

“Assur Will Suffer:” Predicting Disaster in Ancient Egypt

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Abstract Divinatory texts from Egypt are much more plentiful than has often been assumed. Some of these, especially astrological texts, are primarily concerned with the destiny of the king and the country. An overview of the main types is given here, followed by the translation of some of the best-preserved specimens. It should be noted how often they predict disasters. This might, at first sight, be interpreted as a sign of how miserable life was in antiquity. But it is more likely that, in reality, they occurred more rarely and that this would be perceived as evidence for the effectiveness of appeasement rituals. Learning from disaster would include the incentive to improve techniques of prediction and appeasement of the gods.

There is a position, often repeated in scholarship, that Ancient Egypt was not a divinatory society, in contrast to its neighbours like Mesopotamia.¹ I do not intend to discuss the questionable validity of such an assessment for the earlier periods here in detail, but even there, we have, at least from the New Kingdom onwards, enough material to disprove such statements.² A good case in point is a manual of the Ramesside period, from the late second millennium BCE, about divination from oil—more specifically from the shape a drop of oil takes when put onto the surface

¹Jan Assmann, *Ägypten: Eine Sinngeschichte* (München: Hanser, 1996), 233–234; Assmann, “Kalendarische und messianische Geschichte: Altägyptische Formen geschichtlicher Semiotik,” in *Geschichtszeichen*, ed. Heinz Dieter Kittsteiner (Köln: Böhlau, 1999), 15–19; Assmann, “Zeitkonstruktion, Vergangenheitsbewußtsein und Geschichtsbewußtsein im alten Ägypten,” in *Der Ursprung der Geschichte: Archaische Kulturen, das Alte Ägypten und das Frühe Griechenland*, ed. Jan Assmann and Klaus E. Müller (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2005), 112–214.

²The best overview of Egyptian divination available at the moment is Alexandra von Lieven, “Divination in Ägypten,” *Altorientalische Forschungen* 26 (1999): 77–126. See also Joachim Friedrich Quack, “A Black Cat from the Right, and a Scarab on your Head: New Sources for Ancient Egyptian Divination,” in *Through a Glass Darkly: Magic, Dreams, and Prophecy in Ancient Egypt*, ed. Kasia Maria Szpakowska (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2006), 175–187.

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of water.³ The prognoses seem to be valid for a private individual rather than the country at large. Similar in date and even more badly preserved are remnants of thunder omina.⁴ From the published preliminary reports, it can be gathered that the apodoseis concern things like the incursion of locusts, strong wind or invasions of Egypt by foreign countries. Divination from earthquakes is also attested,⁵ even though the preliminary report does not allow more detailed insights into how this was carried out. Equally from the Ramesside period, we can see in the so-called Israel stela that the victory of the Egyptians over the Libyans was predicted by people observing the stars and the wind.⁶ From a slightly later time, the 22nd dynasty, comes an inscription which probably indicates a link between civil unrest and an eclipse.⁷

However, for the later periods we are even better served, although the majority of the sources are still unpublished and almost all are only preserved in rather small fragments. In the case of a rather large assemblage of manuscripts, namely those coming from the temple library of Tebtunis, about one sixth of the total manuscripts are of divinatory nature, especially astrological.⁸ This should clearly show the cultural relevance of techniques for reading the future.

Among the divinatory techniques attested in late Egyptian manuscripts (mainly in demotic script, a few times also in hieratic), the dominant one is astrology, but divination from dreams, the behaviour of animals, other "everyday" occurrences, and sometimes also from throwing dice or drawing lots is also mentioned. One major domain which until very recently seemed conspicuously lacking in comparison to Mesopotamian (and classical Mediterranean) divination is that of reading the entrails of animals.⁹

³Sara Demichelis, "La divination par l'huile à l'époque ramesside," in *La magie en Égypte: À la recherche d'une définition*, ed. Yvan Koenig (Paris: La Documentation Française, 2002), 149–165.

⁴Alessandro Roccati, "Lessico meteorologico," in *Studien zu Sprache und Religion Ägyptens zu Ehren von Wolfhart Westendorf* (Göttingen: F. Junge 1984), 343–354.

⁵Roccati, "Lessico meteorologico," 353–354.

⁶Hellmut Brunner, "Zeichendeutung aus Sternen und Winden in Ägypten," in *Wort und Geschichte: Festschrift für Karl Elliger*, ed. Hartmut Gese and Hans Peter Rieger (Neukirchen: Butzon & Bercker, 1973), 25–30, reprinted in Brunner, *Das hörende Herz: Kleine Schriften zur Religions- und Geistesgeschichte Ägypten* (Freiburg: Univ.-Verlag, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988), 224–230.

⁷See the discussion by von Lieven, "Divination in Ägypten," 102–103. See also Rolf Krauss, "Die Bubastiden-Finsternis im Lichte von 150 Jahren Forschungsgeschichte," *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts: Abteilung Kairo* 63 (2007): 211–223.

⁸Kim Ryholt, "On the Content and Nature of the Tebtunis Temple Library: A Status Report," in *Tebtynis and Soknopaiu Nesos: Leben im römerzeitlichen Ägypten; Akten des Internationalen Symposions vom 11. bis 13. Dezember 2003 in Sommerhausen bei Würzburg*, ed. Sandra L. Lippert and Maren Schentuleit (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005), 152.

⁹Classical sources like Herodot 2.57, Diodor 1.70.9 and Cicero, *De divinatione* 2.28 speak of Egyptian divination from entrails, but there is neither a treatise in Egyptian language nor an anatomical model attesting its actual existence in Egypt. However, William Furley, Victor Gysembergh, *Reading the Liver. Papyrological Texts an Ancient Greek Extispicy*

Many of the techniques practised in Egypt are only used for private questions and problems, and it is certainly an indication of the dignity of a technique that it is relevant for the whole country and not only for private individuals. Dreams are only relevant to the private individual who actually dreams them, except in one section of a dream-book with dreams about the Pharaoh behaving in different ways, which has some universal prognoses, such as that for the arrival of the inundation.¹⁰ Even more so, everyday omina like the behaviour of animals hardly ever concern the entire country, except perhaps in some cases concerning ants. To really indicate the future of countries and rulers seems to be a prerogative of the sky, and probably the oldest layer of celestial omina is exclusively concerned with general predictions. Individual astrology is likely a somewhat later development.¹¹ It also makes use of different phenomena, namely the position of planets in relation to the zodiacal signs or different parts of a circle of fixed relation to the horizon. These are changing, but constantly observable or calculable, whereas those celestial phenomena deemed relevant for general predictions are extraordinary events which happen only sporadically—which makes them appropriate signs for the extraordinary events of community life.

The most specific Egyptian astrological technique is certainly the prognostication according to the heliacal rising of Sirius, which is not only the brightest of all fixed stars, but also has a specific relevance for Ancient Egypt. The date of its first morning visibility coincides approximately with the onset of the Nil inundation, and this inundation is essential for the agriculture of the fluvial oasis Egypt, and thus for the possibility of life itself. Due to this fundamental importance, the date of the first morning visibility of Sirius is also the starting point for the ideal year in Ancient Egypt. This means of course that it is also a particularly apt moment for foretelling the character of the coming year.

Already from the Ramesside period, in the thirteenth century BCE there are some indirect testimonies showing that the rising of Sirius was supposed to announce a potentially good year, but detailed treatises on the procedure are only attested from much later periods.

Until now, the principal published testimony for this has been pKairo 31222,¹² a Roman period (second century CE) demotic manuscript from Tebtunis. There are many more unpublished fragments of similar compositions among the collections

(Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015) have published Greek-language papyrus fragments from Egypt which document its presence (and are clearly dependent upon Mesopotamian models).

¹⁰ Papyrus Carlsberg 490, Papyrus Carlsberg Collection, University of Copenhagen. This papyrus will be published by Kim Ryholt.

¹¹ Compare the situation in Mesopotamia; see Ulla Koch-Westenholz, *Mesopotamian Astrology: An Introduction to Babylonian and Assyrian Celestial Divination* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 1995); Francesca Rochberg, *Babylonian Horoscopes* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1998); Rochberg, *The Heavenly Writing: Divination, Horoscopy, and Astronomy in Mesopotamian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

¹² George R. Hughes, "A Demotic Astrological Text," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 10 (1950): 256–264.

in Copenhagen, Florence, and Oxford. Most of them, about a dozen, come from Tebtunis in the Fayum area. Besides the papyri in Egyptian script, there are also several in Greek. We should not attribute too much importance to the change in language—in Roman period Egypt, the indigenous priestly elite was thoroughly bilingual; and especially for astronomical and astrological manuscripts, we sometimes can prove that their users were at home in both languages.¹³ In one case, a Greek papyrus from Oxyrhynchos is so close to a demotic treatise that its editor has already speculated whether it might be a direct translation of an Egyptian model.¹⁴

Most of the manuscripts are based on the position of the planets in the different signs of the zodiac, which implies that they are relatively late in origin, since the zodiac was a concept only systematised in the second half of the first millennium BCE and originated in Mesopotamia.¹⁵ At least one papyrus (pCarlsberg 695), however, works on the basis of the size and brightness of the star. This is likely to be an older, more traditional method, which was the only readily available option for Egypt prior to the Late Period.

Less specifically Egyptian is another astrological domain, namely divination from eclipses. For eclipse omnia, as well as for other phenomena of the (lunar) disc, like specific colours or occultation of stars, the main published testimony is a manuscript from the late first century CE, now in Vienna.¹⁶ It comprises two main sections: the first contains a list for converting Mesopotamian to Egyptian months, followed by omnia from solar and lunar eclipses. According to the calendar date in the year, the region of the sky, and the hour, the eclipses are considered to be relevant for different global regions: Syria, the Hebrews, the Amorites, Crete, and Egypt. The presence of Near Eastern month names in the text has always been considered to be a good indicator of an ultimately Babylonian origin of the composition although there is nothing exactly corresponding to it in the preserved parts of the Mesopotamian omen series *Enuma Anu Enlil*. In any case, the specific correspondences between the Mesopotamian and the Egyptian months permit us to date the archetype on astronomical grounds to the time between about 625 and 482 BCE. There is one partly preserved ruler's name in the text. For a long time it has been restored as Dareius, but recent research has pointed out that a more plausible candidate is Nechepsos, i.e. Necho II of the early sixth century BCE, a

¹³ Joachim Friedrich Quack, "Egypt as an Astronomical-Astrological Centre between Mesopotamia, Greece, and India," in *The Interactions of Ancient Astral Science*, ed. David Brown and Harry Falck (Bremen: Hempden, forthcoming).

¹⁴ Alexander Jones, "4471. Omens from the Rising of Sirius," in *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri LXV*, ed. M. W. Haslam et al. (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1998), 130–133.

¹⁵ Bartel Leendert van der Waerden, "History of the Zodiac," *Archiv für Orientforschung* 16 (1952–53): 216–230; Lis Brack-Bernsen and Hermann Hunger, "The Babylonian Zodiac: Speculations on Its Invention and Significance," *Centaurus* 41 (1999): 280–292; Rochberg, *Heavenly Writing*, 126–131; John P. Britton, "Studies in Babylonian Lunar Theory: part III. The Introduction of the Uniform Zodiac," *Archive for History of Exact Sciences* 64 (2010): 617–663.

¹⁶ Published by Richard A. Parker, *A Vienna Demotic Papyrus on Eclipse- and Lunar Omnia* (Providence, Brown University Press, 1959).

figure famous in the Graeco-Roman tradition as a master of astrology.¹⁷ As a matter of fact, I will later mention a Greek-language lunarium which explicitly claims to be composed for king Nechepso(s).

The second part of the papyrus is illustrated with drawings. It contains, in the upper and the lower part of a page, two different kinds of observations. The upper half is said to concern appearances of the "disk," a term more often used for the sun in the Egyptian language, while the lower half certainly concerns the moon. Since the section about the "disk" also mentions phenomena like the presence of stars, which would be quite unexpected in a passage about the sun, there is some likelihood that this section also concerns the moon, and perhaps more specifically, the full moon.¹⁸ A noticeable feature of the text is that normally it does not give the forecasts directly as such but advises the divinatory specialist to pronounce them.¹⁹

So, the first part fixes the relevance of the eclipses according to time, the second specific lunar phenomena according to outward appearance. Neither of them makes use of either the zodiac or the decans as an alternative possibility of an astronomical reference system. This is potentially another indication of a relatively early date of composition, and peculiarities of grammar would agree with this.

More strongly based on specifically Egyptian astronomical parameters is the unpublished papyrus BM 10651. It has the traditional Egyptian decans as basic astronomical structure of the year, without any mention of the zodiac at all, which is quite surprising for a manuscript of the Roman period, dating probably from the first to second century CE. But this fact might go hand in hand with a striking, directly visible, outward point. Even if the language is purely demotic, the writing is still completely hieratic. That is also quite uncommon for the Roman period; both facts together are likely indicators that the origins of the composition itself go back quite a way, probably to the Saïtic dynasty. The basic phenomena used for the predictions are solar and lunar eclipses and risings of Mercury during the ten-day periods attributed to a specific decan.

Besides the direct attestation of eclipse-omina in the form of treatises, we also find this motive in a literary tale attested in a demotic manuscript of the early Roman period. There, the death of king Psammetichus II (of the Saïte dynasty) is related to an eclipse, and the date can be calculated and proved to be astronomically correct.²⁰

¹⁷Kim Ryholt, "New Light on the Legendary King Nechepso of Egypt," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 97 (2011): 62.

¹⁸Proposed by Mark Smith, "Did Psammetichus I Die Abroad?," *Orientalia Lovanienisa Periodica* 22 (1991): 106; Briant Bohleke, "In Terms of Fate: A Survey of the Indigenous Egyptian Contribution to Ancient Astrology in Light of Papyrus CtYBR inv. 1132(B)," *Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur* 23 (1996): 11–46, plate 1. On 27n87, the author muses about whether the term *itm* could refer to the sun if sun-spots were meant as an observed phenomenon.

¹⁹This is similar in style to older Egyptian medical diagnosis texts, which are formulated thus: "if you find the symptom x, then you shall say . . ."

²⁰Smith, "Did Psammetichus I Die Abroad?" For a second manuscript of the composition, see Kim Ryholt, *The Carlsberg Papyri 10. Narrative Literature from the Tebtunis Temple Library*, CNI

Also astrological, but not completely clear in its specific technique, is papyrus BM 10661,²¹ probably from around the first century CE. It is certain that the position of the planets in certain signs of the zodiac is relevant, but I suspect that some other factor is also of influence, perhaps an eclipse.

An unpublished demotic papyrus at Cairo Museum (RT 4/2/31/1 (SR 3427)) dating to about the first century BCE and now under study by Philippe Collombert,²² is focused on meteorological phenomena like thunder, including prodigal special phenomena like a rain of frogs. Unfortunately, the text is very fragmentarily preserved, but from what remains, it is sufficiently clear that the presages concern universal problems like invasion by a foreign people, famine, lack of rain, and inundation. Collombert points to frequent mentions of Assyria in this text and even considers it quite probable that it is actually a translation from the Akkadian.

Rather unclear in its specific base is papyrus BM 10660, a manuscript of uncertain origin and probably middle Ptolemaic date, ca. 150 BCE. Some event which was likely only specified in the lost beginning of the text is relevant in different senses according to different calendrical time-spans, normally of ten days. We can only speculate if the relevant event was an eclipse, thunder, or even different phenomena.

After this overview on the main sources for my inquiry, I would now like to focus on their specific contents. I have assembled these papyri because, in spite of some divergences in the technique used to arrive at the predictions, they have a point in common: they make prognoses about countries, rulers, and the top elite, and not about everyday individuals.

While many of the prognoses are about disaster, and hence directly relevant to our topic, we cannot reduce them to uniformly negative announcements. Not only dire events are announced, but also regular or even particularly positive situations.

Publications 35 (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2012), 131–141, pl. 18. See also Krauss, “Bubastiden-Finsternis,” 219–220, whose argumentation against this interpretation is, however, marred by serious errors, especially when Krauss argues that the “Book of breathing” is not attested before the Ptolemaic period. Firstly, since the text describes a burial for a king, not a private individual, the practice could well have been different (we do not have any preserved royal funerary papyri of the Saïtic period to check), and second, and more importantly, since the text uses the expression *tj.wi n snsn* ‘hymn of breathing’, arguing from copies of a work always called *šꜥ.t n snsn* ‘letter (deed) for breathing’ is methodically unacceptable. Krauss also overlooks the general fact that demotic narratives about the Late Libyan and Saïtic period tend to incorporate many elements of historical reality. See Joachim Friedrich Quack, *Einführung in die altägyptische Literaturgeschichte III: Die demotische und gräko-ägyptische Literatur. 3., erneut veränderte Auflage*, Einführungen und Quellentexte zur Ägyptologie 3 (Berlin: Lit, 2016), 52–84.

²¹“For this text as well as BM 19660, see Carol A. R. Andrews, Unpublished demotic papyri in the British Museum, *Egitto e Vicino Oriente* 17 (1994), 29–37, there p. 29–32.”

²²Philippe Collombert, “Omnia brontoscopiques et pluies de grenouilles”. In Acts of the Tenth International Congress of Demotic Studies: Leuven, 26–30 August 2008, ed. Mark Depauw and Yanne Broux (Leuven; Paris; Walpole, MA: Peeters, 2014), 15–26.”

To be fair, one has to classify them simply as making predictions of a general relevance, regardless of the specific outcome.

One part of the predictions concerns weather and the natural world. Perhaps the most important point is the question of the Nile inundation, which was crucial for the well-being of Egypt. The most normal case is that a binary opposition is used, either high inundation or low inundation. Sometimes, but rarely, a third category comes into play, namely adequate water. From that, we come to the growth of crops, especially the grain, which was fundamental for the Egyptian economy. Also, the situation of cattle and wild animals is considered. Many of the texts give one overall statement about the economy (*šꜥr*), using a word which otherwise often has the more specific meaning of "price" but is attested with a similar global meaning, "state of the economy" in a passage in the instruction of Khasheshonqi (5, x + 6)²³ (which, in its formulations, is close to omen texts). Probably the same connotation is also present in another instruction text, *plnsinger* 31, 13.²⁴ The possibility of famine is intricately linked with predictions about crops, cattle, and economics.

Occurrences of death and pestilence are still placed in the realm of natural (biological) disasters, but the political situation in a more narrow sense is also well covered. Rebellion and internal strife are predicted, as well as the death of kings or high officials. Even the death of a sacred animal in Egypt does not go unpredicted. In one case, the birth of a ruler's eldest son is foreseen.

Due to their political relevance, the prognoses make frequent mention of foreign countries. The most often mentioned is Assyria, which could, according to Egyptian usage, probably also stand for the larger region of Syria. Crete also features but, as far as I can see, no other Greek regions. Babylon is also mentioned once. References to the Medes are rather likely to mean what is presently called Persia, as the latter designation is rarely used in the Egyptian language. Libya and Nubia appear sporadically. In principle, it should be possible to draw conclusions from the countries involved on the most likely date of composition of these treatises. They seem to fit better with the middle of the first millennium BCE than with the Hellenistic or Roman period.

While it is obviously to be expected that the texts contain predictions about the future behaviour of these foreign countries towards Egypt, be they peaceful or at war, it is a bit more notable that they also predict the internal conditions of the foreign countries, especially negative ones. There are more general statements like "Assur will suffer" or "death will occur in the district of Assyria" and, in some cases, we even find quite specific predictions about the imminent death of a foreign ruler and questions of succession. No normal or even especially positive prognoses for the foreign regions are attested.

²³ See the translation in Friedhelm Hoffmann and Joachim Friedrich Quack, *Anthologie der ägyptischen Literatur* (Berlin: Lit, 2007), 280 and 366, note p.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 269.

In many cases, it is obvious that the phenomenon observed gives uniformly negative predictions, so it is a completely bad sign and leads to unmitigated disaster. In some cases, however, we can observe that conflicting evaluations are present and the prognoses are bad for some domains but positive for others. This can go so far that the texts might appear slightly bizarre or schizophrenic. A good example is the prediction: "Death will occur in the entire country. Its life will be exceedingly good with barley and emmer." Even worse is the passage "Great strife will occur in Egypt. Barley and emmer will be plentiful, likewise all harvest. All cultivation of each field shall be good. Satiety will occur everywhere. They will quarrel, they will drink the jar and eat the knife," where it seems as if abundance and famine are predicted at the same time. Such bipolar effects are also known from later Greek-language predictions,²⁵ so the strange situation cannot simply be attributed to bad textual transmission or my insufficient translation ability. Rather, it might be a realistic assessment that quite often in life, some things go wrong, but total disaster on all fronts is not the norm.

After this presentation of the source material, it is time to draw some conclusions. These divinatory techniques generally treat phenomena on the same footing that we would rather keep separate. These may be, on the one hand, natural disasters, be they climatic or related to fauna, and, on the other hand, political disasters like war, internal strife, or the death of rulers. We tend to tackle those categories quite differently in our times. In the case of famine, organizations like the UN World Food Programme or charitable institutions try to organise food deliveries; in the case of war or civil strife, the UN Security Council would issue a declaration, and perhaps send troops on a peace-keeping mission, and, in the case of the death of a ruler, political leaders around the world would send letters of condolence, and one would simply install the next one. Perhaps this is due to the changed face of the world. Especially in Western Europe and North America, people have become so used to long periods of peace—by now more than 60 years—that they tend to forget that, for much of human history, war was an almost constant affair. Certainly it was on a more limited scale than the twentieth century's world wars, but still, many Egyptian and Near Eastern rulers went on campaigns almost each year.

Another point to be considered is the likelihood of occurrence of the signs predicting disaster. After all, eclipses are not that rare. Lunar eclipses, if we include the partial ones, occur about 1.5 times every year and are quite easy to observe in a country where clouds are rare (partial solar eclipses are even more frequent—2.3 times per year—but those of lower magnitude are much less obvious to the observer).²⁶ Among the Sirius prognoses, so many of the possible planetary positions have negative connotations that a bad prediction must have occurred quite

²⁵See Franz Boll, *Aus der Offenbarung Johannis: Hellenistische Studien zum Weltbild der Apokalypse* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1914), 84–87.

²⁶Joachim Herrmann, *dtv-Atlas zur Astronomie* (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch-Verlag, 1990), 53.

often. If we suppose that the amount and statistical frequency of the signs used for predicting disaster was in any way correlated with the real observed frequency of disasters of some sort, then life cannot have been very nice in antiquity. But it is quite possible that we have a rather inflated number of predicted disasters, which would, of course, mean that the rituals used for appeasing the gods and averting disaster would have been perceived as being rather efficient.

The content of the treatises, with its clear emphasis on events of relevance for the entire country, often even for foreign countries, should make it clear that what we have should be considered ruler’s knowledge—that is, of importance for making decisions about internal and external politics.²⁷ The predictions about internal problems in foreign countries in particular would have been quite useful to somebody involved in decisions about Egyptian foreign policy but irrelevant for the ordinary local population.

Even if the predictions were in some cases of real use for the local countryside, like the question of high or low inundation, it could hardly have constituted its primary area of intended readers. Rather, it would be logical to see such manuals in the hands of scholarly specialists close to the royal court and functioning as its advisors, in the same way as we know it for the Neo-Assyrian period in Mesopotamia.²⁸ They would have been especially important for a political structure with an indigenous Egyptian elite making decisions, which means that the logical high points for postulating the usage of such texts would have been the 26th and the 30th dynasty.

This opens up the question of the context of the attested manuscripts. Unfortunately, some are of unknown provenance. In the case of the fragments from Oxyrhynchus, they are from the rubbish heaps of a city and thus not of immediately obvious place within society, although it can surely be said that they were circulating in a provincial town with only sporadic contacts to the centres of power.²⁹ Looking at the larger ensemble of Egyptian-language fragments from Oxyrhynchus, there is some probability that they belong more specifically to a priestly milieu because the only other textual genres safely attested are divinatory treatises, rituals, and collections of fundamental religious knowledge. Even more clearly, the same setting can be proved for the manuscripts from Tebtunis and Soknopaiou Nesos, where we know that they formed part of temple libraries.

²⁷ Here I follow Assyriological terminology, see e.g. Beate Pongratz-Leisten, *Herrschaftswissen in Mesopotamien: Formen der Kommunikation zwischen Gott und König im 2. und 1. Jahrtausend v. Chr.* (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1999).

²⁸ See e.g. Simo Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars* (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1993).

²⁹ For Oxyrhynchus, see the overviews in Peter J. Parsons, *City of the Sharp-Nosed Fish: Greek Lives in Roman Egypt* (London: Phoenix, 2007); Alan K. Bowman et al., eds., *Oxyrhynchus: A City and Its Texts* (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 2007). None of them covers the Egyptian language texts where my conclusions are based on personal inspection of the papyrus collection at Oxford. See Joachim Friedrich Quack, “The Last Stand? What Remains Egyptian at Oxyrhynchus,” in *Canon and Canonicity*, ed. Kim Ryholt and G. Barjamovic (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2016), 105–126.

So, this leads to the question of how the priests made use of those manuals. It is obvious that they did make fairly intensive use of them, given that at Tebtunis alone, we have so many manuscripts, written in at least a dozen different hands. Did they retain the manuals for local customers, even if only some of the predictions would have been of real interest to them? Or were they part of a larger network across the country that was supposed to report relevant information to the residence of the Ptolemaic king or, in the Roman period, the prefect of Egypt, at Alexandria? At the moment, I do not know of any evidence which would allow an answer to this question. We cannot exclude that the full breadth of predictions was retained in the texts since they were considered canonical, even if some of them were rarely of immediate use.

What exactly was, for the Egyptians, the benefit obtained from predicting disaster? The texts are never explicit when it comes to the question of possible counter-measures. Still, we can suppose that predictions of impending disaster were not read just to prepare the mind for taking the shock more easily. Rather, negative predictions for their own country are likely to have been countered by the inhabitants through rituals aiming at pacifying the gods, as is known for similar kinds of predictions in Assyria,³⁰ and even for Egypt itself in some cases of predictions for private people.³¹

In that sense, for the ancient Egyptians, we can only apply the idea of learning from disaster according to a quite surprising twist: They would not so much learn from one disaster that actually occurred how to deal better with the consequences in the next case or how to avoid too-risky projects. Rather, from the announcement of an impending disaster, they would learn the necessity to prevent it, and if it occurred nevertheless, or occurred completely unpredicted, they might be more inclined to learn about improvements in their prediction techniques or their rituals for appeasing the gods.

From the presentation of this Egyptian material, we can move to probable flows of concepts where Egyptian divinatory treatises might have been influential for other cultures as well, especially the Greeks. There certainly was awareness of the techniques and their potential. The historian Diodor of Sicily, who lived in the second half of the first century BCE, claims that, due to their precise records about the stars, the Egyptians were capable of foretelling the destruction of crops, abundant yields, and pestilences, and that they were able to predict earthquakes or floods, or the risings of comets (I, 81, 5).

We can also attest more specific parallels concerning individual techniques within the corpus of the Greek astrological treatises. An echo of the most specifically Egyptian method of the Sirius omnia on New Year's Day can be found in the Greek astrological treatise of Hephaestion of the early fifth century CE. Coming

³⁰Stefan Maul, *Zukunftsbewältigung: Eine Untersuchung altorientalischen Denkens anhand der babylonisch-assyrischen Löserituale (Namburbi)* (Mainz: von Zabern, 1994).

³¹See Joachim Friedrich Quack, "Schicksal im späten Ägypten," in "Schicksalsvorstellungen," ed. Elisabeth Begemann and Gösta Gabriel, special issue, *Mythos* (forthcoming).

himself from Thebes in Egypt (Apotelesmatika 1, 23),³² Hephaistion gives a fairly developed description of what is observed and relevant. Colours and related visible phenomena are covered as well as the position of the Moon and the planets. In this case, the wise Ancient Egyptians are explicitly indicated as authorities. Even thunder during the first seven days after the New Year is considered to be relevant. Since Hephaistion himself, although writing in Greek, was from Egypt, there was not yet any real cultural flow, except when his manual became part of the Byzantine astrological literature. Sirius omnia seem also to continue in more recent oriental cultures, especially in the Judeo-Aramaic, Syriac, and Arabic languages.³³

For eclipse omnia, we have Hephaistion as well, who devotes a whole chapter to the eclipse omnia of the ancient Egyptians (I, 21). There also is an anonymous excerpt which has preserved a generally fuller version of his source.³⁴

Globally speaking, divinatory treatises based on phenomena like eclipses, thunder, earthquakes, or astrological signs for the year are quite frequent among the often anonymous Greek-language astrological treatises, as well as collected in a large manual by John the Lyde.³⁵ Here, our new Egyptian text material might allow re-opening a very old question. Almost a hundred years ago, Carl Bezold and Franz Boll pointed out that some Greek-language astrological predictions and Mesopotamian omnia contained principally in the astrological treatise *Enuma Anu Enlil* showed structural similarities and, in one case, even quite close specific agreement. They concluded that the Greek material was dependent on the Near Eastern one, and it has to be admitted that the similarities they point out are of real weight.

Still, it is conspicuous that not a single one of the Greek texts in question ever referred explicitly to Babylonian models while, in some cases, there were claims of Egyptian models, most of all in a lunarium of which it is claimed that it was composed of two sources, the one of which the hierogrammateus Melampous wrote for King Nechepso of Egypt, while the other was found written in hieroglyphs in the adyton of the temple of Heliopolis, during the time of king Psammetichus (CCAG VIII/4, 105, 2–5).

Perhaps a solution can now be proposed: the Greeks actually received the treatises in Egypt, and would thus ascribe such a pedigree to them, if they cared at all about the origin. But the Egyptian material is certainly not without relation to the Mesopotamian one, and in some cases, even the possibility of adaptation or direct translation of cuneiforms models must be seriously considered. Thus what

³² Hephaistionis Thebani, *Apotelesmaticorum libri tres*, ed. David Pingree, vol. 1 (Leipzig: Teubner 1973), 66–73.

³³ Alessandro Mengozzi, *Trattato di Sem e altri testi astrologici* (Brescia: Paideia, 1997); Reimund Leicht, *Astrologumena Judaica: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der astrologischen Literatur der Juden* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 46–55.

³⁴ Compare *Catalogus codicum astrologorum graecorum* (CCAG) VII, 129–151.

³⁵ For the last one, see the edition in Ioannes Laurentius Lydus, *Liber de Ostentis ex codicibus italicis auctus et calendaria graeca omnia: Accedunt anecdota duo de cometibus et de terrae motibus*, ed. Kurth Wachsmuth (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1873).

Bezold and Boll observed might well be indirect relations between Greek and Mesopotamian treatises filtered by an intermediary Egyptian stage.

So far I have commented on the mainly casuistic treatises which, even if cast in Greek, are stylistically relatively close to their Egyptian and Near Eastern models. The adaptation can, however, be much more profound. A good case for this is the famous astrologer Ptolemy, who devoted the whole second book of his *Tetrabiblos* to predictions of general nature, mainly for different countries but also for individual cities.³⁶ He discusses phenomena like wars, famines, pestilence, earthquakes, deluges, and also weather and crops. For him, the major signs of importance are eclipses and the transit of planets at rising and stationary points. He also discusses comets and meteorological phenomena. As such, he is not really far away from the basic concerns of the texts I have discussed. His way of presenting the divinatory procedure, however, is quite at variance. He writes in a highly discursive style and gives rules to be applied but no single specific set where any particular constellation is linked with a specific prediction—they are supposed to be derived by the one who has mastered the rules on his own. This is the very opposite of the normal Egyptian or Mesopotamian way, where casuistic individual predictions are given and the inherent general rules never spelled out directly, although there obviously were logical rules involved in elaborating them. So, here we have a much more thorough assimilation and recreation of the old practises.

Text Samples

A) Papyrus Cairo 31222:

(1) The prognoses of Sirius: If she rises while the moon is in Sagittarius: [...] grain in the field [...] (2) in the province of the Assyrian. Much (?) death will occur. ... will be frequent in weakness (?) by night and by day. [...] will (3) go up (?) and it will fill up completely (?).

If she rises while Saturn is in Sagittarius: The Pharaoh³⁷ will destroy³⁸ one of his nobles, and he will ... [...] some³⁹ (4) princes in Egypt. Pharaoh will [...] will go to a temple.⁴⁰ The inundation will come to Egypt. [...] will occur in the region of Crete (?).⁴²

³⁶Text edition Wolfgang Hübner, ed., *Claudii Ptolemaei opera omnia*, vol. III, 1, 'Αποτελεσματικά (Leipzig: Teubner, 1998).

³⁷Against Hughes' reading *nsw* it should be stressed that this is a writing of *pr-c3*, where the *pr*-sign is not written out, as can also be found elsewhere in late hieratic and demotic manuscripts.

³⁸Read *č i t c k h 3 . t m t w = f*.

³⁹Read *h' n. w*.

⁴⁰I would propose to read it as *'rp3'y*.

⁴¹Something bad, according to the determinative.

⁴²For the reading, see Parker, *Vienna Demotic Papyrus*, 11 note to line 25.

If she rises while Jupiter is in Sagittarius: The Pharaoh of Egypt will have power over his (6) region. Enmity will occur against [him], and he will finally escape from it. Many people will rebel against the Pharaoh. Appropriate water is what will come to (7) Egypt. Seed and grain will be high in money. An economy which is poor in money.⁴³ The death of a god will occur in Egypt. (8) A ... will come up to Egypt, and it will go away again.

If she rises while Mars is in Gemini:⁴⁴ (9) Some people will rebel [in] Egypt (and) in the country of the Assyrian. Pharaoh will set out against them (10) with his army. He will destroy them.⁴⁵ The sky will not be able to have much rain in the region of the Assyrian. (10) Illness, ... and enmity⁴⁶ will occur in [...] pestilence for five months.

(11) If she rises while Venus is in [...]: [...] will kill (?)⁴⁷ ... (12) Pharaoh will do a good thing for Egypt [...] will come at the end of this year. ... of mercantile (13) activity⁴⁸ will happen after [...] months. [...]

If she rises while Mercury is in Gemini, the entire country will be happy.⁴⁹ Seed will be high in money. The economy [...] small again.⁵⁰

If she rises while [the sun (?)] is in Sagittarius: the Pharaoh of Egypt will do [...] in [...]

B) From Papyrus Vienna D 6278+

(4, 26) If [the moon be eclipsed (4, 27) in the second month of summer, (since) the month belongs to ...], it means that the chief of the country in question shall be captured. The army shall fall to [battle]-weapo[ns].

(7, 11) If you see the moon during the first month of inundation,⁵¹ ..., (7, 12) [you should] say about it: (7, 13) the ruler of Egypt will sent (7, 14) to the rulers of the foreign countries, (7,15) and they will do it.⁵²

(8, 1) [If you see the] disk being (8, 2) [completely in the colour of gold] on full-moon day, (8, 3) there being a black disk around it, (8, 4) you shall say about it: Great fighting will happen (8, 5) in the entire land. The foreigners (8, 6) ... will

⁴³I read $\text{š}^{\text{c}}\text{r } i\text{w}=f \text{ hm } (n) \text{ h}\check{\text{c}}$.

⁴⁴This whole section has a direct parallel in the Greek papyrus Oxyrhynchus 4471.

⁴⁵I read $i\text{w}=f \text{ r } \check{\text{c}}\check{\text{i}}.t \text{ } \check{\text{c}}\check{\text{k}}^{\text{r}}=w$.

⁴⁶I read $\check{\text{s}}\check{\text{n}}\text{y} \dots \check{\text{c}}\check{\text{c}}\text{y}$.

⁴⁷I would propose to read $h\check{\text{i}}b$.

⁴⁸To be read $i\check{\text{p}}.t \text{ } \check{\text{s}}\check{\text{w}}\check{\text{t}}$.

⁴⁹Unmistakable traces of the typical Tebtunis writing of $n\check{\text{f}}\check{\text{r}}$ are preserved.

⁵⁰To be read $h\check{\text{m}} \text{ } \check{\text{c}}\check{\text{n}}$.

⁵¹I propose to read $i\check{\text{p}}\check{\text{i}} \text{ } \check{\text{i}}\check{\text{h}}.t$. In the word previously read as $h\check{\text{t}}\text{y}$, the supposed sign h looks very different from the clear alphabetical h in $h\check{\text{k}}$ 4, 27. Compare the almost identical writing of a clear $i\check{\text{p}}\check{\text{i}} \text{ } \check{\text{i}}\check{\text{h}}.t$ in IV, 14.

⁵²I read $[m\check{\text{t}}\check{\text{w}}]=w \text{ } i\check{\text{r}}\check{\text{i}}=w$.

come upon Egypt, (8, 7) they will make quarrels and trouble (8, 8) and the king of Egypt will (8, 9) slay his officials.⁵³ The fishes (8, 10) will be plentiful in the river, (8, 11) their number will not be known. The birds will be plentiful in the sky, (8, 12) their number will not be known.

(8, 13) If you see the moon in the first month of inundation, ... (8, 14) when it is in the colour of gold, while there is a disk (8, 15) inside it, you shall say about it: Death will (8, 16) occur in the entire country. Its life will be (8, 17) exceedingly good with barley and emmer.

(9, 1) If you see the disk being (9, 2) completely in the colour of gold,⁵⁴ while its red (9, 3) ... is downwards, (9, 4) and there is one black disk on its west (9, 5) and another one on its east, you (9, 6) shall say about it: War will occur in [the entire land] (9, 7)—variant: the land of Egypt—(9, 8) and one king will drive out another king. [...] (9, 9) Great strife will occur in Egypt. Barley (9, 10) and emmer will be plentiful, likewise all harvest. All cultivation (9, 11) of each field shall be good. Satiety (9, 12) will occur everywhere. They will quarrel, (9, 13) they will drink the jar (?) and eat the knife.

(9, 14) If you see the moon in the first month of inundation ..., (9, 15) while its north is dark and its south light, (9, 16) you shall say about it: [A king will] (9, 17) drive out and [the rulers of] (9, 18) the foreign countries [will slay their] (9, 19) rebels.

(12, 1) if you see the disk [in the colour] (12, 2) of gold, there being three stars within it, [you shall] (12, 3) say about it: A great disturbance will [occur] (12, 4) in Egypt for [...] years, while [...] (12, 5) them. The king of (12, 6) Egypt will kill his officials. (12, 7) South, Nord, West, [East] ... (12, 8) is what he will reach among them.⁵⁵

(12, 9) If you see the moon in the colour of (12, 10) gold while there is a black star in its middle, (12, 11) you shall say about it: War and disturbance (12, 12) will occur in the entire land, and a man will (12, 13) eat the possession of his fellows (12, 14) and they don't have the power to save themselves.

(13, 1) If you see the disk, (13, 2) it being rising and bright with smoke (?)⁵⁶ (13, 3) on the 'day of the nest',⁵⁷ then a low⁵⁸ inundation (13, 4) will come to Egypt.

⁵³To be read *sr.w*, see Joachim Friedrich Quack, "Zur Lesung des Wortes für 'Beamtschaft,'" *Enchoria* 18 (1991): 193–196; now accepted by Mark Smith, *Papyrus Harkness* (MMA 31.9.7) (Oxford: Griffith Institute, 2005), 203.

⁵⁴For the correction of reading and translation, see R. J. Williams, review of *A Vienna Demotic Papyrus on Eclipse- and Lunar-Omina*, by Richard A. Parker, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 25, no. 1 (1966): 69.

⁵⁵I read *'n.īm'* [=w].

⁵⁶See Williams, review of *A Vienna Demotic Papyrus*, 69.

⁵⁷For *šyṣ* with the house-determinative, see Heinz-Josef Thissen, "Verkauf eines Geflügelhofs (P. Loeb 87 + 63)," in *Texte—Theben—Tonfragmente: Festschrift für Günter Burkard*, ed. Dieter Kessler et al. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2009), 406–413, esp. 409–410n2.

⁵⁸The sign is to be read (*pace* Parker, *A Vienna Demotic Papyrus*, 44) *hm*, not *wr* since it has no divine determinative. Besides, for a 'high' inundation, the text consistently uses *ṣ*.

it being good. (13, 5) Barley and emmer will be plentiful in the entire land. (13, 6) Death will occur within three years (13, 7) among the animals, the men, (13, 8) [the fishes, the] birds in the entire land. (13, 9) A [...] inundation (?)⁵⁹ will come this year.

(14, 1) If you see the disk, it being (14, 2) rising in the east at the beginning of a year, while its (14, 3) southern part is covered, then death will occur (14, 4) at the beginning of the year.

(14, 5) If you see the moon being bright, (14, 6) while there is a star within it, you shall (16, 7) say about it: Confusion will occur in Egypt (14, 8) for three years, and the strong one will take (14, 9) the possession of [the] weak⁶⁰ one while he has no (14, 10) power to save <himself>. They will cultivate (14, 11) the field but will not find⁶¹ harvest.

(15, 4) If you see the moon [being] entirely black (15, 5) while there is a red disk (15, 6) [i]n its midst, then you shall say about it: The army/population⁶² (15, 7) of Egypt will revolt against the (15, 8) ruler of Egypt, they will capture him⁶³ (15, 9) like a woman with her children.

(16, 1) If you see the disk, it being (16, 2) divided on one side, then death will occur (16, 3) at the beginning of the year.

(16, 4) If you see the moon in two colours (16, 5) in its midst in gold, then you shall say about it: (16, 6) One king will drive out another king, and (16, 7) men shall live in Upper and Lower Egypt, (16, 8) and the army/population of Egypt (16, 9) will fight [...], (16, 10) and their e[lder]⁶⁴ children will [...] (16, 11) their younger⁶⁵ children.

Fr. 1: (1, 1) If you see the disk completely in the colour (1, 2) of gold, and there is no other colour (1, 3) in it, you shall say about it: The northern country will be (1, 4) well off.⁶⁶ Barley and emmer will be plentiful in the field. (1, 5) The king of Egypt spend his life-time (1, 6) while his heart is happy. Fish and fowl will be (1, 7) abundant. Death of ...⁶⁷ will occur. A high inundation (1, 8) [will come ...]

⁵⁹The preserved downstroke below the base-line can hardly belong to any other word than *ḥꜥꜣi*.

⁶⁰To be read *gb*, not *hs*.

⁶¹For the reading, see Joachim Friedrich Quack, "Korrekturvorschläge zu einigen demotischen literarischen Texten," *Enchoria* 21 (1994): 72.

⁶²The term *mꜣꜥ* is specifically a designation of the army in earlier periods, but later evolves to mean 'mass, population'.

⁶³See also Karl-Theodor Zauzich, "Das demotische 'Buch des Geckos' und die Palmomantik des Melampous," in *Forschungen in der Papyrussammlung: Eine Festgabe für das Neue Museum*, ed. Verena Lepper (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 2012), 355–373, esp. 369n17.

⁶⁴I would propose to restore *ꜥꜣꜣy.w*.

⁶⁵To be read *hm* against Parker's reading *wr* 'big' (*Vienna Demotic Papyrus*, 48), see note 55.

⁶⁶Instead of assuming an omission in the text, like Parker, *Vienna Demotic Papyrus*, 49f., I interpret *nꜥꜣr.w* as writing for the infinitive.

⁶⁷Hardly 'a star', as read by Parker, *Vienna Demotic Papyrus*, 49.

C) From Papyrus BM 10651 (Unpublished)

(1, x + 2) [.] much death will occur [in] Egypt. [. . .] will [. . .] (1, x + 3) [pe] rish. The foreign people will come to Egypt [.] (1, x + 4) . . . will occur. The one who will eat fish and fowl of the sky in this month [will] become weak (?) [. . .] (1, x + 5) . . . Do not give honey to any medical prescription in this month!

If Mercury appears [. . .] (1, x + 6) will become weak. The high officials of Pharaoh will die. [. . .] (1, x + 7) Strong wind from south-east is what will happen in them. Now [. . .].

(1, x + 8) If the sun makes an eclipse in the [. . .] which he said, then a high inundation will occur in [. . .] (1, x + 9) take the sanctuaries of the gods. All . . . will . . . [. . .] (1, x + 10) . . .

If Mercury appears, he being [. . .] (1, x + 11) the sanctuaries. The ruler of [. . .] will die within ten months, and [. . .] (1, x + 12) will succeed him. The one who [eats] things in this month which have co[oked] milk in it will die (1, x + 13) by a gazelle.

If the moon makes an eclipse in the decade he said, then Pharaoh will be at peace with the [ruler of] (1, x + 14) Assyria and with the ruler of Crete. The chief men of the north will die (1, x + 15) within this year. Little water will come to Egypt. The economy will be feeble. Famine will (1, x + 16) occur. Egypt will be bad off. Worms will appear in the fields. . . . will [. . .] Death (1, x + 17) will occur among the animals. Terror will occur within Egypt. A foreign people will come to Egypt in secret, (1, x + 18) and will go away without having taken (anything). The women who will eat [.] (1, x + 19) in this month while being pregnant, the one whom the give birth to will die. Do no use medical prescriptions in this month (1, x + 20) except emetics.

If [. . .] which he said, then one will destroy the land of [. . .] by (1, x + 21) a weak man. His [. . .] will [. . .] afterwards. The district of S[yria (?)] will be badly off.

.
(2, x + 8) [. . .] pestilence will occur for six years. It is good to make medical remedies. [. . .] (2, x + 9) [.] spittle. Dead people . . . feebleness of the [. . .] (2, x + 10) [.] the moon will make [. . .] upwards, then the house of Pharaoh will be destroyed. Rebellion [. . .] (2, x + 11) [.] blood of the sun. There occurs a friend of the [. . .] (2, x + 12) the Medes [.] of the hills and foreign countries. The water will be high this year. [. . .] (2, x + 13) the ears. It is good [to make medical remedies]. Its outside.

If Mercury appears in these which he has said, then the [. . .]

(2, x + 14) The decade of Ach[ui]. Feeble wind from north-east is what occurs in them.

If the sun [makes an eclipse . . .] (2, x + 15) his palace. The people of Egypt will sell their children for money [. . .] (2, x + 16) having power.

If the moon makes an eclipse <in those which> he said, then the child of Pharaoh [. . .] (2, x + 17) Fight will occur in this very year. Pharaoh will kill his

people [...] (2, x + 18) likewise. The water will be high, the economy will be feeble. Egypt will be badly off. [...] (2, x + 19) The one who will eat cucumbers in this month, death will occur with it. It is good to make medical remedies.

[...] (2, x + 20) Crete will come to Egypt within three—variant twenty-one—years. They will throw [...] (2, x + 21) district. The one who will eat coriander, his heart will get loose.

If Mercury [...] (2, x + 22) ... will occur.

The decade of Tep-a-Bawi. The green feldspar occurs in the sky (?) in [...] (2, x + 23) The ruler of Egypt by the people of his house. Evil will occur afterwards.

[...] (2, x + 24) good. Death will occur among the Libyans. Bitterness will occur.

An official [...] (2, x+25) [...] in the month, he dies being weak.

D) Papyrus BM 10660 (Unpublished)

1,1 [...] the [...] will die. The beasts of the desert will be well off. Day 1 till 11; the second: The ruler of

(1, 2) [...] day 8(?) till 9: A small inundation will come to Egypt. The crocodiles will ... them

(1, 3) [...] Egypt. ... Food will occur in that very month. Day ... A big war

(1, 4) [...] without death in it. Much food. [...] The beasts of the desert

(1, 5) [...] will occur in Egypt. The boys will die... [...]

(1, 6) [...] the beasts] of the desert will be well off. Day 9 till. [...]

(1, 7) [...] ... [...]

(2, 1) Second month on inundation, day 1 till 10: You shall say to him: A high inundation will come to Egypt; they will cultivate (the field). Disturbances and war

(2, 2) in the entire country. Imprisonment of the high officials will occur. Barley and emmer will be plentiful. Heat will occur. Satiety of the bodies will occur.

(2, 3) Day 11 till 20: A high inundation will come. Disturbance will occur in the entire country. The gods and men (2, 4) and the beasts [...] ... They will say: 'The builder will leave...' ... of the south will appear in Egypt.

(2, 5) Day 21 till 30: ... [...] ... will come being hungry (?). ... [...] ... will come [...]

(3, 1) Third month of spring, day 1 till 10: A high inundation will come to Egypt and they will be happy. The animals of the country [...] (3, 2) and a destiny (??) of those of hardhouse in this year. The king of Egypt will pour out (?); the pouring will receive death (?) [...]

(3, 3) Disturbance will occur among the children of Pharaoh. Day 11 till 20. A (normal?) inundation will come to Egypt. [...] (3, 4) in the entire country, and they will say: 'The builder will leave ...' The king of Egypt will ... [...] (3, 5) [...] water [...] They will say .. [...] .. [...] of the entire country. The textile [...] (3, 6) [...] .. [...]

E) Papyrus BM 10661 (Unpublished)

(x + 1) [...] in the east, being ... and smoky [...] day 9: new moon. The sun in Leo. the moon in Leo.

(x + 2) [...] ... that means a high [inundation].

(x + 3) [...], then receives ... I it before ... except hitting them. Feeble economy
..... They won't be able to reach the ruler of Polemon (?) ...

(x + 4) [...] among them. If Mercury is among them, then the water of Egypt will be high that very year. If there is wind during day-time, then the ruler of Medias will die within 312 days.

(x + 5) [... within] 180 days. The field of Egypt will be well off that very year. Strong wind in the sky and rain will occur. If half-moon will occur within them, then the ruler of Media will die.

(x+6) [... Jupit]er, namely Leo. Crying and grief will occur, danger will come. The rulers of Egypt, the people of the palace, the brothers of the district will perish.

(x + 7) [... from month x], day 11 till the fourth month of spring (?), day 1, then death will occur.

(x + 8) [... the ca]stles, the brothers of the district will fall.

(x + 9) [...] will be well off. Death will occur in the district of Assur.

(x + 10) [...] yield (?), the harvest. The danger which ... it will come, the district will fall. The weapons of war will perish.