Egyptian religious texts are of a fundamentally different nature from the core texts of the modern world religions. Hardly any narrative accounts exist of the mythological world, and although there existed a kind of canon, there was no attempt to reach a really fixed formulation of religious dogma. In addition, and partly as a result of these circumstances, it is common even within single texts to find statements that are logically contradictory. As a result, even correctly translated religious texts are usually barely comprehensible, striking the reader as both confusing and confused. Yet it seems certain that the Egyptian priests, who continued to produce such texts over the millennia, usually knew what they were doing. If we fail to understand the texts, it is primarily our problem.

A possible explanation for the almost impenetrable formulation of religious compositions may be that they were not intended to clarify religious ideas. Because Egyptian religion is fundamentally a ritual religion, the texts are in most cases ultimately of a liturgical nature. Countless text passages illustrate how every detail of the performances was associated with the most varied (and not necessarily related) mythological backgrounds. The consequence is that the texts present an incoherent jumble of fragmented statements. This is how the texts present themselves on the surface.

How to cope with such data?

Hidden Narratives

Methodological Perspectives on the Analysis of Ancient Egyptian Funerary Texts

26 - 27 October 2012

Venue: Institut für Ägyptologie und Altorientalistik
Hegelstrasse 59
55099 Mainz
Room 305/309

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The method of sequencing

The fact that there is so much variation between different versions of the same composition is probably not due to incompetence on the part of the scribes, but to the fact that texts were continually being adapted when inscribed on a new source. This "open transmission" has its methodological implications. Rather than studying, for instance, the function and meaning of Coffin Texts spell 335 in general, it may be useful to concentrate on how this source is composed, and how it is contextually embedded in an individual source, or group of sources.

One method will be worked with in detail: the method of 'sequencing' funerary texts. This method aims to disclose from the barely comprehensible surface structure which persons and places are involved, and how the events are chronologically structured. Often, the chronology of the underlying deep structure is entirely different from what would be read at first sight from the surface structure. By reconstructing chronological schemes of action, the method leads to the disclosure of 'narrative patterns' that must be closely linked to the mythological schemes the ancient Egyptian theologian must have had in his mind.

Teilnahmevoraussetzungen:

Ein Großteil des Workshops wird aus der Diskussion vorgegebener Texte sowie der Anwendung der Methode des Sequencing sein. Eine Vorbereitung der im Vorfeld bereitgestellten Texte und eine Beteiligung an den Diskussionen werden erwartet.

Die Beteiligung an der Diskussion erfordert gute Sprachkenntnisse und nach Möglichkeit Vorkenntnis von Funerärtexten. Der Workshop richtet sich daher an Master- und Magisterstudenten, sowie Doktoranden und Mitarbeiter des Instituts. Die Vormittagsvorträge am 26. Oktober sind für ein breiteres (auch nicht-ägyptologisches) Publikum geeignet.

Es stehen ca. 10 freie Plätze zur Verfügung.

Um Voranmeldung wird gebeten. Für Rückfragen stehen wir jederzeit zur Verfügung: Jan Dahms, jan-mic@uni-mainz.de.

26th October 2012
Room 305/309 in the Institut für Ägyptologie und Altorientalistik, Hegelstrasse 59, 55122 Mainz

9 a.m.	Opening by H. Willems
9.15 a.m.	H. Willems, The Method of Sequencing in the Analysis of Egyptian Funerary Texts
10 a.m.	Bernard Arquier, The Coffins of Mesehti from Assiut
10.45 a.m.	Coffee Break
11 a.m.	Jan Dahms, The Coffins of Karenen from Saqqara
11.45 a.m.	Ilona Regulski, The Berlin Papyri of Sedekh from Assiut
0.30 p.m.	Lunch
2 p.m.	Discussion of one or more spells on the coffins of Sesenebenef based on the method of sequencing (H. Willems)
4 p.m.	Tea Break
4.15 p.m.	Continuation of discussion

27th October 2012
Room 305/309 in the Institut für Ägyptologie und Altorientalistik, Hegelstrasse 59, 55122 Mainz

9.15 a.m.	Bernard Arquier and group: Discussion of one or more texts from the coffins of Mesehti at Assiut
10.45 a.m.	Coffee break
11.00 a.m.	Jan Dahms and group: Discussion of (a) text(s) from the coffins of Karenen at Saqqara
0.30 a.m.	Lunch break
2 p.m.	Ilona Regulski and group: Discussion of (a) text(s) from the papyri of Sedekh.
3.30 p.m.	Tea Break
3.45 p.m.	Harco Willems and group: Discussion of the method of sequencing based on a text from a different period and cultural context (P. Berlin 3032, Third Intermediate Period)