



“The eastern Door of Heaven is open to you. Nut has embraced you.
She whose hair is long, and whose breasts hang down”



Birmingham Egyptology
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The Embracing Arms and the Heaven's Doors

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Introduction

The “Embracing” posture
In the religious texts of the Old Kingdom

Leads to the deceased's
Resurrection Celestial Ascension

And therefore, leads to the opening of
the Doors of Heaven that gives
access to the celestial sphere

The visualisation of this aspect of the
“embracing imagery” is not attested
before the New Kingdom Netherworld
Books and Book of the Dead Vignettes

Aims of the Poster

Through analysing textual and
iconographical evidence: The poster
aims to understand the following

- How the embracing
arms imagery is
associated with the
opening and/or the
existence of the Doors
of Heaven as well as
act as their concealed
replacement.

- The identity of the
owner of the
embracing arms and
how their embrace to
the sun god emulates
the primeval moment
of creation and his
emergence from the
Primeval Waters.

Methodology

The poster answers the abovementioned questions
through classifying the iconographical and textual
attestations of the “two embracing arms” imagery
according to the deities embracing the sun god and
illustrate their significance and relation to the Doors of
Heaven.

What are the Doors of Heaven?

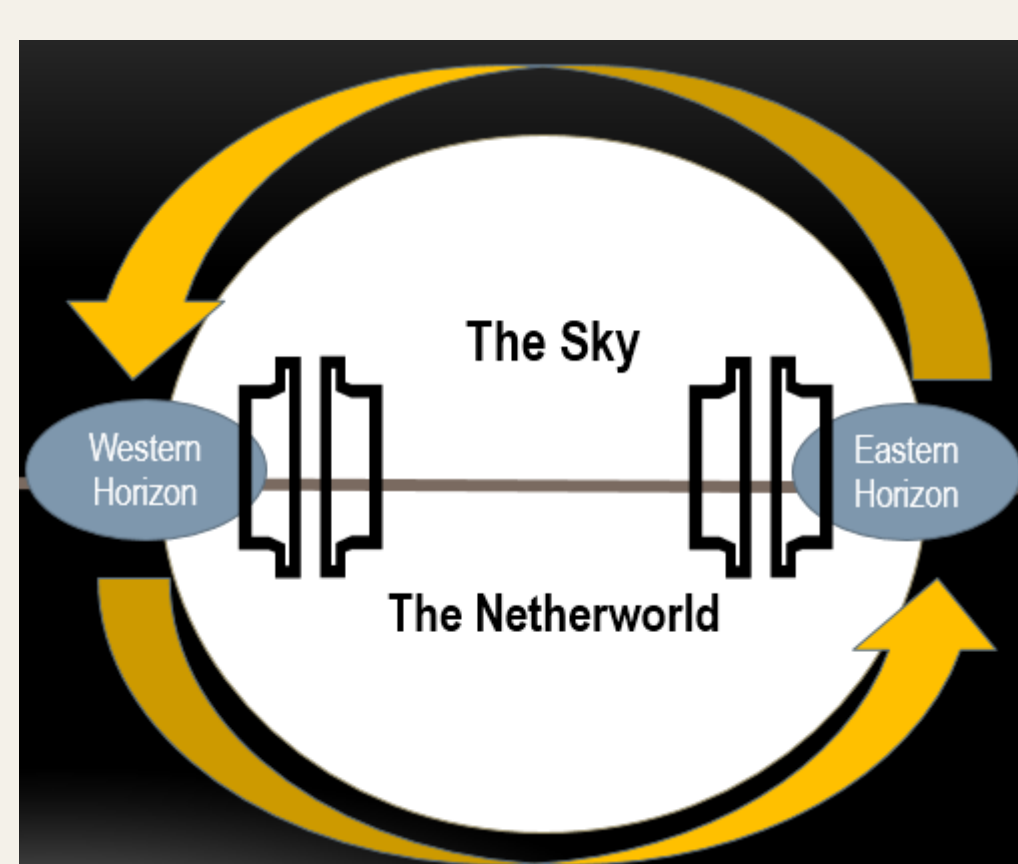


Vignette of BD chapter 17 – papyrus of
Neferrenpet - E. 5043 – 19th Dynasty
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Vignette of BD chapter 17 – papyrus of
Hunefer - EA 9901 – 19th Dynasty,
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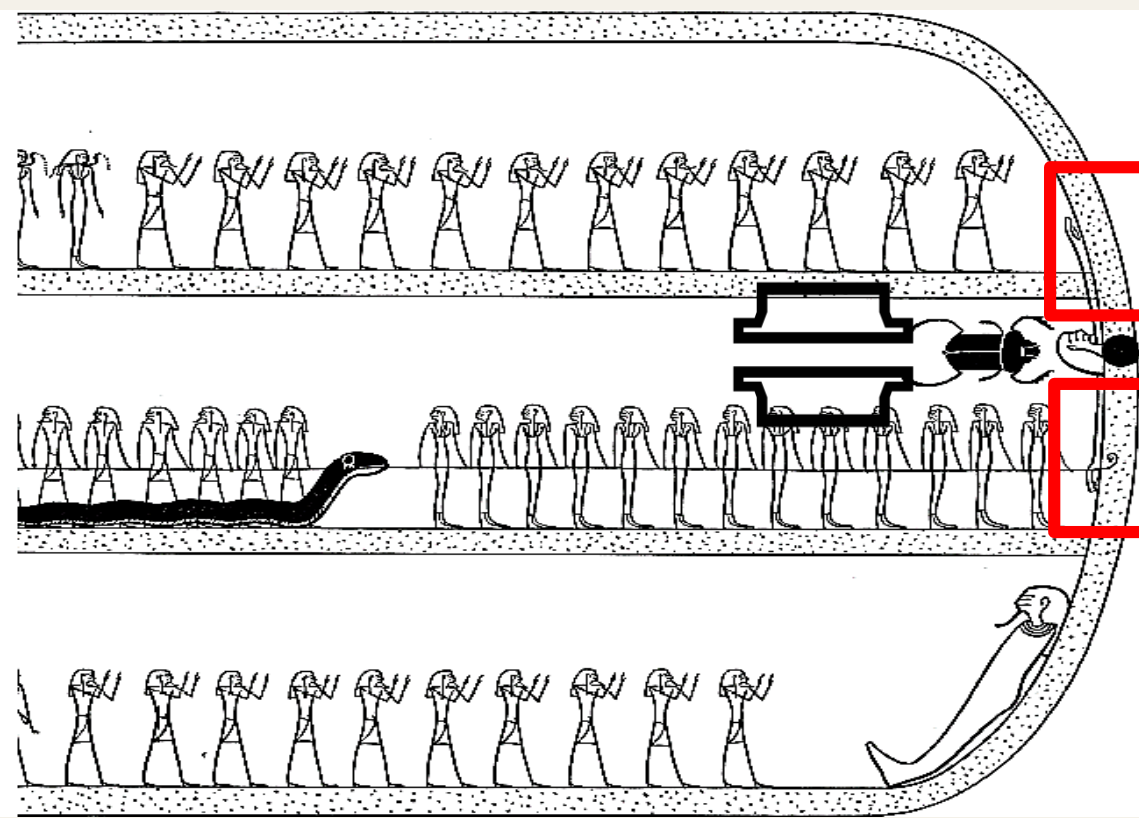
- The Doors of Heaven, the ancient Egyptian “*ꜥꜣ wy p.t*” are the gates that separate between the realms of the heaven and netherworld which open to the sun god and the deceased in his following during their cyclical travel across the eastern and the western horizons.
- These doors are not always depicted as actual gates but their existence is sometimes hidden in certain themes.



The Hidden Doors of Heaven and the “Embracing Arms”

The solar rising and setting scenes, known in the Egyptological sources as “*Perpetuum Mobile*”, hides the depiction of the **Doors of Heaven** in its themes, which normally incorporated the “embracing” imagery, either mentioned textually, depicted iconographically or both.

➤ The Arms of Shu as the Doors of Heaven:



Concluding tableau of Amduat – the “eastern gateway of heaven” is not represented, but mentioned in the annotations.

- The annotations mention that Shu: “Separates heaven from the earth and from the Unified Darkness” – It is his “two arms that seal the Netherworld”.
- The fact that the Arms of Shu “seal” and “separate” compares them with the “Doors of Heaven” playing the same role.

➤ The Arms of Shu, Nut, and the “God of the Douat” as the Doors of Heaven:



21st Dynasty Papyrus of Tentamun - BNF No. 172 – shows the complete solar cycle without depicting the Doors of Heaven separating between heaven, earth and netherworld; but only the transitional stages are marked with the “two arms”.

- The two arms of Shu “that seal the netherworld” are placed at the mouth and vagina of Nut – which act as the portals through which the sun god enters and exits the netherworld, i.e. the Doors of Heaven.
- Another embracing arms that receive the solar boat into the netherworld belongs to “the great god, Lord of the Douat”, which could either belong to Geb – also shown in his anthropomorphic form, or Osiris who represents the Douat.
- The arms of Nut, which touch the ground, is also associated with the opening of the Doors of Heaven.

❖ PT Spell 697:

Oh this N, the mouth of the earth is open to you,
The eastern Door of Heaven is open to you,
Nut embraces you, she whose hair is long, and whose breasts hang down



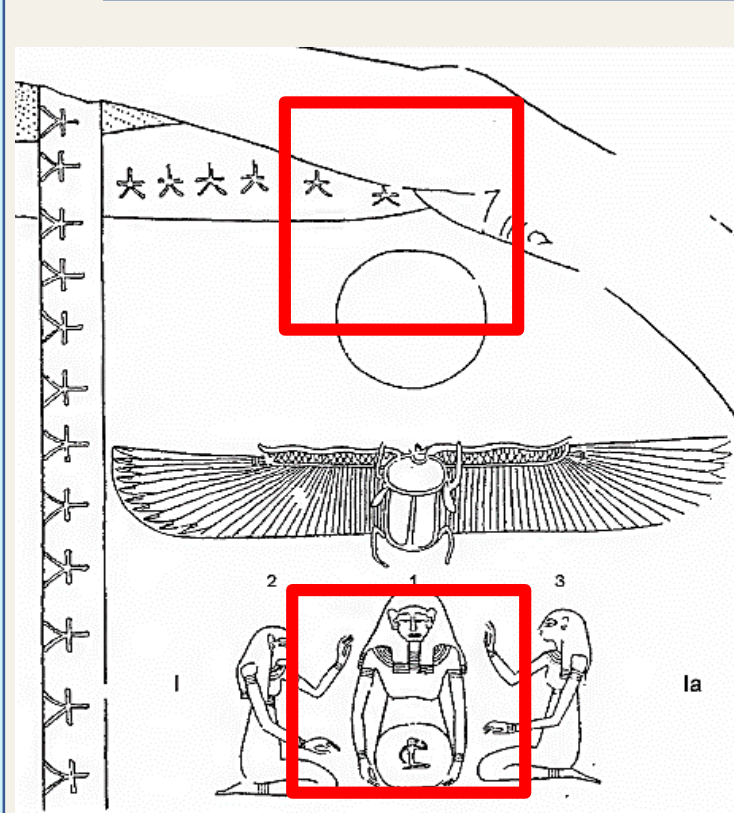
Scene from the tomb of Neferserkheru – T.T. 296 – 19th Dynasty



21st/ 22nd Dynasty Papyrus of Sesekh – The Egyptian Museum in Berlin Inv. No. 3147 visualises PT spell 697

- The scene from the tomb of Neferserkheru visualises PT spell 697 where the *dd* pillar indicates the embrace of Osiris which is associated with the Doors of Heaven in the Book of Nut. At the “arms”, “mouth” “vagina” of the goddess, the annotations mention the “embrace” of Osiris to the Sun god at his entrance and exit from the Douat. i.e. the Doors of Heaven.
- In the papyrus of Sesekh, the arms of Shu denotes the opening of the eastern Door of Heaven at the raising of the sun god from the netherworld and his receiving by Nut in the sky as in PT spell 697.

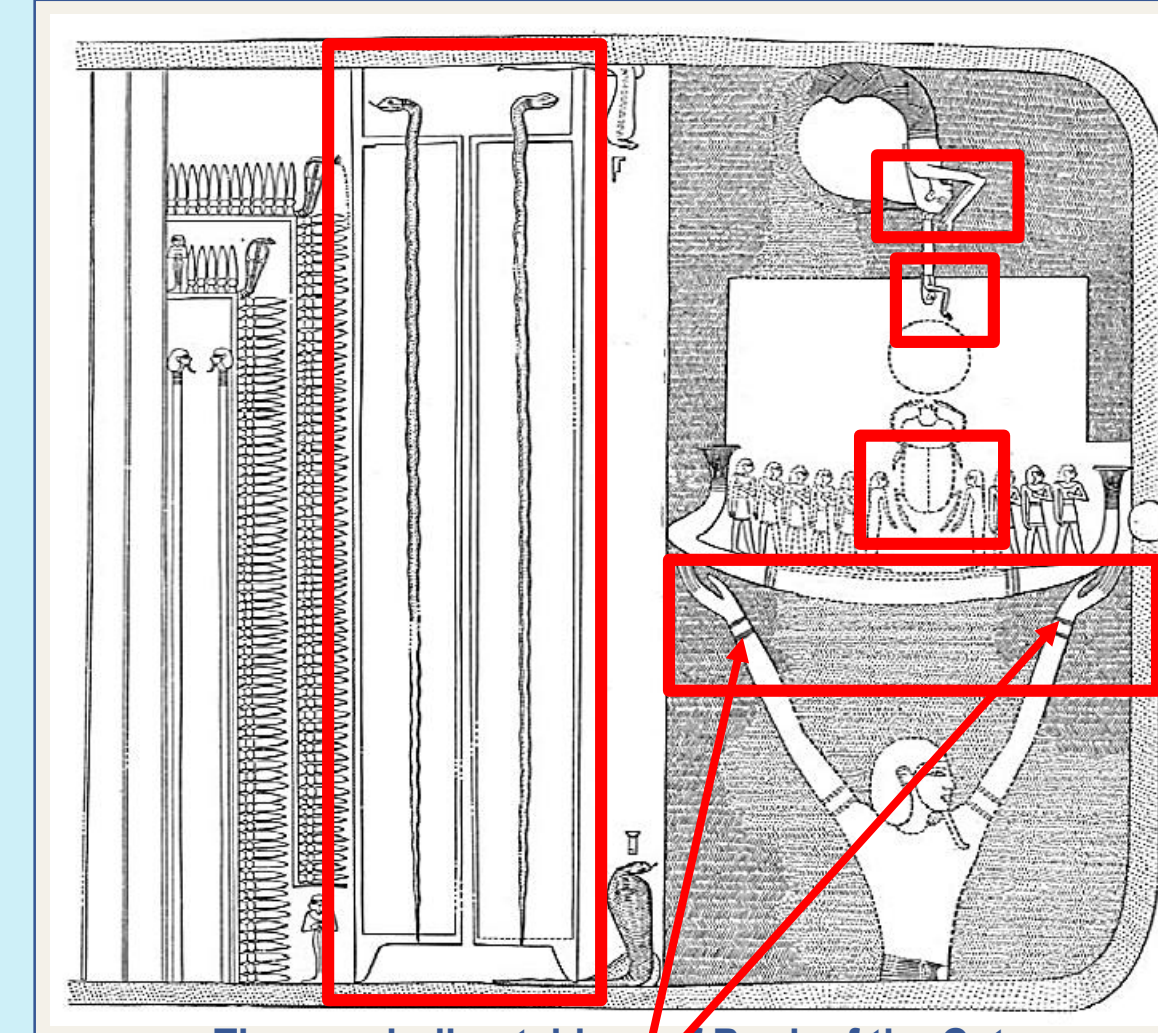
➤ The Embracing Arms of the Creator Deity (?) and the Primeval Deities as the Doors of Heaven:



The birth scene of the sun god – Book of the Day

- In the Book of the Day, the annotations mention the opening of the eastern Door of Heaven shown in the form of the womb of Nut where he appears as a solar disk and as a winged scarab.
- Below, the sun god is born as a child within a disk which is embraced by a divine figure.
- On either side, the arms of Isis and Nephthys are also seen protectively assisting the birth of the sun god.
- This divinity is believed to be either a version of goddess Nut, named “*Snu*” “to encircle/embrace”, which corresponds to her embrace to Re at a marker for the opening of the eastern Door of Heaven.
- Or, it could embody the “Creator Deity” who embraces the sun god within the circle representing the “potter’s wheel” at his moment of birth.

➤ The Arms of Nun and Tatenen as the Doors of Heaven:



The concluding tableau of Book of the Gates

- The scene of the arms of Nun comes after the opening of the last gate of the netherworld, i.e. the eastern Door of Heaven, which makes the raising of the sun god by the “Arms of Nun” from the primeval waters marking the initial opening of the eastern Door of Heaven which repeats every sunrise.



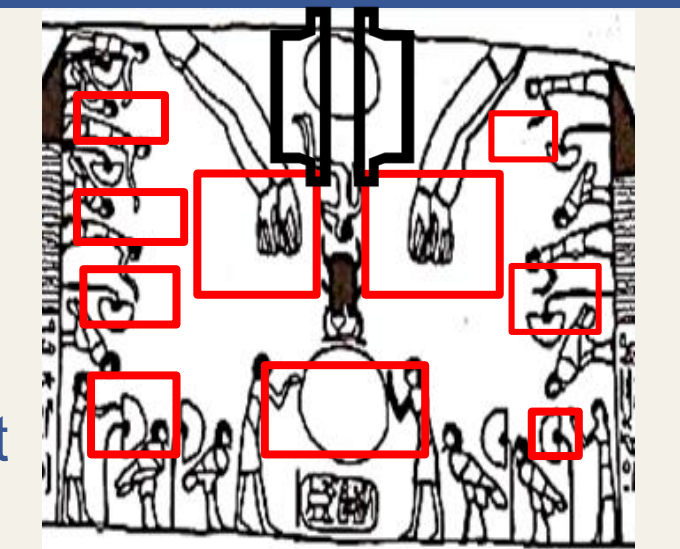
Book of the Earth – Tomb of Ramesses VI – K.V. 9

- From below, the two embracing “two arms of Nun” “*ꜥꜣ Nnw*” raise the solar disk from the Unified Darkness between the two Aker lions to emulate the horizon sign from which the sun disk rises to signify the opening of the eastern Door of Heaven.

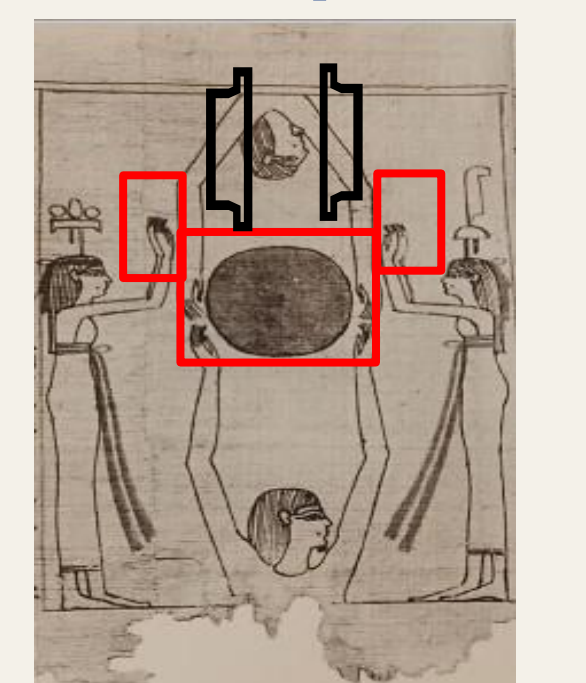
- Several arms are meant to “embrace”, receive and raise the solar deity, from the top: Osiris, “who encircles the Douat”, Nut, and Isis and Nephthys in the Solar barque.
- In the Pyramid Texts, the opening of the “Gate/s of Nun” is associated with the shining of the deceased like the sun god from the Eastern Horizon.
- In the annotations to the Concluding tableau of the Book of the Gates, the “Arms of Nun” is the place where the sun god “transforms himself” to “open the netherworld into heaven” to finally “appear in heaven”.
- In the Book of the Earth, the “embracing arms” of Tatenen and Nun exist on the sides of the Aker lions which marks the entrance and exit from and into the netherworld, therefore; associated with the Doors of Heaven.

The “Anonymous Embracing Arms” were not in fact “anonymous” to the ancient Egyptians!

- In the attested examples, the arms shown at the scenes of the rising and setting of the sun god are “embracing” and “lifting” to signify the opening/presence of the Doors of Heaven.
- The owners of these arms are named and/or depicted at times, while they are kept hidden at others, which makes their identity unknown to us, but not to the ancient Egyptians!
- It seems that to the ancient Egyptians, they the owners of these embracing arms were “collectively” understood to be these deities, netherworld dwellers, *bj* souls and baboons whom are seen in the milieu of the existing/hidden Doors of Heaven and were entitled with their guarding and opening.
- The presence of the “Two Arms” “*ꜥꜣ wy*” in the act/gesture of embracing could in fact using the “play of words” replace the “two door leaves” “*ꜥꜣ wy*”, where the two arms also open at the passage of the sun god and separate between the different realms.



Concluding tableau of the Book of Caverns – tomb of Merenptah



Papyrus of Padiamun – the Egyptian Museum – Cairo – 21st Dynasty

Conclusions

- ❖ Based on the presented textual and iconographical evidence, the “embracing arms” that circulate the solar deity at his rising and setting signify the following:
 - These arms separate between the realms of the universe from the ancient Egyptian perspective; the earth, the Douat, heaven, atmosphere, and the Primeval Waters, therefore; they belong to the deities that personify these realms: Geb, Osiris, Tatenen, Nut, Shu and Nun. And for their “separating” nature, they play the role of the “Doors”.
 - And as the main aim of the sun god, and his followers, to reach the heavenly terrains, these arms substitute the Doors of Heaven, that give access to the sky, in their role of separation between the realms as well as their protective and guarding function in the form of the “embracing gesture”.
 - Without lifting the solar deity with their embrace, the solar rising will not be achieved, meaning that their role is more of a gatekeeper that allows the opening of the Doors of Heaven at the passage of the sun god.
 - Starting from the 18th/19th Dynasties, and the 21st/ 22nd Dynasties widely spread attestations, the identity of the owners of the “embracing arms” is not known and only denoted to with the “embracing imagery”.
 - It is suggested that by this developed stage of the ancient Egyptian religion the Egyptians had already knew that they belong to the milieu of the solar rising and setting and belong to deities and divine beings associated with the Doors of Heaven and their opening.
 - The embracing arms imagery is associated with the creator and primordial deities whose embrace to the solar deity emulates the primeval rising, separation between heaven and earth, the creation at the Potter’s Wheel and the initial opening of the Doors of Heaven which is repeated at every solar rising.

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