

Grimal Nicolas. *Les ancêtres de Karnak*. In: Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, 154<sup>e</sup> année, N. 1, 2010. pp. 343-370

(partial) English translation of pages 348-359.

The cult of ancestors is well known, in the private<sup>1</sup> as well as royal domain, for which the "canons", whether on the walls of temples or other media, are both a historiographic and a legitimization tool<sup>2</sup>. The "room of the Ancestors" occupies a strategic position in the *Akh-menu*, adapted to the role that it plays there: it is placed, in fact, in the most western part of the room, known as "the festival" of Thutmose III, just after the vestibule which leads there (fig. 4). Closer to the west bank of the Nile, site of the royal necropolis, than all the rest of the monument, since "featuring" the kings of the past, it is open to the north (fig. 5).

The same decoration continues on the three walls: two registers show Thutmose III, making an offering to a double theory of statues of deceased kings; the king is represented standing, four times, at the ends of the east and west walls, each time, facing these theories, which are leaned against each other from the middle of the south wall (fig. 6). He thus turns his back to the north and looks to the south, orientated himself as is the monument. These representations have been often commented on and studied since their first publication by Prisse d'Avennes. It is not necessary to return to it here, except to recall that these studies all lead to the observation of the absence of the kings of the Old Kingdom mentioned in the room at Karnak and the discovery by D. Wildung of their point. common, which is to have a funeral cult attested in Egypt<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> R. Demarée, *The Ah jqr n R'-stelae* : On ancestor worship in ancient Egypt, Leyde, Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten. 1983.

<sup>2</sup> See D. Redford's classic study, *Pharaonic King-Lists, Annals and Day-books. A Contribution to the Study of the Egyptian Sense of History*, SSEA Publications, 1986, vol. 4; most recent state of the matter: K. Ryholt, "King Seneferka in the King-Lists and his Position in the Early Dynastic Period", *Journal of Egyptian History* 1, 2008, p. 159-173.

<sup>3</sup> See *Annuaire du Collège de France* 109, 2009, p. 635-636.

The same decoration continues on all three walls: two registers show a theme of Thutmes III making offering to statues of deceased kings; the king is depicted standing four times at the ends of the east and west walls, each time facing these statues, which are leaning against each other from the middle of the south wall (Fig. 6). He thus turns his back to the north and looks to the south, which is itself oriented in the same way as the monument. These representations have often been commented on and studied since their first publication by Prisse d'Avennes. There is no need to return to them here, except to point out that these studies all lead to the conclusion that the absence of the kings of the Old Kingdom evoked by the chamber at Karnak and discovered by D. Wildung that they all had one thing in common, namely that they had an attested funerary cult in Egypt.

The four registers which thus run on the walls of the chapel present the statues of the ancestors according to an organization which is obviously that of the great royal canons, and which can be found fixed in the lists of Manetho. The grouping by dynastic families is dominant. But it is clear that choices have been made in the list of kings and that some dynasties are more represented than others. The reason for this remains to be found, as well as that of the position of these statues in relation to the geography of the temple, if not more.

The rulers of the Old Kingdom are grouped together in the upper eastern and southern quarter (fig. 7). The first on the list is also the oldest<sup>4</sup> and the sequence follows a chronological order. It will also be noted that all the dynasties of the Old Kingdom are represented, but that no statues corresponding to the kings of this section have been found except that of Sahure and Niuserre<sup>5</sup>. The same sector presents the rulers of the Eleventh and the Seventeenth Dynasty, that is to say the founders, respectively, of the Middle Kingdom and the New Kingdom, with Intef occupying among the very first places<sup>6</sup>. If no statue of these sovereigns has been found, in the Cachette or elsewhere, there are on the other hand, for some of them, monuments or traces of monuments in the temple.

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<sup>4</sup> Whoever it is (see previous note), it probably belongs to the Third Dynasty.

<sup>5</sup> In red in figure 7.

<sup>6</sup> It is probably this political quality that earned them their place, as princes, among kings.

The lower east and south register (fig. 8), hold the bulk of the rulers of the Twelfth and Seventeenth dynasties, Amenemhat I and Senusret I each opening, respectively, the upper and lower theory of the twelfth. The reason for this position is perhaps due to the fact that, having regard to the brevity and the tragic end of the reign of Amenemhat I, Senusret I is considered to be the founder of the dynasty, as evidenced by his coronation name, *whm mswt*, "who renews births". Added to this, the desire of Thutmose III to highlight Senusret I, the real founder of the temple, and to establish the privileged relationship he never ceases to affirm on these monuments, making him his role model at Karnak.

Naturally, there are monumental attestations in the temple for these rulers. It should be noted that representations of four of them have been found<sup>7</sup>: Amenemhet I, Senusret I, Amenemhet IV and Montuhotep II.

The upper and lower western and southern quarters (fig. 9 and 10) show kings of the Twelfth, Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Seventeenth dynasties. The entire upper quarter, with one possible exception<sup>8</sup>, is occupied by the Thirteenth Dynasty (fig. 9), of which three other kings are also found on the lower quarter (fig. 10). The Thirteenth Dynasty is the most prevalent, on the western wall, but also on all the walls, compared to the other dynasties<sup>9</sup>; it is ahead if the Seventeenth, but only slightly. Theban power therefore largely dominates this set, which is not surprising. The same observation applies to the number of representations of these sovereigns found in the temple: eleven in total, including six for the Thirteenth Dynasty<sup>10</sup>.

The relative scattering of the dynasties between the different registers of this western part of the chamber suggests a logic of classification complementary to the historical sequence, which the relative compactness of the dynastic blocks of the eastern part probably prevents them from being correctly understood. Since the monuments making up the temple are, for the most part, located to the west of the chamber, be it on the east-west axis or on the north-south axis, it may be appropriate to wonder if this organization

<sup>7</sup> In green in figure 8.

<sup>8</sup> Senusret III, if correctly read *H'-k 3w-R'*.

<sup>9</sup> It is worth considering this observation: this dynasty has many more kings than the others and is not well known to us.

<sup>10</sup> In green on figures 9 and 10.

does not also correspond to the "geography" of the temple. The reading grid of the room would therefore be both temporal and spatial (fig. 11).

Let us therefore confront the statues of the "room of the Ancestors" with the reality of the monuments evoking them, as archeology allows us to establish. To do this, let us group together in list and by dynasties the kings appearing in the "room of the Ancestors" and of whom a statue or a representation has been found in Karnak<sup>11</sup>:

<u>Fifth Dynasty</u>	– <b>4</b> Sobekhotep I
– <b>1</b> Sahure	– <b>8</b> Neferhotep I
– <b>2</b> Niuserre	– <b>10</b> Sobekhotep IV
<u>Eleventh Dynasty</u>	– <b>19</b> Sobekhotep VI
– <b>16</b> Montuhotep II	– <b>9</b> Sobekhotep VII
<u>Twelfth Dynasty</u>	– <b>11</b> Neferhotep II
– <b>13</b> Amenemhat I	– <b>6</b> Senusret IV
– <b>12</b> Senusret I	– <b>5</b> Amenemhat VI
– <b>4</b> Senusret III	– <b>7</b> Sobekhotep VIII
– <b>20</b> Amenemhat II	<u>Seventeenth Dynasty</u>
– <b>15</b> Amenemhat IV	– <b>14</b> Intef V
<u>Thirteenth Dynasty</u>	– <b>17</b> Sobekemsaf I
– <b>18</b> Wegaf	

Plotted on the map (fig. 12), this list shows a distribution almost entirely on the two axes, to the west of the location of the "Chamber of the Ancestors". If we reduce it to only statues (fig. 13), the location corresponds roughly to the orientation of the walls of the "room of the Ancestors": two-thirds of the statues on the south wall are from the south axis (fig. 14); everything that corresponds to the eastern wall comes from the area to the east and north of the south axis (fig. 15); similarly, all the elements that can be compared with the western wall were found in the western part of the southern processional

<sup>11</sup> The numbers of the statues are in **bold**, corresponding to the numbers in red of the plans in fig. 12 to 15.

axis (fig. 16). However, it is in this latter area that the greatest number of monuments or remains of monuments has been discovered (fig. 2), dating or evoking the Middle Kingdom; they must have been there originally, more likely than in the so-called "Middle Kingdom" court<sup>12</sup>.

Obviously, the "geography" of the "chamber of the Ancestors" meets that of the temple, and the statues which appear there seem to follow a path, echoed throughout the Akh-menu.

In fact, the "room of the Ancestors", is oriented along an axis parallel to the main axis of the Festival Hall (fig. 17), so as to give direct access to the corridor leading to the solar room.

Between the two axes, at the northern end of the hypostyle hall, is a hall housing a monumental triad in red quartzite, representing Thutmose III between Amon and Mut (fig. 18). The eastern wall of this room shows Thutmose III, facing north, making an offering to the mummified divinities of Karnak, that is either, as Paul Barguet observes, ten visible on the lower register and probably eight, now missing, on the upper register, or the same as in the southern corridor of the Akh-menu<sup>13</sup>. That is, we are dealing with the double Ennead, which consecrates the Heliopolitan role of the temple of Karnak, originating in the north and looking south, the orientation of the wall following the actual orientation.

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<sup>12</sup> See N. Grimal, "Civilisation pharaonique : archéologie, philologie, histoire", *Annuaire du Collège de France*, 2009-210 (110<sup>e</sup> année), p. 477-480 ; Chr. Wallet-Lebrun, *op. cit.* (n. 4), p. 31-40.

<sup>13</sup> P. Barguet, *op.cit.*, p. 182-183, cliché OIC 6171.

## FIGURES



Emplacement de la chambre des Ancêtres  
vu vers le sud

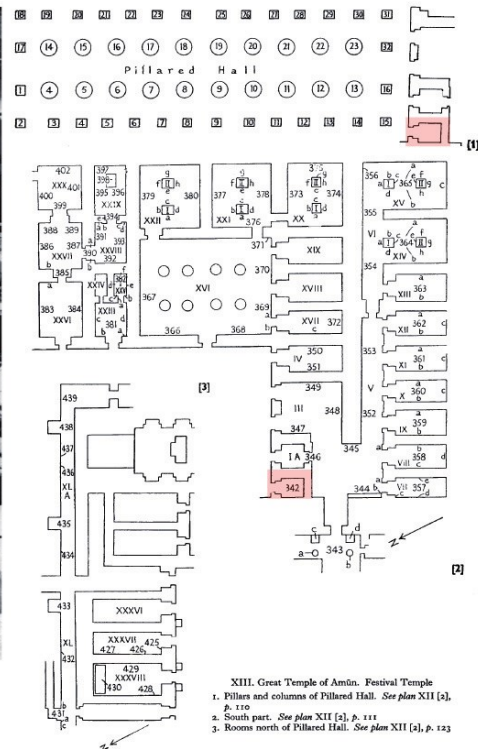


Fig. 4. Site plan and original location of the monument.



Emplacement de la chambre des Ancêtres  
vu vers le sud



Cliché Archives NG

La chambre des Ancêtres reconstituée au Musée du Louvre

Fig. 5. The monument reassembled in the Louvre: orientation of the walls.

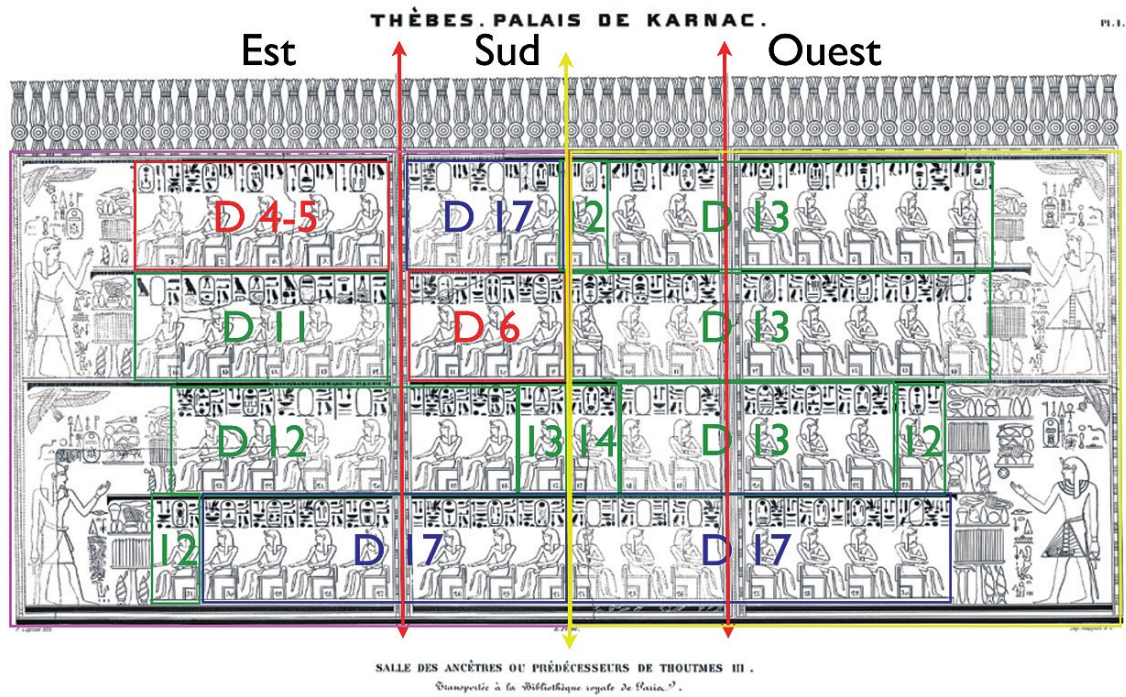


Fig. 6. Orientation of the walls and distribution of the rulers by dynasties, according to the survey by Prisse d'Avennes.

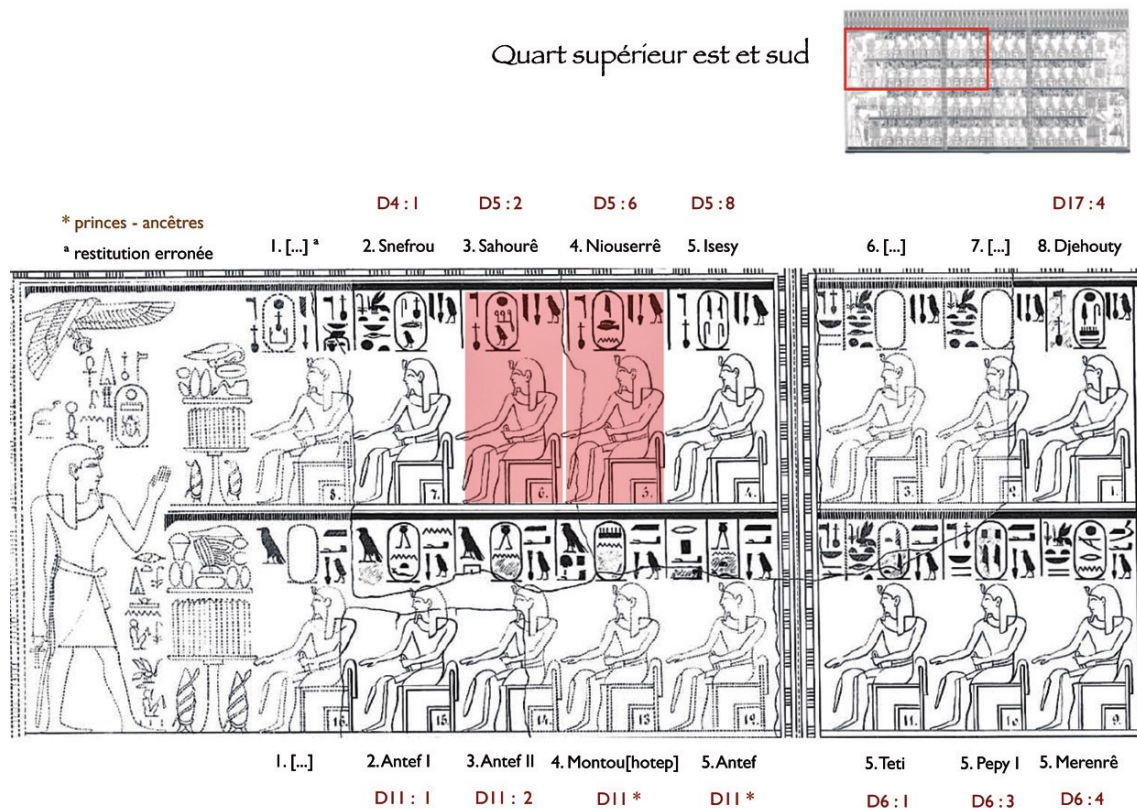


Fig. 7. Upper register east and south

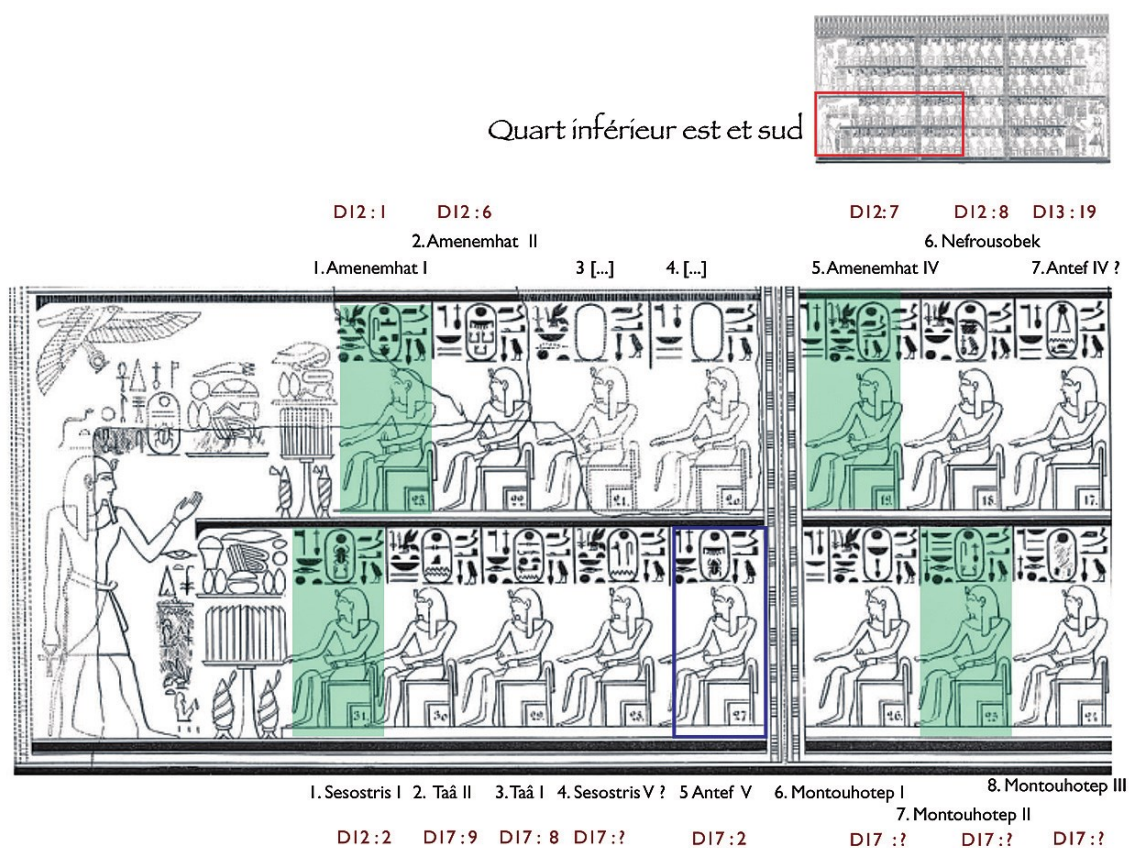
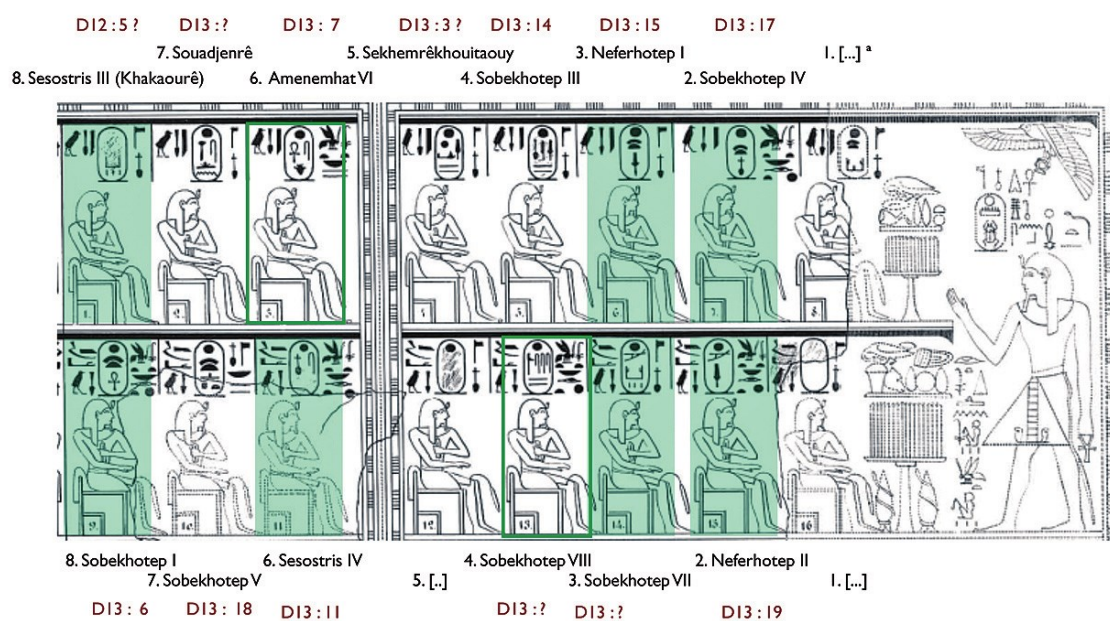


Fig. 8. Lower register east and south

Quart supérieur sud et ouest



<sup>a</sup> restitution erronée

Fig. 9. Upper register south and west.

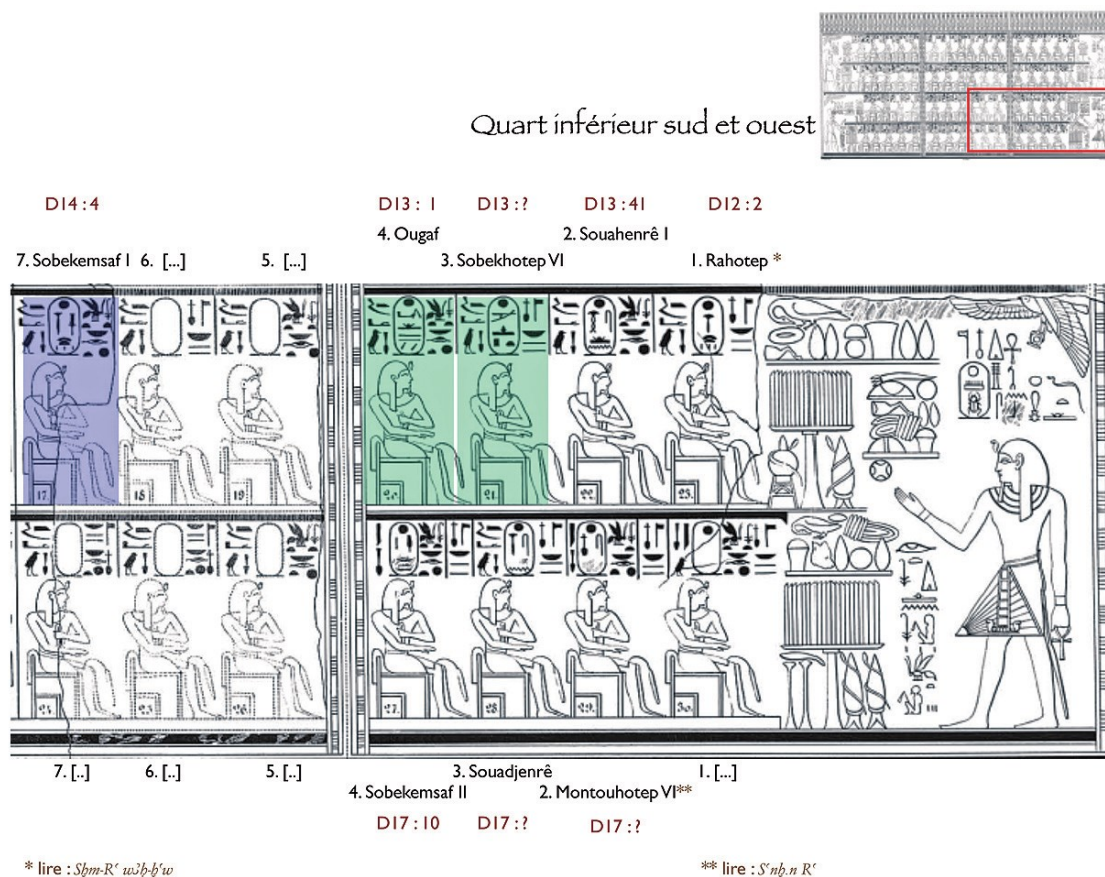


Fig. 10. Lower register south and west.

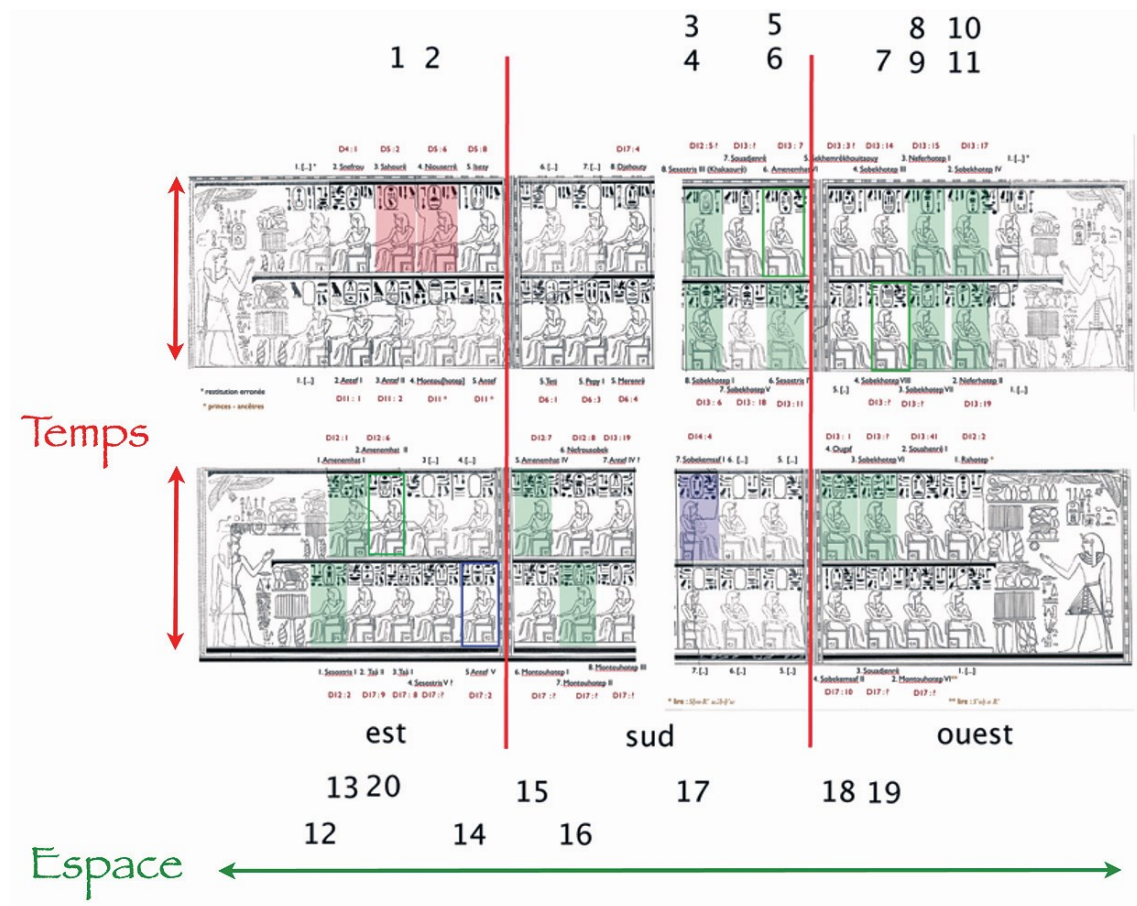


Fig. 11. The reading axes of the "Chamber of the Ancestors".