



PROCESSIONAL BARQUES FROM THE TOMB OF TUTANKHAMUN (KV62)

Noreen Doyle

University of Arizona Egyptian Expedition

ABSTRACT

Ancient Egyptian processional (portable) barques took various forms, not all of which included shrines for cult images. Some of the model boats found in Tutankhamun's tomb resemble and were probably originally shrineless processional barques used in festivals, rather than funerary models of solar barques in the usual sense.

A variety of evidence from many periods of Ancient Egyptian history attests to the overland conveyance of model boats in cultic processions.¹ In widespread use throughout Egypt, the best known of these processional barques are those that appear in New Kingdom reliefs in temples at Thebes and Abydos,² the majority of which feature a deckhouse in the form of a shrine to conceal a small cult image from view as it was carried in procession. These tended to feature forward-facing figural ornamentation at stem and stern—the ram-headed *wsr-h3t* of Amun being the best known (Fig. 1)³—but some took other forms. An early Ramesside processional barque of Ptah, for example, was papyriform, with *dd* pillars taking the place of the papyriform stem (i.e., bow) finial.⁴ The scant, and usually fragmentary, evidence of Middle Kingdom antecedents demonstrates that processional barques, papyriform or otherwise, from this earlier period carried comparatively larger cult images of a deity or deceased king (Fig. 2).⁵ Evidence for shrine-bearing processional barques predating this period is more suggestive than certain,⁶ but the distinctive *hnw* barque of Sokar, identifiable from Old Kingdom through Roman times, may have been an early example.⁷

The iconographic record shows that not all processional barques carried shrines. Several

without this kind of specialized deckhouse appear in a relief depicting a major episode of Ramesses III's Sokar festival, in which the king escorts a procession of cult equipment and offerings (Fig. 3).⁸ In the accompanying inscription, Ramesses III declares this to be the festival of his father, Osiris; the text identifies the king with Horus, who defeats Osiris's foes and provides offerings to the god, thus establishing himself as the rightful heir.⁹ Near the head of the procession, groups of priests shoulder carrying poles that support processional barques. Tall posts, similar to those typically associated with the sledge (*mfh*) of Sokar's *hnw* barque,¹⁰ brace each barque in place. The hulls and steering equipment are substantially similar among the five barques: papyriform with straight stem and incurved stern, with falcon heads capping the quarter rudders and rudder stanchions. The hulls of three barques have *w3dt* eyes.

Only one of the processional barques, associated by the adjacent inscription with Sekhmet,¹¹ carries a shrine (Fig. 3.E). This presumably housed a cult image of the goddess. The texts accompanying most of the other four name additional goddesses who, like Sekhmet, are identified with the Eye of Re: Hathor (Fig. 3.A); no goddess named but perhaps intended to be Wadjet¹² (Fig. 3.B); Satet or, more likely, Shesmetet (Fig. 3.C);¹³ and Bastet (Fig. 3.D).¹⁴

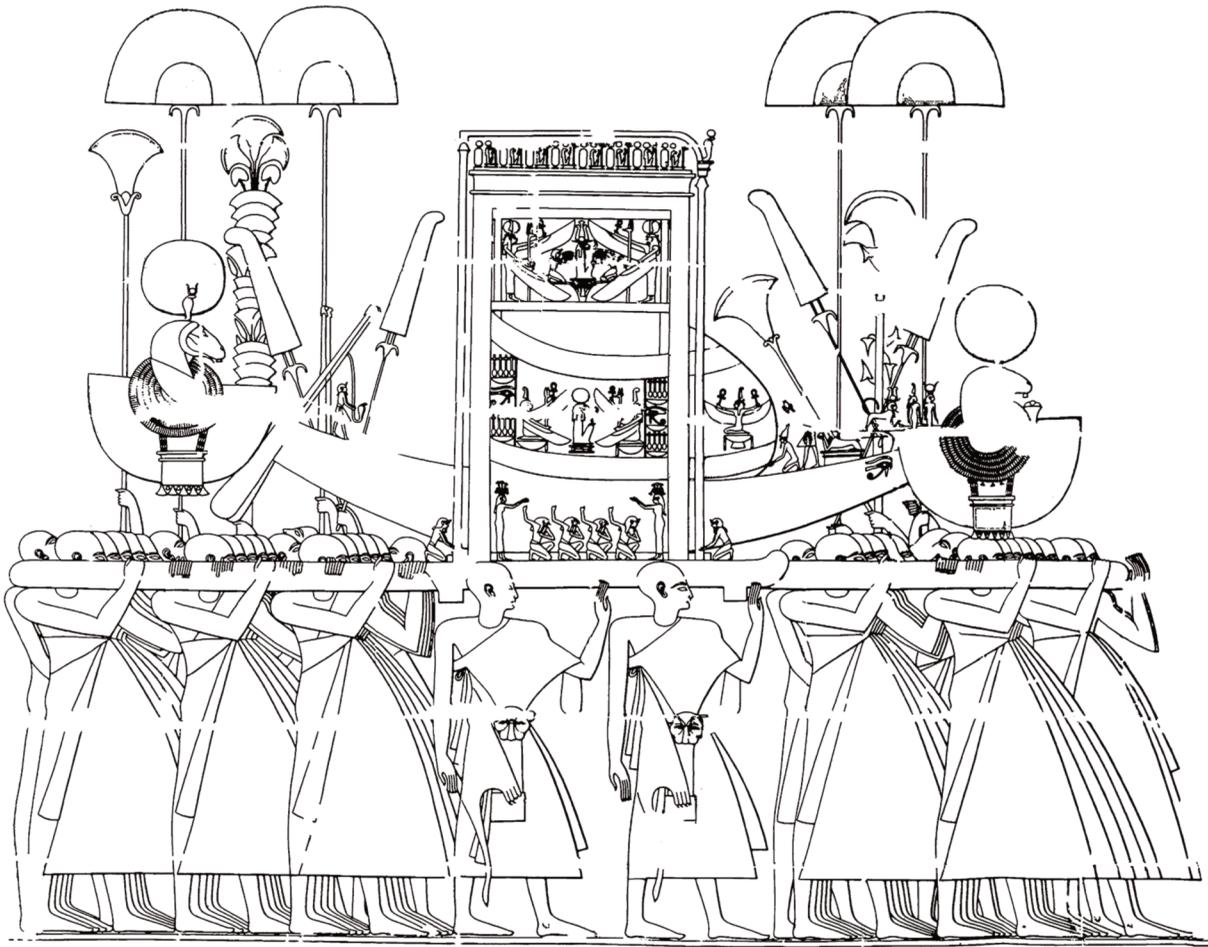


FIGURE 1: Detail from a relief of priests carrying the processional barque of Amun. Twentieth Dynasty, Medinet Habu. After Epigraphic Survey 1940, pl. 231.



FIGURE 2: Vignette with processional(?) barque containing the cult image of a deceased king. Papyrus BM EA 10610,2, V.7. Late Twelfth Dynasty, Thebes. After Geisen 2012, 304.

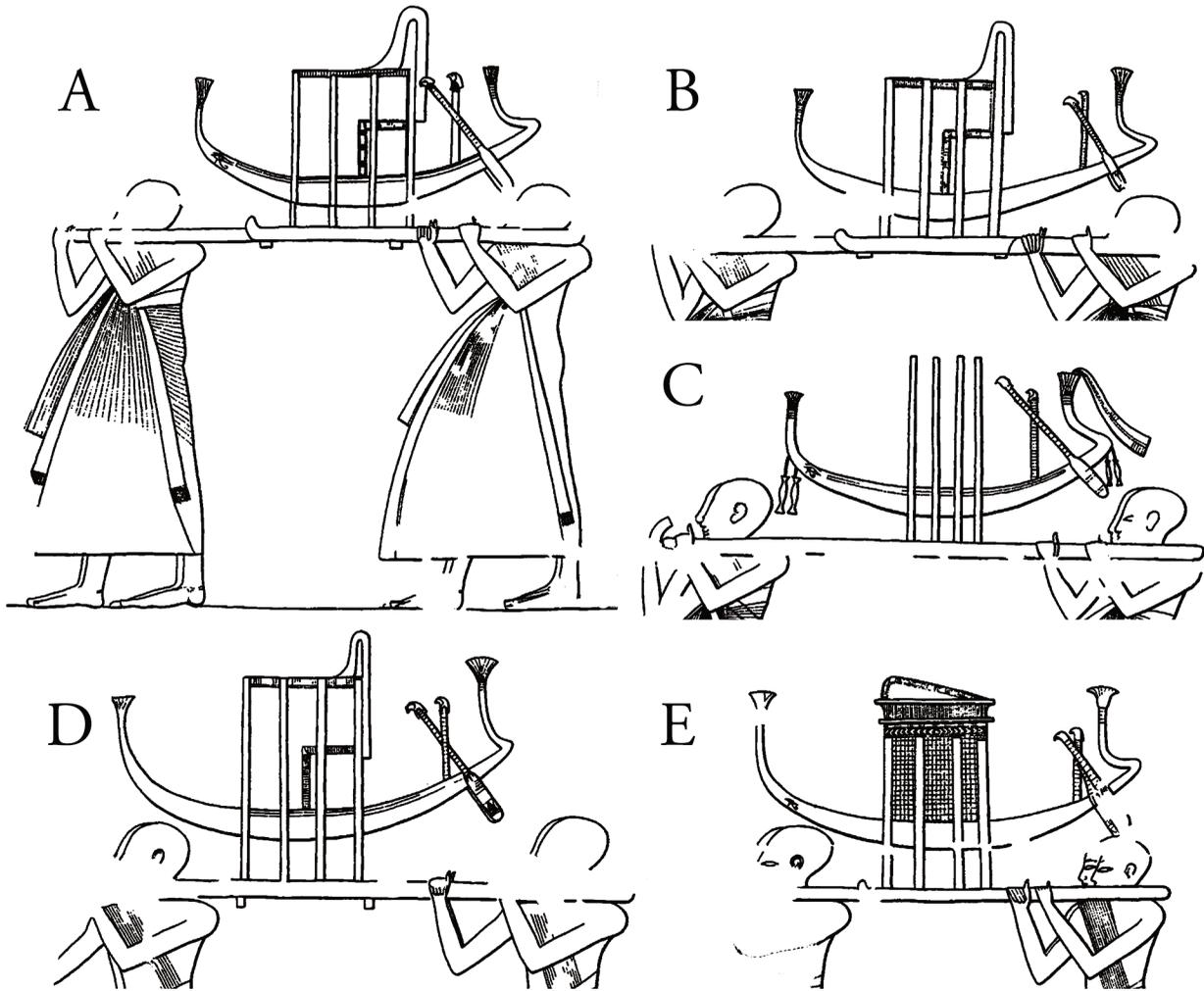


FIGURE 3: Details from a relief of priests carrying processional barques for goddesses in the festival of Sokar of Ramesses III: A: Hathor. B: Unidentified, perhaps Wadjet. C: Bastet. D: Satet or, more likely, Shesmetet. E: Sekhmet. Twentieth Dynasty, Medinet Habu. After Epigraphic Survey 1940, pl. 226.

In the inscriptions, each goddess grants life, stability, dominion, joy, health, and/or jubilees to the king.

Aboard the barques of Hathor, Wadjet(?), and Bastet (Figs. 3.A, B, D) are vacant *hwt* block thrones, a type of seat that symbolically provides a temple-like (i.e., sacred) accommodation for its occupant, whether deity, king, or deceased individual;¹⁵ Shesmetet's (Fig. 3.C) carries neither seat, shrine, nor other deck structure. The presumed presence of Sekhmet's cult image may indicate that the ritual took place at Memphis (her major cult center) or that the cult image had been brought from Memphis for the occasion. The absence of shrines for the others

suggests a corresponding absence of their cult images. These barques instead facilitated/invoked/suggested the participation of these goddesses by means of the empty *hwt* block thrones (a motif seen in earlier representations of other kinds of sacred barques¹⁶) or perhaps a place for the deity to stand.¹⁷

The three throne-bearing barques depicted in Ramesses III's temple closely resemble four nearly identical model barques with straight stems and incurved sterns found in KV62, the tomb of Tutankhamun (Fig. 4): Carter obj. nos./JE nos. 285/61343,¹⁸ 286/61345,¹⁹ 307/61346,²⁰ and 311/61344.²¹ Discovered in the Treasury with numerous divine

images, these models come in two sizes, and, unlike most of the other boat models from KV62,²² they are inscribed.

The two larger throne-carrying barques (Carter 285/JE 61343 and Carter 286/JE 61345) measure 2.42 meters in length and 0.335 meters in maximum beam. (These are by far the largest boat models from the tomb.) Each is carved from a rectangular block of wood created by joining together several smaller pieces.²³ Stem and stern finials were added, as were the two beams that support the quarter rudders and their stanchions. Amidships, a peg holds the block throne (the back of which is 0.24 meters tall) in place. The sides of each hull are painted, the primary color being green; finials have gilding. The deck areas are white with blue and red decoration. A *w³dt* eye appears on each side.

The two smaller models (Carter 307/JE 61346 and Carter 311/JE 61344) fit this description as well, differing from Carter 285 and 286 chiefly by size: Carter 307 and 311 measure, respectively, 1.48 and 1.49 meters in length with beams of 0.275 and 0.273 meters. The smaller barques seem close in size to the barques in Ramesses III's relief, which are slightly shorter than the height of their bearers. It is, however, impossible to know what adjustments of scale the artists made to fit the human figures and the cult equipment into the space allotted to the scene.²⁴

Differences exist between Tutankhamun's models

and the processional barques in Ramesses III's relief. Quarter rudders of the latter have the figural finials that tend to characterize the rudders and rudder stanchions of sacred barques.²⁵ Although these details are present on two other papyriform models from KV62,²⁶ they are absent from the four models under principal discussion here. Tutankhamun's throne-bearing models have decorated rudder blades, a feature present (i.e., surviving) on only some of those depicted at Medinet Habu. More notable are the variant proportions of throne to barque. The thrones of Ramesses III's goddesses dominate the barques on which they stand. They also lack, but presumably once had, decorated finished surfaces similar to those of Tutankhamun's.²⁷

Divergences notwithstanding, the inscriptions on Carter 285 and 286 offer a direct connection between this pair and the Sokar festival. Aft the bow and aft the rudder beam of Carter 285 and 286 is the same variation of Tutankhamun's names and titles:

NEAR BOW:

nfr ntr nb-hprw-r^c wsir mry [sic]

The good god, Nebkheperure, beloved of Osiris

NEAR STERN:

s³ r^c twt-nh-^cimn hk³ iwnw sm^cw skr mr[y] [sic]

son of Re, Tutankhamun, ruler of Southern Heliopolis (i.e., Thebes), beloved of Sokar

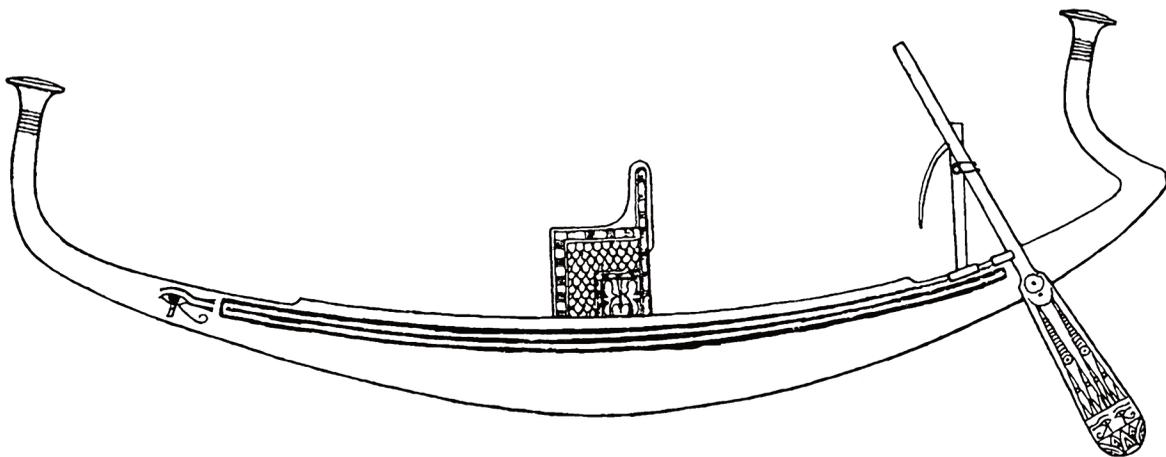


FIGURE 4: Papyriform wooden model barque, Carter 311/JE 61344. Eighteenth Dynasty, Valley of the Kings (Tomb of Tutankhamun, KV62). After Jones 1990, pls. XXIX and XXXV.

Inscriptions on their smaller counterparts read:

CARTER 307/JE 61346:

NEAR BOW:

nfr ntr nb-hprw-r^c di nh

the good god, Nebkheperure, given life [like Re]²⁸

NEAR STERN:

s3 r^c twt-nh-^cimn hk3 iwnw sm^cw mi r^c

son of Re, Tutankhamun, ruler of Southern Heliopolis, [given life] like Re.²⁹

CARTER 311/JE 61344:

NEAR BOW:

nfr ntr nb t3wy nb-hprw-r^c

the good god, lord of the Two Lands, Nebkheperure

NEAR STERN:

s3 r^c nb h^cw twt-nh-^cimn hk3 iwnw sm^cw

son of Re, lord of crowns, Tutankhamun, ruler of Southern Heliopolis.

The two larger models very likely served during Tutankhamun's Sokar festival; the two smaller may have served in a similar, if not the same, ritual context. It is not out of the question that the other papyriform models from KV62—which range in length from 1.24 to 1.59 meters, are uninscribed and throneless (cf. Fig. 3.C), and either have stems and sterns that curve inboard (Carter 308/JE 61347³⁰ and Carter 312/JE 61348³¹) or are raftlike and flat (Carter 313/JE 61350³² and Carter 464/JE 61349³³)—were also carried in procession.

Why tomb furnishings included processional barques can only be speculated.³⁴ That Carter 285/JE 61343 and Carter 286/JE 61345, usually referred to in publication as “solar barques,”³⁵ guaranteed the king access to Re's day and night barques or the ability to otherwise travel waters of the heavens and the netherworld³⁶ seems unlikely with the evidence of the Medinet Habu relief and their own inscriptions. Their exact correspondence with any of the processional barques depicted at Medinet Habu cannot be proven, but in such a scenario they might have ensured that the goddesses of the solar Eye would participate in the king's afterlife, either to grant him such gifts as those that Ramesses III received or, perhaps, to help the king (in his role as Horus) overthrow the enemies of Sokar/Osiris, a fitting role for these fierce guardians. The barques from KV62 could have (also?) allowed the king—as occupant of their thrones or, like Ramesses III, as an

actor in their procession—to participate in festivals held after his death.³⁷ This might have motivated the inclusion in tombs of seemingly secular “traveling ships,” a type of river vessel that conveyed the king, queen, and other high-ranking individuals for business and pleasure.³⁸ Ships of this type did not serve as sacred watercraft but did tow gods' river barges, which functioned as floating temple space, during festivals.³⁹

Almost all of Tutankhamun's model traveling ships are smaller than the papyriform barques just discussed,⁴⁰ but even quite small models appear among cultic equipment. A fragment of relief from the *hb sd* reliefs in Niuserre's sun temple at Abusir (Fifth Dynasty) shows a participant in a procession carrying on his shoulder what appears to be a small model barque (Fig. 5).⁴¹ An administrative list of metal cult equipment (e.g., jar; stand) from the temple of Raneferef at Abusir includes a “copper boat” (*bi3 w3*), which suggests that the “boat” was a (small) model made of or sheathed with metal.⁴² In Ptolemaic times, thirty-four sacred barques measuring 1 cubit and 2 palms in length (about 68 centimeters) were used for a ritual voyage enacted at the sacred lake of Hathor's temple at Dendara; the writing of each boat (*wi3*) is determined with a shrine-bearing papyriform barque.⁴³ Shrineless papyriform barques also remained in use as well after the pharaonic period. A Roman example with a block throne (size unknown, but with proportions similar to the KV62 models), evidently of a cupreous metal, has recently come to light through the underwater excavations in Abu Qir Bay.⁴⁴



FIGURE 5: Detail of relief showing a small model barque carried in a *hb sd* procession. Sun temple of Niuserre, Abusir. Fifth Dynasty. After Kees 1928, Bl. 11, no. 209.

Model boats found in tombs thus might not be originally (or solely) intended as grave goods. Despite their abundance, the roles these objects played in funerary and cult rituals remain imperfectly understood.

-
- ¹ See, e.g., C. Karlshausen, *L'iconographie de la barque processionnelle divine en Égypte au Nouvel Empire* (Leuven, Uitgeverij Peeters and Departement Oosterse Studies, 2009); P. P. Creasman and N. Doyle, "Overland Boat Transportation during the Pharaonic Period: Archaeology and Iconography," *Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections* 2.3 (2010): 14–30; a publication encompassing this topic is in preparation.
- ² For an overview of these processional barques and references to specific publications, see Karlshausen 2009.
- ³ See Karlshausen 2009, esp. 32–47, 67–90, 116–127.
- ⁴ A. Calverley, *The Temple of King Sethos I at Abydos II: The Chapels of Amen-Re, Re-Harakhti and King Sethos* [London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1935], pl. 23; Karlshausen 2009, pl. 19.
- ⁵ Middle Kingdom sacred barques rest on pedestals far lower to the ground than those of the New Kingdom; for the Middle Kingdom examples, see: C. Geisen, *The Ramesseum Dramatic Papyrus: A New Edition, Translation, and Interpretation*, PhD dissertation, University of Toronto [2012]), 302–311; C. Eder, *Elkab VII: Die Barkenkapelle des Königs Sobekhotep III. in Elkab. Beiträge zur Bautätigkeit der 13. und 17. Dynastie an den Göttertempeln Ägyptens* (Turnhout: Brepolis, 2002, Taf. 9, Block-Nr. 9, Taf. 10, Block-Nr. 10. See also Karlshausen 2009, 14–31. A publication encompassing this topic is in preparation.
- ⁶ Karlshausen 2009, 6–14; a publication encompassing this topic is in preparation.
- ⁷ G. A. Gaballa and K. A. Kitchen, "The Festival of Sokar," *Orientalia* 38, 13–34; K. A. Kitchen, "Henu-Barke (hnw)," in W. Helck et al. (eds), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie II: Erntefest–Hordjedef*, 1119–1120.
- ⁸ The Epigraphic Survey, *Medinet Habu IV: Festival*

Scenes of Ramses III (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1940), pl. 226; Gaballa and Kitchen 1969, 1–76, pls. 1–2.

- ⁹ Gaballa and Kitchen 1969, 11–13.
- ¹⁰ Seen, for example, in Epigraphic Survey 1940, pls. 221–223, 227–228; Gaballa and Kitchen 1969, pl. 1; cf. the lack of such upright posts for the sacred barques in of the Theban triad depicted in this same temple (Epigraphic Survey 1940, pls. 229–233), and for a convenient additional selection of other sacred barques likewise lacking them, see Karlshausen 2009, pls. 4–31.
- ¹¹ Gaballa and Kitchen 1969, 10.
- ¹² Gaballa and Kitchen 1969, 9–10, 63.
- ¹³ Gaballa and Kitchen 1969, 10.
- ¹⁴ Gaballa and Kitchen 1969, 9–10.
- ¹⁵ K. P. Kuhlman, *Der Thron im Alten Ägypten: Untersuchungen zu Semantik, Ikonographie und Symbolik eines Herrschaftszeichens* (Glückstadt: J. J. Augustin, 1977), 57–60, 82–83.
- ¹⁶ An empty block throne stands near the stern of a small papyriform barque that Mentuhotep II paddles or punts in a ritual for Amun (D. Arnold, *Der Tempel des Königs Mentouhotep von Deir el-Bahari II: Die Wandreliefs des Sanktuaries* [Mainz: Zeichnungen von Wolf-Günther Ledge und Reginald Coleman, 1974], pl. 22; Karlshausen 2009, pl. 1).
- ¹⁷ The lack of throne for Satet/Shesmetet and other distinctions among the five barques must, for now, go unexplained.
- ¹⁸ D. Jones, *Model Boats from the Tomb of Tut'ankhamun* (Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1990), 44–46, pls. VI–VII, XI; Griffith Institute, *Carter Archives*, <http://www.griffith.ox.ac.uk/gri/carter/285.html> (accessed 6 June 2017).
- ¹⁹ Jones 1990, 46, pl. XI; Griffith Institute, *Carter Archives*, <http://www.griffith.ox.ac.uk/gri/carter/286.html> (accessed 6 June 2017).
- ²⁰ Jones 1990, 46–47, pl. XI; Griffith Institute, *Carter Archives*, <http://www.griffith.ox.ac.uk/gri/carter/307.html> (accessed 6 June 2017).
- ²¹ Jones 1990, 47–48, pls. XXIX, XXXV; Griffith Institute, *Carter Archives*, <http://www.griffith.ox.ac.uk/gri/carter/311.html> (accessed 6 June 2017).
- ²² Also inscribed (with titles/epithets paralleling

- those of Carter 307 and 311) are the following traveling ships: Carter 276/JE 61329 (Jones 1990, 37–39; Griffith Institute, *Carter Archives*, <http://www.griffith.ox.ac.uk/gri/carter/276.html> [accessed 6 June 2017]); Carter 321/JE 61330 (Jones 1990, 39–40; Griffith Institute, *Carter Archives*, <http://www.griffith.ox.ac.uk/gri/carter/321.html> [accessed 6 June 2017]); and Carter 336/JE 61328 (Jones 1990, 40–42; Griffith Institute, *Carter Archives*, <http://www.griffith.ox.ac.uk/gri/carter/336.html> [accessed 6 June 2017]).
- ²³ Jones 1990, 45.
- ²⁴ Figures in the procession, including those shouldering the processional barques, vary in scale.
- ²⁵ N. Doyle, “Curious Nautical Details from the Eleventh Dynasty Temple at Deir el-Bahri,” in P. P. Creasman (ed.), *Archaeological Research in the Valley of the Kings and Ancient Thebes: Papers Presented in Honor of Richard H. Wilkinson* (Tucson: University of Arizona Egyptian Expedition, 2013), 126–127.
- ²⁶ Carter 308/JE 61347 and Carter 312/JE 61348, with incurving stem and stern and lacking thrones or any other deck structure; each measures under 1.40 meters in length (Jones 1990, 42–43, pls. XXVIII, XXXIV; Griffith Institute, *Carter Archives*, <http://www.griffith.ox.ac.uk/gri/carter/313.html> [accessed 6 June 2017]; Griffith Institute, *Carter Archives*, <http://www.griffith.ox.ac.uk/gri/carter/464.html> [accessed 6 June 2017]).
- ²⁷ Cf. Kuhlmann 1977, 58 (“undekorierte Beispiele entsprachen sicher nicht der Norm, sie werden auf Verfall oder Nicht-Fertigstellung zurückzuführen sein”).
- ²⁸ Jones 1990, 47 notes 1–2.
- ²⁹ Jones 1990, 47 notes 1–2.
- ³⁰ Jones 43–44, pls. XXVIII, XXXIV; Griffith Institute, *Carter Archives*, <http://www.griffith.ox.ac.uk/gri/carter/308.html> [accessed 6 June 2017]).
- ³¹ Jones 44, pls. XXVIII; Griffith Institute, *Carter Archives*, <http://www.griffith.ox.ac.uk/gri/carter/312.html> [accessed 6 June 2017]).
- ³² Jones 1990, 42, pl. XXVI; Griffith Institute, *Carter Archives*, <http://www.griffith.ox.ac.uk/gri/carter/313.html> [accessed 6 June 2017]).
- ³³ Jones 1990, 43, pl. XXVII; Griffith Institute, *Carter Archives*, <http://www.griffith.ox.ac.uk/gri/carter/464.html> [accessed 6 June 2017]).
- ³⁴ The role of solar goddesses in the Sokar festival is not entirely understood, either (Gaballa and Kitchen 1969, 62–66).
- ³⁵ For example, in the Murray *Handlist* (specifically Carter nos. 285, 287, 311; see previously given Griffith Institute links for these objects); N. Reeves, *The Complete Tutankhamun* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1990), 142–143 (Carter no. 311, with 312 as a lunar barque); T. G. H. James, *Tutankhamun: The Eternal Splendor of the Boy Pharaoh* (New York: Fall River Press, 2009), 284–285 (Carter nos. 307, 311).
- ³⁶ E.g., “Sometimes, as on the four models from Tutankhamun’s tomb, the centre of the boat is occupied by a cuboid throne, on which the deceased was perhaps to journey across the sky by day and through the underworld at night” (Jones 1990, 61).
- ³⁷ J. Assmann, *Death and Salvation in Ancient Egypt*, trans. D. Lorton (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 212.
- ³⁸ A publication encompassing this topic is in preparation.
- ³⁹ For examples contemporary with Tutankhamun, see The Epigraphic Survey, *The Festival Procession of Opet in the Colonnade Hall, with Translations of Texts, Commentary, and Glossary* (Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1994), pls. 17, 28–29.
- ⁴⁰ By far the largest model traveling ship from KV62 is the inscribed Carter 352/JE 61332, which measures about 1.85 meters (Jones 1990, 25); many others are under 1 meter. New Kingdom model traveling ships could be even larger than Carter 352, as demonstrated by three found in KV35 (Amenhotep II): CG nos. 4944, 4945, and 4946 range in length from 1.9 to 2.34 meters (G. A. Reisner, *Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire: Nos. 4798–4976 et 5034–5200* [Le Caire: Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 1913], 96–99).
- ⁴¹ Kees 1928, *Das Re-Heiligtum des Königs Ne-Woser-Re 3*, Bl. 11, no. 209 (with no. 210).
- ⁴² P. Posener-Kriéger, M. Verner, and H. Vymazalová, *Abusir X: The Pyramid Complex of*

Raneferef: The Papyrus Archive (Prague: Czech Institute of Egyptology, Faculty of Arts, Charles University in Prague, 2006), 245, pl. 29 B.a line 1. Large copper models may also attested textually: the creation of morning (*m'ndt*) and evening (*msktt*) solar barques 8 cubits (about 4 meters) long and either made of or sheathed with copper (*hmt*) appears in the royal annals for Neferirkare's year 11 (Palermo Stone v. V.2; T. A. H. Wilkinson, *Royal Annals of Ancient Egypt: The Palermo Stone and Its Associated Fragments* [London: Kegan Paul International, 2000], 179).

However, the modest size of the other equipment in the list from Raneferef's complex suggests that the *bi³ w³*, too, was fairly small.

⁴³ É. Chassinat, *Le mystère d'Osiris au mois de Khoiak I* (Le Caire: Imprimerie de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1966), 124–125.

⁴⁴ N. El-Araf, "Roman Shipwrecks among Latest Seafloor Discoveries near Alexandria," *AhramOnline*, 21 November 2017, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/281925.aspx> (accessed 21 November 2017).