

# Compulsion and Control in Ancient Egypt





# **Compulsion and Control in Ancient Egypt**

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Egyptology Symposium**

Edited by  
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## Abbreviations

- ÄA – Ägyptologische Abhandlungen  
AAR – African Archaeological Review  
ÄAT – Ägypten und Altes Testament  
AAWLM – Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur in Mainz, Abhandlungen der Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaftlichen Klasse  
ACE – Australian Centre for Egyptology  
AEPHÉ – *Annales de l'École pratique des hautes études*  
ÄF – Ägyptologische Forschungen  
AION – *Annali dell'Istituto Orientale di Napoli*  
AJA – American Journal of Archaeology  
AJH – Athens Journal of History  
AJSL – American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures  
ANM – *Archéologie du Nil Moyen*  
AnOr – *Analecta Orientalia*  
AnPap – *Analecta Papyrologica*  
ArOr – *Archiv Orientální: Journal of African and Asian Studies*  
ASAÉ – *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte*  
ASAW – Abhandlungen der philologisch-historischen Klasse der sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften  
BACE – Bulletin of the Australian Centre for Egyptology  
BAR – British Archaeological Reports  
BASP – Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists  
BdÉ – *Bibliothèque d'Étude*  
BIFAO – Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale  
BiOr – *Bibliotheca Orientalis*  
BMSAES – British Museum Studies in Ancient Egypt and Sudan  
BSFÉ – Bulletin de la Société française d'Égyptologie  
CAJ – Cambridge Archaeological Journal  
CDD – Chicago Demotic Dictionary  
CdÉ – *Chronique d'Égypte*  
CENiM – *Cahiers Égypte Nilotique et méditerranéenne*  
CHANE – Culture and History of the Ancient Near East  
CNIANES – Carsten Niebuhr Institute of Ancient Near Eastern Studies Publications  
CRIPEL – *Cahier de Recherches de l'Institut de Papyrologie et d'Égyptologie de Lille*  
CSSH – Comparative Studies in Society and History  
CT – A. de Buck, Coffin Texts  
DGÖeAW – Denkschriften der Gesamtakademie, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften  
ÉAO – Égypte, Afrique et Orient

*EEF* – Egypt Exploration Fund  
*EES* – Egypt Exploration Society  
*EESOP* – Egypt Exploration Society Occasional Publications  
*EgUit* – Egyptologische Uitgaven  
*ELR* – Erasmus Law Review  
*ÉT* – Études et Travaux (Académie Polonaise des Sciences)  
*EVO* – Egitto e Vicino Oriente  
*FES* – Frontiers in Earth Science  
*FIFAO* – Fouilles de l’Institut français d’archéologie orientale  
*GHP* – Golden House Publications  
*GM* – Göttinger Miszellen  
*GÖF* – Göttinger Orientforschungen  
*HÄB* – Hildesheimer Ägyptologische Beiträge  
*HES* – Harvard Egyptological Studies  
*HPBM* – Hieratic Papyri from the British Museum  
*IANSA* – Interdisciplinaria Archaeologica Natural Sciences in Archaeology  
*IEJ* – Israel Exploration Journal  
*IFAO* – Institut français d’archéologie orientale  
*IJHA* – International Journal of Historical Archaeology  
*IJHR* – Istraživanja – Journal of Historical Researches  
*JAEA* – Journal of Ancient Egyptian Architecture  
*JAEl* – Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections  
*JAL* – Journal of African Law  
*JAR* – Journal of Archaeological Research  
*JARCE* – Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt  
*JEA* – Journal of Egyptian Archaeology  
*JEH* – Journal of Egyptian History  
*JESHO* – Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient  
*JJP* – Journal of Juristic Papyrology  
*JNES* – Journal of Near Eastern Studies  
*JSA* – Journal of Social Archaeology  
*JSSEA* – Journal of the Society of the Study of Egyptian Antiquities  
*KRI* – K. A. Kitchen, Ramesside Inscriptions, Historical and Biographical  
*LÄ* – W. Helck, E. Otto, W. Westendorf (eds), Lexikon der Ägyptologie  
*LAGB* – Linguistics Association of Great Britain  
*LANE* – Languages of the Ancient Near East  
*MDAIK* – Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo  
*MittSAG* – Mitteilungen der Sudanarchäologischen Gesellschaft  
*MVCAE* – Material and Visual Culture of Ancient Egypt  
*NAR* – Norwegian Archaeological Review  
*NINO* – Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten

*OBO* – Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis  
*OIAR* – Oriental Institute Annual Report  
*OIP* – Oriental Institute Publications  
*OIS* – Oriental Institute Seminars  
*OLA* – Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta  
*OMRO* – Oudheidkundige mededelingen uit het Rijksmuseum van Oudheden  
*OW* – Old World: Journal of Ancient Africa and Eurasia  
*PÄ* – Probleme der Ägyptologie  
*PAM* – Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean  
*PN* – Die Ägyptischen Personennamen  
*PTA* – Papyrologische Texte und Abhandlungen  
*RAD* – Ramesside Administrative Documents  
*RdÉ* – Revue d'Égyptologie  
*RevL* – Revue du Louvre et des musées de France  
*RIDA* – Revue internationale des droits de l'antiquité  
*RiME* – Rivista del Museo Egizio  
*RT* – Recueil de travaux relatifs à la philologie et à l'archéologie égyptiennes et assyriennes  
*SAGA* – Studien zur Archäologie und Geschichte Altägyptens  
*SAK* – Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur  
*SAOC* – Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilisation  
*SASAÉ* – Supplément aux Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte  
*SDAIK* – Sonderschrift des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo  
*SHCANE* – Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East  
*SLR* – Sydney Law Review  
*SNR* – Sudan Notes and Records  
*S&N* – Sudan and Nubia  
*SSEA* – Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities  
*TdE* – Trabajos de Egiptología  
*URAÄ* – Untersuchungen zum Rechtsleben im alten Ägypten  
*Urk. I* – K. H. Sethe, Urkunden des Alten Reiches  
*Urk. IV* – K. H. Sethe, Urkunden der 18. Dynastie. Abteilung IV  
*VOHD* – Verzeichnis der orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland  
*Wb.* – J. P. A. Eрман and H. Grapow (eds), Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache  
*WdO* – Welt des Orients  
*YES* – Yale Egyptological Studies  
*ZÄS* – Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde  
*ZPE* – Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik



## Preface

Alexandre Loktionov

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King's College, London*

This book is above all else a testament to the resilience and determination of those who have contributed to it. When the 3rd Lady Wallis Budge Egyptology Symposium was first conceived, in the autumn of 2019, it was intended as a convivial event, held in the grand surroundings of Christ's College and accompanied by excellent food and drink. Yet reality decreed otherwise: held at the height of the Covid pandemic (27th – 28th August 2020), there was no socialising, no food, and – for many delegates – no opportunity to even take a break from the proceedings by taking a walk outside. This was the year of lockdown, and this was perhaps the quintessential lockdown conference. In hindsight, given the theme of *Compulsion and Control*, this was perhaps highly appropriate – with delegates being *compelled* to maintain contact exclusively online while being subjected to hitherto unprecedented forms of epidemiological *control*. Had the event spiralled into disaster, given the circumstances, few would have blamed it.

The fact that it did not, and that both the conference itself and the work on the subsequent proceedings remained on schedule, mean that I shall remain eternally grateful to all the contributors. Each and every one set about their work with the great determination that comes with overcoming adversity, and I fervently hope that this result is one of which all can be proud. Indeed, in one noteworthy way, the outputs of the conference even exceed what would have been possible in the conventional pre-Covid context: recordings exist of the vast majority of the papers being presented. This has allowed the core content of the original conference to be preserved on an online video channel, allowing viewers to experience the event once again in the form in which it once took place. This resource – the Christ's College Egyptology Channel – is now intended to serve both as a source of reference to complement the papers in this volume and, no less importantly, to act as a tribute for those who kept Egyptology going during a notoriously dark time. The Channel can be accessed here:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCT6BxUV4TTzAYwTNLghPaGg>

Three contributors to the original conference – Richard Jasnow, Hratch Papazian, and Micòl di Teodoro – were unfortunately not in a position to participate in the present volume. However, they added much scholarly value, insight, and enthusiasm to the event, and this is by no means forgotten.

Finally, alongside the contributors, great thanks must also be given to the organisations without whose generous funding and logistical support this book would never have happened. Foremost among these is Christ's College, Cambridge which has very generously supported my endeavours through the Lady Wallis Budge Fund. Robert Hunt, Senior Tutor of Christ's, deserves special mention for his bold vision of promoting the College as a place of international excellence in Egyptology, and for making the conference part of that broader vision. Additional support has also been kindly provided by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC Grant Ref: AH/V006711/1) and the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, University of Cambridge. During the editing phase

of preparing this book, I have also benefitted from the stimulating academic environments of the HSE University Institute for Oriental and Classical Studies (Moscow) and the Department of Political Economy, King's College London. To all these bodies I am profoundly grateful.

# Introduction: Pluralisms of Compulsion and Control in Ancient Egypt

Alexandre Loktionov

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King's College, London*

## Abstract

*This introduction provides an overview of the seven sections and seventeen chapters which make up the present 'Compulsion and Control' volume. It also sets out the overarching thesis of the book, rooted in the integration of studies of Egyptian compulsion into legal pluralism theory, and proposes a model for how this might be done. This model lays no claim to perfection, but is intended rather as an initial concept which might spark a broader conversation about the value of the proposed theoretical approach in the context of future Egyptological studies.*

**Keywords:** Hierarchy; Legal Pluralism; Linguistic Analysis; Punishment; Text and Image

## Introduction

Like much in Ancient Egypt, this book is marked by duality. The seventeen chapters that follow are at the same time standalone works for those seeking insight into highly specific aspects of compulsion and control at a given time, and yet simultaneously they are also pillars supporting the book's central theme: attaining a more nuanced understanding of compulsion and control through a multi-strand approach rooted in legal pluralism.<sup>1</sup> While this concept is currently rarely alluded to in Egyptology,<sup>2</sup> and is normally associated with law studies in far more modern societies, this book – through its seventeen detailed examples – hopes to illustrate that its definition can be substantially broadened to encompass Egyptological research. After summarising each of the book's sections and the papers within it, this introduction will therefore then proceed to demonstrate how each can be fitted in to the overarching legal pluralist framework, and what the implications of doing so might be.

The first section contains two papers investigating the nature of compulsion and control in and around temples. In her article, Marcella Trapani uses a detailed case study of the *Turin Indictment Papyrus* to

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<sup>1</sup> In most studies thus far, legal pluralism has usually been used to describe and analyse societies where multiple judicial systems are in operation – for example, in postcolonial states where legal systems imposed by former imperial powers, typically centred in big cities, coexist with indigenous customary law, typically based in rural areas. For examples of such studies and associated theoretical debate, see for instance G. R. Woodman, 'Legal Pluralism and the Search for Justice', *JAL* 40 (1996), 152–167; É. Le Roy, *Les Africains et l'institution de la justice* (Paris: Dalloz, 2004) and F. Pirie, *The Anthropology of Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 38–44. For attempts at expanding legal pluralism theory into other contexts, see for instance K. von Benda-Beckmann, 'Globalisation and Legal Pluralism', *International Law FORUM du droit international* 4 (2002), 19–25; B. Z. Tamanaha, 'Understanding Legal Pluralism: Past to Present, Local to Global', *SLR* 30 (2008), 375–411 and E. Melissaris, 'From Legal Pluralism to Public Justification', *ELR* 6/3 (2013), 173–180. For an overarching discussion of the whole concept, see E. Melissaris and M. Croce, 'A Pluralism of Legal Pluralisms', *Oxford Handbooks Online*: <<https://academic.oup.com/edited-volume/41331/chapter/352337146>>.

<sup>2</sup> For more detailed thoughts on this by the present writer, as well as some initial ideas on how the issue might be rectified, see A. A. Loktionov, *The Development of the Justice System in Ancient Egypt from the Old to the Middle Kingdom* (PhD diss., Robinson College, University of Cambridge, 2019), 15–19, 25–29, 49–54 and *passim*.

provide a thorough insight into the mechanisms available to Ramesside temple staff to exert their authority, with a particular focus on underhand means of doing so, such as bribery and manipulation of oracular verdicts. This contrasts with the approach taken in the second paper by Leah Mascia, which looks at much more formal, state-approved mechanisms of control within the temple sphere, with specific reference to the site of Oxyrhynchus in the Roman period. Central to both chapters is the importance of having an official affiliation to the temple setting, granting the office-holder access to specific privileges and an ability to compel others to do their bidding – whether this was through strictly legal means, or less so.

The second section moves on from the temples to the religion which they served, and how certain aspects of it yielded opportunities for compulsion and control. To this end, Anne Landborg discusses the Egyptian concept of the *bꜣ*-spirit and the associated notion of *bꜣ.w* ('might'), highlighting how these theological constructs were vested with the power to compel through curses or other supernatural manifestations of force. Renata Schiavo, meanwhile, concentrates on the 'letters to the dead' – a diverse grouping of texts pointing to a religious belief in the power of ancestors to influence, or even explicitly control, happenings in the present existence. In differing ways, these two articles emphasise the importance of the faith-based superstructure surrounding Egyptian notions of compulsion: being compelled did not have to be a physical experience enforceable by a material power on earth, but could just as effectively be derived from a religious necessity in the mind of the believer.

In the third section, attention turns to mechanisms of control at the borderlands of Egypt, starting with Adam Fagbore's exploration of Egyptian strategies for maintaining control at the Nubian border in the late Middle Kingdom. Fagbore highlights both the significance of physically altering the borderland environment through the construction of forts, and the importance of intense and often exemplary violence as a form of subjugation. These themes of forcefully bringing under control those on – or beyond – the border are also explored by Christian Langer, his paper demonstrating that the implications of this went far beyond pure ideology, having profound economic significance in the form of bonded labour. Thus, not only could built environments on the border be modified to suit the controlling needs of the state, but so could populations themselves, with deportation and resettlement serving as tools of compulsion. However, control processes on the border were not just about force: as Loretta Kilroe demonstrates in her ceramic study, populations were also capable of drawing upon multiple influences to exert self-control over their daily practices and material culture outputs, seemingly without significant threat of violent subjugation. This dichotomy between the hard and soft power manifestations of compulsion pervades the entire volume, but is perhaps most strikingly manifested in the discussions in this section.

From the borderlands discussion then shifts to administration, with two chapters constituting the fourth section of the volume. In the first of these, Fredrik Hagen explores the division of workforces into two distinct sides, building his case around a Ramesside papyrus from Kom Medinet Gurob, which lists the names and titles of various workers. He then connects this to a wider administrative practice of creating duality, as best known from workforce management strategies at Deir el-Medina, which raises intriguing questions about the conceptualisation of a body of workers as both a whole, and as a sum of two parts – smaller units, presumably easier to control. This focus on workforce management is then continued in Rune Olsen's contribution, which provides several New Kingdom case studies of scribal records kept during tomb construction, throwing into relief the complexity of the bureaucratic process and raising at present still unanswered questions about the ultimate purpose of the administrative documentation: were records kept primarily for higher authority, or as a show of force by the recording scribes themselves? In any case, what is apparent is that the power of the scribal palette should be seen as an integral part of the overall compulsion and control apparatus of Ancient Egypt, deserving as much attention as more obviously repressive measures, such as the use of direct force.



From administrative manifestations of control, the book moves to discuss its portrayal in text and image. In this fifth section, the first two chapters by Matthieu Hagenmüller and Margaret Maitland both discuss ways in which subjugation and social order could be materialised in the visual record and backed up by texts, taking as their core datasets Old and Middle Kingdom material respectively. Deploying the sociological theories of Michel Foucault around discipline and power, both authors highlight the importance of text and image as a mechanism for generating awareness of one's social status, thereby reinforcing the identities of workers as subordinate and elites as superior. A range of specific iconographic motifs and narrative devices were deployed to achieve these results, and enjoyed great longevity. Meanwhile, in the third contribution, Marta Valerio approaches the visualisation of power from a different angle – that of the physical marking of the bodies of the subjugated themselves. By drawing comparisons with well-attested instances of cattle branding, a compelling case is made for the practice being used on occasion to mark humans also, and this appears to be backed by a range of literary allusions emphasising the power of the brand. Thus, this section highlights how diverse the visual, tangible aspect of control could be: it could range from subliminal effects on consciousness via particular ways of constructing social space and interaction, right up to very physical forms of domination – such as leaving indelible marks on bodies.

As well as at state-sanctioned level, compulsion and control could also be manifested on a much smaller scale – within local communities or individual family units, and this is the focus of the penultimate section in this book. Here, Brian Muhs demonstrates the importance of patronage as a prerequisite for advancement in the legal and administrative sphere: drawing on a range of Demotic documents, he illustrates that while Ptolemaic Egypt had a very sophisticated judicial apparatus, simply obeying the letter of the law without making the right connections with influential officials was unlikely to guarantee success. These connections could take the form of social bonds or obligations derived from kinship ties, an aspect of the latter being explored further in the ensuing paper by Steffie van Gompel. Based also on predominantly Demotic material, this chapter illustrates the leverage possessed by Egyptian fathers in influencing the marriage prospects of their children; most notably eldest sons. Due to their control of family property, fathers could effectively leave their children destitute if they so wished, which gave them the capacity to engineer the marital choice of their sons. In both papers, the overarching theme is therefore one of dependent parties accepting the need to obey local superiors – by these officials or fathers – in exchange for getting what they wanted, be it a victory in court or viable family life. Such mechanisms, while not in themselves having the force of law, were effectively underpinned by law, and would have been crucial to overall control of key strata in the population in accordance with established principles. While the present volume is only able to explore this dimension of compulsion from a Demotic perspective, it is hoped that this may spark investigations into similar processes in earlier periods too.

Finally, the seventh and last section of this book explores how the various strands of compulsion and control – to a large extent discussed above – were manifested in the Egyptian language. This section differs from the others in that, rather than focussing on specific events or practices carried out to uphold given elements of compulsion, it instead concentrates more on methodological aspects of studying this topic as a phenomenon expressed in the written record – thereby giving valuable insight into what the Egyptians may have thought of compulsion and control, rather than purely what they did. The first contribution here is by Sami Uljas, wherein he offers a survey of the means of expressing compulsion in the earlier phases of Egyptian. Proceeding in chronological order, this is followed by John Tait discussing instances of compulsion and control in Demotic narrative, and finally by Victoria Fendel looking at various responses to control and repression in Coptic texts, with particular reference to Manichaean Kellis. As well as discussing contrasting periods, these three papers also offer a range of approaches to studying compulsion in the Egyptian language: that of Uljas is very much rooted in what might be termed conventional linguistics, as opposed to Tait's approach,

which is predominantly narratological. Fendel's contribution, meanwhile, sits somewhere between the two – its linguistics-driven methodology has much in common with Uljas, but its tight focus on a single corpus of textual material, rather than attempting to make broader generalisations, has more in common with Tait. Moreover, the paper also makes a range of methodological points unique to itself, especially regarding the relationship between the language of compulsion and the ordering of space. Thus, this closing section demonstrates the great variety of language-based methodologies which are deployable in the compulsion context: one might expect these to serve as inspiration for further work.

Overall, it is therefore hoped that this book will attain its two core objectives. Firstly, the extensive selection of chapters on highly diverse topics across a chronological span of over three millennia should serve as a reference for a wide range of specific factual and methodological inquiries into Ancient Egyptian forms of compulsion and control. Secondly, the sum of all these parts has a key overarching message of its own: the importance of legal pluralism, conceived as broadly as possible, as a framework for understanding the overall process whereby Egyptian society retained control over itself and its members [Figure 1].

It is important to add that Figure 1, almost certainly, has room for further addenda. Conversely, some readers might wish to merge certain categories into one. The aim of the present writer is most definitely not to smother such debates or attempt to prescribe a rigid model, but rather to provide a platform on which further work – both empirical and theoretical – can be assembled. It is very much hoped that readers might feel able to participate in this debate, and that the contributions on the following pages might serve as inspiration to do so.

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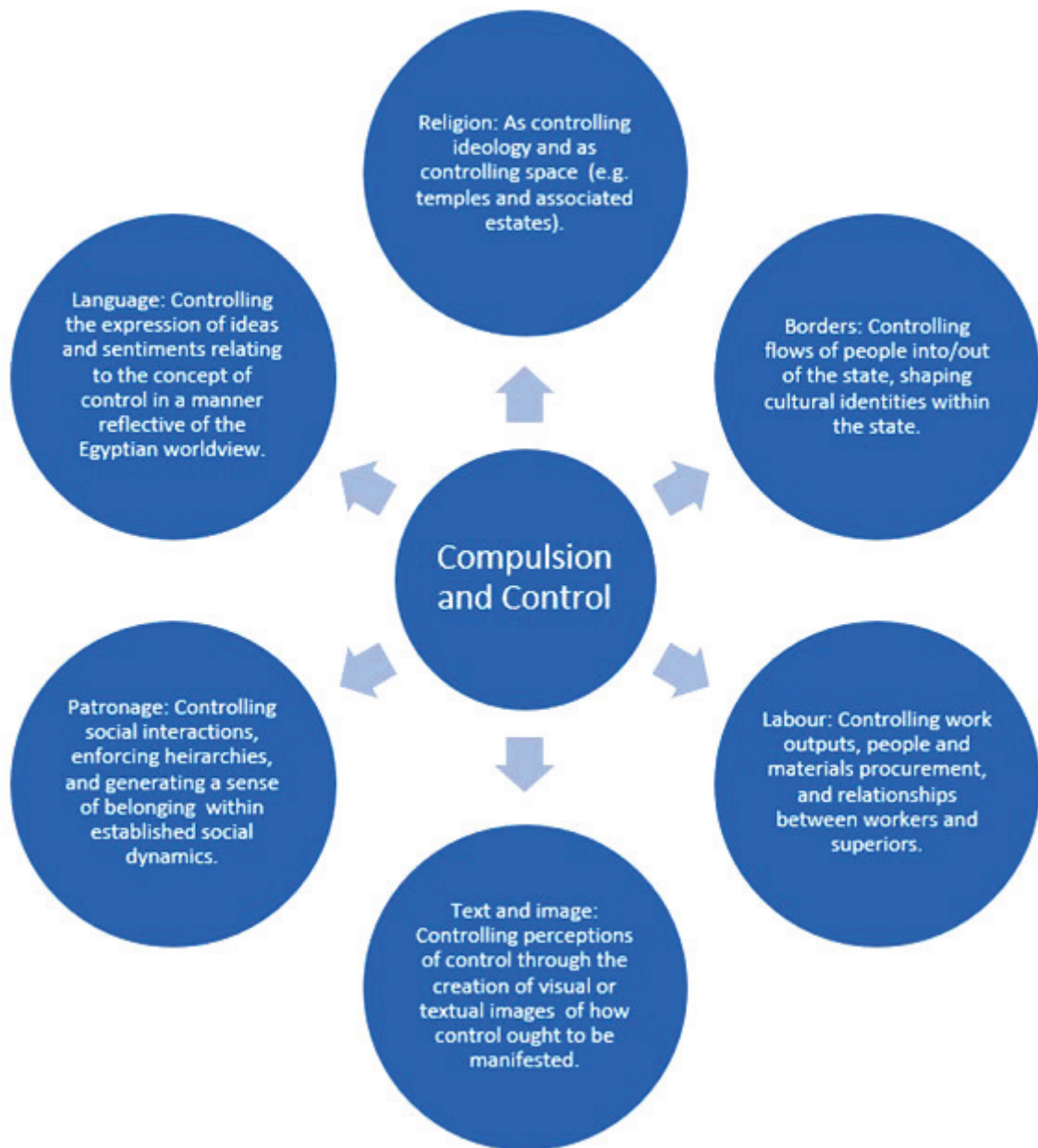


Figure 1. A model for the different strands of compulsion and control based on legal pluralism theory