The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Moon: Coffin Texts Spells 154–160

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Tézisek angol nyelven / Summary
Introduction

Spells 154–160 of the Coffin Texts (CT II, 266a–388c) have long been known to form one composition because in their titles all of them promise the knowledge of the *bas*, mostly in connection with different localities.¹ These spells are also frequently cited in discussions on the lunar concepts of the ancient Egyptians,² yet so far these two noticeable aspects of the spells have not been intertwined more tightly. A careful reading of the texts reveals that – underlying the thematic unity postulated in the first place by the presence of the *bas* – the real editorial principle of this group of spells is a chronologically ordered account of the phenomena that happen during a lunar month. After the introduction (spell 154) which explains the origins of the month, the subsequent spells represent the successive stages of the monthly cycle: the period of invisibility (spell 155), waxing (spell 156), full moon (spell 157), waning (spell 158), arrival of the last crescent at the eastern horizon (spell 159), and again the conjunction of the sun and the moon, which is when a solar eclipse can occur (spell 160).

While this sense of the spells can, in most cases, be deduced from the already existing and widely used translations of the Coffin Texts,³ in my dissertation I offer a new translation with an extensive commentary that brings out the lunar character of these spells more than any previous renderings has thus far. Such an approach is important because Coffin Texts spells 154–160 seem to be the oldest comprehensive treatise on the moon anywhere in the world. For my analysis of the spells I rely on the text variant that is found on the coffin of the Hermopolitan official, Sen (B4L⁴ according to the siglum in CT II). The reasons for my choice of this text – as is explained in the dissertation – stem from the argument that spells 154–160 were compiled in their sequence in Hermopolis, the main cult centre of the lunar god Thoth. In support of this claim I point to the fact that Hermopolis (also often referred to by the site name of its necropolis at the time, Deir el-Bersha) is known to have contributed to the corpus of Coffin Texts,⁴ as well as to the fact that some autobiographical tomb inscriptions found there hint at a deep interest in astronomy by the local elite.⁵ It is therefore not surprising that Sen’s text is rife with allusions to the lunar cycle.

⁴ Gestermann 2008: 201–203.
The structure of the dissertation

The dissertation consists of four major sections. After the introduction, I will look at the individual spells, one after the other, and offer a detailed commentary on them. Each chapter in this section is introduced by the hieroglyphic transcription of the spell, as is given in de Buck’s edition of the Coffin Texts. It is followed by transliteration, translation, and the comments about the different lines. The next section offers a more general commentary on the composition and comprises four chapters. The first one reiterates the main lunar themes of the Book of the Moon for making its structure and logic clearer. The next chapter analyses the contents of the spells in relation to each other in order to distinguish the different textual layers that exist within the composition. The following chapter examines the copies of the Book of the Moon that have come down to us from Deir el-Bersha and Asyut, and establishes the chronology of their creation. The final chapter in the general commentary looks at the survival of the Book of the Moon by examining how the spells made their way into the corpus that superseded the Coffin Texts, i.e. the Book of Going Forth by Day. At the end of the dissertation, a short conclusion closes the discussion, summarising the major findings and once more highlighting the uniqueness of the composition.

The major themes of the spells

Spell 154: the origins of the month

Spell 154 is about the origins of the month and it explains why months are not of uniform length in nature. Any steadfast observer of the moon is bound to discover that in some lunations 30 days elapse between two identical phases of the moon, whereas in other months only 29 days do. In the language of modern astronomy we express this irregularity by saying that the synodic month – the period between two successive full moons, or any other phases – lasts an average of 29.53059 days.

\[jw=j \text{rh}.kw \text{jr}.t \text{Jwn.w } \text{tmm.t } \text{bsj } \text{wr-mj}.w \text{ hr=s}\]

\[\text{hb.t } r \text{m sn.wt dj}.t \text{e jn } \text{htm } r \text{jw}^6 \text{Jwn.w jw=j } \text{rh.kw jry.t } \text{hnk.t } n \text{ t; y } \text{hr=s}\]

I know the eye of Heliopolis into which not even the greatest of seers has been initiated, the diminishing of the part in the senut, and how the destroyer extends the arm against the heir of Heliopolis. I know how a braided lock of hair of a man is made upon it.\(^6\)

\(^6\) CT II, 272a–274b.
The allusion to a lock of hair at the end of this passage is juxtaposed later in the text by the mention of a shorn man (šk). These images surely evoke the waxing and waning of the moon, stemming from an old concept that likened the different phases of the earth’s satellite to a bald head (the full moon) with hair gradually beginning to cover it. Another key phrase here is snwt, the name of the sixth day of the month, which in Heliopolitan doctrine symbolised the fullness of the moon. In later texts this term was often used interchangeably with smdt, the designation of the fifteenth of the lunar month, on which day the full moon takes place in most lunations. The sixth day could be associated with the fullness of the moon because according to a related mytheme the lunar eye consisted of six parts. The six fractions corresponding to these parts – the dimidiated series starting with ½ – fail to add up to unity by a tiny margin (1/64), such that they expressed the idea of near completeness at the same time. Furthermore, this arithmetic exercise of the fractions may have actually been connected with the average length of the synodic month. The ‘diminishing of the part in the senut’ would therefore refer to a month that is somewhat shorter than the ideal 30 days, the period that was the basis for the twelve equally measured monthly units of the civil calendar. This length of time is alluded to in spell 154 by the mention of the mftb-harpoon, which was written with the number 30. The harpoon belongs to He-who-is-in-his-fire, a creature – a snake according to the hieroglyphic determinative – that acts as the enemy of the sun god Re.

Rē pw hr mdw.t hnwt Jm.j-wm=f hr psš.t Jwn.w
qēn r=f j j t ḫpr ḫb.t pw m jbd

It was the case that Re had a discussion with He-who-is-in-his-fire over the division of Heliopolis.
Then his part was injured and that is how the diminishing of the month came into being.

Thus we learn that the reduction in the length of the month resulted from a dispute between Re and He-who-is-in-his-fire. This name must be a designation of the moon in conjunction, that is

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7 CT II, 282c–284b.
8 Derchain 1962: 20; Eaton 2011: 236.
10 Smith 2002: 122.
11 Lieven 2000: 75.
14 Priskin 2002.
15 CT II, 278a–b.
16 Arquier 2013: 123.
17 CT II, 274c–276c.
when the moon is between the sun and the earth. During this period of lunar invisibility, when
the waning crescent can no longer be seen before sunrise at the eastern horizon and the first
crescent has not yet appeared in the western sky after sunset – the moon apparently dwells in
the vicinity of the sun, i.e. in the sun god’s fire. In other words, the moon is invisible because
it moves conjointly with the sun (other iconographic and textual references to this union of the
sun and the moon appear from the New Kingdom onwards). That the name He-who-is-in-his-
fire describes the moon in conjunction will further be reinforced by spell 160 in which the
serpent will once more make an appearance as a hostile entity towards the sun, this time
responsible for a solar eclipse (see below). The ancient Egyptians started the lunar month with
the onset of lunar invisibility, so this was the time when the months were really reckoned.
Consequently, it is appropriate for the invisible moon to feature in a description that is trying
to come to terms with the different lengths of the month. The serpent injures and takes away a
part of Re, and the recognition that the moon reflects the light of the sun may lie behind this
statement. The motif may also be a distant relative or predecessor of Plutarch’s story of how
Thoth won a part of each day from the moon through playing draughts to form the five
epagomenal days.

Spell 155: the period of lunar invisibility

The title of spell 155 leaves absolutely no doubt about which phase of the lunar cycle this text
describes because, unlike the other spells, it connects the bas not with a place or cardinal
direction, but with psḏn.tjw, the invisibility of the moon. The reciter of the spell boasts about
his duties concerning the lunar eye, including being in charge of its fractional components in
the room where the eye itself is stored. This may be a direct allusion to the cult practices in
Hermopolis, and to a store room where the ritual objects used in the cult were kept. However,
the speaker’s familiarity with the eye does not only encompass the tangible paraphernalia of
the lunar cult, but also such facts that we would now call scientific knowledge.

\[ jw=j \text{rḥ kw jḥ.t m jr.t Tḥ.y.jp r.w=s} \]
\[ \text{wšš ʾnḏw r wšš.w wḥ.w} \]
\[ r 5-nw n gs twt n ḣp r.w=s m fj.w.t mh.t r ḫqš.t \]

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21 CT II, 290a.
22 CT II, 294c.
I know what is missing from the eye of Tebi when its parts are counted, and when dawn is stronger than the glow of the darkened night.

The fifth part of an entire half for counting its parts between what is in the filling eye and the ailing eye.\(^{23}\)

The filling eye and the ailing eye are definitions of the waxing and waning moon, respectively, and the cryptic definition of a number, ‘the fifth part of an entire half’, refers to the period that separates them. The entire half means the half of a full month, and thus equals fifteen; consequently its fifth part equals three, and thus the whole expression defines the length of the period of lunar invisibility as lasting for three days. In some months the new crescent of the waxing moon appeared on the evening of the third day of the lunar month,\(^{24}\) and in all probability this observation prompted the statement in the Book of the Moon. Other sources also suggest that the ancient Egyptians regarded the maximum length of the time of the moon’s absence from the sky as three days. The Fundamentals of the Course of the Stars (Book of Nut),\(^{25}\) and a passage in a mythological manual about the cults in the Delta (7th century BCE) claim that when Horus regains the vision of his eyes (i.e. the waxing crescent appears in the west), he goes forth on the morning of the fourth day of the month.\(^{26}\) This occasion is also called \(\text{pr.t-sm}\), ‘the going forth of the \(\text{sem}\)-priest’, and indeed designates the fourth day in the lists of the lunar days that have come down to us from the Graeco-Roman Period.\(^{27}\) The act of the \(\text{sem}\)-priest ritually expressed that the moon passed before the sun, was – after three days – surely and irrevocably ‘released’ by the sun, and could again be seen in the night sky.

The reciter of the spell now compares his knowledge to that of the embalmer priest, and defines the invisibility of the moon in concrete anatomical terms, by likening this phenomenon to the appearance of an eyeball.\(^{28}\) Then he provides yet another description of \(\text{psdn.tjw}\), referring to the mysterious lack of Osiris.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{jw m jwtt hnt Wsjr} \\
\text{ts.n.tw h3.t-f n ph.wj=f} \\
\text{m mdh.t n.t s3w}
\end{align*}
\]

\(^{23}\) \(\text{CT II, 294d–298a.}\)
\(^{24}\) Parker 1950: 13.
\(^{26}\) Meeks 2006: 14 (pBrooklyn 47.218.84, IV, 5–6).
\(^{27}\) Parker 1950: 11.
\(^{28}\) \(\text{CT II, 298c–300b.}\).
It is a void out of Osiris,
when one has joined his front with his back
as the hewn out part of the beam.²⁹

This passage probably has some links with the type of objects that from later periods are known as Osiris beds and Osiris bricks.³⁰ The silhouette of Osiris was sunk into wood or pottery and this space was filled with soil and seeds, so that the latter could sprout and the emerging green vegetation could re-enact the resurrection of the god.³¹ The invisibility of the moon is associated with the empty void of the figure of Osiris: he is there but at the same time unseen and non-existent. He only comes to life when the seeds start to produce the green foliage, just as the moon is invisibly present in front of the sun and only springs to life after being sufficiently distant from it.

After putting great emphasis on the initiation of the reciter into lunar knowledge,³² the spell closes with an allusion to the end of the period of invisibility.

\[\text{wn n=j ntjw m ps\dagger n.tjw} \]
\[\text{fjw m\textsuperscript{33} n=j wp.w pr.(w) m sh.w n.w Wr.t} \]
Open to me, those in the moon’s invisibility.
I have seen the gelder come out of the slaughterhouse of the Great Eye.³³

Written sources that have come down to us from Graeco-Roman times indicate that the two halves of the lunar cycle were envisioned as bulls with different temperaments.³⁴ The waxing moon was thus seen as a fiery, vigorous bull (\(k\text{\textsuperscript{i} psj}\)), whereas the waning moon was equated with an ox, a castrated bull (\(s\text{\textsuperscript{t}b}\)).³⁵ So, when the person responsible for the castration of the lunar bull (\(wp.w ‘\text{someone who cuts, a gelder’}\)) leaves the slaughterhouse, it means that the period of waning and invisibility is about to end, and the waxing of the moon can begin.

²⁹ CT II, 302c–304a.
³⁰ Carter 1933: 81 and pl. lxii;
³¹ Tooley 1996.
³² CT II, 304b–d.
³³ CT II, 306a–b.
³⁵ Sethe and Firchow 1957: 54.
Spell 156: waxing

It is at this point, at the very end of lunar invisibility, that spell 156 joins in and provides an all-encompassing description of the waxing period by identifying two of its key moments.

\[
\text{\textit{rw n sw.t hnt q'h}}
\]
\[
\text{\textit{wbn dšr.t m mnį.t}}
\]

The feather is thrust into the shoulder,

and then the Red Crown rises in the \textit{mentjat}-bowl.\textsuperscript{36}

It is clear from a number of other sources, including notably other Coffin Texts (spells 6 and 9),\textsuperscript{37} that the feather was a symbol of the first lunar crescent appearing over the western horizon just after sunset,\textsuperscript{38} which in turn led to its close association with this cardinal direction.\textsuperscript{39} In this context, then, the shoulder must refer to the relevant body part of the arching sky goddess, Nut, which is in fact situated in the west. The signification of the Red Crown in the next line is less certain, not negligibly because of the obscurity of the word \textit{mnį.t},\textsuperscript{40} but it most probably denotes the full moon rising from the eastern horizon (the connotations of the verb \textit{wbn} hint at this meaning). Due to the atmospheric scattering of light, the full moon when close to the horizon – just like the sun near the horizon – may appear to have a red hue (the association of redness and the full moon can be deduced from other sources as well).\textsuperscript{41} The two lines thus demarcate the starting and end points of the waxing period: the first crescent above the western horizon and the full lunar disc over the eastern horizon. Such an interpretation finds strong support towards the final lines of the spell where the same two antithetic lunar events framing the first half of the month are named again in more certain terms.\textsuperscript{42}

\[
\text{\textit{jw=j rh.kw bš.w Hmnw}}
\]
\[
\text{\textit{ššr.t m 3bd pw cš.t m smd.t pw}}
\]

\textsuperscript{36} \textit{CT} II, 312f–314b.
\textsuperscript{37} \textit{CT} I, 16c-19a, 29a-31a.
\textsuperscript{39} Willems 2005; Meeks 2006: 32, 292.
\textsuperscript{40} Willems 1996: 215.
\textsuperscript{41} cf. Goebs 2008: 158–159.
\textsuperscript{42} Parker 1950: 12.
I know the bas of Hermopolis.
It is the small eye on the second day of the lunar month, it is the great eye on the fifteenth day of the lunar month.\textsuperscript{43}

\textit{Spell 157: full moon}

Spell 157 introduces a new context into the Book of the Moon with the struggle between Horus and Seth. It is about the two different kinds of injury that the full moon – the intact eye of Horus – can suffer.

\begin{verbatim}
R₆ pw dd.n=f n Hr.w jmj m₃=f=j jr.t=k dr hpr nw r=s
m₃=n=f s(t) dd.jn=f dg r pf c=k hbs(.w) m wd₃.t jmj.t
wn.jn Hrw hr dg t r pf dd.jn Hrw
mk wj hr m₃=f hd.wj hpr m₃-hd pw
\end{verbatim}

It was the case that Re said to Horus: ‘Let me see your eye because this happened to it’.
As he looked at it, he said: ‘Take a look at this part as your hand covers the sound eye there’.
And Horus looked at that part and said:
‘Behold, I see it as altogether white’. And this is how the oryx came into being.\textsuperscript{44}

Through a pun between the expressions \textit{hr m₃=f h₃.wj} and \textit{m₃-h₃}, the oryx plays a crucial role in this story. Its connection with the time of the full moon is intimated in some of the inscriptions that accompany the scenes of the slaying of this animal on the walls of Graeco-Roman temples:

‘The oryx is burnt and killed as the \textit{wedjat-eye} is provided with its constituent elements. Moon, come so that you may wander through the sky and your movement could be whole and sound!’

\textit{(smi h₃-h₃ ḏ₃-mdw mh nṣr.tw m₃-h₃ m ḏ₃.tw Ṙ₃.t ḏ₃.t Ṙ₃.tw m r.w=s ḥ₃-r.j₃b.t m ḫ₃s=k m ḥ₃.j.t Ṙ₃.t=k jr.(t) m ḏ₃)}\textsuperscript{45}

Horapollo, the Greek author who penned down often enigmatic descriptions of a series of hieroglyphic signs in the 4th or 5th century CE, also connects the oryx with the moon, and most probably with the full moon, when he says that it could foretell the rising of the sun and the moon.\textsuperscript{46} He also speaks of this animal as somewhat inimical to the moon.\textsuperscript{47} These two strands of tradition are intermingled in spell 157 of the Coffin Texts as well.

\textsuperscript{43} \textit{CT} II, 322c–324a.
\textsuperscript{44} \textit{CT} II, 334b–338b.
\textsuperscript{45} Chassinat 1928: 138–139.
\textsuperscript{46} Boas 1993: 65–66.
\textsuperscript{47} Boas 1993: 65.
The oryx is included in a context that deals with a temporary covering of the moon given that, after Re warned Horus of some overcast part to his celestial eye, Horus replied that it was still shining unblemished. The whole episode must then denote a lunar eclipse during which one part, or the entirety, of the lunar disc is temporarily dimmed as the shadow of the earth falls on it. Lunar eclipses, as a matter of fact, can only happen during a full moon, at the time of opposition when the sun, earth, and moon are aligned.

The second injury involves the pig as a Sethian animal knocking Horus unconscious, thus presaging the regular monthly waning of the moon.

$qd.jn	ext{n} R^n Hrw	ext{ dg m-dj} r(rj)\;pf\;km$

$q^h.n\;Hrw\;hr\;dg.t\;r(rj)\;pf\;km$

$q^h.n\;Hrw\;hr\;kJw.t\;hr\;qd\;wrf.t\;n\;jr.t=f\;n\;n\;t\;qd=f$

$m(k)\;jr.t=j\;mj\;sqr\;pf\;jrj.n\;Sth\;jr.t=j$

Then Re said to Horus: ‘Now look at this black pig’.

Horus looked at the black pig.

Then Horus shouted because of the grave condition of his raging eye, saying:

‘Behold, my eye is like the injury that Seth has inflicted on my eye’. ⁴⁸

The pig was closely associated with the full moon and, once again, there is plenty of evidence from later times that support this notion. A hieroglyphic inscription from the temple of Edfu,⁴⁹ as well as the writings of classical authors testify to the fact that the ancient Egyptians sacrificed pigs and consumed pork on the day of the full moon.⁵⁰ According to Plutarch, furthermore, Seth discovers the body of Osiris when he is chasing a pig in the light of the full moon.⁵¹ The pig is also portrayed as a threat to the moon – a repugnant animal that is ready to swallow the lunar disc – in, for instance, the Book of Gates,⁵² or in the 7th century BCE mythological manual from the Delta.⁵³ As a consequence, we must assume that the mention of the pig in Coffin Texts spell 157 refers to the regular injury suffered by the lunar eye, i.e. the beginning of the monthly waning of the moon.

⁴⁸ CT II, 338c–341b.
⁴⁹ Chassinat 1930: 354.
⁵¹ Griffiths 1970: 129.
⁵² Manassa 2006: 122–125, 137–141.
Spell 158: waning

The period of waning itself is evoked in the following spell through subtle, but still intelligible, allusions.

*r'h b:\w Nhn jw=j r'h.kw sšt\i n Nhn*

dr.tj Hr.w pw jtrj.n mw.t=f qm\j.tj hr mw

Knowing the *bas* of Nekhen. I know the secret of Nekhen.

It is the hands of Horus that his mother made and that were thrown into water.⁵⁴

From a story that was already known in Middle Kingdom times,⁵⁵ but has survived in its fullest form in a Ramesside papyrus recounting the strife between Horus and Seth,⁵⁶ we know that Isis cuts off and replaces Horus’ hands because he used them to collect the semen of Seth who had tried to force a sexual intercourse with him. At a later point of the narrative, it is Horus’ semen that eventually prevails over Seth, leading to the creation of a disc on the head of Thoth that must be the moon itself.⁵⁷ The hands of Horus being made by his mother therefore surely refers to this mythological episode and symbolises the waning of the moon in the lunar cycle, when it is feeble and vulnerable, but still carries its inherent capacity of rejuvenation. The statement that Horus’ hands are thrown into water metaphorically describes the second half of the lunar cycle because the waning crescent, after having risen from the eastern horizon and travelled some distance towards the west, never reaches the western horizon and is never able to set. Each day in the second half of the monthly cycle, the rising sun starts to cancel out the moon’s light at dawn, and as the light of the sun intensifies, the lunar crescent fades away into the blue background of the sky; it is, in effect, ‘thrown into the celestial waters’.

qd\j.n R’ h\d s\j pn n ئ.t hr jr.t.n mw.t=f r=f ds=s

h\i (jn\j) n=\j Sbk n ph.wj h\m=f st sr\d=f st dj=f st r s.t jrjt

Sbk n ph.wj qd=f jw h\m.n=\j b\i.n=\j btktk m=c=j hr sp.tj mw

h\d.d.n=\j m ph.wj hpr h\d pw

Re then said: ‘This son of Isis was injured because of what his mother herself had done to him.

⁵⁴ CT II, 349a–d.
⁵⁵ Quirke 2004: 181–182.
⁵⁶ For the hieroglyphic text, see Gardiner 1932: 37–60, for a translation, Lichtheim 1976: 219–220.
⁵⁷ Servajean 2004: 125.
I wish Sobek of the edge of the waters were fetched for me so that he could fish them out, grow them and put them back to their right place’.

Sobek of the edge of the waters said: ‘I fished, I scooped (it) up, but (the catch) has slipped from my hands onto the shores of the water.

Finally I caught it in the edge of the waters with a cover basket’. And that is how the cover basket came into being.58

This passage further refines the description of the waning moon. The crocodile god Sobek is the embodiment of the rising sun,59 the emerging solar disc that eventually causes the concealment of the waning crescent. In some of the netherworld books of the New Kingdom, a crocodile gives birth to the morning sun.60 Also, in the much later Book of the Fayum (2nd century CE) Sobek is depicted as the sun dwelling around the liminal zones of the eastern and western horizons;61 in the context of spell 158 he must be the rising sun in the east (see also spell 160 below). His epithet, ‘Sobek of the edge of the waters’, also implies that he lingers around the horizon, close to the shore of the celestial waters (just as real crocodiles habitually lurk at the edge of waters waiting for they prey). He tries to fish out the hands but they keep slipping from his grasp. This describes how the dwindling crescent still continues to elude the sun on the successive days of the waning period, even though it rises closer and closer to dawn and travels shorter and shorter distances towards the west. Sobek finally catches his fish (the hands/moon) with a device that is used in shallow waters: a cover basket (a wickerwork basket with no bottom that is placed over a fish, which could thus be grabbed by hand through the upper opening remaining above the level of the water).62 In astronomical terms, this act corresponds to the meeting of the sun and the moon at the eastern horizon, and consequently, to the eventual capture of the moon by the sun (i.e. the disappearance of the waning crescent).

Spell 159: the arrival of the last crescent at the eastern horizon

Spell 159 is also concerned with the beginning of the period of lunar invisibility. It further elaborates the theme of the encounter of the moon and the sun at the eastern horizon, in the realm that was known to the ancient Egyptians as the Field of Reeds (šh.t jîr.w).63

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58 CT II, 350b–353c.
59 Zecchi 2010: 23.
Knowing the bas of the easterners. I know it is the gate in the middle, from which Re emerges in the east.

Its south is in the lake of the hbs-geese, which is the place where Re navigates by sailing; its north is in the waters of the sr-geese, which is the place where Re navigates by rowing.\(^{64}\)

Whereas spell 155 is about the invisible moon in the evening, anticipating the appearance of the first crescent in the west, this spell is connected with the east and the morning sun. Because the moon becomes hidden in the light of the sun, the text refers to it through the description of the latter. The southern and northern limits of the sun’s yearly path along the eastern horizon are specified;\(^{65}\) this part of the text perhaps emphasises the fact that, although the moon slightly strays off the trajectory of the sun (the ecliptic) during its monthly cycle, they are always close enough for the moon to become invisible when the two meet at the eastern end of the sky. The enormous dimensions of the vegetation in the Field of Reeds that are cited in the second part of the spell – emmer five cubits tall, which then grows to seven cubits\(^{66}\) – possibly allude to the closeness of the moon and its beneficial effects on the growth of plants,\(^{67}\) or to the rising solar disc that reveals ever greater parts of itself as dawn turns into day.

**Spell 160: a solar eclipse**

The last chapter of the Book of the Moon, Coffin Texts spell 160, describes the situation when the invisible moon in conjunction travels with the sun through the day sky and a solar eclipse occurs.

\(^{64}\) CT II, 363c–366a.

\(^{65}\) CT II, 364a–366a.

\(^{66}\) CT II, 369b–370d.

\(^{67}\) Smith 2002: 126.
Knowing the *bas* of the westerners. I know the *bas* of the westerners, the mountain of Bakhu on which the sky leans; it is of crystal, 300 rods in length and 120 rods in width. Sobek, the Lord of Bakhu is on the east of the mountain, and his temple is made of carnelian. There is a snake on the top of the mountain, 30 cubits in length and the three cubits of its forepart are of flint.

I know the name of the serpent dwelling on the mountain: He-who-is-in-his-fire is its name.68

The two protagonists of an eclipse are named: Sobek once more stands for the morning sun in the east, whereas the moon reappears as He-who-is-in-his-fire – cast again in the role of the enemy of the solar deity (his name, however, is slightly misspelled on Sen’s coffin; for the correct orthography see coffins B17C, B1C, and B3C69). The lunar connotations of the passage are also evident from the dimensions: the celestial mountain is 300 rods long (ten times 30) and 120 rods wide (ten times twelve), and the lunar serpent itself is meaningfully 30 cubits long. Quite in keeping with the contents of the spell, the three-cubit-long forepart possibly represents the period of invisibility since, for the Egyptians, its maximum length – as explained above – equalled three days.

68 CT II, 375b–379a.
69 CT II, 379a.
70 CT II, 379b–380b.
springs into action and, after he utters a magic spell and displays his strength to repel the lunar serpent, the voyage of the sun continues and Re can set in the west.\textsuperscript{72} The moon presumably also emerges from the encounter unscathed, and thus the endless cycle of lunar withering and renewal can be perpetuated.

\textbf{Conclusion}

In conclusion I would like to stress that not only do the lunar references abounding in spells 154–160 follow a clear chronological pattern, but that they also comprise all the phenomena that can be viewed along the monthly cycle: the period of invisibility, waxing, full moon, a potential lunar eclipse during a full moon, waning, and a possible solar eclipse during invisibility. As a consequence, the Book of the Moon can be said to belong to the rare group of ancient Egyptian literary products that give a systematic treatment of a particular topic.\textsuperscript{73} Admittedly, the allusions to the moon are often rather cryptic and can, in most cases, only be deciphered with the help of later sources, usually of Graeco-Roman date, that are much more explicit with their lunar content. It should not be forgotten, however, that the ancient Egyptian Book of the Moon is not a scientific treatise, but belongs to a collection of mortuary spells that is often characterised by a striving for arcane knowledge.\textsuperscript{74} In accordance with the circumstances prompting the creation of the text, the ultimate purpose of the book was not to disseminate factual information about the moon, but no doubt to equip the deceased with the regenerative powers of this well-observed celestial body. Thus, these spells may be seen as the very first clear-cut evidence for a set of beliefs that became more emphatic at the later stages of Egyptian civilisation, such as when the dead assumed the identity of the moon in some New Kingdom versions of the Book of Going Forth by Day (see the papyrus of Ani),\textsuperscript{75} or when the pre-eminent divine actor of resurrection, Osiris, became thoroughly equated with the moon in Graeco-Roman times.\textsuperscript{76}

\textbf{References}


\textsuperscript{72} CT II, 380c–386c.
\textsuperscript{73} cf. Baines 2007: 41.
\textsuperscript{74} Hays 2008: 190.
\textsuperscript{75} Faulkner 1994: pl. 18.
\textsuperscript{76} Derchain 1962: 46; Koemoth 1996: 203.


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