

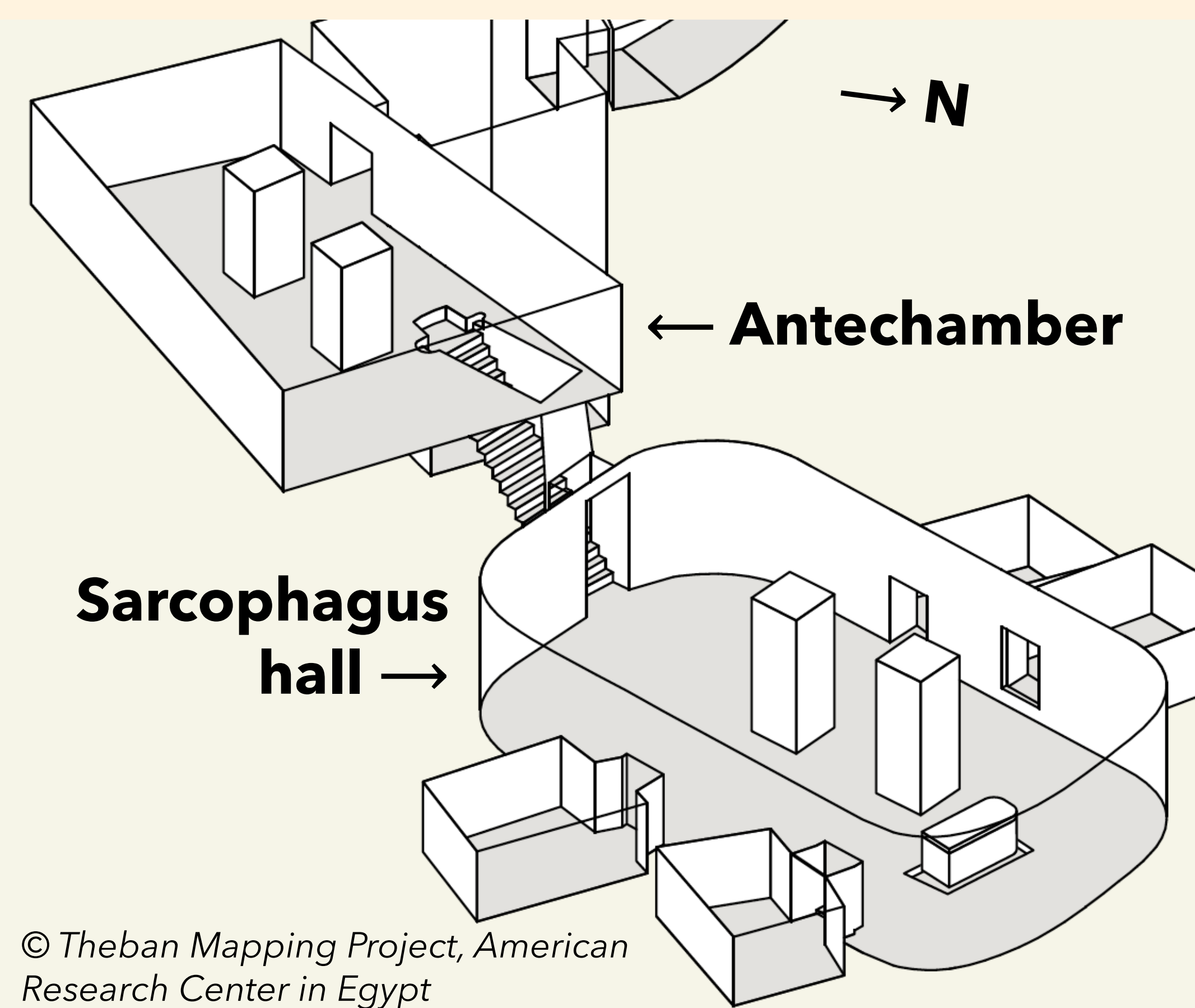
# Compiling Egyptian Underworlds

## Modelling sources and ritual practice for the Amduat catalogue of king Thutmose III

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### The Amduat in brief

- Cosmography describing activities of divine beings in the underworld; first attested in the 15th century BCE
- Probably used in solar cult and secondarily in mortuary contexts: conferred knowledge of the sun-god's activities and membership of his entourage
- **Long version:** 12 tableaux of text and images representing the sun-god's nightly underworld journey
- **Tabular catalogue:** images from the long version, except hostile and damned beings. **Addition of the king.**

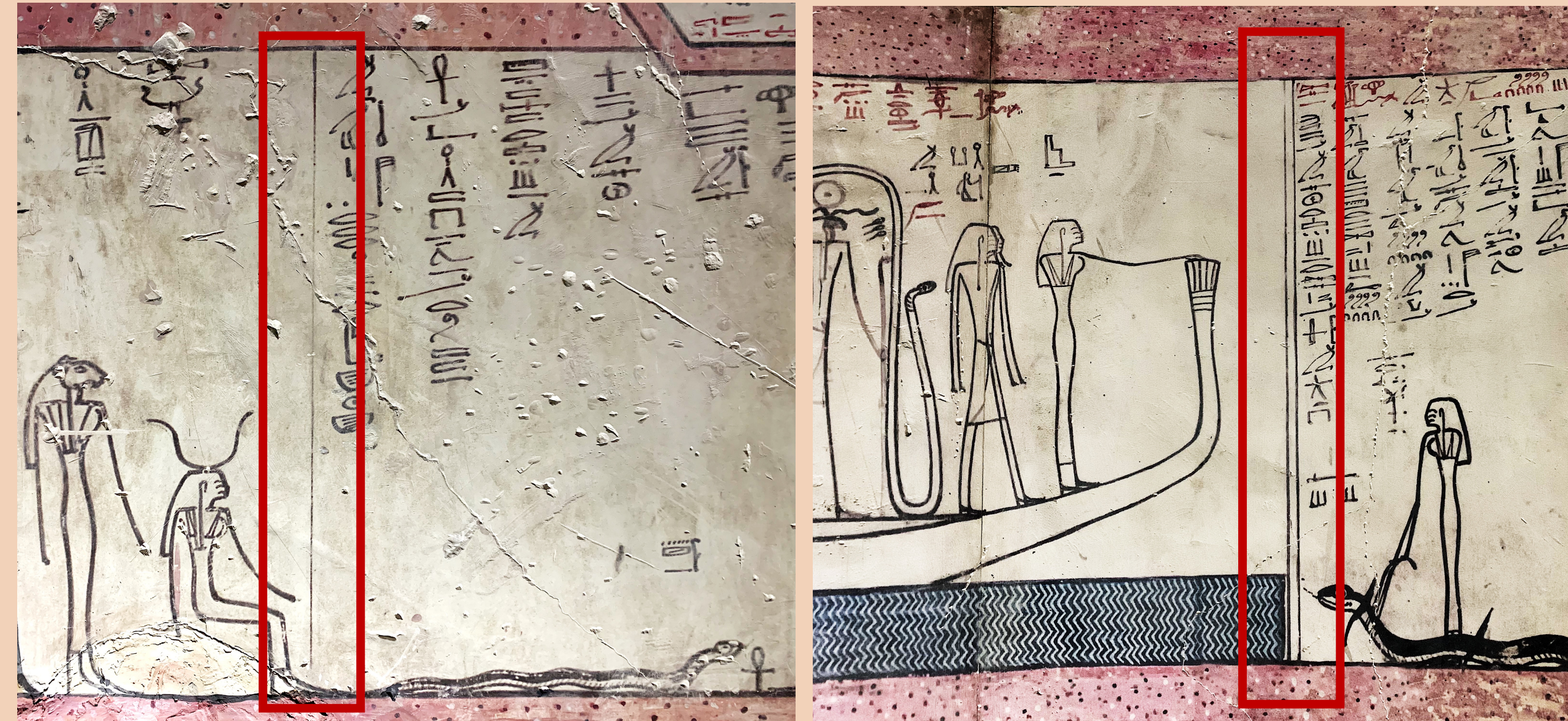


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Above: part of the tomb of Thutmose III

- **Long version in the sarcophagus hall:** arrangement of tableaux creates a spiralling path evoking the sun's cycle
- **Catalogue in the antechamber:** order of images roughly corresponds to layout of the long version. Runs west to east like the sun's nightly path
- The tomb does not just depict an underworld. It is one. The king is an essential part of the divine community.
- **A new understanding of the catalogue:** It extends and reinforces this ritual transformation by playing on the collation, study, and elaboration of lists of specialized religious knowledge by restricted groups of initiates.

### 1) Possible sources: collections of vignettes?



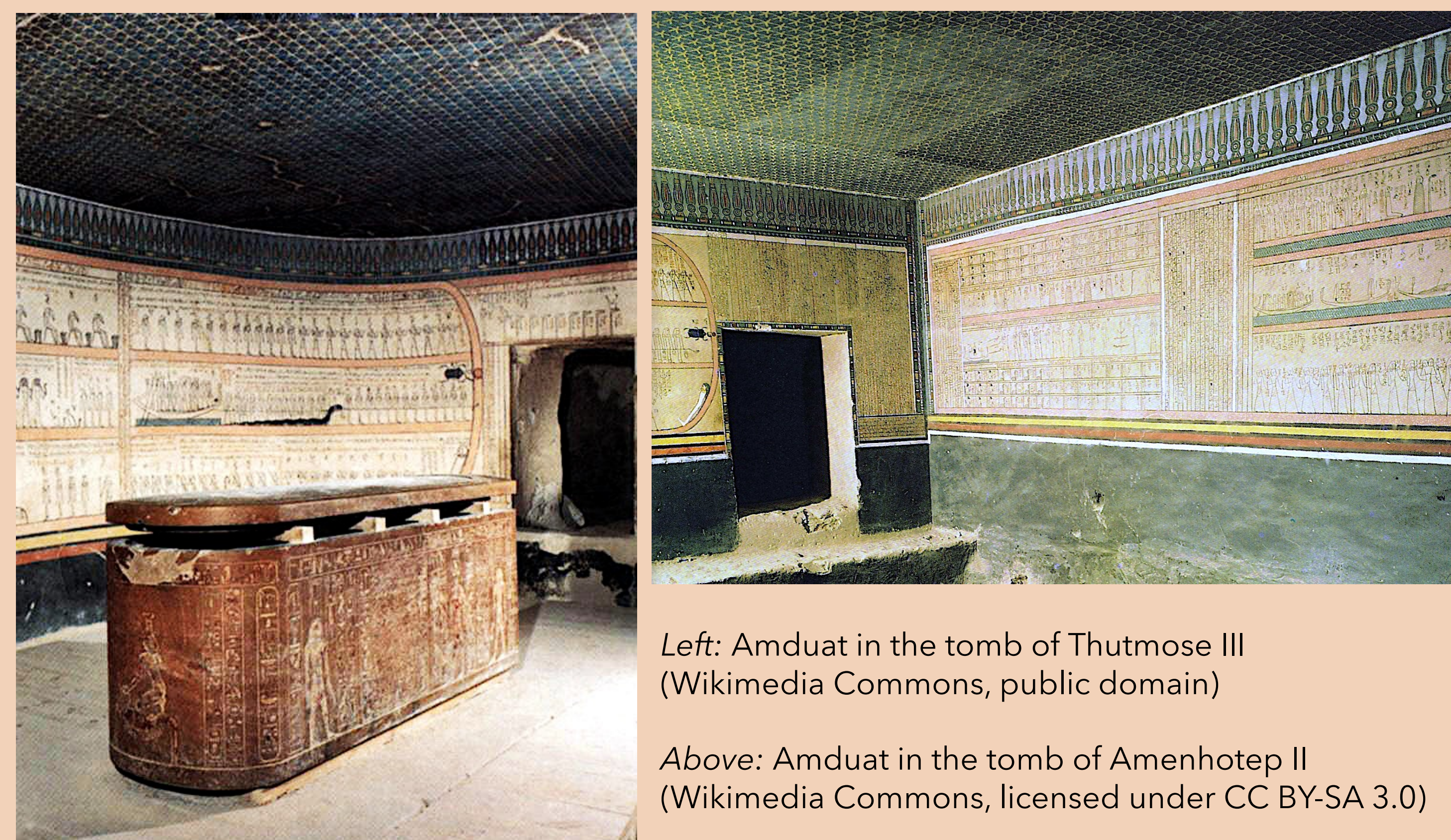
Vertical dividers occasionally separate scenes, or groups of figures within a scene

Bolton Museum KV 34 facsimile; photographs by Jordan Miller

### On sources for other pictorial-verbal compositions, and processes of combining written and pictorial material, see, e.g.:

- Baines, John 2013. *High culture and experience in ancient Egypt*, 57-88. Studies in Egyptology and the Ancient Near East. Sheffield; Bristol, CT: Equinox.
- Kockelmann, Holger 2017. How a Book of the Dead manuscript was produced. In: Foy Scalf (ed.), *Book of the Dead: becoming god in ancient Egypt*, 67-74. Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

### 2) Vignettes combined into the long version



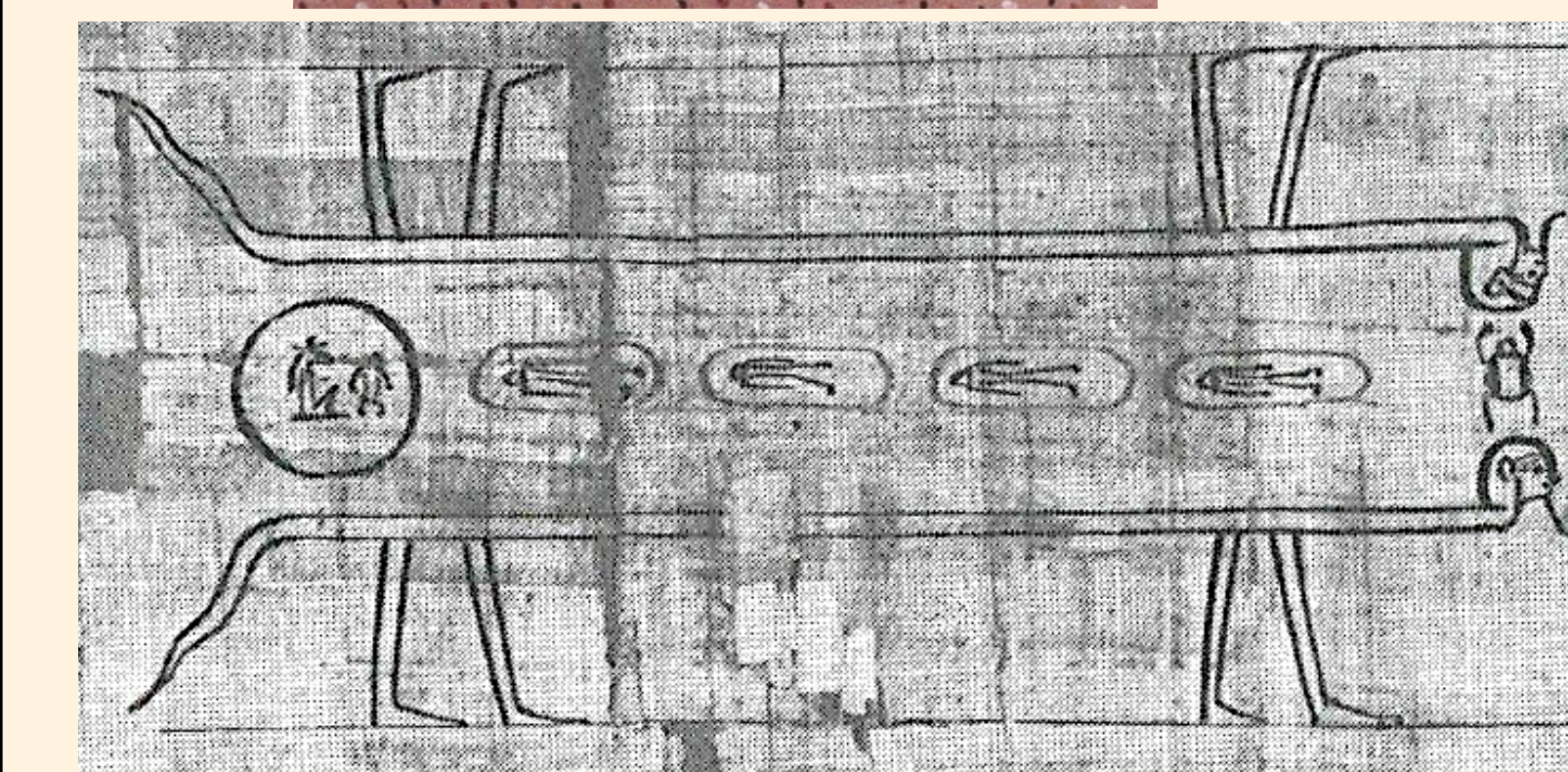
Left: Amduat in the tomb of Thutmose III (Wikimedia Commons, public domain)

Above: Amduat in the tomb of Amenhotep II (Wikimedia Commons, licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0)

### Images configured in line with overarching conventions: rows of similarly sized, mainly anthropomorphic figures

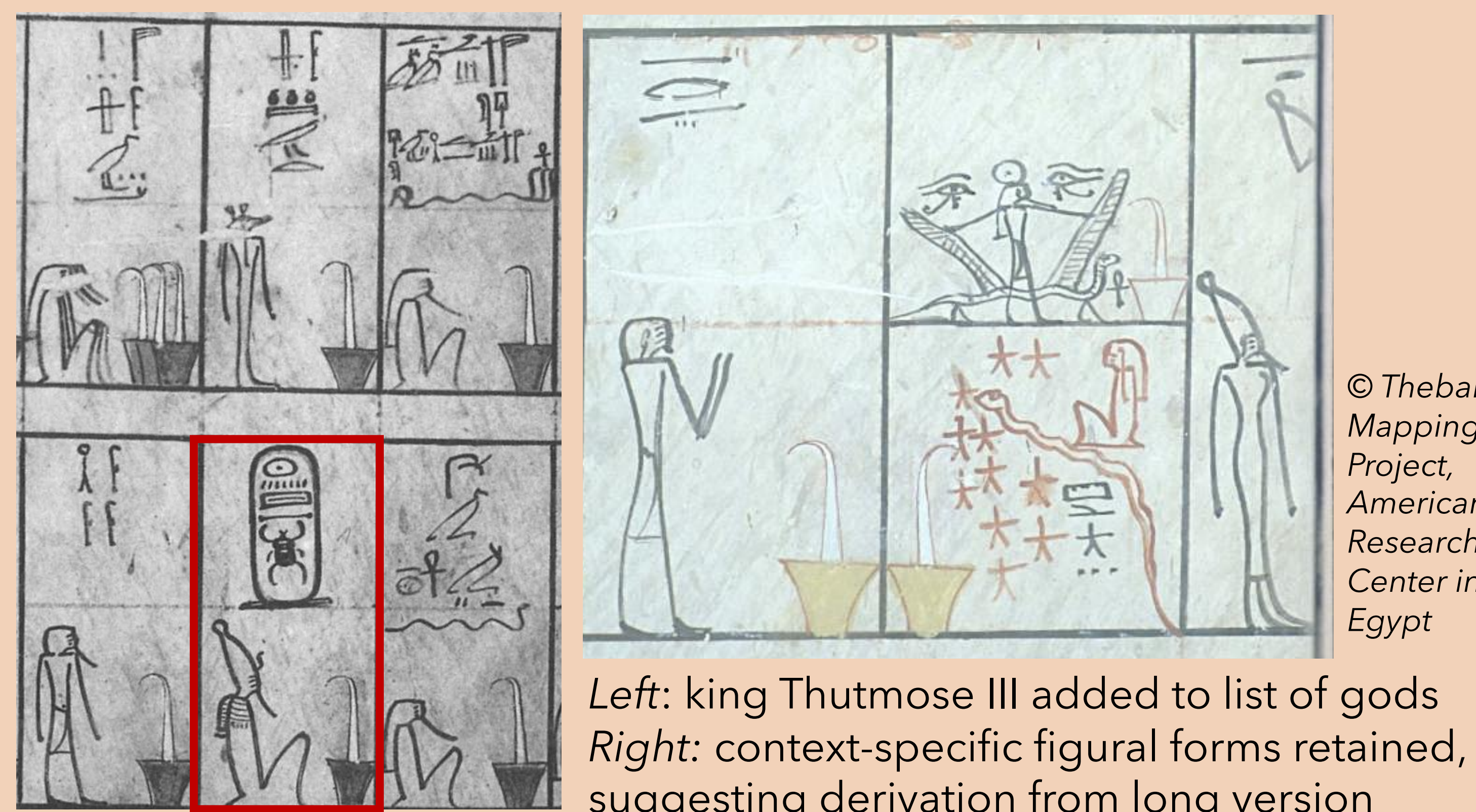


Distinctive ways of presenting common subjects, here the sun-god rising out of the underworld at dawn



Above: in the Amduat; one in a row of figures  
Below: in a later papyrus; a diagrammatic scene comprising several figures

### 3) ReCompilation of figures from long version



Left: king Thutmose III added to list of gods  
Right: context-specific figural forms retained, suggesting derivation from long version

### Conclusion: the catalogue as ritual device

'This is made based on this image (sšmw) in the hidden part of the underworld. These reproductions (sntyw) are the equivalent (mjty) of the great god himself.' – Closing text, long Amduat, 1st hour

The catalogue derives from the long version. **It closes the loop of ritual practice, evoking a source manuscript that was copied from an underworld and that could be used to craft others.** It reinforces the king's divine status and was a creation specific to his tomb. Similar acts of ritualized list-making may have been performed for others, but without **monumentalizing the manuscripts** in the same way. Such variation would be unsurprising: the Amduat is differently presented even in the tomb of the next king, Amenhotep II.