they can let that unfair event

²⁶ Petrie Museum, London, UC16163. A.H. GARDINER, K. SETHE, *Egyptian Letters to the Dead*, p. 3-5, 19-20, pl. II-III A. Translation in E.F. WENTE, *Letters from Ancient Egypt*, Atlanta, 1990, p. 212-213, no 341. Photographs of the document on www.petrie.ucl.ac.uk.

happen. But before complaining, Shepsi recalls his mother the geeses she asked for and he brought her; and he recalls a father the bull's leg he offered him. Goose and bull's leg are particularly wanted offerings. All the letters to the dead observe this scheme:

1. First reminder of the ritual duties performed by the living;
2. Exposition of the problem of the household;
3. Reproach addressed to the spirit because he has let unfair events happen and appeal to him to really solve it now, otherwise the troubles will directly affect him, notably his supply in offerings.

Consequently, it appears that the letters to the dead are not only demands address to a familiar spirit, they are also clear blame of the spirit that has not fulfil his duties regarding his living ones. In the letters to the dead, there are indeed several statements that constitute reproaches to the deceased and sound like adages:

Hu Bowl²⁷: “It is for a spirit (*šh*) who intercede for those-who-are-upon-earth that invocatory offerings are made”.

Moreover the letters to the dead are not only prayers and reproaches but contain also some kind of threat.

Cairo Bowl²⁸: “Fight for her really now and we make your domain firm and we pour water for you.”

This threat is justified because the dead seems not to have respect the pact that unites living and their *šh.w*. In trouble, the livings cannot anymore fulfil their own duties.

What is the nature of this pact uniting livings and *šh*? It can be deduced from the letters to the dead, but it is summarised in a cycle of spells from the Coffin Texts who have close affinity with letters to the dead. These are the spells known under the numbers 38 to 41. These texts have drawn the attention of many scholars because of an apparent original content for

²⁷ Petrie Museum, London, UC16244. A.H. GARDINER, K. SETHE, *Egyptian Letters to the Dead*, p. 5, 20-21, pl. IV-IVA. Translation in E.F. WENTE, *Letters from Ancient Egypt*, Atlanta, 1990, p. 215, no 348. Photographs of the document on www.petrie.ucl.ac.uk.

²⁸ Caïre, CG 25375. A.H. GARDINER, K. SETHE, *Egyptian Letters to the Dead*, p. 7-8, 22, pl. VI-VIA. Translation in E.F. WENTE, *Letters from Ancient Egypt*, Atlanta, 1990, p. 215-216, no 350.

such texts.²⁹ They don't seem to be concerned in the first place by the fate of the deceased like one can expect for funerary incantations, but by the fate of his surviving son. Indeed, the living son address a discourse to his father, in presence of the counsel of the gods, and ask him to not make him die prematurely. The son doesn't want to take the place of his father in the netherworld, whereas he has just inherited of his place on earth within the household.

As a matter of fact, the fate of the deceased is of course the subject of those spells. We see the living son in a ritual context at the tomb of his father complaining to him and to the gods that he wants to make him die prematurely. He then tries to convince him (and the gods) that this is a mistake: first of all because the son has never act wrongly toward his father and most of all because his father needs him on earth. In spell 38, the son presents himself as the *ba* of his father on earth.³⁰ The *ba* is one of the components of the human person, the one apt to mobility that allows the deceased to circulate between the underworld, the earth and the sky. Being *ba*, the living son presents oneself as the one directly acting for his father and essential for his endurance after death. Later he explains: he is the one who take care of his household, his tomb and the supply of offerings, only possible if the household is prosperous and wealthy. Without the son on earth, no survival is then possible. In return, the dead father must be the son's supporter and defend him against the accusations that may be brought against him in the divine tribunal. The respective assignments are then clear and summarized by the son as follow:

“This father of mine is in the West as my supporter in the god’s tribunal, while I am on that *separated* land of the livings being his supporter in the tribunal of men.”³¹

Then appears a clear parting of the duties. The important term of the precedent statement is “separated”, *dsr* (“separated”, “sacred”) in Egyptian. It is out of question that the dead father shows himself too much intrusive. His domain is now the otherworld and the domain of his son is the earth and the household. The relations must be regulated by the

²⁹ The bibliography is rich. Lately, translation and commentary by H. Willems, in *Social Aspects of Funerary Culture*, p. 324-369, with literature.

³⁰ A. De Jong, “Coffin Text Spell 38: The Case of the Father and the Son”, *SAK* 21, 1995, p. 141-157; S. Donnat, “Le Dialogue d’un homme avec son *ba* à la lumière de la formule 38 des Textes des Sarcophages”, *BIFAO* 104, 2004, p. 191-205.

³¹ Spell 39, *CT* I, 171j-172e.

rituals and by the tomb. As several funerary texts indicate, the dead can circulate, but only from his tomb where he must always come back for good relations.³²

What thus teach us spells 38-41 of the ritual regulation of the livings/*ꜥḥ* relations? Harco Willems has shown that these spells are in fact part of a larger cycle that comprises other spells (30-41) taking place during feasts for the dead. During these feasts, livings proceed to a re-enactment of the *sꜥḥw* ritual firstly performed during the funerals. The episodes of the rite include purification and offering rituals, execration ritual against enemies of the spirit (Spell 37) and finally a liturgy to “re-established a friendly relationship” of the deceased towards his family (spells 38-41).³³ H. Willems assumes that the letters to the dead must have be part of the last section of the ritual. This re-enactment confirms the dead in his *ꜥḥ*-status but most of all make sure that the dead always respects the pact uniting him to his livings.

The important term in that respect is the term *ḥtp* “be in peace”, thanks to the offerings, and *shꜥtp* “make peaceful”. Several texts indicate that the most important ritual act considering a *ꜥḥ* is to appease (*shꜥtp*) him, by regular funerary cult. Changed into a *ꜥḥ*, the deceased doesn’t stop to be a potentially dangerous entity, since all the dead and the gods are capable of malevolent actions according to the Ancient Egyptian. But in that case, the answer of the livings is to intimately relate the reach of an *ꜥḥ*-status and the pacification towards the living family. Relations then, but strictly controlled, submitted to rules, thanks to the funerary offerings.

2. The paradigm of *mwt*

On the contrary, the use of term *mwt* exclude the dead concerned of that scheme. In his restricted meaning, it refers to another, antagonistic, paradigm. We find him in letters to the dead, applied to the official enemies of the livings, but also in magical texts of protection and execration rites against Egyptian enemies of the pharaoh damned after death.

In these rites,³⁴ the dead are figured in broad line, like statuettes of prisoners. These substitutes are broken, destroyed or buried. The ritual treatment is then the opposite of that of

³² For example, Pyramid Texts spell 223, *Pyr* § 216b. Coffin Texts, spell 44, *CT I*, 190h-191b. J. Assmann, *Images et rites de la mort*, p. 103.

³³ H. Willems, in *Social Aspects of Funerary Culture*, p. 358-361.

³⁴ On execration rituals, see R.K. Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, *SAOC* 54, Chicago, 1993, p. 113sq; Y. Koenig, *Magie et magiciens dans l’Égypte ancienne*, Paris, 1994, p. 131-185; G. Pinch, *Magic in Ancient Egypt*, London, 1994, p. 91-95.

the *ꜣḥ*, which try to make endure his images, his name, i.e. all kind of support needed for good relationships with the livings. In execration rituals, on the contrary, the aim is to make impossible relations by destroying all the potential medium of relationship.

A similar aim appears in magical texts. By different methods (the fabrication of an protective amulet, frightening words towards the demon, or appeal to the gods or other dead), they try to chase away evil entities from the livings. The central terms in that respect are *dr* “drive out”, *ḥsf* “repel, keep away”, or *shr* “remove, move away”. I take this last term as the emblematic definition of the *mwt* paradigm because of its parallelism of construction with *shṯp*, typical of the *ꜣḥ* paradigm (both are words derivations by the prefix *s-*).

Conclusion

In their more restricted meaning, *ꜣḥ* is the blessed dead (ideally a man dead after an old age with heirs who can perform for him *sꜣḥw* ritual) and the *mwt*, the damned dead, with no burial and no funerary cult. But since *mwt* can on occasions designate dead enemies of the livings that could have been *ꜣḥw* for them or for other people, it is better to consider, in a wider sense, *ꜣḥ* and *mwt* as two antagonistic paradigms of relationships between livings and dead. In the first one, the livings try to regulate the relationships by the cult (*sꜣḥw/shṯp*). In the other one, they try, on the contrary, to make an end to too much disordered relationships. Of course, the antagonistic paradigms of *ꜣḥ* and *mwt* are the two extreme points by which the Egyptians organise their entire relationships with the dead. It is only a dualistic categorization that fit the “dialectic structure” of the Egyptian thought.³⁵ Because between these two extreme points –blessed dead/damned dead– are the multitude of ordinary dead who were collectively remembered during feasts, but also drive out when danger appears.

³⁵ Ph. Derchain, “La religion égyptienne”, in H.-P. Puech (ed.), *Histoire des religions I*, Paris (Folio Essais), 2000, p. 118-119.