Erntezeremonien. As in every traditional culture in which agriculture has an important part, we may suppose that in Egypt also the work of harvesting was accompanied by ceremonies and festivals. Yet we have little certain information about harvest ceremonies, even though the activities of the harvest are depicted again and again in the tombs. This would seem a remarkable exception to the general rule that we know more of the religious aspect than of other aspects of Egyptian culture. The explanation must be that our knowledge of Egyptian religion is not all-round but rather one-sided, being chiefly related to the gods who were venerated in temples, to the king and to the dead. The sources of the Egyptians themselves, in so far as they are preserved, do not tell us very much about the ceremonies pertaining to ordinary life and the work of the day.

There is a well-known remark by the Greek author *Diodorus Siculus: '. . . at harvest time the people make a dedication of the first heads of the grain to be cut and standing beside the sheaf beat themselves and call upon *Isis.'[1] Figures bearing an offering of ears of corn and fruit represented in various Theban tombs may perhaps, all or in part, be interpreted as offering first-fruits, especially since we know the institution existed from the use of the term 'first-fruits of the harvest' (*tpw n šmw*) in texts.[2] The Ptolemaic temple of Edfu celebrated the ritual of 'the first-fruits of the field according to the prescripts of Amenemhat' (of the M.K.).[3] This last addition suggests, however, that it was not so much a ceremony accompanying the corn harvest as a traditional temple rite. It formed part of the festival of the Reunion of *Hathor of *Dendara and *Horus of Edfu in the third month of the summer, when the normal harvest of the grain was long past.[4] The offering of first-fruits mentioned by Diodorus might also be such a traditional temple rite, as it is connected with a ceremonial lament. In Egypt, such a lament did not take place at harvest-time, but in connexion with sowing (*Choiakfest).[5]

There is no reason to suppose that the flute-players sometimes shown in the harvest scenes of the tombs were playing dirges in the style of the so-called song of Linos or Maneros (*Maneroslied);[6] their songs were far more probably cheerful and profane.[7] The crescent-shaped bundles of corn depicted above some winnowing scenes in the Theban graves (Nacht–*Nḫt* etc.), which have been convincingly identified with the so-called corn bride (*Kornbraut)[8] that the present-day fellahin make from ears of corn and hang by the door of their house as guardian of the crops before they begin cutting the corn, might indeed also be interpreted as first-fruit offerings.

Just as first-fruit offerings as part of a temple festival have their origin and parallel in harvest ceremonies accompanying the work of harvesting, the same will have applied to the ceremony of *ḥwt bḥzw*.[9] As we see it in temple reliefs it cannot have been a simple threshing ceremony (*Kälber, Treiben der; *Vernichtungsritual) but must have formed part of a temple ritual of wider purport. That the ceremony of erecting the Ded column (*Djed-Pfeiler) had its origin and parallel in a harvest ceremony can only be credited if this column really is a post with ears of corn, as has been proposed.[10] The ceremony of *ỉzḫ jt*,[11] the cutting of a sheaf of corn by the *pharaoh, often shown in temple reliefs as part of festivals that are not only harvest ceremonies (*Minfest) also leads us to think that there were rites associated with the actual reaping. While the ritual lament during the harvest mentioned by Diodorus is not confirmed by Egyptian sources, it is also open to doubt whether the ceremonial cutting of the first sheaf was regarded as the killing of the corn god or goddess. Although threshing is occasionally[12] interpreted as the killing of *Osiris, the ceremony of *ḥwt bḥzw* is usually conceived not as the slaying of the corn god, but as the slaying of enemies (*Feindsymbolik). Reaping corn could also signify the slaying of enemies.[13] Clearly religious speculations has a tendency to explain and ritualize harvest operations as a judgement upon hostile demons; indeed, other activities that take place beyond the confines of temple and tomb, such as hunting, fishing, waging war etc. are treated in the same way. In any case lack of material would make it too hazardous an undertaking to construct a simple farmers' religion of harvest ceremonies and other fertility rites (*Fruchtbarkeitsriten) beside or before the religion we know from the temples.[14] Owing

in part to the fact that the temple festivals were linked to a year of 360 + 5 days without a leap-year, so that they gradually moved through the year out of connexion with the seasonal pattern, they were mainly determined by the holy world of myth and ritual that underwent reinterpretation in the course of time (*Alltagswelt und Heilige Welt).

The festival of *Renenutet that was held in Thebes on 1 Pachoon[15] is a harvest festival that in the N.K. was celebrated at the time of harvesting grain and grapes, as is evident from several Theban tombs.[16] Centuries later the festival in honour of *Harsomtus celebrated on that calendar date in Edfu still seems to have traits of a harvest festival,[17] although there was also a festival of Renenutet on other dates, e.g. 7 Tybi at Edfu and *Dendara.[18] In *Esna[19] the festival in honour of *Chnum and other gods on 1 Pachoon is called the festival of Renenutet, and her birth is celebrated on that date (*Geburtstage v. Göttern). Also in Thebes the harvest festival was not exclusively in honour of Renenutet, but also for *Amun, so that it must be assumed that when the time of harvest was about 1 Pachoon (18th dyn.) everywhere in Egypt the first-fruits were offered to the local gods[20] and the festival was afterwards maintained by tradition. The goddess Renenutet[21] protects the harvest (*wtt* = snake; *rnnt* is 'produce' in connexion with agriculture: 'crop'[22]). Since it was not the death, but the birth of Renenutet that was celebrated, at Esna for instance, it must have been a merry festival, as one would naturally expect. It seems that usually it was not the birth of Renenutet herself but of the child *Nepre (= corn) that was commemorated.[23] The nurse[24] Renenutet ist often depicted with the child Nepre on her lap. Few details are known of the festival. It may have lasted about 5 days.[25] In any case the rites were not confined to the temple. Ceremonies took place in the open air, on the fields and in the granaries,[26] accompanied by processions.

[1] Diod. Sic., 1, 14. Translation: C.H. Oldfather, Diodorus of Sicily I (Loeb Classical Library), 49. – [2] Gilula, in: Tell Aviv Journal of the Tell Aviv University. Institute of Archaeology 1, 1974, 43–44; Sethe, Lesestücke, 93; Naville, Deir el-Bahari III, 82; Leclant, Montouemhat, 202. 207. – [3] Maurice Alliot, Le culte d'Horus à Edfou au temps des Ptolémées 1, Kairo 1949, 234 cf. 213; Louis A. Christophe, Les fêtes agraires du calendrier d'Hathor à Edfou, CHE serie VII, fasc. 1, 1955, 35–42. – [4] Cf. Fairman, in: Bulletin of the John Rylands Library 37, Manchester 1954–1955, 200. "In my mind there can be no possible doubt that the Sacred Marriage of Edfu was essentially a harvest festival, in reality that of the First Month of Summer, but a harvest festival performed out of due season" (*Zeitgemäßheit). – [5] See also Anne Burton, Diodorus Siculus, Book I. A Commentary, Leiden 1972, 75. – [6] See Alfred Hermann, in: RAC VI, 278. – [7] Waltraud Guglielmi, Reden, Rufe und Lieder auf altägyptischen Darstellungen der Landwirtschaft TÄB 1, 1973, 52 and passim. – [8] Blackman, in: JEA 8, 1922, 235–240 and JEA 19, 1933, 31. The present writer observed this custom in a house in Dra Abu'l Naga in 1974. – [9] Blackman and Fairman, in: JEA 35, 1949, 98–112; 36, 1950, 63–81; Kees, in: NAWG, 1943, 476. – [10] Helck, in: Or 23, 1954, 409; R.T. Rundle Clarke, Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt, London 1959, 235f. – [11] Edfou I, 384 and XII pl. 330; I, 393 and XII, pl. 332; VI, 280 and X, pl. 151e Dendara IV, 69 and pl. 272. Emile Chassinat, Le mystère d'Osiris au mois de Khoiak II, Kairo 1968, 562 with reference to Champ. ND 1, 288 and LD IV, pl. 102 (Esna). Best known is Medinet Habu IV, pl. 196 cf. C. Jouco Bleeker, Die Geburt eines Gottes, Leiden 1956, 82–87. The rite *3ẖ jt* requires further investigation. – [12] Sethe, Dramatische Texte, 134. – [13] Alliot, o. c., 231, = Brugsch, Thesaurus, 370. – [14] Alexandre Moret, La mise à mort du dieu en Egypte, Paris 1927 and in: AIP 3, 1935 (= Fs. Capart), 311–342; J.G. Frazer, Adonis, Attis Osiris II, London 1914, 45ff. – [15] Schott, Festdaten, 103; Schott, in: StG 9, 1956, 18–24; Alliot, o.c., 230f. – [16] TT 38. 48. 57. 90. 96. 120. 181. 253. 284. – [17] Alliot, o.c., 231. – [18] Daumas, Mammisis, 272, cf. p. 332 referring to the festival of Renenutet at *Philae on 2 Paophi: Junker-Winter, Philae II, 305, 15. – [19] Esna V, 21; Sauneron, in: BIFAO 60, 1960, 12. – [20] RÄRG, 169. – [21] Jan Broekhuis, De Godin Renenwetet, Assen 1971. – [22] Assmann, Liturgische Lieder, 216 A. 137: ‚Ernte'. – [23] Leibovitch, in: JNES 12, 1953, 73–113. – [24] Renenutet is the 'nurse' (see Broekhuis o.c.). I do not know any text in which Renenutet is called mother of Nepre. – [25] Alliot o.c., 231; Blackmann, in: JEA 8, 1922, 236; but Wild, in: BIFAO 56, 1957, 213 does not reckon 'the measuring of corn' on 27 VIII to the festival itself on 1 IX. – [26] N. de Garis Davies, in: BMMA 24, 1929, 41–49 and in: JEA 25, 1934, 154–156; Torgny Säve – Söderbergh, Four 18th Dynasty Tombs, Oxford 1957, 41–43, pl. 41. H. te V.