



NEAR EASTERN
LANGUAGES &
CIVILIZATIONS



“RITUAL LANDSCAPE AND PERFORMANCE”

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 23:

- 9:00 – 9:20 am** **Coffee**
- 9:20 – 9:30 am Welcoming Remarks by the organizer Christina Geisen
- Morning Session: Ancient Egypt I***
(Chair: John C. Darnell)
- 9:30 – 10:00 am “*Archaeology of Symbols. The Third Millennium BC Egypt burial rites and ceremonies*”
Miroslav Bárta (Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic)
- 10:00 – 10:30 am “*Dayr al-Barsha and Dayr al-Bahri. Two Ritual Landscapes in the time of Mentuhotep II*”
Harco Willems (Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium)
- 10:30 – 11:00 am “*Karnak as the stage for a ritual in commemoration of Senwosret I?*”
Christina Geisen (Yale University, USA)
- 11:00 - 11:15 am Discussion
- 11:15 – 11:45 am** **Coffee Break**
- Morning Session II: Ancient Egypt II***
(Chair: John C. Darnell)
- 11:45 – 12:15 am “*Reading Abydos as the Landscape of Postmortem Transformation*”
Mary-Ann Pouls Wegner (University of Toronto, Canada)
- 12:15 – 12:45 pm “*Landscape, tombs, and sanctuaries: the interaction of architecture and topography in Western Thebes*”
Ute Rummel (German Archaeological Institute Cairo, Egypt)
- 12:45 – 1:00 pm Discussion

1:00 – 2:30 pm **Lunch Break**

Afternoon Session I: Ancient Egypt, Nubia, and Coptic Egypt

(Chair: Christina Geisen)

2:30 – 3:00 pm “*From River to Desert – Foreign Interpretations of Egyptian Festivals in a Marginal Environment*”
John C. Darnell (Yale University, USA)

3:00 – 3:30 pm “*Ritual landscape in Nubia during the New Kingdom: The example of Miam/Aniba*”
Martina Ullmann (University of Cologne/Ludwig Maximilian University Munich, Germany)

3:30 – 4:00 pm “*Ritualization and Psalmic Recitation in a Coptic Liturgical Procession at the White Monastery*”
Stephen Davis (Yale University, USA)

4:00 – 4:15 pm Discussion

4:15 – 4:45 pm **Coffee Break**

Afternoon Session II: Ancient Egypt (modern perspectives and performance)

(Chair: Christina Geisen)

4:45 – 5:15 pm “*Inhabiting the landscape in the past, present and future: Towards understanding ancient lives and modern perspective*”
Robyn Gillam (York University, Canada)

5:15 – 5:45 pm “*Watery Egyptian landscapes and performances within them*”
John Baines (University of Oxford, United Kingdom)

5:45 – 6:00 pm Discussion

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 24:

8:30 – 9:00 am **Coffee**

Morning Session I: Ancient and Modern Mesopotamia and Ancient Near East

(Chair: Enrique Jiménez)

9:00 – 9:30 am “*Revision, Relocation, and Reinterpretation: Remarks on the Ritual Dynamics of the Babylonian Akitu Festival in the Seventh Century BC*”
Eckart Frahm (Yale University, USA)

9:30 – 10:00 am “*Assyria through the Ages: contemporary continuity of ritual in theory and praxis*”
Sargon Donabed (Roger Williams University, USA)

10:00 – 10:30 am “*Hittite Past, Water Cult, and the Landscapes of Plato in Medieval Konya (south-central Turkey)*”
Ömür Harmansah (University of Illinois, USA)

10:30 – 10:45 am Discussion

10:45 – 11:15 am **Coffee Break**

Morning Session II: Hellenistic Near East and Ancient Greece

(Chair: Alberto Urcia)

11:15 – 11:45 pm “*Performing Nostalgia: Political Revival after Empire in the Hellenistic Near East*”
Lauren Ristvet (University of Pennsylvania, USA)

11:45 – 12:15 pm “*Libations and the Greek Ritual Landscape*”
Milette Gaifman (Yale University, USA)

12:15 – 12:30 pm Discussion

12:30 – 2:00 pm **Lunch Break**

Afternoon Session I: Meso-America

(Chair: Alberto Urcia)

2:00 – 2:30 pm “*The ritual landscape of Mesoamerican E-groups*”
Oswaldo Chinchilla (Yale University, USA)

- 2:30 – 3:00 pm *“Labyrinth and Circle. Rites of passage in a recovered Mesoamerican Codex”*
David L. Carrasco (Harvard Divinity School, USA)
- 3:00 – 3:15 pm Discussion
- 3:15 – 3:45 pm Coffee Break**

Afternoon Session II: Ancient China and Digital Archaeology
(Chair: Christina Geisen)

- 3:45 – 4:15 pm *“The Performance of Landscape in Early Imperial Chinese Ritual”*
Martin Kern (Princeton University, USA)
- 4:15 – 4:45 pm *“Structure from Motion in Egyptology and beyond: an overview of experiences from on-field acquisition to final layouts”*
Alberto Urcia (Yale University, USA)
- 4:45 – 5:00 pm Discussion
- 5:00 pm Closing Remarks by Christina Kraus (Chair of the NELC Department)

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ABSTRACTS

JOHN BAINES (University of Oxford, UK)

Watery Egyptian landscapes and performances within them

Many studies of ancient Egyptian ritual landscapes focus on Upper Egypt, where the low desert and the escarpment form a pervasive background and the Nile valley is generally narrow. Yet the earliest representations of rituals in a landscape setting show watery environments, in most cases probably depicting the delta. The delta landscape was much more enveloping, and the perspective of those travelling within it, on water or land and as ritual actors or observers, lacked the relief and visibility of Upper Egypt. Its characteristics spoke even more strongly than those of the Nile valley to the importance of the river and to the liminality and impermanence that much ritual performance seeks to overcome. In addition to pictorial images, much of the symbolism of Egyptian architectural forms is aquatic. The focus on such environments, which is ideologically crucial, is evident also in elite pastimes and their partly ritual associations.

MIROSLAV BÁRTA (Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic)

Archaeology of Symbols. The Third Millenium BC Egypt burial rites and ceremonies

This talk will focus on preserved remains of ritual activities and tokens of religious concepts which were identified during the research on Early Dynastic and Old Kingdom necropolis at Abusir South. Specific attention will be paid to some individual architectural features preserved in several non-royal tombs of the period which reflect specific cultic behaviour. In detail, the origin of the false-door concept and the archaeological traces of the symbolical movement of the soul within the tomb will be discussed and interpreted. At the same time, a case will be made that there existed a very close link between specific architectural forms and local landscape setting and nature connotations.

DAVÍD L. CARRASCO (Harvard Divinity School, USA)

Labyrinth and Circle. Rites of Passage in a recovered Mesoamerican Codex

This illustrated lecture narrates the dramatic rediscovery of the Mapa de Cuauhtinchan #2 and the Mapa's internal drama of ritual performances across central Mexico's landscape. Rites of passage at the Place of Seven Caves, the opening of sacred bundles in times of conflict, war at the City of Changes, and the quest for a new homeland via pilgrimage, inter-ethnic marriage, a visit to the tree of paradise and the repetition of the New Fire Ceremony will be discussed.

OSWALDO CHINCILLA (Yale University, USA)

The ritual landscape of Mesoamerican E-groups

In ancient Mesoamerica, pyramidal temples were often conceived as mountains. As such, they articulated with other architectural structures—temples, platforms, plazas, ball courts, and others—to form veritable landscapes that were modeled after the mythical landscapes in which transpired the gods' creative acts. Such landscapes served as settings for ritual performances that related in complex ways with mythical paradigms. While these qualities of architectural landscapes are widely

acknowledged, it is hard to find specific evidence, except in cases such as the Great Temple of Mexico, where abundant documentation provides clues about the building, its mythical correlates, and the meaning of the rituals that were conducted there. In this talk, I propose an interpretation of the architectural compounds known as E-groups, which were built at numerous sites in southern Mesoamerica. E-groups have long intrigued archaeologists because of their apparent solar connotations, suggested by their shape and orientation. I suggest that they were conceived as mythical landscapes related to the origin of the Sun and the Moon. Furthermore, I compare E-Groups with the sanctuaries of the modern Huichol of west Mexico, which are conceived as mythical landscapes related to the myths that explained the origin of the sun and the moon, and discuss the implications of this parallel for the study of the Mesoamerican religious tradition.

JOHN C. DARNELL (Yale University, USA)

From River to Desert—Foreign Interpretations of Egyptian Festivals in a Marginal Environment

A New Kingdom rock inscription site in the northwestern hinterland of ancient Thebes preserves rock art and inscriptions in which members of military patrols in the region—apparently Nubian troops—depicted imagery from festivals in which they participated. Using a combination of formal iconography and their own iconographic insertions—more spontaneous visual snapshots and idiosyncratic annotations to a formal visual template—the creators of the rock inscription site, and its major tableau of interrelated images, reveal a cynosure of official imagery and popular perception. An earlier Nubian textual reference to the participation of similar military units in a Middle Kingdom Theban festival provides a brief but similar window into the ways in which foreign elements of Egyptian society might perceive and interpret their participation in festival activities, in which they are intended to participate in an Egyptian living tableau of cosmic interrelationships.

STEPHEN DAVIS (Yale University, USA)

Ritualization and Psalmic Recitation in a Coptic Liturgical Procession at the White Monastery

The subject of my study is a trilingual manuscript in the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris (BN Copte 68) containing the rite of a medieval processional liturgy associated with the White Monastery in Egypt. Primarily written in Coptic, with selected sections in Greek and Arabic, the manuscript includes rubrics from the Psalms and other biblical passages, as well as a sermon by the fifth-century abbot of the monastery, Shenoute of Atripe, to be read at different points during the procession. My primary focus in this paper will be on the intersection of Psalmic recitation and bodily movement within the ritualized time and space of the procession. The manuscript is structured according to a series of *hermeneiai* and congregational responses drawn from the Psalms, which are coordinated with different actions and locations in the processional route. Drawing on other late ancient and early medieval Coptic manuscript evidence, I will argue that these *hermeneiai* had an oracular function for liturgical participants, whose encounter with the divine would have been mediated not only through the localized ritual construction of *loca sancta*, but also through the oral and aural acts of reciting the Psalms and listening to the sermon of their monastic father Shenoute read aloud in their midst.

SARGON G. DONABED (Roger Williams University, USA)

Assyria through the Ages: contemporary continuity of ritual in theory and praxis

Today, there are numerous ethno-linguistic/religious communities that self-identify as Assyrians; from members of the Chaldean Catholic Church in Iraq to Yezidis in European diaspora, to Syriac Orthodox bishops and laymen in the Mardin region of Turkey. This paper will discuss the meanings of ritual, and the practice thereof, by the current Assyrian community (or elements of it) with the hope of elucidating aspects of cultural endurance from the world of ancient Mesopotamia. It engages with both diaspora and ‘homeland’ communities with a historical or chronological approach meant to illustrate threads of continuity, whether eliminated (or forgotten) or reimagined and reappropriated.

ECKART FRAHM (Yale University, USA)

Revision, Relocation, and Reinterpretation: Remarks on the Ritual Dynamics of the Babylonian Akitu Festival in the Seventh Century BC

One of the most important and complex rituals of first millennium BCE Mesopotamia was the famous Akitu festival, performed every year during the first eleven days of the month of Nisannu in Babylon. The festival, which included divine processions within and outside the sacred landscape of Babylon, celebrated the reinstatement of the Babylonian king, the victory of the Babylonian god Marduk over the forces of chaos, and the annual rejuvenation of nature. In 689, the Assyrian king Sennacherib, after conquering and destroying Babylon, relocated the Akitu festival in an adapted version to the Assyrian city of Assur. The lecture investigates how Sennacherib manipulated the sacred infrastructure of Assur to accommodate the festival, and how his theologians rewrote the Babylonian epic *Enūma eliš*, the festival’s cultic legend, to reflect the Assyrian king’s new religious priorities. It also discusses a number of seventh century commentaries, both on the ritual acts associated with the Akitu festival and the mythological events narrated in *Enūma eliš*.

MILETTE GAIFMAN (Yale University, USA)

Libations and the Greek Ritual Landscape

The paper explores the place of the ritual act of intentionally pouring out liquids within the broader scheme of ancient Greek religion.

CHRISTINA GEISEN (Yale University, USA)

“Karnak as the stage for a ritual in commemoration of Senwosret I?”

The Ramesseum Dramatic Papyrus has caught the interest of several scholars since its discovery in a late Middle Kingdom tomb in the later built Ramesseum and its first publication by Sethe in 1928. The manuscript consists of a text and an illustration part, and features a guideline for the performance of a ritual. Due to the fragmentary state of the papyrus and to missing parallel texts, the identification of the ritual has been difficult. Suggestions include the representation of the Sed Festival, the Accession to the Throne, or the Coronation Ritual, either one performed for Senwosret I, whose name is preserved in the first two vignettes of the manuscript. Based on a revised translation of the text, an analysis of the participating officiants and their duties, an examination of the depiction of the king in the vignettes, and a comparison with other royal and statue rituals known from ancient Egypt, the manuscript certainly

deals with the dead king Senwosret I, and more specifically with his statue, and not with the living ruler, as would be the case if one of the three above-mentioned identifications was correct. Therefore, it is suggested that the manuscript features a statue ritual performed in commemoration of Senwosret I's accomplishments in Karnak. Such an interpretation makes it likely that the rites were carried out in said temple complex, maybe on an annual basis.

After a discussion on the new interpretation of the Ramesseum Dramatic Papyrus, the focus of the presentation will therefore be the question whether the ritual could have actually been performed at Karnak.

ROBYN GILLAM (York University, CAN)

Inhabiting the landscape in the past, present and future: Towards understanding ancient lives and modern perspective

This paper will explore epistemological aspects of the study of ancient landscapes. It will consider the different kinds of information available about past environments, beginning with ancient textual sources and art historical materials, especially how they may be interpreted in relation to archaeological and paleo-environmental data. In particular, this paper will focus on how ancient landscapes are reconstructed, and the role that a number of external factors, especially imaginative visualization, play in the conclusions of the researcher. How equivalent present day landscapes are experienced, especially by present inhabitants will be considered, as well as the ethical and ethical implications of utilizing such material.

ÖMÜR HARMANSAH (University of Illinois, USA)

Hittite Past, Water Cult, and the Landscapes of Plato in Medieval Konya (south-central Turkey)

This paper is a multi-temporal investigation of performance and performativity in the landscapes of south central Turkey, with a specific focus on the modern provinces of Konya and Karaman. Acting as a vibrant borderland between the Hittite Empire's "Lower Land" and the Mediterranean kingdom of Tarhuntašša during the Late Bronze Age, the landscapes of Konya and Karaman witnessed the construction of stone monuments and inscription of sites of geological and ritual significance, such as springs and prominent rock outcrops. The persistent durability of such sites allowed them to be incorporated to local cultural practices in their afterlife. This paper will focus on the medieval and early modern association of Hittite rock monuments with holy or saintly figures of the pre-Islamic and Islamic past such as Plato (Eflatûn) and Prophet Mohammed. This new ritual landscape was not only linked to the deep past through the reinterpretation of ancient monuments and rock carvings but also benefited from the performativity and local politics of watery places. The paper will argue that the creative place-specific engagement with the past and the vibrant nature of springs allowed such sites to constitute a coherent landscape of miracle and healing in medieval and early modern Anatolia.

MARTIN KERN (Princeton University, USA)

The Performance of Landscape in Early Imperial Chinese Ritual

The vast expanse of ancient China was not only an actual geography but also, constituted both ritually and textually, a political, historical, and religious one. It embodied both the terrestrial and celestial

realms, mapped against each other in correlative cosmology and incorporating cosmic as well as ancestral spirits. Through multiple forms and layers of ritual performances, this physical landscape of Chinese antiquity became the imperial landscape—a political cosmos enacted through sacrifices to mountains, rivers, and culture heroes-turned nature spirits; far-flung imperial processions; inscriptions placed on mountains and other natural sites; hunting parks and ritual hunts; sacrificial altars erected, and imperial sacrifices performed, at religious centers well beyond the capital realm; and ancestral shrines spread across the empire. Imperial sovereignty not merely extended itself through space: it represented itself by defining this space as political, historical, and religious. Within the early empire, the ritual performance of territorial sovereignty symbolically enacted the unified realm of formerly competing states. Gazing beyond the imperial borders, it defined the outer world as peripheral and tributary.

MARY-ANN POULS WEGNER (University of Toronto, Canada)

Reading Abydos as the Landscape of Postmortem Transformation

Abydos was integrally connected to postmortem transformation, from its early link with royal mortuary activity as the locus of tombs of Egypt's first rulers, to its developing associations with deities such as Khentyimentiu, Osiris, Wepwawet, Horus, Isis and Heqet, who played integral roles in the process of rebirth. The fact that individuals from a broad spectrum of socio-economic levels sought the support of such deities in order to attain an afterlife is reflected in the participation of many different sectors of the population in the development of the ritual landscape of Abydos and the importance of the site to expressions of social identity. This paper will examine the idea that the landscape of North Abydos replicated aspects of the geography of the Netherworld.

As the human participants in the performative rituals that linked elements of the built and natural environment of Abydos together were, of necessity, bound to the earthly plane, terrestrial elements of the site were symbolically identified with elements of the Duat, through which the deceased passed during the postmortem voyage. This realm was also conceptually linked to the body of Nut, through which the barque of the solar deity passed during the hours of the night, and within which the mystical union of that deity with Osiris took place. Although a rigid correspondence between loci mentioned in mortuary texts and the physical landscape of the site may not have existed, certain significant locales at the site did have correlates in the mortuary realm as it was visualized in specific periods. The North Abydos Votive Zone immediately adjacent to the main Osiris temple, which became a focal point for the construction of offering chapels and the erection of commemorative stelae by the Middle Kingdom, was associated with the culmination of the journey of apotheosis, the route through which the transformed Osiris passed and the rejuvenated solar deity emerged at dawn. By the New Kingdom, there are indications of elements of the built environment that expressed this symbolic identification with rebirth explicitly. Reading the geography of North Abydos as a reflection of the landscape of the Duat has significant potential to expand our understanding of the interrelated functions of specific elements of the built environment as well as the geographical points where individuals sought access to the divine.

LAUREN RISTVET (University of Pennsylvania, USA)

“Performing Nostalgia: Political Revival after Empire in the Hellenistic Near East”

In Ancient Near Eastern scholarship, Alexander’s conquest of the Achaemenid empire is often the defining line between two world orders, marking the end of a particular civilization. Archaeological research bears out some of this, identifying important shifts in settlement patterns, urban organization, irrigation networks, and trade patterns across Western Asia. At the same time, however, in many societies, the past— whether associated with rarefied traditions or nostalgia for a bygone political reality— became an important political symbol for a range of actors. I will consider two of the Near East, the South Caucasus and Seleucid Babylonia, where nostalgia for a vanished or vanishing world order provided a blue-print for emerging polities. In Seleucid Babylonia, Babylonian and Urukian governors, notable urban residents, and Seleucid kings all paid lip service to the importance of Babylonian history and ritual, while transforming it for their own ends. Similarly, in the South Caucasus, an area that was rarely under the control of the Seleucid kings, local dynasts drew upon both a local, mythical past and the symbolism of the Achaemenid empire in political and religious rituals, burial practices, and construction projects. Comparing political strategies in the Seleucid heartland and on the periphery allows us to reflect upon some of the paradoxes of nostalgia in a time of rapid social, economic and political change. Such a project may shed new light on the Hellenistic Near East.

UTE RUMMEL (DAI Cairo, Egypt)

“Landscape, tombs, and sanctuaries: the interaction of architecture and topography in Western Thebes”

The paper reflects on the spatial and ideational interrelation between the conceptualized landscape of the Theban West Bank, and the local sanctuaries and tombs, especially architecture and imagery of the latter. The Theban rock tomb constitutes a physical and conceptual part of the landscape, which was, as textual and pictorial sources illustrate, perceived as the embodiment of the regenerative goddess of the West Hathor-Imentet; it was in fact part of her anatomy. The western mountains were viewed as an agentic environment inhabited by the Theban divinities. In its specific mythology resp. theology, the West complements the East Bank: they form two components of a well-defined religious system that were ritually merged during the course of the major Theban festival processions emanating from the main temple at Karnak.

As a case study, the tomb-temples of the Theban High Priests Ramsesnakht and Amenhotep (20th Dynasty, ca. 1150-1070 BC) numbered K93.11/K93.12 in Dra’ Abu el-Naga will be considered, as they form an elaborate example of a consciously placed and interactive funerary monument. The large double tomb complex has been investigated by the German Archaeological Institute Cairo for many years (see the project’s website at <http://www.dainst.org/project/46083>), and has proved to be a key monument within the area. Constructed at a dominant position above the southern hill slope of Dra’ Abu el-Naga-North, the monuments are interrelated with both the geomorphology of the immediate environment as well as with important sanctuaries like the nearby *Men-iset* and Karnak Temple across the river. The results obtained in K93.11/K93.12 have provided a considerable amount of additional information on New Kingdom tomb architecture and semantics, and on the composition of the local ritual landscape. They shed more light on the function of tombs as an element of this landscape, i.e. how they were included into the Beautiful Feast of the Valley and other religious festivals. Moreover, the archaeological and topographical observations highlight the importance of Dra’ Abu el-Naga as a

stage for the festival processions not only during the Ramesside Period but from the Valley Festival's very onset in the 11th Dynasty.

MARTINA ULLMANN (University of Cologne/Ludwig Maximilians University, Munich, FRG)
Ritual landscape in Nubia during the New Kingdom: The example of Miam/Aniba

Immediately following the (re-)conquering of Nubia in early Dyn. 18 the Egyptians started to set up a new religious topography for the land south of the 1st cataract. Cults for Egyptian deities were installed from the 1st cataract in the north to the Gebel Barkal in the south. The most visible remains of this religious appropriation of Nubia by the Egyptians are the dozens of temples which were erected and run by the Egyptian authorities in the middle Nile valley during the New Kingdom. As in Egypt ritual landscapes emerged with cult buildings that were interrelated to each other in manifold ways (topographically, architecturally, theologically, ritually) and at various territorial levels (microcosm, macrocosm).

The paper aims at demonstrating the way in which this was done by examining as an example the ritual landscape which emerged around Miam/Aniba in Dyn. 18, incorporating the rock temple at Ellesiya to the north and the small shrines at Ibrim to the south.

ALBERTO URCIA (Yale University, USA)

Structure from Motion in Egyptology and beyond: an overview of experiences from on-field acquisition to final layouts

The talk presents the results gathered during several experiences within research expeditions aimed to digitally document archaeological features such as landscape, stratigraphy, architecture, artefacts and bones. What is presented here is not intended to offer holistic methodologies for recordings but rather showing workflows that have been used to solve different case studies, opening them to critics and/or suggestions.

To be functional the SfM technique always has to consider four main phases: choice of the right equipment, photo acquisition, post processing and layouts production. Considering these phases, we describe the technical issues and the advantages that characterized each case study. The dialog between experts and technology was primarily important in order to get a good flexibility to combine in the right way the different techniques to perform the recordings. In fact, the SfM alone cannot provide all the information that a digital document needs to be scientifically recognizable and usable: without the integration of other related major techniques such as topographic survey and computer graphics, 2D/3D imaging is quite limited and mainly satisfy for display and graphic purposes only.

The presentation shows how much the scale of representation is influencing the entire approach in terms of timings, storage space, equipment and skills. This parameter is defined by the level of accuracy and resolution necessary to record each subject so that it can offer enough detail to be properly observed, studied and edited. It was also interesting to see how much this innovative recoding technique is becoming part of the daily tasks of researchers who are not necessarily specialized in technology and how this new interaction is influencing the production of new knowledge in archaeology.

HARCO WILLEMS (Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium)

Dayr al-Barsha and Dayr al-Bahri. Two Ritual Landscapes in the time of Mentuhotep II

Religious processions in ancient Egypt are best known from the New Kingdom and later, but much earlier evidence does in fact exist. Different from the later examples, which tend to constitute connections between temples, the known earlier processions are mostly connected with the funerary cult. An early example of a procession of the former kind took place during the so-called Valley Festival, during which the cult statue of Amun(-Re) was brought in procession to the temple of Mentuhotep II at Dayr al-Bahri. Since the Dayr al-Bahri temple also shelters the royal tomb, this processional landscape also has strong funerary connotations.

This paper will confront this well known evidence from Thebes with the ritual landscape at the site of Dayr al-Bahri. The history of this latter processional infrastructure suggests a possible connection with the one at Thebes.