

The Solar Cosmological Interpretation of the Egyptian Nut, Shu, Geb Scene

Kiatezua Lubanzadio Luyaluka

Institut des Sciences Animiques, Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo

*Corresponding Author:

Kiatezua Lubanzadio Luyaluka

Email: kiatezuall@yahoo.fr

Abstract: One of the well known images in the iconography of ancient Egypt is the Nut, Shu, Geb scene. In this paper the author used the “solar cosmological interpretation” (SCI) to enforce the perception of this scene as a depiction of the process of creation. The method of SCI implies the use of the deductive approach to establish the kemetic cosmological argument (KCA) and the pre-suppositional use of the systematic natural theology that the KCA constitutes to correlate and enforce the Nut, Shu, Geb scene as a cosmogonical and cosmological depiction; the correlation thus established between the KCA and the NSGS extends the scientific nature of the former to the later and evidences that the Nut, Shu, Geb scene is not only the depiction of the origin of the temporal universe, but also a pictorial explanation of the nature of our universe.

Keywords: Nut; Shu; cosmology; Egypt; cosmological argument.

INTRODUCTION

One of the well known images in the field of the iconography of ancient Egypt is the Nut, Shu, Geb scene (NSGS). In an article titled *The Symbolic meaning of the scene of Nut, Geb, and Shu* Kramer [1] introduces this depiction of the third intermediate period in this way:

“In this scene we can see the sky-goddess Nut positioned in a vault, her finger and toe tips touching the ground. Underneath her, the earth-god Geb is lying. Between the two, Shu is standing. His arms are raised, thus supporting Nut” (p. 12).

The NSGS is generally perceived as an explanation of the creation of the world; it captures the initial moments of the cosmogony of ancient Egypt. However the symbolism of this scene is not amply explained. In order to remedy to this failure, this paper will use the “solar cosmological interpretation” (SCI). The SCI is a method of the interpretation of solar cultures introduced by the Institut des Sciences Animiques (ISA), a think-tank based in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, whose center of interest is the scientific defense of African epistemology and spiritual culture.

The SCI starts from the facto-deductive scheme, the use of an empirical fact to build by deduction the kemetic cosmological argument (KCA), and presupposes the systematic natural theology offered by the KCA to be the essence of solar religion, the religion that characterized the ancient civilizations of Sumer and Egypt and which is the mark of traditional Africa. This allows one to validate or establish the

scientific nature of an aspect of African or solar culture by establishing through comparative study the correlation between the systematic natural theology established through the KCA and the ethnographic elements defining the aspect of solar or African culture which is being examined.

The use of the SCI to explain the NSGS presupposes that ancient Egypt was immersed in solar religion. This nature of Osirian religion was demonstrated by the ISA [2] as involving:

- The immersion of ancient Egypt in the solar epistemology, an epistemology characterized by the freedom of soul and whose fundamental truth is that reality is spiritual. This epistemology is called solar due to its focus on the divine.
- The solar characteristics of the religion of ancient Egypt; these essentially evoke the hierarchical nature of its theism.

One of the main consequences of the use of the SCI is that upon establishing successfully the correlation between the systematic natural theology of the KCA and the ethnography of the aspects of the African or solar culture being studied, the scientific nature of the KCA can be validly affirmed for this African or solar cultural element.

SOLAR EPISTEMOLOGY AND THE ANCIENT EGYPTIAN CULTURE

It was demonstrated by the ISA [3] that ancient Egypt was immersed in solar epistemology. The author said above that the fundamental tenet of this epistemology is the freedom of soul; this freedom the

culture of ancient Egypt affirmed by depicting the soul as a bird or a butterfly hovering above the body or the corpse [16-18]. The freedom of soul implies its peregrination toward higher planes of existence, and this leads to the high stature attributed to oracles, dreams, intuitions and revelations as preferred means of attaining to truth; Herodotus shows in his book *An Account of Egypt* that oracles were used even to solve tricky geographic problems concerning the Nile; while for Cheikh Anta Diop [4] “clerical justice was often rendered through oracle” (p. 172).

Whenever western epistemology, called lunar due to its focus on matter like the moon orbiting around the earth, is presupposed on the a priori affirmation of the material nature of reality; solar epistemology evidences the foundational facts of solar science as being the following a posteriori facts:

- Reality is spiritual,
- Any truth is revelation,
- Any truth is included in the knowledge of God,
- Matter is only a limited perspective on spiritual reality.

It must be stressed that while the presuppositions of the lunar science cannot be demonstrated, the validity of the foundational truths of solar science can be demonstrated thanks to the KCA [3]. Moreover, the possibilities of the peregrinations of soul imply the existence of higher planes of existence; these possibilities dictate a hierarchical perception of theism [2].

Obviously lunar and solar epistemologies dictate two different perceptions of the dynamics of the universe; the former excludes any participation of the spiritual elements in scientific explanation while the last is holistic [5] and implies the unity of the visible and the invisible. The reader must bear this in mind and realize from here on that the author will be explaining theological and cosmological realities solely according to solar epistemology;

THE KCA AS A SYSTEMATIC NATURAL THEOLOGY

The cosmological argument in Western philosophy is an argument on the existence of God which starts from “the presence of the cosmos back to a creator of the cosmos” [6]. Throughout the history of Western philosophy this argument is restricted to the demonstration of the existence of an ultimate cause of this temporal universe, cause which is supposed to be the Most-high creator God.

As the author said in the introduction, the KCA derives from the use of the facta-deductive scheme, a deductive reasoning starting from the empirical, i.e., observable, fact of the existence of individualities and particular circumstances in our visible universe.

Contrary to Western philosophy, the ISA has extended the KCA into a systematic natural episteme including the various fields of theology among which is cosmology, the solar explanation of the origin, nature and dynamics of our temporal universe [7]. The KCA can be summarized in the following manner¹:

- There are individualities and particular circumstances in our universe. Our universe possesses an individuality; this nature implies a contingency.
- A necessary cause exists which includes our universe and explains this contingency.
- Being the cause of an individual universe, this cause is individual; hence there are other necessary causes which are at least potentially causative.
- The individual nature of these relative necessary causes is a contingency; therefore there is an absolutely necessary cause including all these relative causes and explaining their contingency.
- This absolutely necessary cause is God, the Supreme Being. The Most-high thus defined is transcendent, indivisible and absolutely infinite because any lesser nature would imply a contingency. All reality is included in the Most-high.
- As the manifestation of the indivisible God, the Father, each relative necessary being, each Son is the expression of His fullness, the Verb.
- Being the expression of the fullness of the Father, the Son is a “sun”, the irradiation of the full glory of the Father.
- Since the Father is indivisible and each Son is the manifestation of His fullness, the Father, the Son and the Verb are inseparable in their substance, existence and activity; this is solar trinity, it implies that the Father always acts through the Son thanks to the Verb, the Son acts for the Father thanks to the Verb.
- The transcendent nature of the Father, implies the existence of a hierarchy of divinities at the top of which there is:
 - The Most-high,
 - The Demiurgic creator, a Son of God,
 - The Verb.

THE KCA AS A SOLAR COSMOLOGY

Through the systematic natural theology of the KCA, the ISA demonstrates [7] that the Supreme Being,

¹ Since Kôngo religion is perfect exemplification of solar religion, the words “father”, “son” and “man” convey the gender-free meaning of the Kôngo words *se*, *mwana*, and *mûntu* which can be used for persons of both sexes.

the Father, is Truth and Love; thus the Sons are endowed with free will. However since the Father and the heavenly realm are absolutely without any contingency, the bad use of the free will by the Son leads to his fall into an illusory consciousness characterized by the loss of spiritual consciousness, a sense of the loss of substantiality. Thus the Son becomes a non-incarnated spirit groping in spiritual darkness.

It has been evidenced above that the Most-high includes all reality and that He is without any contingency; thus creation occurs in the temporal consciousness of the creator. But, since the creator is a necessary being, and since all reality is included in the Most-high:

- Creation occurs in the intermediary highest plane, because to fall lower would be for the creator to become a mortal man, this will annihilate his ability to create, i.e., the manifest presence in him of the Verb.
- Creation occurs in an illusory consciousness of the creator because he is a necessary being and all reality is included in the heavenly consciousness.
- Creation is only a perspective of the eternal realm, because God includes all reality.
- The good that appears in creation has its reality in the Supreme Being, the All-in-all.
- The illusory nature of the creative consciousness applies only to the limitation the perspective tries to impress on divine good.
- According to solar trinity, creation is the direct work of two principles: the demiurgic creator and the Verb.

In view of this cosmology, creation is only a soteriological plan for the salvation of mortal men, the fallen Sons of God. This conclusion is elucidated by the fact that on the dynamic level, being a necessary cause and in accordance to the transcendent absolutely non-contingent nature of the Most-high and the illusory nature of creative consciousness, the creator moves back to the necessary realm under the impulsion of the Verb. Now, solar epistemology implies the existence of many planes of temporal existence, as evidenced by the freedom of soul; thus there are two spaces-times:

- The absolute space-time which includes all the different planes of a universe; it is the frame in which the illusion of limitation occurs.
- The relative space-time; it is unique to any plane and defines the perspective of reality in each of them.

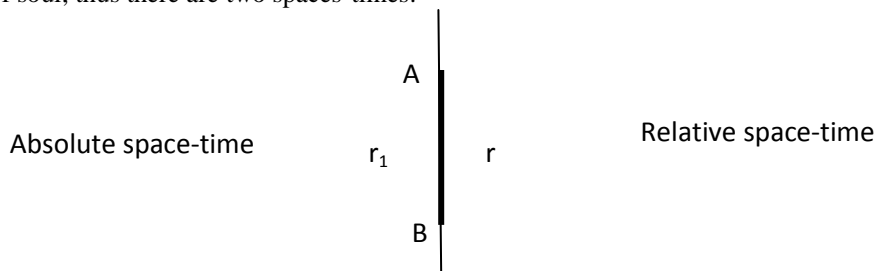
Since the Verb never changes, under its impulsion the creator accelerates toward reality; this isotropic acceleration translates into the acceleration of the absolute space-time toward nothingness and the acceleration of the relative space-time toward reality, toward infinite; i.e., as the creator moves back to the heavenly consciousness, our sense of limitation accelerates toward nothingness, thus our perspective on reality accelerates toward infinite. The first acceleration has been demonstrated by the ISA [7] to be the mathematically verifiable explanation of the dynamics of the universe (gravitation, translation and rotation) and the stability of atoms in the solar perception of the temporal universe.

The deductive approach of the KCA starting from an empirical, observable, fact (the existence of individualities in the universe) and the mathematical verifiability of the cosmology that emanates from it imply the scientific nature of the systematic natural theology of solar religion, the KCA.

MATHEMATICAL VERIFICATION OF SOLAR COSMOLOGY

The author gives here a simple mathematical verification of solar cosmology; for a more elaborate tensor-calculation about this cosmology the reader can turn to the appendix of the article of Luyaluka [7] in *the Journal of Pan-African Studies*.

Let A and B be two points of the universe situated at the intersection of the absolute space-time and a relative one. An observer in the absolute space-time sees these points separated by the distance r_1 but the one in the relative space-time sees them as separated by the distance r . The author supposes the acceleration of the relative space-time to be negligible in this calculation.



At the initial moment, before the beginning of the accelerations, the observers in both spaces-times see the situation according to the equation:

$$r_1 = r \tag{1}$$

As time elapses r_1 dwindles and the situation evolves into the equation:

$$r_1 = r \left(1 - \frac{1}{2} g t^2 \right) \tag{2}$$

A double derivation of the equation (2) yields the acceleration of r_1 calculated according to the time elapsed in the relative space-time.

$$a = -rg \tag{3}$$

However, the reader knows that what is dwindling under the acceleration of the absolute space-time is not the isolated radius r_1 but the volume that contains it. Let v_1 be a cylinder of the absolute space-time containing the radius r_1 ; the value of r can be calculated in relation to this cylinder and in accordance to the equation (1).

$$v_1 = \pi r^3 k \tag{4}$$

From this value of the cylinder one gets the equation:

$$r = \frac{v_1}{\pi k r^2} \tag{5}$$

Intuitively the reader may realize that the exact value of the height of the cylinder is not important. What is necessary is that its volume be not null. Thus

the ratio $\frac{v_1}{\pi k}$ can be taken as a constant q and by replacing the amended value of (5) in (3) one gets:

$$a = -\frac{q}{r^2} g \tag{6}$$

In this equation (6) $-qg$ can be equaled to a constant G ; thus one gets finally:

$$a = \frac{G}{r^2} \tag{7}$$

Now by multiplying both sides of the equation (7) by the reciprocal masses of the celestial bodies symbolized by the points A and B one gets:

$$F = G \frac{Mm}{r^2}$$

that is Newton's law of gravitation

explained according to solar cosmology as the result of the isotropic acceleration of the absolute space-time to nothingness. Once again the reader is reminded that this result is solely in accord with *a solar perception of the universe*, a holistic vision which implies the unity of the visible and the invisible and which *must not to be confused with Western lunar explanation*.

SYNTHESIS OF SOLAR COSMOLOGY

Solar cosmology as developed above thanks to the systematic natural theology of solar religion has evidenced that:

- The heavenly realm is included in the consciousness of the Father, the Most-high.
- The Sons of God are "suns" the irradiation of the infinite glory of the Father.
- Creation occurs in the temporal consciousness of the creator.
- Creation occurs in an intermediary plane.
- Creation is the work of the creator and the Verb.
- The fallen Sons of God first land in a state of potential temporal being.
- The creator voluntary turns away from the glory of God to save the fallen Sons of God;

COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE NSGS AND THE KCA

The purpose of the author in this section is to establish the correlation between the conclusions drawn above from the solar cosmology, from the KCA, and the NSGS. According to the method of SCI any correspondence of these depictions with the cosmology of the systematic natural theology of solar religion will extend the validity and scientific nature of this later to Egyptian cosmology.



Fig. 1: the Nut, Shu, Geb scence.

Retrieved from <http://hubpages.com/education/Osiris-and-Isis-An-Egyptian-Love-Story>.

The heavenly realm is included in the consciousness of the Father. The KCA has revealed that the Most-high is transcendent. The existence of the Most-high God in Egypt is sustained by many Egyptologists including Sayce [8] and Rawlinson who affirms His existence in this way:

“Besides the common popular religion, the belief of the masses, there was another which prevailed among the priests and among the educated. The primary doctrine of this esoteric religion was the real essential unity of the Divine Nature. (...) This Being seems never to have been represented by any material, even symbolical, form.” [19].

Moreover van den Dungen, alluding to *the Pyramid text of Unas*, recognizes this existence of the Supreme Being in Egyptian religion by saying “from the beginning, Egyptian religion was aware of the existence of a unique, [unnamed] divine power or god” [9].

It follows from these evidences that the denial of the existence of a Supreme Being in ancient Egypt is the result of a perception that restricts the definition of monotheism to Western vision of God, the Supreme Being, as “a personal, perfect being who created the world and who has certain divine properties, or attributes, which set God apart from all other beings” [10].

In ancient Egypt the Supreme Being was not only unnamed, but also not represented. This state of things and the hierarchical nature of solar theism led many Egyptologists to deny the monotheism of ancient Egypt. The ISA has demonstrated that solar monotheism is more valid than any option that confuses the Most-high and the creator [2].

In considering Western monotheism, either creation occurs in the creator, the Most-high, or it occurs outside of him. In the first case the Supreme Being is not immutable and perfect, while in the second a greater being can be conceived who includes creator and creation, and this last case is a violation of the ontological argument of Anselm of Canterbury. This led many Western scholars to complain that “God turns out to be a logically impossible being” [10].

From ancient Egyptian solar perception of the Supreme Being the author can conclude that in the NSGS Nut is not the Most-high, because this one was never represented in ancient Egypt; Nut rather represents the celestial realm as Geb represents the

temporal order, the realm of creation. In other words, Nut represents the consciousness of the Father as Geb represents the temporal consciousness of the creator. Thus according to the NSGS, and in correlation to the KCA, the heavenly realm is identical with the consciousness of the Father.

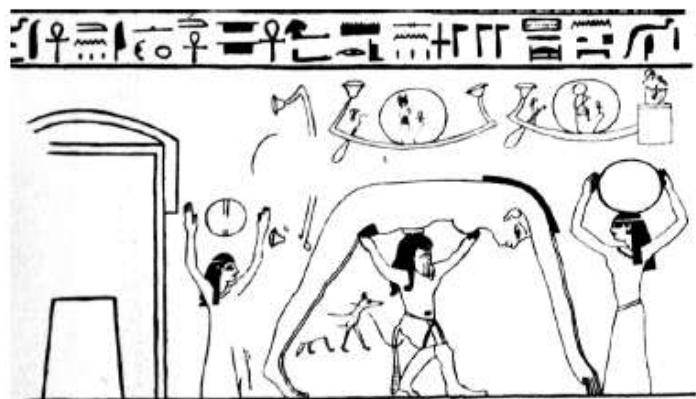
The Sons are “suns” the irradiation of the infinite glory of the Father. The body of Nut is represented in the NSGS as filled with stars. Since, as it has been demonstrated above, this body is the figuration of the heavenly realm, it is in reality the symbol of the celestial consciousness. The author said above that this conclusion is reinforced by the fact that the Most-high was never represented in ancient Egypt.

This leads to the conclusion that the stars represent the Sons of God in the full manifestation of the glory of the Father. This depiction is correlated by the KCA which evidences the glorious nature of the Sons of God as “suns”, the manifestation of the infinity glory of the Father.

Creation occurs in the temporal consciousness of the creator. Contrary to the KCA, the NSGS doesn't depict the fall of the Sons of God from the heavenly realm due to the bad use of their free will; however, it clearly shows that Geb has always the face turned away from the heavenly realm. This implies that in order to create the Son of God must freely leave the heavenly consciousness, where he is a star or a sun.

Geb is depicted as including reeds. In comparison with the body of Nut representing the heavenly realm, the author can deduce that the body of Geb is a figuration of the temporal consciousness, the consciousness of the creator. The reeds manifest the fact evidenced by the systematic natural theology of solar religion, the KCA: creation (symbolized by the reeds) occurs in the temporal consciousness of the creator.

The fallen Sons of God land first in a state of potential temporal being. Contrary to Western theology, creation in solar religion is not ex-nihilo. Wiredu [20] eschews this kind of creation as far as African traditional religion, i.e., solar religion, is concerned: “to say that some being could make something come out of nothing is of the same order of incoherence as saying that some being could make two and two add up to fifty” (p. 30). This view is verified by the KCA: the heavenly realm preexists any creation.



**Fig. 2: Cairo, Egyptian Museum, Coffin of Ankhruï (Petrie 1889, pl. 2).
Reproduced from Kramer [1].**

In figure 2 Geb doesn't appear. In comparison to figure 1 the depiction of figure 2 corresponds to the moment before the descent of the creator, a moment when, according to the KCA, the fallen Sons of God appear in the state on non-being as non-incarnated spirits in the darkness. In the religion of ancient Egypt this state is designated as the *nun*, the state of potential existence of the temporal realm.

Creation occurs in an intermediary plane. In the NSGS though the creator descends in a lower plane, he is still within the vault formed by Nut, thus in comparison to the reeds, representation of the created order, the creator is an intermediary plane. The plane occupied by the creator is higher than the one in which creation abides.

The intermediary nature of the position of the creator is also seen in the fact of his being in relation with the heavenly realm through Shu, the representation of the Verb. Did the creator descend in a more low temporal order he would be a mortal man, thus he could not create. The fact of landing in an intermediary consciousness enabled the creator to maintain a sense of divine consciousness which allowed him to create.

Creation is the work of the creator and the Verb. Nut, Shu and Geb represent the heavenly solar trinity of the Egyptian religion. According to the KCA the highest expression of this trinity is composed of the SSupreme Being, the creator and the Verb. In Memphis theology this expression of solar trinity is represented by the unnamed Supreme Being, Atom and Ptah.

In his book titled *Stolen Legacy*, George G. M. James [11] summarizes Memphis theology and shows that while Atom is the creator, Ptah is the logos and creative power exercised over all creatures. As the logos, the Verb, Ptah transmits power and spirit to all Gods. Ptah controls lives of all things through his commands. In him all things live, move and have their eternal being. Thus, as the author said above, in Memphis theology the highest expression of solar

trinity includes: the unnamed Supreme Being, Atom (the creator) and Ptah (the Verb).

From this analysis it is confirmed that Shu is not the Verb, but his representation as the manifestation of the fullness of the Father in the Sons, called in Memphis theology "power and spirit".

Moreover, Shu is defined as the "the god (...) of air" [12]. It is worthy here to note the similitude with the Sumerian God Enlil. Enlil is called "Lord air" [14]; which is understood to mean the Lord-breath. The ISA demonstrated that Sumer belongs to solar epistemology like ancient Egypt; thus both civilizations bathed in solar religion [3].

Therefore it becomes more interesting for the reader to note that Shu's representation of the Verb is also seen in the fact that, like in the NSGS "Enlil, the air-god, separated heaven from earth" [13].

Enlil assisted the creator in the creative process [15]; the same characteristic is recognized to Ptah who is defined by James [11] as the logos and creative power exercised over all creatures. This nature of the Verb, evidenced by the KCA, is expressed in the NSGS by the fact that Geb remains linked with Shu, with the consciousness of the Verb.

The creator voluntary turns away from the glory of the Father. The author has shown above that in order to create the Son of God must leave the heavenly consciousness where he is a star or a sun and land in an intermediary consciousness. The descent of the creator is thus different from the fall of mortal men. If, as evidenced by the KCA, the fall is the result of the bad use of the free will, i.e., the consequent of sin, the descent of the creator is impelled by divine Love as an expression of the divinity of the Sons of God.

To illustrate this voluntary descent of the creator, as Geb, is always depicted having the face turned away from the heavenly realm, as one concerned

about beings situated in a plane lower than the heavenly one and trying to reach out to them.

IS THE NSGS A COSMOGONY OR A COSMOLOGY?

All the evidences offered in the above section illustrates that the NSGS is not only a cosmogonical representation, but also a cosmological depiction; thus the separation and supporting meanings are both conveyed by this scene of Egyptian iconography. Moreover, the demonstrated scientific nature of solar cosmology resulting from the KCA and its correlation with the NSGS lead, thanks to the SCI, to the affirmation of the scientific validity of the NSGS as a cosmogonical and cosmological depiction.

In his article titled *The Symbolic meaning of the scene of Nut, Geb, and Shu* Kramer [1] plays down the separation meaning of the NSGS because “the evidence that the separation-scene is a depiction of this cosmogonical stage is not ample” (p. 34). Kramer proposes that the NSGS alludes to two functions:

- The movement: “the arched body of Nut can be seen as a circuit upon which the sun and the stars traverse” (p. 26)
- Regeneration and resurrection.

Therefore, for Kramer the NSGS is has not a cosmogonical meaning but rather a cosmological one. “That the sky is supported and not separated from the earth becomes clear because of two different appearances of Shu” (p. 34) writes Kramer who points that in figure 2 Shu is replaced by Bes and there is a case where his place is taken by Thoth.

The systematic natural theology of solar religion has revealed that there is no contradiction between the separation meaning of the NSGS and the supportive one. In order to create a Son of God must leave (be separated from) the heavenly realm for a temporal one. The Verb maintains (supports) in the heavenly Son of God the consciousness of the fullness of the divinity; thus the Verb separates the heavenly realm from the temporal one.

Moreover, Nut doesn't represent the Most-high, but rather the heavenly consciousness, because the Supreme Being was never represented in ancient Egypt. Thus in the “supporting” meaning, it is not the Supreme Being who is supported, but the divine consciousness, i.e., the Verb maintains in the Sons of God the consciousness of their divinity.

That Shu is replaced by Bes or by Thoth in some depictions is not a problem, because what appear in the NSGS are only representations; thus Shu is not the Verb, but a representation of it; hence that his place be taken by Bes or by Thoth changes not the nature of Verb, but maybe the emphasis is set on other

characteristics of the manifestation of the fullness of God.

As to the “regeneration” and “resurrection” meanings it must be remembered that according to the KCA creation is only a soteriological plan of a Son of God for the salvation of the fallen Sons of God, mortal men; moreover, the KCA reveals that the purpose of man is to regain his divine nature, the manifest expression of the Verb, that he has lost due to his bad use of his free will. This fact is expressed in *the Egyptian book of the dead* by the request of the dead Osiris Ani to be “one of the Osiris”, i.e., one of the Sons of God. Therefore, regeneration, resurrection and creation coalesce in the process of mortal man's regaining his divine nature as a star or a sun.

In these last meanings the NSGS in figure 2 can also be perceived as the last stage in which a fallen son of God has resumed his nature in heaven as a star or a sun or the ultimate stage in which the creator, in his acceleration toward the heavenly realm, has reached reality; thus the temporal realm is reduced back to its original potential state: the *nun*.

CONCLUSION

One of the well known images in the iconography of ancient Egypt is the Nut, Shu, Geb scene (NSGS). While there is a large consensus for the cosmogonical explanation of this scene as depicting creation, its symbolism is not comprehensively elucidated; moreover some people estimate that the evidence for the separation meaning are slim therefore they advance the cosmological meaning; for them the NSGS manifests Shu as supporting the sky.

In this paper the author used the “solar cosmological interpretation” (SCI) to enforce the perception of the NSGS scene as a depiction of the process of creation. The method of SCI allowed the author to use a deductive approach to establish the systematic natural theology of the solar religion, the kemetic cosmological argument (KCA), and by pre-supposing this cosmological argument as applying to ancient Egypt; he correlated and enforced the NSGS as a cosmogonical and cosmological depiction thanks to a comparative study.

Thus, the correlation established between the KCA and the NSGS has evidenced that the NSGS is the depiction of the process of the creation of the temporal universe as well as a pictorial explanation of its nature and the relations solar religion establishes between the Supreme Being, the creator and the Verb. Moreover, in the NSGS Shu conveys the idea of the supporting the heavenly consciousness as well as the function of separating it from the temporal consciousness. The NSGS has been demonstrated to apply also to the resurrection and regeneration process because creation is only a plan of salvation of fallen Sons of God.

Finally the demonstrated scientific nature of solar cosmology resulting from the KCA and its correlation with the NSGS lead, thanks to the SCI, to the affirmation of the scientific validity of the NSGS as a cosmogonical and cosmological depiction.

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