Festivals and Feasts in Ancient Egypt

A comparative study of the socio-political implications of festivals and feasts in Egypt and Rome

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Introduction

'Religion is the opium of the people'

Karl Marx[1]

Throughout history religion has played an important role, as a means of connecting people, maintaining political power and social order, from the Ancient Near East to the Middle Ages and onwards to the 21st century.

This thesis will focus on the role of religious festivals in Ancient Egypt and Ancient Rome, the function these fulfilled in a socio-political context, and on how the two cultures differ from one another. In the case of Egypt, the state cult by which I refer to religious practices where the Pharaoh or priests appointed by him mediated between gods and men, was not accessible to the commoner.[2] This in turn must have led to social tensions and inequality. During the festivals, the state cult was made more 'accessible'[3]. The Roman festival we will be looking at, which is the Saturnalia, on the other hand, initiated a complete role reversal on a social level.[4]

We arrive at the quote by Karl Marx: these festivals appear to be the 'opium' Marx is referring to. What Marx means by 'opium' of the people is the following: Religion is a sedative for the non-elite part of the population, rather than something that gives a feeling of euphoria, this sedative is used by the ruling class to keep the non-elites segment of the population in check. This is not the only reason the masses turn to religion; they also use it as a means to relieve the burdens of their daily life.[5] However, is this also the case in the Ancient Near East and Classical Antiquity? As mentioned before, the state cult was not open to the commoners in Egypt. However, during festivals it became accessible; they were able to participate in religious celebration, but could not directly contact with the divine. The Roman festival initiated a role reversal, during which servant were treated the same as their masters. Both these events can be interpreted as the opium Marx is referring to, serving as a sedative to numb the pain the non-elite are experiencing. However, is Marx' theory compatible with what happened in Ancient Egypt and Rome? Since Marx' theory concerns the role religion plays and has played in human history, we can assume that his theory is compatible with these Ancient civilizations. The compatibility of the theory will be tested in this thesis.

The time periods that will be looked at are the Late Bronze Age in Egypt and Classical Antiquity in Rome. The reason to look at Ancient Egypt during the Late Bronze Age is due to the vast amounts of archaeological evidence, concerning festivals and society. The archaeological sources that will be used will come from Amarna and Deir el-Medina. These sites are dated in the Late Bronze Age and offer a large amount of data to reconstruct society, which is required for this research.

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[1] A. Aldridge, *Religion in the Contemporary World a Sociological Introduction*, (Cambridge, 2013), 37.

[2] K. Szpakowska, 'Religion in Society: Pharaonic', in A.B. Lloyd (ed.), *A companion to ancient Egypt*, (Oxford, 2010), 512-3.

[3] The use of quotation marks is meant to indicate a hyperbole on how accessible the state cult became.

[4] Encyclopaedia Britannica <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Saturnalia-Roman-festival> accessed 16.04.2018.

[5] Aldridge, *Religion in the Contemporary World*, 38.

The festivals that will be discussed in this thesis are The Beautiful Feast of the Valley and the Osirian Khoiak festival, which is mostly known from the Middle Bronze Age[6], these festivals are both Egyptian, and as mentioned before the Roman Saturnalia festival. The reason for picking these two Egyptian festivals are the different areas these festivals originate from, The Beautiful Feast of the Valley originates from the Theban area, while the Osirian Khoiak originates from the Abydos region. The Roman Saturnalia has been chosen because of the role reversal that took place during the festival.[7] First a comparison between life in Ancient Egypt during festivals periods and everyday life will be made, which will be followed by a comparison between Egypt and Rome. The ultimate goal is to draw a broader conclusion on the similarities and differences between festivals of Late Bronze Age Egypt and Classical Rome.

To summarize, the research question will be as follows: What were the socio-political implications of festivals and feasts celebrated in Ancient Egypt, and what are the differences and similarities concerning these implications compared to the Saturnalia in Rome?

[6] The Late Bronze Age (New Kingdom) version of the festival has been studied in this thesis.

[7] Encyclopaedia Britannica <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Saturnalia-Roman-festival> accessed 06.06.2018.

1. Ancient Egyptian Society

1.1. Methodology

The theoretical basis for this chapter's analysis will draw on studies done by several Egyptologists. These include, but are not limited to, a study into legal aspects of Egyptian society done by R. Versteeg; studies concerning area data from Deir el-Medina, by L. Meskell and G. Neunert; a general study by E. Frood on Egyptian society; and studies about the Egyptian state and politics, by A.B. Kootz. To further support this chapter several sociological works concerning social structure and social mobility by P.M. Blau, P.A. Sorokin, T. Parsons and other authors are used.

The study by G. Neunert uses the terms micro and macro-world.[8] By micro-world Neunert refers to small communities of people, which can be as large as a family going up to a neighbourhood and even villages.[9] These micro-worlds formed the building blocks of the macro-world, in Ancient Egypt and still are in our own time and place, since we spend most of our lives interacting directly with our direct surroundings, family, friends, and teachers, which is the micro-world, rather than with the government, which is the macro-world. Because of the importance of these micro-worlds this chapter will be mostly using the theoretical framework of Neunert and complement it with the other fore mentioned studies. Figure 1 is a model based on Neunert's assertions, which was further inspired by an article by W.J. Goode.[10] He discussed a structural approach within sociology, which served as a basis to adopt this structural approach with the micro-world theory. This model is able to be scaled to different sizes and levels of complexity. However, the larger the social element to which the model is applied, the more complex it becomes. Thus, we are able to conclude that when the size of a society/social element grows, so does its complexity.

1.2. Hierarchy, social mobility, and social structure of micro and macro-worlds

According to E. Frood kinship and family form the core of social structure in Ancient Egypt,[11] which is in line with Neunert's assertions. However, according to her the micro-world plays no direct role in the macro-world.[12] This is an interesting statement, since the micro-worlds clearly form the building blocks of the macro-world(s). Because of this, one would expect they have a direct influence onto how the

[8] G. Neunert, 'Re-/Constructing Ramesside society? Arguing in Favour of a Network of Micro-worlds', in S. Kubisch and U. Rummel (ed.), *The Ramesside Period in Egypt Studies into Cultural and Historical Processes of the 19th and 20th Dynasties*, (Berlin, 2018), 227-8.
[9] *Ibidem.*
[10] W.J. Goode, 'Homans' and Merton's Structural Approach', in P.M. Blau (ed.), *Approaches to the Study of Social Structure*, (New York,1975).
[11] E. Frood, 'Social Structures and Daily Life: Pharaonic', in A.B. Lloyd (ed.), *A Companion to Ancient Egypt*, (Oxford, 2010), 471.
[12] *Ibidem.*

macro-world takes shape. However, Frood sees the macro-world as the government apparatus and nothing more. When we combine this with an article by Eyre we start to understand Frood's statement. Eyre states that the government did not penetrate to a personal level and the only interaction took place during the collection of revenue.[13] This explains why the micro-world does not have any influence on the macro-world, but the macro-world does exert a certain amount of influence on the micro-world. Thus, we see that the micro-worlds are able to function semi-independently within the macro-world. These micro-worlds mostly take shape in households which then form the building blocks for neighbourhoods and villages.[14] Macro-worlds are large towns and cities, where the macro-world is a sum of communities supporting and interacting with each other. Furthermore, according to Neunert, the macro-world also concerns the structure which covers state being a hierarchy, and a government and its officials.[15] However, I prefer to only view large villages, towns, and cities as macro-worlds and view the nationwide hierarchy as an independent structure that connects the macro-worlds. This sum of all the connected macro-worlds together we then call a country, in this case Ancient Egypt. The reason for this approach is to prevent the micro and macro-world theory from becoming too complicated and confusing. Because when we see the government as a macro-world, this leads to confusion with two different macro-worlds, and the existence of a macro-world in a macro-world. Furthermore, because the nationwide hierarchy covers the larger social structures and institutions, it does not allow for a detailed study of Egyptian society on a more local level. However, it does enable us to see structures on a national level and allows us to see what role the hierarchy played onto the micro and macro-worlds. Like the lack of public services the government provided[16] and thus, the need for patrons within the micro and macro-worlds to fill the lack of these public services.[17]

Egyptian hierarchy is to be seen as a standard hierarchy, which has an elite, followed by a middle class, and lastly a bottom layer of peasants and slaves (fig. 2). At the top of the hierarchy there is the king, followed closely by priests and other important religious officials.[18] Below this top level of the hierarchy, there was the nobility, which was tasked with the governing of *nomes* and districts, these make up the elite part of the population. These layers are also viewed as the Egyptian elite by Frood, Versteeg, and Lorton.[19] The elite are then followed by lesser bureaucrats, military officers, wealthy farmers, and trained artisans who possess a certain skillset; this can be anything from writing to sculpting, these people are to be seen as a

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[13] C. Eyre, 'Patronage, Power, and Corruption in Pharaonic Egypt', in *International Journal of Public Administration* 34:11 (2011), 702-3.

[14] *Idem*, 474.

[15] Neunert, in S. Kubisch & U. Rummel (eds.), *The Ramesside Period in Egypt*, 227-8.

[16] D. O'Connor, 'The Social and Economic Organization of Ancient Egyptian Temples', in J.M. Sasson and J. Baines (eds.), *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East,* (New York, 1995), 320.

[17] Eyre, in *International Journal of Public Administration*, 710.

[18] These refer to high-priests, such as the high-priests of Amon-Re at Thebes.

[19] E. Frood, in A.B. Lloyd (ed.), *A Companion to Ancient Egypt*, 476. Versteeg, *Law in Ancient Egypt,* 209-10. D. Lorton, 'Legal and Social institutions of Pharaonic Egypt', in J.M. Sasson and J. Baines (eds.), *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, (New York, 1995), 351.

middle-class.[20] The next layer is the peasants. All the way at the bottom are the slaves, which were brought to Egypt from raids and expeditions into foreign territories, whom are the lowest standing in society.[21]

The question I find important to ask about the hierarchy is: Was there social mobility present within this hierarchy? First, we need to answer a different question being; what is social mobility? For this I use the definition by P.A. Sorokin, which is as follows:

By social mobility I understand any transition of an individual or social object of value - anything that has been created or modified by human activity – from one social position to another.[22]

Furthermore, Sorokin makes a clear distinction between horizontal and vertical social mobility. By horizontal he refers to the transitioning of individuals, groups and objects within the same social stratum. With vertical he refers to the ascending or descending of individuals, groups or objects to a different social stratum.[23] Lastly Sorokin provides an elaborate scheme on social mobility which can be found in his work.[24] Here he makes the clear distinctions between objects, individuals, horizontal, vertical, ascending and descending mobility. Furthermore, he provides examples of horizontal mobility and several forms of horizontal mobility. The reason for an elaborate explanation on social mobility is because; it is one of the most prominent and important social mechanics and a lack of it causes increasing tension over time, since families and individuals are stuck in their social environment for generations. J.A. Wilson argues that there was no system where ancestry fully determined an individual's social standing. According to him, society would have collapsed if there was.[25] However, Wilson fails to elaborate what type of social mobility he is referring to, besides the claim that ancestry does not fully determine one's social standing. Lorton also claims that there was plenty of social mobility present. According to Lorton there was room to advance up and down the social ladder within the elite as well as for the other social classes. Though, the mobility he is referring to that takes shape within the elite would be classified as horizontal social mobility and not vertical as he claims it to be. Furthermore, Lorton says that during the intermediate periods it was a prime moment to advance on the social ladder, since new local governments would rise, which required new officials to take on government roles.[26] However, we need to keep in mind that the social mobility Lorton talks about, did not allow people to advance throughout the hierarchy within weeks. The process must have taken a long period of time, since people themselves had to learn new traits and skillsets or their children had to be educated in a certain trait or skillset. According to Angela Onasch, in her article on the social standing of New Kingdom officials, the social position of the father and the ability to write are the two main

[20] D. O'Connor, 'New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period, 1552-664 BC.' In B. Trigger, B. Kemp, D. O'Connor & A. Lloyd (Authors), *Ancient Egypt: A Social History*, (Cambridge, 1983), 192.
[21] Lorton, in J.M. Sasson and J. Baines (eds.), *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, 216-7.
[22] P.A. Sorokin, *On the Practice of Sociology*, (Chicago, 1998), 174.
[23] *Ididem*.
[24] *Idem*, 176.
[25] J.A. Wilson, *The Culture of Ancient Egypt*, (Chicago, 1957), 75.
[26] D. Lorton, in J.M. Sasson and J. Baines (eds.), *Civilizations of the ancient Near East,* 352.

factors when it concerns social advancement.[27] Furthermore, Onasch says that individuals from lower social standing were able to learn how to write. However, it was not a common practice for these individuals to learn how to write.[28] Writing was taught at centralized locations with a senior scribe taking on the role of a teacher.[29] At these schools basic reading and writing skills were at first taught in groups and later on, as the pupils became older, developed into an apprenticeship.[30] Her first claim is in line with a sociological consensus that the education of an individual together with the education of their parents and the occupational status of their parents dictates their children's ability to move up the social ladder.[31] This all agrees with the claim that Lorton makes that social mobility existed in Ancient Egypt, but elaborates more on this than he himself does.

1.3. Archaeological sources: Amarna and Deir el-Medina

To complement the established framework the archaeological sources are to be discussed. The data will be used to analyse social distinctions and find differences from and similarities to the macro-world in the micro-world. The order in which this will be done is by working from the micro to the macro-world.

The first site is Amarna, the capital of Akhenaten during his reign as king of Egypt (fig. 3). When Akhenaten founded Amarna and chose it as his place of residence, important Egyptian government officials followed him to the new capital. These government officials brought with them layfolk that were their dependents in the form of a patron-client relationship.[32] Small communities started to form and turned into neighbourhoods, which were micro-worlds, placed in the macro-world that was the city of Amarna. In the micro-worlds we find a hierarchy which takes shape in the patron-client relationship. This relationship refers to the system where a wealthier and socially higher standing person, the patron, takes care of his poorer and lower ranking personnel, which are his dependants. We see the smaller houses, which belonged to the dependents, built around the larger house of the patron (fig. 4).[33] The reason for the existence of the patron-client relation was due to the lack of government penetration to a personal level[34] with the only government interaction taking place during the collection of revenue.[35] Moreover, the government did not provide public services, which led to the patrons taking on this role at a local level.[36] Thus, people were dependant on local officials and more well-off people to provide these services and protect their interests. Figure 4 and 5 clearly shows the small

[27] A. Onasch, 'Zur sozialen Stellung der ägyptischen Beamten im Neuen Reich', in H. Grünert (ed.), *Ethnograpisch-Archäologische Zeitschrift*, 26 (Berlin, 1986), 281-90.
[28] *Idem*, 286.
[29] J. Baines, *Visual & Written Culture in Ancient Egypt*, (Oxford, 2007), 44-5.
[30] C. Eyre & J. Baines, 'Four notes on Literacy' in J. Baines (ed.), *Visual and Written Culture in Ancient Egypt*, (Oxford, 2007), 92.
[31] W. Müller & R. Pollak, 'Social Moblity', in J. Wright (ed.), *International Encyclopaedia of the Social & Behavioural Sciences 2nd edition*, volume 15 (Elsevier, 2015), 642.
[32] B. Kemp, *The City of Akhenaten and Nefertiti Amarna and its People*, (London, 2012), 163.
[33] *Ibidem.*
[34] Eyre, in *International Journal of Public Administration*, 702.
[35] *Idem*, 703.
[36] *Idem,* 710.

neighbourhoods that formed due to the patron-client relationship. Furthermore, we see that these neighbourhoods are separated from one another by roads, but by no means are they fully isolated and fully independent worlds.[37]

These micro-worlds formed the macro-world of Amarna; the patrons were also the links between the micro-worlds since the patrons interacted with the state and with other officials within the city.[38] The dependents of these patrons probably had contacts with other micro-worlds as well, which could have taken shape in the form of their work or them travelling to different parts of the city. However, the main connection between micro-worlds must have been through the network of patrons that spanned the entire city.

The second archaeological site we discuss is Deir el-Medina - the workmen's village responsible for the construction of the royal tombs in the Valley of the Kings and Queens. Deir el-Medina is treated as a macro-world, with the families that lived in the village as the micro-worlds. This fits perfectly to the model in figure 1. The order of analysis will be reversed this time, starting with the macro-world and work towards smaller aspects of the village.

Firstly, we will look at the overall hierarchy that was in place in Deir el-Medina and the role of women held within the village. The hierarchy was based off the hierarchy of the workmen, which lived and worked in the village, since their skill, wealth, and reputation carried over to the domestic sphere from the work sphere.[39] The wives of these workmen appeared to have had a lot of influence, since women were able to assume their husband's responsibilities when they were out of town.[40] Moreover, they were able to represent their husbands when the wages were paid.[41] Women also held religious titles, which might mean that their influence extended well beyond their husbands', when it concerned the realms of religion and family.[42] Additionally, women in Ancient Egypt had right to private property and married women even had a right to $^1/_3$ of the joint property of the entire household.[43] Moreover, women also were able to purchase and sell property, besides solely owning it. This enabled them to accumulate wealth through labour and trade, by means of trading textiles they produced for other goods.[44] However, we do not know how much of this profit had to be shared with their husbands, if any at all.[45] Thus, women did not only play a social role, but also an economic one in Deir el-Medina.

When we look at the hierarchy in Deir el-Medina we see that the Vizier was at the top of this hierarchy, and although he was not a direct part of the macro-world that is Deir el-Medina, he was nonetheless important, since he was accountable for all

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[37] For more models of the city of Amarna I recommend visiting: The Amarna Project model page <http://www.amarnaproject.com/pages/model_of_the_city/index.shtml>.

[38] A. Stevens, 'Tell el-Amarna', in W. Wendrich (ed.), *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology*, (Los Angeles, 2016), 7.

[39] Neunert, in S. Kubisch & U. Rummel (eds.), *The Ramesside Period in Egypt*, 229-30.

[40] L.H. Lesko, *Pharaoh's Workers: the Villagers of Deir el-Medina*, (Cornell University Press, 1994), 33-4.

[41] Neunert, in S. Kubisch & U. Rummel (eds.), *The Ramesside Period in Egypt*, 233.

[42] Lesko, *Pharaoh's Workers*, 33-4.

[43] J.K. Toivari, *Women at Deir el-Medina: A Study of the Status and Roles of Female Inhabitants in the Workmen's Community during the Ramesside Period*, (Leiden, 2000), 222.

[44] *Idem,* 223.

[45] *Ibidem*.

the work done by the workmen from the village and the wellbeing of the village. Furthermore, the Vizier had a direct link with the Pharaoh. The Vizier was followed by the foremen and the scribes, who would oversee the daily work done on the tombs. These in turn were followed by the deputies and workmen.[46] This hierarchy was reconstructed by Neunert, who looked at the rations distributed to the labourers to reconstruct it.[47]

Now that a basic hierarchy has been described for the village of Deir el-Medina we can start looking at the details. Not only while working on the royal tombs did the foremen and scribes have influence, they also held influence in the village's daily life. An example of this is their involvement in the village's judicial processes. This was due to the fact they held a majority in the local tribunal. Controlling the rule of law allowed them to exert control in different areas as well.[48] Foremen and scribes used labour meant for the royal tombs for their own personal projects, which demonstrates the influence these people held.[49] Furthermore, the foremen and scribes would also live in larger houses than the regular workmen.[50] This is another example of their larger wealth compared to the rest of the village. There was most definitely social mobility present in Deir el-Medina. Sons of workmen were able to advance through the ranks, even though this was sometimes achieved by means of bribes.[51] However, what is important to note is that these bribes were, as far as we know, not common. This means that becoming a part of the elite and middleclass of this settlement was not inaccessible to lower ranking members of society. Moreover, the climbing of the social ladder in Deir el-Medina is in agreement with what has been discussed in the previous paragraph.

To summarize, Egyptian society had a clear hierarchy. However, this was not in the shape of an inelastic and static system. This means there was a social structure that consisted of different social standings, which interact with each other and allowed for social mobility in between them. This social mobility did allow people to advance through society. But this required either a decent position of an individual's parents or to have been able to learn to read and write. Because of this, families could still remain in a specific social stratum for generations. Furthermore, we need to take the dynamic between macro and micro-worlds into account, since this will help us establish a more complete image of Egyptian society. Amarna appears to have consisted of several micro-worlds that made up a macro-world. These micro-worlds are to be seen as separate entities, but nonetheless they were connected to one another. Moreover, these micro-worlds had a hierarchy which looked similar to the hierarchy of the macro-world, although they sometimes lack certain layers of the macro-world hierarchy. We can still identify hierarchies even within the micro-worlds in Amarna, which are the micro-world hierarchies in the shape of the patron-client relation. Deir el-Medina had a clear hierarchy where there was a middleclass, consisting of the foremen and scribes, which governed the village. This middleclass

[46] Lesko, *Pharaoh's Workers*, 18-9.
[47] Neunert, in S. Kubisch & U. Rummel (eds.), *The Ramesside Period in Egypt*, 229-31.
[48] Lesko, *Pharaoh's Workers*, 23.
[49] J. Cerny, *Community of Workmen at Thebes in the Ramesside Period*, (Cairo, 2012), 332.
[50] Lesko, *Pharaoh's Workers*, 25.
[51] *Idem*, 354.

appears to have acted as the local government. Because of this they were able to exert influence over the workmen that lived in the village for their own benefit. Women in Deir el-Medina held as much influence as their husbands and we must not forget their religious titles and the importance these titles carried with them.

2. Egyptian festivals and feasts

Ancient Egypt knew an abundancy of festivals and feasts. Because of this, only two festivals were picked and discussed in this chapter. These festivals are The Beautiful Feast of the Valley and The Osirian Khoiak Festival.

Festivals in Ancient Egypt offered the opportunity to follow the heart and break social and moral values/codes. This means that people were allowed to give into their impulses and their desires, which was contrary to non-festival days, during which the heart should be kept under control.[52] This leads to a lack of restrictions on moralistic overtones and acts of contrition during festivals, which in turn leads to a carnival-like[53] setting.[54] Moreover, offerings were an important part of these festivals and there are several attestations of consumption of alcohol and how this consumption differed from the everyday norm.[55] Besides intoxication other forms of sensory stimulation like movement, scent and sound were used.[56] Preparations for these festivals were important and elaborate. For instance, the workmen of Deir el-Medina were allowed several days off to brew beer for festival preparations. Lastly, festivals and feasts were highly anticipated events, since they functioned as a weekend and a moment during which the entire population could participate in the state cult, to which the access was customarily restricted to high ranking priests and the Pharaoh, by restricting access to the temples.[57] However, during festivals, this was treated in a more lenient way and non-religious personnel were allowed access to the first court of most temples.[58]

2.1. The Beautiful Feast of the Valley

The Beautiful Feast of the Valley was a festival celebrated in and around Thebes. The festival was celebrated in the seventh month of each year and was dedicated to the god Amon of Karnak and the dead, on which the biggest emphasis lay.[59] The festival consisted of a procession led by the king, Amon, and several Theban deities, being Mut, Chonsu and Amaunet,[60] from Karnak to the western-Nile bank (fig. 7). These processions were one of the few moments during which the king was seen in public. This created a special atmosphere, by participating in the celebrations he showed that he was part of society, but yet distinguished himself by remaining out of reach of the public. On the western-bank of the Nile the king and Amon visited the necropolis,

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[52] L. Meskell, *Private Life in New Kingdom Egypt*, (Princeton, 2002), 170-1.
[53] By carnival-like and carnivalesque I refer to celebrations similar to the present day carnivals celebrated in places like the south of the Netherlands.
[54] C.J. Bleeker, *Egyptian Festivals Enactments of Religious Renewal*, (Brill, Leiden, 1967), 23.
[55] A. Sadek, 'Festivals and Pilgrimages', in *Popular Religion in Egypt during the New Kingdom*, (1987) 178-9.
[56] E. Teeter, *Religion and Ritual in Ancient Egypt*, (Cambridge, 2012), 56.
[57] *Idem,* 56-8.
[58] M. Marée, 'Tempelbezoek en Feesten' in M. Raven (ed.), *Goden van Egypte*, (Leiden, 2018), 85.
[59] Meskell, *Private Life*, 171.
[60] S. Schott, 'Das Schöne Fest vom Wüstentale', in *Abhandlungen der Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaflichen Klasse,* XI (Göttingen, 1952), 6.

the temples of deceased pharaohs, and other gods, being the sanctuary of Hathor and the chapel of Anubis.[61] Higher and lower ranking officials had the opportunity to participate directly in the procession, either by carrying the procession barque or by being on the king's ship.[62] Even the dead were able to participate in the festival, by the means of steles, which were located along the procession route in the necropolis; they were able to receive offerings through these steles and could even be seen by the god, who could look at their stele, see their depictions and read their names.[63] Also, the general public and minor priests were able to participate in the festival's procession as a spectator.[64]

Furthermore, during the festival families of the dead celebrated the festival in the funerary chapel of their ancestor(s), which were located in the Theban necropolis.[65] The deceased were the focal point of the festival, while celebrating the festival in their chapels; family members gave offerings to the deceased, played music and sang songs, which was done by musicians and dancers. This made for a beautiful day in his/her (the deceased's) house, as Schott describes it.[66] Also, a banquet (fig. 8 & 9) was held during the festival in the family tomb, as is attested in textual sources from Deir el-Medina[67] and chapels from the Theban necropolis.[68] During this banquet the aim was to become intoxicated and thus partially fade out the border between the living and dead, which held religious importance.[69] This enabled the family to directly interact with the deceased and reconnect with their ancestors. The reason for all this is because the mortuary cult of ancestors played an important role in Egyptian culture.[70]

Additionally, Schott makes a distinction between two different stages of the festival. The first area is the procession along the Nile, which is led by the king. The second stage is the celebrating of the festival by families in funerary chapels of their ancestors. The first area appears to have been more of a carnivalesque setting, with lots of offers and several forms of entertainment, which takes shape as an eventful procession.[71] Contrary, the celebration in the funerary chapels was more private, but still carnivalesque in nature. The main similarity between the two is the central aspect of remembering the deceased and the connection with them during the festival.[72]

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[61] *Ibidem*.
[62] *Idem*, 9.
[63] *Idem*, 7.
[64] H. Jauhiainen, *Do Not Celebrate Your Feast Without Your Neighbours*, (Helsinki, 2009), 28-9.
[65] *Idem*, 148.
[66] S. Schott, in *Abhandlungen der Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaflichen Klasse XI*, 72.
[67] H. Jauhiainen, *Do Not Celebrate,* 149.
[68] S. Schott, in *Abhandlungen der Geister- und Sozialwissenschaftlichen Klasse XI*, 33-39.
[69] H. Jauhiainen, *Do Not Celebrate*, 148-9.
[70] For an overview on Ancient Egyptian ancestor veneration I recommend reading N. Harrington, in *Living with the Dead. Ancestor Worship and Mortuary Ritual in Ancient Egypt*, (2013).
[71] S. Schott, in *Abhandlungen der Geister- und Sozialwissenschaftlichen Klasse XI,* 91-3.
[72] *Ibidem.*

2.2. The Osirian Khoiak Festival

The Osirian Khoiak Festival was held during the month of Khoiak, which was the fourth month of the inundation, Akhet, season.[73] The main component of this festival was the procession with Osiris from his temple to his tomb at Peker, which has been identified as the tomb of Djer, a king from the first dynasty, located at Umm el-Qab (fig. 10). The festival attracted pilgrims from all over Egypt, these pilgrims erected steles and statues along the procession route.[74] However, what is important to note is the fact that pilgrimages, like the Christian pilgrimage to Lourdes, did not exist in Ancient Egypt[75] and that pilgrimages to festivals was limited to locals and officials.[76] Figure 11 shows one of the many steles that got erected at Abydos. By erecting these steles pilgrims hoped to be able to participate in the procession and benefit from it even when they were not physically present. Not only do these steles represent the owner, but quite often it mentions their family members as well, who also profited from being displayed and mentioned in those steles. However, these pilgrims did not consist of people from every social stratum. They were from the richer and more well-off parts of society, the elite and middleclass, which could afford such a pilgrimage. A large number of steles belonging to these people have been preserved. The largest collection of these steles is currently located in the Dutch National Museum of Antiquities.[77] One of the more famous steles from this collection is the one of the royal sculptor Hatiay (fig. 12). Figure 13 and 14 show the steles of the royal scribe Penserd and the scribe of the temple of Amon Penrennoe. Hatiay, Penserd, and Penrennoe are all to be seen as either middleclass or elite within Ancient Egyptian society, whom were able to travel to Abydos and participate in the festival and erect a personal stele. The reason for seeing these individuals as middleclass and elite is because, they bear titles which required them to be literate and allowed them access into important institutions, like the temples and the royal palace. This was not possible for people who did not belong to these social classes.

The festival was performed to ensure a successful rebirth of the god Osiris and Egypt since this held agricultural importance; because the festival was celebrated at the same time as the last month of the inundation season, we can interpret the rebirth of the land as the receding of the Nile flood and reappearance of fertile farm land.[78] The procession itself was closely intertwined with the Osiris myth, which was performed as a drama during the festival. The sources for this are texts containing monologues, dialogues, songs, music and dance.[79] These and a reconstruction of the

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[73] K.J. Eaton, *The Ritual Functions of Processional Equipment in the Temple of Seti I at Abydos*, (New York, 2004), 404.

[74] K.J. Eaton, 'The Festivals of Osiris and Sokar in the Month of Khoiak', in *Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur*, (Hamburg, 2006), 75-6.

[75] Y. Volokhine, 'Le Pèlerinage dans l'Égypte pharaonique' in *Rendre visite aux Dieux. Pèlerinage au temps de l'Égypte Pharaonique*, (Paris, 2013), 9.

[76] *Idem*, 11.

[77] During my internship at the museum I have been able to work on a number of these steles. Thus, the reason for using them in my thesis.

[78] K.J. Eaton, in *Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur*, 76.

[79] L.B. Mikhail, *Dramatic Aspects of the Osirian Khoiak Festival*, (Uppsala, 1983), 51-3.

drama are covered in detail by Mikhail.[80] The drama was on looked by pilgrims from outside the temple, except for the rituals concerning Osiris' resurrection. These were prepared and executed in private chambers within the temple,[81] since these rites were sacred and were not to be seen by non-religious personnel. The drama served as a form of entertainment; religious education about the Osirian myth; and a reassurance for what was to come after death.[82]

The Osirian Khoiak lasted several days and allowed for plenty of opportunities for the public to participate in the god's cult. Firstly, by being involved in the procession where they would erect statues and/or steles and watch the procession take place; secondly, by watching the drama that was performed which illustrated the Osiris myth.[83] Both these aspects were closely intertwined with one another, since the drama was part of the procession or vice versa.

[80] *Idem*.
[81] R. David, *Temple Ritual at Abydos*, (London, 2016), 264-5.
[82] Mikhail, *Dramatic Aspects*, 51-3.
[83] For a general overview on this I recommend reading Mikhail, *Dramatic Aspects*.

3. The socio-political implications of Egyptian festivals for Egyptian society

As discussed in the previous chapter there are certain changes during Egyptian festivals, concerning social interaction, morals and values. These changes are discussed per festival and at the end summarized to see if there are common aspects between the festivals.

3.1. The Beautiful Feast of the Valley's implications

It is evident that there are two distinct spheres during the Beautiful Feast of the Valley. These are the private and the public sphere, which are discussed in this order.

Firstly, we have the private sphere, which gives us some valuable information about private celebrations and the impact these had on people's daily life. It was a time during which the entire family honoured their ancestors by celebrating the festival inside their funerary chapels. During this celebration, there was plenty of music, dance and other forms of entertainment. This was the case in both the public procession and the private celebration at the funerary chapels, as is depicted in figures 8 and 9. Intoxication by alcohol or other means was also common during these private celebrations. All these types of sensory stimulation[84] had a great impact on people and the way they experienced the festival, which made it an emotional event. Seeing how elaborate the private celebration was, displays the importance of the festival and how much people were looking forward to it. Additionally, we should keep in mind that festivals like these allowed a break in the day to day regimen of the people, very much like weekends do in today's western societies. These moments allowed people to forget about their day to day responsibilities, relax and break with social codes and values.[85]

Secondly, we have the public sphere, in which the king himself participated. The social dynamics during the public celebration of the festival are intriguing. Commoners were able to view the procession and participate in the celebration, and thus take part in the cult of Amon of Karnak. This interaction was as expected very limited and consisted of being able to view the procession, participate in the celebration, and receive food that was being distributed from the offers to the god(dess).[86] The statue of the god(dess) was kept out of sight, since only the pharaoh and high ranking priests were allowed to see the god(dess).[87] To achieve this, the deities were hidden in a shrine that was located on the bark.[88] Nonetheless, experiencing the presence of the god(dess); in German called *Gottesnähe*, which expresses this in a more satisfactory way[89], was more than sufficient for the

[84] Teeter, *Religion*, 56.
[85] Meskell, *Private Life, 170-1.*
[86] .I. Sadek, *Popular Religion in Egypt during the New Kingdom*, (Hildesheim, 1987), 176-82.
[87] Teeter, *Religion*, 56.
[88] M.M. Luiselli, *Die Suche nach Gottesnähe: Untersuchungen zur persönlichen Frömmigkeit in Ägypten von der Ersten Zwischenzeit bis zum Ende des Neuen Reiches*, (Wiesbaden, 2011), 54.
[89] The term *Gottesnähe* will, therefore, be used from this point onwards to describe this phenomenon.

participants[90] and was a form of emotional stimulation besides the music and dance, which contributed to the atmosphere of the festival. The Egyptian term used for this is seeing the god, which emphasises the visual aspect.[91] Seeing the god was so important that it became a wish for people in life and the afterlife.[92] The king led the procession, which showed his role as being the head priest of Egypt. Although this was commonly known, it is, nevertheless a reaffirmation of his religious position and thus asserting his importance. Officials were also present on the king's barque, which showed their importance since they were able to be this close to the king and thus showed their influence in Egyptian society. This is I call 'privileged visibility'[93] this is the public display by the ruler and the surrounding elite to show off their social and political importance and asserting themselves in the process of doing so.

3.2. Socio-political consequences of the Osirian Khoiak

During the Osirian Khoiak there was no separation between private and public spheres. The main focus was the public sphere which was accessible to everyone and was closely intertwined with the private one, since the funerary chapels and steles were erected right next to the procession route. This public sphere was comprised of two main events; the procession of Osiris from his temple to his grave, and the drama performed by priests. The procession was observed by the members of Egyptian society that travelled to Abydos to participate in the festival[94], which consisted of locals and officials from all over Egypt.[95] To ensure future participation they erected steles and statues along the procession route. This shows the social and religious importance of this festival and allowed these people access into the Osirian cult, which was otherwise not possible. This access took shape in the god passing by their steles and reading them.[96]

The drama that was performed served as a form of entertainment and as a means to educate the people about the Osirian myth. Furthermore, it served as a means to reassure the people about death and the afterlife.[97] Besides this reassurance it must have been impressive for the spectators to watch as well. Considering seeing this type of drama was not an everyday thing in Ancient Egypt. It was performed by priests in front of the temple so the public was able to see it, and because it was the starting point of the procession that took place after the drama. This, again, demonstrates the experiencing of *Gottesnähe* by the spectators. Being able to see the shrine of the god and be in his presence, but not directly seeing him. However, the part of the drama where Osiris was resurrected took place inside the temple, outside of public view since this was too sacred to be seen by the broader public. This shows

[90] Luiselli, *Suche nach Gottesnähe*, 54-5.
[91] *Idem*, 54.
[92] *Ibidem*.
[93] This term is covered by Newlands in: C.E. Newlands, *Satius'Silvae and the Poetics of Empire*, (Cambridge, 2002), 234.
[94] Eaton, in *Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur*, 76.
[95] Y. Volokhine, in *Rendre visite aux Dieux. Pèlerinage au temps de l'Égypte Pharaonique*, 11.
[96] S. Schott, in *Abhandlungen der Geister- und Sozialwissenschaftlichen Klasse XI*, 7.
[97]Mikhail, *Dramatic Aspects*, 51-3.

us that, even during festivals we still witness a certain amount of exclusion from the state cult.

Concerning the political aspects observed during the Osirian Khoiak, they were similar to those of the Beautiful Feast of the Valley. The elite and the King would reaffirm their position, especially during the New Kingdom when the elite were responsible for the organisation of the festival[98], which was an important task and came with a lot of prestige. On the other hand, the social aspects consisted of locals and officials from all over Egypt travelling to Abydos to participate in the festival. This, however, is not to be seen as similar to the present-day pilgrimage like the pilgrimage to the Lourdes.[99] Since this pilgrimage was not accessible to all members of society, unlike the pilgrimage to the Lourdes. The festival lasted three days, which gave the people three or possibly more days to escape their regular routines, enabling them to drop most social restriction, celebrate, and forget about their daily responsibilities, because these types of festivals functioned as a short holiday. Furthermore, we should not forget that the 'pilgrimage' itself to Abydos had an impact on the people, since it was a complete change of pace from their regular lives, travelling to other parts of the country, which was not a normal thing for most people.[100]

3.3. Summary

To summarize, both festivals had clear socio-political implications. The political implications that were found are the reinforcement of the nationwide hierarchy and important social, political, and religious positions. These consisted of the position of the king, the priesthood and the elite surrounding the king. This is not surprising, but it does show us that this was an important aspect for the discussed festivals. Since the elite and king played a central role in the celebrations. This was by organising the festival or acting as religious officials. This reaffirmation was either on purpose or came as a side effect to the roles the king and elite held in the celebrations. It is however, made clear by the steles that the elite were well aware of the importance and prestige that came with the organisation of the festivals. Thus, it is quite clear this reaffirmation was elaborate and well thought out.

The social aspects take a lot of different forms. This could be private celebrations with relatives to public celebrations with the rest of the population. Both the public and private celebrations clearly had social implications since they broke up the regular routine for these people and allowed them to break with social norms and values for a brief period of time. This enabled them to forget about their daily life and responsibilities, through all types of sensory stimulation, much like present day festivals, for example carnival in the south of the Netherlands.[101]

Lastly, the presence of the god(dess) was an important factor during the festivals, especially in the public sphere. This search for and experiencing of

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[98] *Idem*, 76.

[99] Y. Volokhine, in *Rendre visite aux Dieux. Pèlerinage au temps de l'Égypte Pharaonique*, 9.

[100] *Idem*, 11.

[101] This is based off my own personal experiences, having both celebrated and observed this festival myself on numerous occasions.

Gottesnähe was closely intertwined with the celebrating with other individuals and helped create the desired atmosphere during these festivals. This was done by experiencing a feeling of connection and creating a sense of community, due to the shared experience of *Gottesnähe*. Thus, they were highly anticipated events, like present-day festivals are.

4. The Roman festival of Saturnalia

This chapter only discusses Roman society and the Roman festival of Saturnalia. Furthermore, it discusses the implications it held for Roman society. The comparison and conclusion between Rome and Egypt is conducted in the next chapter.

4.1. Background of the Saturnalia

The Roman Saturnalia has a long history, which goes back to the first settlements in Ancient Italy. The festival was held in honour of the god Saturn and the golden age during which he reigned. During this golden age there was no slavery or any other example of a social hierarchy or private property. The Saturnalia is an attempt to return to this golden age for a short period of time.[102] The festival was celebrated on the 17th of December, which according to some researchers was used to mark the end of the harvest season;[103] this shows that the festival also held agricultural importance, since Saturn was the male god of harvest.[104] The cult surrounding Saturn and his festival witnessed several reforms[105] by the Senate during the second Punic War (218-201 B.C.E.)[106]. This was closely intertwined with the expansion of Rome during and after the second Punic War.[107] Because of this, the Saturnalia from the second Punic War onwards is discussed. Even after the Saturnalia started to lose importance with the rise of Christianity, certain aspects of the festival might have been adopted by Christianity.[108] This indicates the importance the festival held in society or how deeply it was rooted in the pre-Christian traditions.[109]

Furthermore, what is important to note, is the fact that the Romans did not observe weekends like most present-day societies do. Because of this, festivals took on the function of breaking up people's workweeks and allowing time for celebration and relaxation.[110]

Roman society was a hierarchical society, like Ancient Egypt. At the top of this hierarchy there were the rich (*Patricii*, *Equites* and *Nobiles*), followed by a middle

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[102] H.S. Versnel, 'Saturn and the Saturnalia the Question of Origin', in F.J.A.M. Meijer & H.W. Pleket (eds.), *De Agricultura in Memoriam Pieter Willem de Neeve*, (Amsterdam, 1993), 109-11.

[103] The origin and the date of the celebration are discussed in detail by H.S. Versnel, in F.J.A.M. Meijer & H.W. Pleket, *De Agricultura*, 98-120.

[104] *Idem*, 98-99.

[105] For an overview on the origins and reforms of the cult of Saturn and the Saturnalia I recommend reading: C. Guittard, 'Recherches sur la Nature de Saturne des Origines a la Réforme de 217 Avant J.C.' in R. Bloch (ed.), *Recherches sur le Religions de l'Italie Antique*, (Geneva, 1976), 43-71.

[106] F.G. Naerebout & H.W. Singor, *De Oudheid Grieken en Romeinen in de Context van de Wereldgeschiedenis*, (Amsterdam, 2015), 481.

[107] *Idem*, 48-51.

[108] Which is being argued by H.H. Scullard in, H.H. Scullard, *Festivals and Ceremonies in the Roman Republic*, (London, 1981), 207.

[109] *Ibidem.*

[110] J.W. Iddeng, 'What is a Graeco-Roman Festival? A Polythetic Approach', in J.R. Brandt & J.W. Iddeng (eds.), *Greek and Roman Festivals*, (Oxford, 2012), 29.

class, the poor (*plebs*), and lastly Romans lacking official citizenship and slaves.[111] Patron-client relationships also existed in Ancient Rome; this mostly occurred through slaves that had been freed by their former masters[112] and the rich taking care of the poor.[113] During the transition to Imperial Rome these social mechanics did not change much.[114] The only change was the Emperor taking his position at the top of the social pyramid.[115] The interaction between higher and lower standing members of society did not change and was identical to that of the Republican era. On a political level, however, much changed; the Emperor took control over the entire bureaucratic structure, which was divided between an Imperial one and a Senatorial one. Besides this the Emperors slowly broke down the power that the Senatorial offices held, thus reasserting their own power in the progress.[116]

4.2. The festival and its socio-political implications

The festival itself is known for its carnivalesque setting which remained mostly the same throughout its history. However, during the Imperial era we observe changes, but these are limited to the public celebration of the festival. Thus, we start with the Republic and afterwards move on towards the Empire.

During the Republican times the festival took place as follows: In the private sphere the hierarchy in the household was reversed. Masters treated their servants as equals for a limited amount of time. This is seen during the banquet that was held, where masters either waited their slaves, dined with them or the slaves dined before their masters.[117] Furthermore, there was an exchange of gifts between the participants of the festival.[118] Besides the banquet and the reversal of hierarchy a mock-king was appointed, who was to act as a Master of Revels.[119] All these aspects served as tools to levitate pressure, which was generated by the regular social dynamics within the household.

In the public sphere the festival started with a great sacrifice at the temple of Saturn[120], which was located on the *Forum Romanum*[121](Fig. 15 & 16.). This was then followed by a banquet and procession[122], which anyone was able to attend. Additionally, social restrictions were lifted. Regular public life came to a halt and

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111 Naerebout & Singor, *De Oudheid*, 306-7.
112 E. Deniaux, 'Patronage', in N. Rosenstein & M.M. Robert (eds.), *A Companion to the Roman Republic*, (Oxford, 2006), 404-5.
113 For a more elaborate view on the Patron-Client relationship in Ancient Rome I recommend reading: E. Deniaux, in N. Rosenstein & M.M. Robert (eds.), *Roman Republic*.
114 Naerebout & Singor, *De Oudheid*, 378.
115 *Ibidem*.
116 *Idem,* 384-7.
117 Dolansky, in Rawson (ed.), *Companion,* 495.
118 *Idem*, 491-2.
119 Scullard, *Festivals and Ceremonies*, 207.
120 *Idem*, 206.
121 L. Richardson, 'The Approach to the Temple of Saturn in Rome', in *American Journal of Archaeology 84*, (1980), 51.
122 G. Gorski & J.E. Packer, *The Roman Forum: a Reconstruction and Architectural Guide*, (Cambridge, 2015), 226-7.

was replaced by a carnivalesque celebration of the festival.[123] Lastly, everyone was just as in the private sphere treated as equals and not to be held accountable for most actions that they committed during the festival.[124] Any borders between different social standings were thus nullified together with any set social rules. This shows great similarity between the public and private celebration during the Republican era.

During the Imperial era of Rome, there were slight changes in the public sphere. Contrarily, in the private sphere celebrations remained the same. Servants were still treated as equals, allowed to dine with their masters during the festival, and were not held accountable for most actions they committed during the festival.[125]

Concerning the public celebration, just like the Republican celebration people of all ranks joined the carnivalesque celebration, which was facilitated by the Emperor himself. This demonstrates the rise of a political motive alongside the social one, since the Emperor demonstrates that he is the leader of the Roman people and takes care of them. Thus, affirming his position on a social and political level and portraying himself as a patron of the entire population. The main location in which the festival took place, which was originally located outside of the temple of Saturn, was moved towards the amphitheatre.[126] The reason for this was because of the large amount of people the amphitheatre was able to host. During the festival a banquet was held inside the amphitheatre and gifts consisting of food and money were given to the spectators of the lavish spectacle that was the festival. Replacing the original freedom of speech people had during the festival; being able to openly criticize others, more specifically senators and other officials in Republican days. This was no longer allowed by the Imperial regime.[127] The loss of freedom of speech can be seen as a type of state censorship to prevent any form of criticism about the Imperial regime. Additionally, the Emperor engaged with the public, but remained at a respectful distance, being part of the celebration, but at the same time setting him apart from the regular population. He did this by being located on a type of balcony that was located inside the amphitheatre, together with the elite that were close to the Emperor. Contrarily, the remainder of the elite and the general population would be located on the regular seats inside the amphitheatre. The Emperor used this 'privileged visibility' as a tool to control society.[128] The reason why this worked so well was due to the fact that, the Emperor was withdrawn from public eye on regular days, with the exception of triumphs and games. This also had another reason, being the potential threats the Emperor could face if he celebrated the festival as part of the public. There was always a chance of usurpers taking advantage of the vulnerable position of the Emperor, since he would have to manoeuvre himself through a large mass of people, of which potential enemies could take advantage. Lastly, the rank reversal was still present, but only to a limited extent, controlled by the Emperor for his personal gains, which enabled him to increase his popularity and improved

[123] Scullard, *Festivals and Ceremonies*, 206.
[124] J.G. Frazier, *The Golden Bough,* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2012, 3rd edition), 307-8.
[125] *Ibidem*.
[126] Newlands, *Statius' Silvae,* 227.
[127] *Idem,* 233-4.
[128] *Idem, 234.*

stability after the festival was concluded.[129] This loss of personal liberties that used to be the freedom of speech and fully fledged role reversal, which in the Imperial days was present but in a weaker and more regulated form, during the festival was compensated by overabundance, in the form of material pleasures, such as money, food and other material things.[130]

[129] *Idem,* 235-7.
[130] *Idem,* 245.

5. Comparison and Conclusion on Rome and Egypt

5.1. Society

Ancient Egyptian and Roman society have several aspects in common with one another. On a national level we see that both societies had a similar hierarchy. In the case of Egypt, the top of this hierarchy consisted of the Pharaoh and elite that surrounded him, followed by a middle class, then the peasants and lastly slaves. For Rome this is identical, however, during the Republic we see the absence of an authoritarian ruler at the top of the hierarchy, but in the Imperial era an Emperor takes the top position.

Another similarity between both societies is the existence of a patron-client system, by which the rich well-off members of society helped the poor and less well-off members. For Egypt evidence for this is found in Amarna, but also throughout Egypt.[131] While in Rome, this occurs through released slaves, who automatically became dependents of their former masters, but also in other cases, like people belonging to the lower parts of society who required financial aid.[132] The taking care of their dependants was a way for the patrons to exert and increase their social and political influence.

Families and other micro-worlds, being neighbourhoods and small villages, as discussed by Neunert and in Rawson are the main building blocks of Ancient Egyptian and Roman society[133], since they are the realm in which people's daily lives take place and thus shape their lives accordingly. This was not only the case in Ancient Egypt and Rome, but throughout human history.[134]

Lastly, there appears to be more evidence for social mobility for all social classes and different types of social mobility in Ancient Rome than there is in the case of Ancient Egypt. In Rome people were able to acquire citizenship. This opened up the road to higher ranks within society even for released slaves, although most often this did not happen within a single generation.[135] In Egypt social mobility was also present, but it is harder to track than it is in Ancient Rome.[136] Additionally, the position of the parents and the ability to read and write played an important role in Egypt. This thus limited who were able to advance up the social ladder within Egyptian society.

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[131] This is covered in more detail by Eyre, in *International Journal of Public Administration*.

[132] For Egypt see: Kemp, *The City of Akhenaten*, 163. For Rome see: Naerebout & Singor, *De Oudheid*, 304-5.

[133] For Egypt see: Neunert, in Kubisch & Rummel, *The Ramesside Period*. For Rome see: B. Rawson, *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds*, (Malden, 2011).

[134] An example of this is when we as move into a new area and new social group (micro-world). This often causes us to adapt ourselves to our new surroundings. Thus, demonstrating the influence the micro-worlds have on our lives.

[135] Naerebout & Singor, *De Oudheid*, 308-9.

[136] This is due to the fact that most sources concerning social mobility originate from the elite.

5.2. Comparison of festivals

Festivals being either a present-day festival[137] or one in antiquity have one or more motives to be organised and celebrated. These motives are: religious, social or political. Concerning festivals celebrated in Antiquity and the Ancient Near East a religious motive is always present. This is because of the importance religion held in these societies. Fortunately, the combination of a religious motive with a social and/or political is the scope of this thesis. During the Ancient Egyptian festivals, we observe that besides the religious motives there was a social and sometimes political motive present.[138] These festivals functioned as weekends and as a means to break up day-to-day life.[139] Furthermore, in Ancient Egypt the search for *Gottesnähe* played an important role, both on a social and religious level, creating a sense of community and sharing an identical experience with others. In the case of Ancient Rome, we see the motives are similar. However, with the Saturnalia there is a clear emphasis on social aspects and motives, which in turn shaped the festival and the way it was celebrated.

The festivals and their way of celebrating show some differences when comparing the two; this is to be expected since they originated from two different cultures. In Ancient Egypt there was a public procession for the divinity that was involved with the festival during which food was distributed and a private banquet was held. In Rome we see that during the Saturnalia there is both a public and private banquet and a procession. During the public banquet food was distributed to the participants of the festival. Comparing this to Egypt we see that only the procession and the private banquet occurred here as well. Furthermore, we see different types of entertainment; in Ancient Egypt singers and dancers were used to liven up the procession.[140] Imperial Rome on the other hand, used the amphitheatre for hosting and helping provide entertainment.[141] Inside the amphitheatre a banquet and games were held, which continued well into the night due to artificial illumination.[142] Thus, we see that there are several common aspects between Rome and Egypt. One of these is the procession that occurred during the festival, the private banquets, and a public distribution of food. In the case of Egypt this took place during the procession, while in Rome, this took place during the public banquet that was held in the amphitheatre.

5.3. Implications of the festivals

The implications of festivals on society are divided into two sub-categories, these are political and social. However, these implications are often closely intertwined with

[137] F. A. Salamone, 'Festivals', in W.C. Roof & M. Juergensmeyer (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Global Religion*, (2012), 397-401.
[138] A similar interpretation is given in Bleeker, *Egyptian Festivals*.
[139] Teeter, *Religion and Ritual*, 56.
[140] S. Schott, in *Abhandlungen der Geister- und Sozialwissenschaftlichen Klasse XI*, 91-3.
[141] Newlands, *Statuis' Silvae*, 227.
[142] *Idem*, 233.

one another. Nonetheless, the division between social and political implications was maintained as much as possible.[143]

The social implications in Ancient Egypt were the breaking of the day-to-day rhythm and regular workweek. This explains why festivals in the Ancient Near East and Antiquity took place on such a regular basis. Furthermore, these festivals allowed non-religious personnel, which consisted of lower ranking elite, middle-class, peasants and slaves, to be involved with the state cult, to which the access customarily was restricted to high-ranking priests and the pharaoh himself. During a festival like the Osirian Khoiak or the Beautiful Feast of the Valley the Ancient Egyptians were also allowed to follow their hearts, by which lifting restrictions on social norms and codes is meant.[144] This led to a carnivalesque setting, which can be compared to present-day carnival in the south of the Netherlands. In Ancient Rome we also see clear social implications. Like Ancient Egyptian festivals, festivals in Ancient Rome were used to break the regular routine. During the Saturnalia in Rome we see that there was a full role reversal and abolishment of most social codes, norms and values.[145] This kind of exception to the regular order of business was a reminder of how society was meant to be and function, being the day-to-day hierarchy and social norms, codes, and values. Furthermore, it is also a form of social-stress release, which was mostly aimed at the slaves and lower ranking in society.[146] We now see that the festivals have several similarities concerning social implications, although the execution of these is different, which can be explained by the difference in culture. The desired result was the same, being a relief of pressure from societal norms and values.

Concerning the political implications, we need to make a distinction between Imperial and Republican Rome. Ancient Egypt and Imperial Rome can be compared directly with one another, since in both cases an authoritarian ruler was in control. Both these rulers used 'privileged visibility' as a means to assert their position during festivals. However, this did not limit itself to the authoritarian ruler, but also to the elite that surrounded this individual. They were able to show off their importance, due to their close position to the ruler. Moreover, this intertwines with the social implications, since this involves a social hierarchy that was being enforced during the festivals. Moreover, the Pharaoh or Emperor and elite did not celebrate the festival by being a part of the regular crowd.[147] This created a distance between the two groups, implying that they were part of the larger population, because they were celebrating together with everyone else, but yet they were different from the rest of the population. In case of Republican Rome, the elite of society would still have been able to show off their importance, for instance, by facilitating the festival. This gained them a certain level of social and political prestige. Because they were fulfilling an important societal and religious need. In the case of Imperial Rome, we clearly observed political implications that appear to have been well thought out and were

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[143] As is discussed by Salamone, in W.C. Roof & M. Juergensmeyer (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Global Religion*, 397-401.

[144] Meskell, *Private Life*, 170-1.

[145] Scullard, *Festivals and Ceremonies*, 206.

[146] Dolansky, in Rawson (ed.), *Companion,* 496-7.

[147] Besides setting themselves apart from the rest of the population, this also was a dangerous endeavour. This was due to possible threats originating from the public.

elaborate. However, are we able to say the same about Republican Rome and Ancient Egypt; or are we to see the political implications there as side effects of the elite fulfilling their social and religious obligations? Both can be stated as correct, since it is plausible that the elite in Republican Rome and Ancient Egypt were well aware of the influence they held during these celebrations. Thus, besides fulfilling their social and religious obligations, they used this moment to expand their own influence and prestige.

5.4. Conclusion

Having compared festivals in both Ancient Egypt and Rome, I conclude that: throughout the Ancient Near East and Antiquity there are common aspects for festivals. These consist of the reason for celebrating these festivals, which are either, religious, social, or political and the effects these festivals had on both society and the political hierarchy. In both cultures, festivals are important events for everyone in society, ranging from the priesthood to the elite and state officials, and the remainder of the population. They ensured that society was able to keep functioning and a social hierarchy was maintained. Furthermore, it gave the ruling elite a chance to use their positions to expand their influence within society. Lastly, festivals rather than religion appear to have been a means to relieve the burdens of daily-life of Ancient Egyptian and Roman people, since festivals, although part of religion, were able to relieve tension and other negative social factors differently and possibly more effectively than day-to-day practice of religion, which was limited to veneration and offerings without the special atmosphere a festival created.

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Appendix

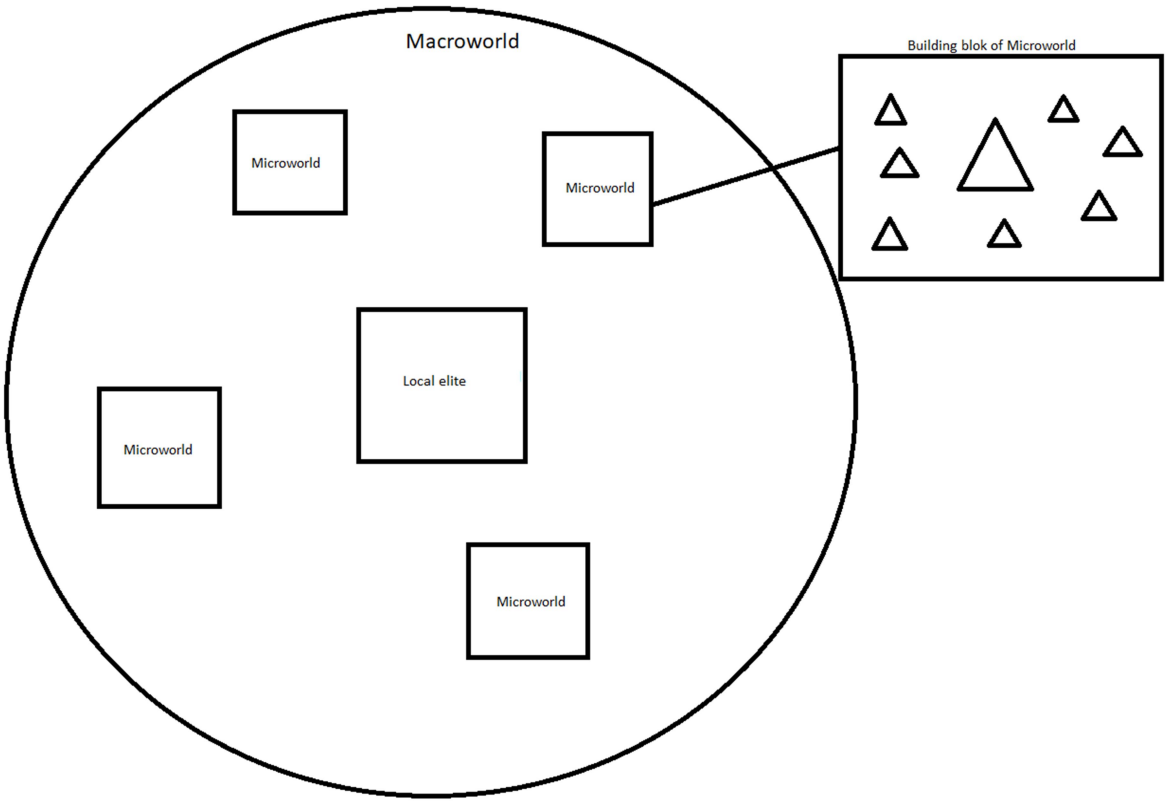

Figure 1, Model of the micro-, macro-world theory

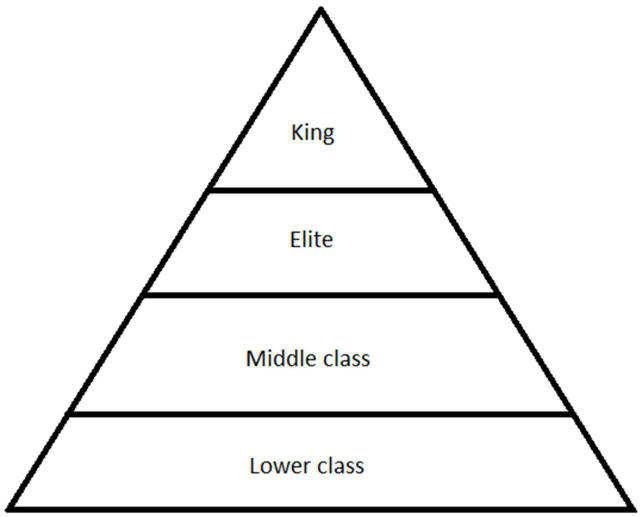

Figure 2, default social pyramid, reflecting Ancient Egypt's hierarchy

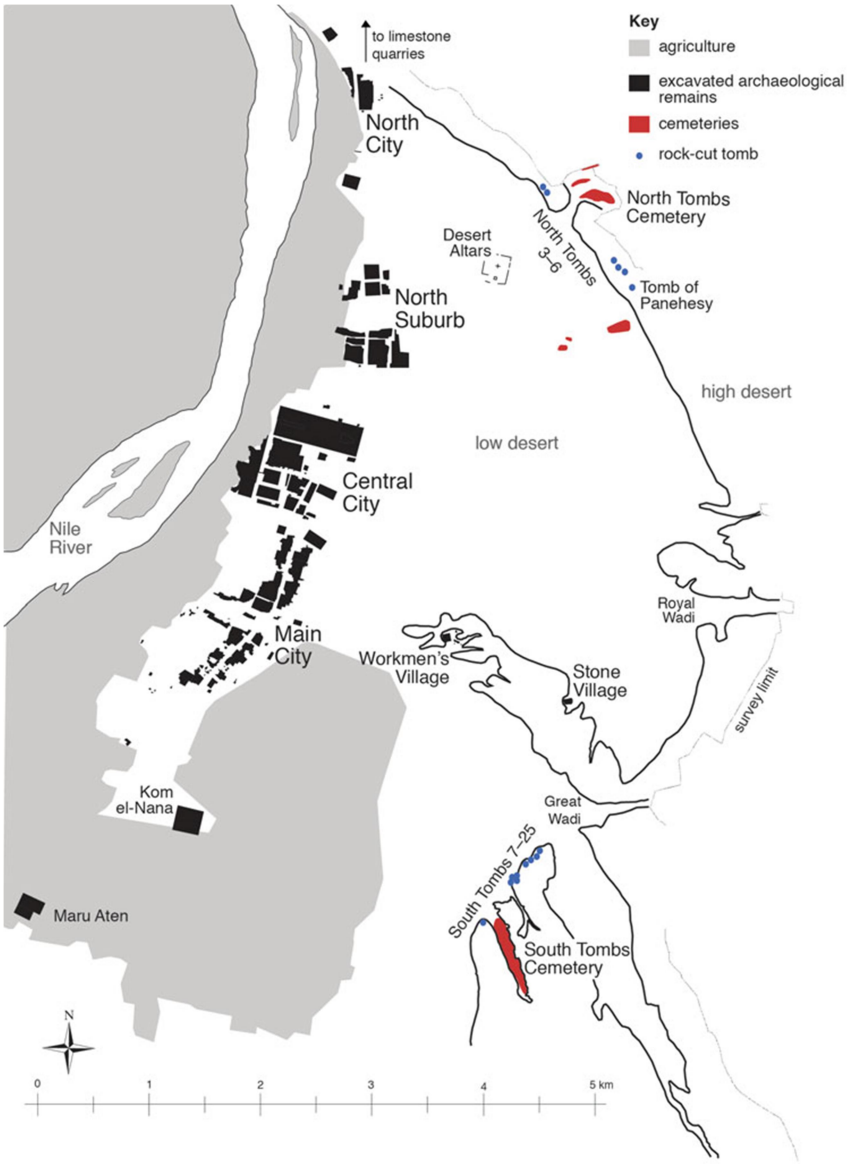

Figure 3, Map of Amarna. From: Stevens, *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 28:1, 105.

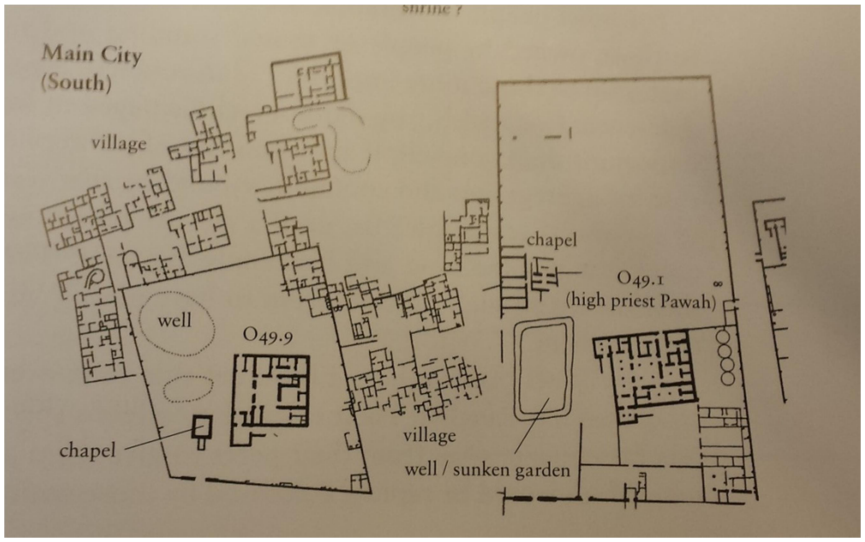

Figure 4, map of a micro-world in Amarna, where the smaller buildings of the dependants are centred around the larger house of their patron. From B. Kemp, *The City of Akhenaten*, 165.

Figure 5, Model of the city of Amarna which shows the distinct sections of the city. From The Amarna Project <http://www.amarnaproject.com/pages/model_of_the_city/index.shtml>, accessed 25.09.2018.

Figure 6, Model of Neighbourhoods in Amarna showing the roads dividing them, From The Amarna Project <http://www.amarnaproject.com/pages/model_of_the_city/index.shtml>, accessed 25.09.2018.

Figure 7, map of Thebes and the west bank from, J. Baines and J. Malek, *Cultural Atlas of Ancient Egypt*, (Oxford, 2000).

Figure 8, banquet scene showing musicians, dancers and guests. From, The British Museum, <https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details/collection_image_gallery.aspx?assetId=244310001&objectId=119660&partId=1> accessed 08.12.2018.

Figure 9, Detail of musicians and dancers of the previous scene. From, The British Museum, <https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details/collection_image_gallery.aspx?assetId=244310001&objectId=119660&partId=1> accessed 08.12.2018.

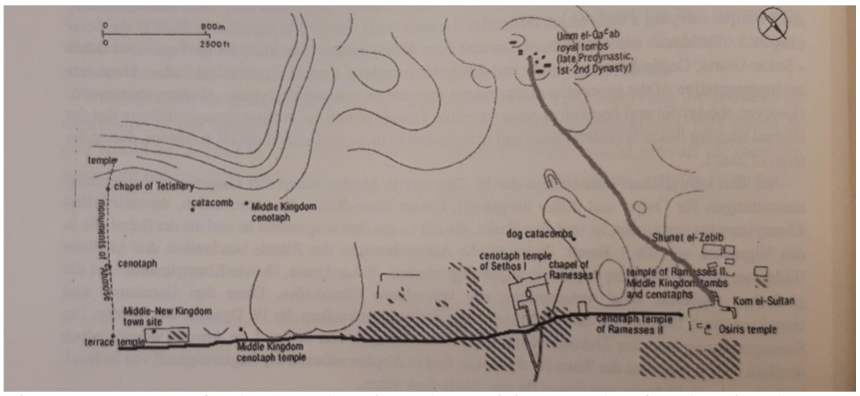

Figure 10, map of Abydos showing the Osirian tomb of Peker in the top right with the procession route leading to it from the temple. From K.J. Eaton, 'The Festivals of Osiris and Sokar in the Month of Khoiak', in *Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur*, (Hamburg, 2006), 76.

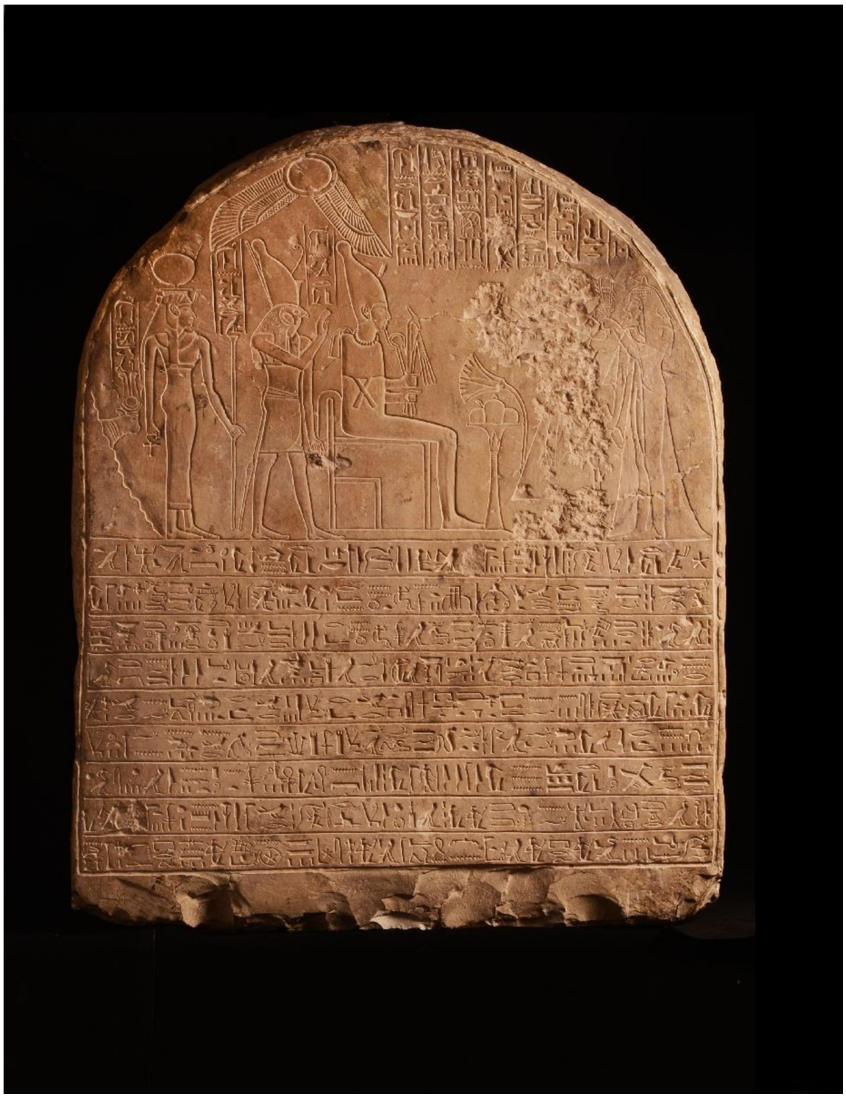

Figure 11, stele of the high priest of Amon-Re, Herihor. Herihor himself has been carved out of the stele, but this demonstrates the importance of the Osiris cult at Abydos. Since a high priest of Amon-Re erected a stele honouring Osiris at Abydos. From the RMO, <http://www.rmo.nl/collectie/zoeken?object=AP+16>, accessed 18.10.2018.

Figure 12, The stele of the royal sculptor Hatiay containing his autobiography. From the RMO, <https://www.rmo.nl/collectie/collectiezoeker/collectiestuk/?object=AP%2012>, accessed 15.02.2019.

Figure 13, stele of the royal scribe Penserd, from the RMO, <https://www.rmo.nl/collectie/collectiezoeker/collectiestuk/?object=H.III.RR%204>, accessed 15.02.2019.

Figure 14, stele of the scribe of the temple of Amon Penrennoe, from the RMO, <https://www.rmo.nl/collectie/collectiezoeker/collectiestuk/?object=L.XI.5>, accessed 15.02.2019.

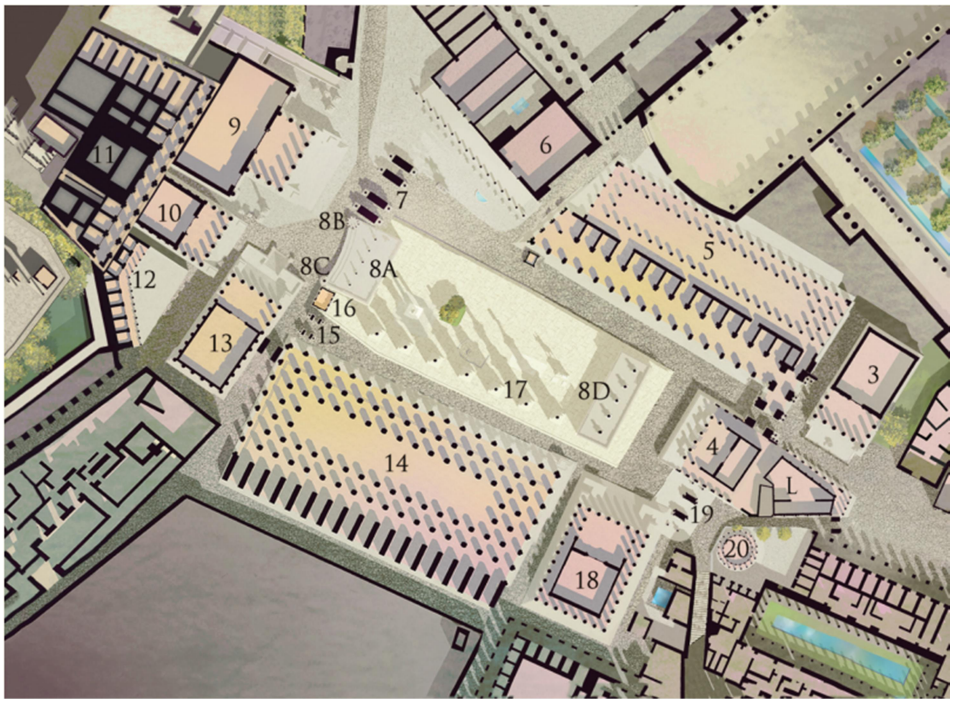

Figure 15, Map of the Forum Romanum, with the temple of Saturn located at number 13. From: G. Gilbert & J.E. Packer, *The Roman Forum: a Reconstruction and Architectural Guide*, (Cambridge, 2015).

Figure 16, Picture of the temple of Saturn, looking towards the front of the temple. From: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Roma-tempio_di_saturno.jpg> accessed 08.05.2019.