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DIPARTIMENTO DI STUDI ORIENTALI  
SAPIENZA, UNIVERSITÀ DI ROMA

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# APPROACHING RITUALS IN ANCIENT CULTURES

QUESTIONI DI RITO:  
RITUALI COME FONTE DI CONOSCENZA  
DELLE RELIGIONI E DELLE CONCEZIONI  
DEL MONDO NELLE CULTURE ANTICHE

Proceedings of the Conference, November 28-30, 2011, Roma

EDITED BY  
CLAUS AMBOS AND LORENZO VERDERAME

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# THE RECEPTION OF ROYAL AND DIVINE RITUALS BY INDIVIDUALS IN EGYPT OF THE FIRST MILLENNIUM

FEDERICO CONTARDI

Many royal and divine rituals are preserved thanks to their secondary uses for the benefit of non royal persons, especially as part of the funerary equipment. These phenomenon occurred in the first millennium BC and lasted until the end of the Pharaonic civilization.

This paper examines these rituals and investigates the social and cultural reasons of this phenomenon.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

**R**ITUAL is the organization in normative form of acts concerning the religious sphere. Although it may also refer to activities not necessarily related to this sphere (cf., for example, in the seventeenth century, the ritual of dressing the French king Louis XIV),<sup>1</sup> Egyptian ritual was always religious. Rituals concerned with dressing the pharaoh are unknown. However, it is reasonable to assume that activities benefiting the god-king would be closely linked with religion and magic. Certainly this is suggested by other texts, such as the ritual for the protection of the king's sleep (see *infra*, 3.1.2).<sup>2</sup>

Rituals originated simultaneously with religion; at first they will have been transmitted orally. Only later were they committed to writing. For the earliest period (Old Kingdom) much has been lost; the evidence is confined to the continued existence of the sovereign in the Hereafter. The Pyramid Texts, a collection of formulas for the rebirth of the deceased sovereign, are a heterogeneous composition with formulas even drawn upon rituals which had disappeared (or were never put into writing) and upon those which are known from later written sources. Some of them concern the worship of statues, the Opening-of-the-mouth ritual, and the offering ritual.<sup>3</sup>

During the development of pharaonic civilization a variety of rituals emerges – foundation rituals, rituals for the cults of the gods (of which there exist different types), royal funerary rituals, funerary rituals for the benefit of a non-royal individual – documented essentially in two forms: monumental, on the walls of temples and tombs, and on papyrus scrolls to preserve and transmit them.

<sup>1</sup> Duc de Saint-Simon, *The Memoirs of Louis XIV, His Court and The Regency*, chapter LXXVIII.

<sup>2</sup> Pries (2009).

<sup>3</sup> Hayes (2008-2009: 49).

The function and destination of each and every ritual were well defined and determined. A ritual for the benefit of a king or a god were specific only to them and were not transferable to an individual, since the divine world (including the king) and the world of mortals were clearly distinct and separate. This difference is rigorously maintained especially in periods prior to the first millennium, so much so that at the beginning of the Middle Kingdom (at the turn of the third to the second millennium B.C.) the occurrence of the Pyramid Texts in an individual setting (the mastaba of Sesostrisankh at Lisht)<sup>4</sup> is not extremely common. On the other hand, if it is true that at the end of the third millennium some formulas of the Pyramid Texts merged to form the new *corpus* of the Coffin Texts, destined for the mortal world, this is not an example of the appropriation of royal texts for individual use, in the sense intended in this contribution, for in this case it was a gradual cultural process consisting of a reworking rather than an adoption of that material.

## 2. THE PHENOMENON

In the first millennium B.C. there is a new phenomenon that originated from the political and social situation in Egypt at that time: the reception of royal funerary literature in the non-royal sector. It began at the dawn of the first millennium (Dynasty XXI), when, in the Thebaid alone, the male and female members of the priestly class of the god Amun-Re added some parts of the book of the Amduat to the most common Book of the Dead. The Amduat is a book pertaining to the afterlife which appears beginning in Dynasty XVIII; it was intended for the deceased sovereign in particular. It was articulated according to the twelve hours of the night when the journey of the sun god took place, and it was mainly written on the walls of tombs (versions carved on coffins and tabernacles containing the coffins are also known). In Dynasty XXI some segments, especially those containing the last four hours, and abbreviated version were recorded on the coffins of priests and on papyrus. From this moment, the Amduat, along with other compositions such as the Litany of Re, entered the corpus of funerary literature available to non-royals. The reason this phenomenon occurred is related to the specific historical moment. The end of the Ramesside period was characterized by a marked weakening of pharaonic power, especially in the Thebaid, which culminated in Dynasty XXI. This consequently led to the permanent abandonment of the Theban necropolis as the burial place of the pharaoh in favor of the temple area in the capital of Tanis in the Delta. This downsizing of royal influence in the Theban area led to an increase there in

<sup>4</sup> Immediately after the Old Kingdom some formulas of the Pyramid Texts are recorded on containers for canopies, coffins and other individual funerary equipment: Allen (2006).

the power of the priestly caste of the god Amun-Re, and especially in that of the high priest. In Egypt a sphere of influence was therefore established from Elephantine to el-Hibe where authority was exerted by the high priest of Amun-Re in the form of a theocracy, while authority in the northern part of the country lay in the hands of pharaoh.<sup>5</sup> The power vacuum left by the pharaoh in the south was filled by the high priest and his clergy who did not hesitate to appropriate the textual material of royalty buried in the Valley of the Kings.

From this moment onwards, these texts became part of the repertoire of non-royal individuals. In Dynasty XXVI, for example, they were regularly used together with other royal compositions (the Pyramid Texts) which for more than 1500 years were no longer the exclusive prerogative of the pharaoh. A significant example is provided by the tomb of the dignitary Peta-menophis in the Asasif (TT 33), where the inscriptions on the walls include a collection of ancient funerary texts traditionally intended for the pharaoh – Pyramid Texts, the Book of Gates, the Amduat, the Litany of Re, the Book of the Night, the Book of the Earth, and the Book of Caverns.<sup>6</sup>

In many respects this phenomenon, while reminiscent what had happened at the end of the Old Kingdom, is, however, very different. In fact, the phenomenon at the end of the Old Kingdom does not include the usurpation of royal texts, but rather a reworking of them to create a new non-royal funerary literature (the Coffin Texts).

Instead, the phenomenon occurring in the first millennium, and which continues at least until the second century A.D., differs in scope and content – i.e., until the twilight of pharaonic civilization, when on a regular basis both royal texts and those for the worship of the gods as well were appropriated by non-royal persons.

This phenomenon takes concrete shape in the following forms: 1) acquisition of royal and divine texts in the private sphere; 2) adoption of versions originally destined for divine or royal worship also for those rituals that traditionally viewed the non-royal individual as their beneficiary.

Reception necessitated personalization of the text for the new beneficiary. This adaptation could take various forms, to which the addition of the name of the deceased was essential. The name could replace one of the original beneficiaries of the ritual (the god or ruler) or be added to them. Sometimes the substitution was done very expeditiously, simply by crossing out the names of the original addressees and inserting the deceased's name over them. This is the case, for example, in pBM 10252 (end of the fourth century

<sup>5</sup> The story of Wenamun (see, most recent: Ritner 2009: 87ff.) – which refers to the beginning of the Dynasty XXI – demonstrates that Egypt was in fact a country ruled by two authorities: one in the north, represented by Smendes, the other in the south represented by the high priest Herihor.

<sup>6</sup> Traunecker (2008: 15-48).



B.C.),<sup>7</sup> a copy of the Book for Overthrowing Seth, where the owner's new name has been inserted, deleting any mention of the sovereign (*pr-ḥ*) and Osiris (*Wnn-nfr*).<sup>8</sup> Another possibility was to take an existing text, leaving it unaltered, while writing the name of the deceased new owner only in the colophon (as in the case of the papyrus Brehmner-Rhind).<sup>9</sup>

Through the acquisition of these texts, the deceased intended to take advantage of the benefits intended for the original recipient of the text.

Acquisition of such texts by non-royal individuals has led to the preservation of a number of royal and divine texts down to the present; they would have been lost otherwise since most of them were kept in libraries which have been completely destroyed. In fact, the discovery of temple libraries is very rare, some of the most significant being in Tebtynis and in Soknopaiou Nesos.

### 3. RITUALS ORIGINALLY INTENDED FOR THE PHARAOH AND THE GODS

The royal and divine origin of these texts is sometimes evident because the names of the original beneficiaries are still present. The way the manuscript is "customized" for the new recipient makes it possible to identify two types: on the one hand, original rituals of the temple library which were effectively used for worship and, on the other, rituals that are copied. All those texts in which customization is absent or limited to the colophon (mostly written by a different hand than the remainder of the text) seem to belong to the first category, while those texts in which the customization to the new beneficiary was done directly in the body of the text belong to the second.

#### 3.1. *Rituals for the benefit of the pharaoh*

Among the texts appropriated by non-royal individuals, the rituals and magical texts originally intended to benefit of the pharaoh are less common than those originally intended for divine worship. They were certainly kept in the library of the temple and were re-used by the priests for their own *post-mortem* protection. It is not always clear whether a funerary composition derived from the royal sphere; sometimes a few precise clues reveal that origin. Certainly the following texts were originally designed to protect the sovereign.

<sup>7</sup> PBM 10252 contains various formulas: "Spell to repel the attack of the enemy, which is carried out for the temple of Osiris Khentyamety, to repel Seth in his attack and in order to keep away Seth from Osiris; Spell to overthrow Seth and his followers; Spell to bring out Sokar; Spell to protect the barque; Ceremonies for Geb; Spell to transfiguration".

<sup>8</sup> Schott (1929: 3).

<sup>9</sup> Faulkner (1932: 32 ff).

### 3. 1. 1. Text of the nine-headed Bes and other magical texts

This magical text of protection is preserved in two manuscripts, pBrooklyn 47.218.156<sup>10</sup> and pCarlsberg 475,<sup>11</sup> dating, respectively, to the beginning of the Ptolemaic period<sup>12</sup> and to the end of the Ptolemaic period (or perhaps as late as the beginning of the Roman period).

As is expressly stated in the initial section, it protected the pharaoh from all deadly and evil beings, from death itself, and from terror (pBrooklyn 47.218.156, 1,2): “Raise your voice for pharaoh l.p.h. and protect him from all bad and evil things [...]”. To this end, the nine-headed god Bes, whose monstrous appearance kept such dangers away, was invoked. The final section describes how the formula was to be employed, *viz.* it should be recited before an image of the nine-headed god Bes painted on a blank sheet of papyrus to be worn by whomever sought the protection (pBrooklyn 47.218.156, 3,6; pCarlsberg 475, 6). The more general designation “a woman or a child” replaced the name of the pharaoh as the beneficiary. In another, similar formula (where, however, the beneficial monstrous Bes has only seven faces) on the same sheet of papyrus, “the man” is cited as the beneficiary (pBrooklyn 47.218.156, 5,7). This shows that a male recipient was distinguished from the female and child recipients.

The existence of at least two copies of this formula shows that its secondary use in the non-royal sphere is not an isolated case, but falls within an established tradition. In addition, the graphic arrangement of the text on both papyri and the fact that each text was written by a single scribe indicate that the manuscripts are rearranged copies of an original magical text for the ruler’s benefit, and not original magical texts which were interpolated.

Other examples of magical texts for the protection of the sovereign appropriated for the benefit of individuals can be cited, for example, in pBrooklyn 47.218.49,<sup>13</sup> which was intended to prevent ear diseases for a ruler named Psammetichus, and in pBrooklyn 47.218.138.<sup>14</sup> In column x+13,9-15 of the latter, a formula against the bite of reptiles is retained. In the final section with practical instructions about how to cast the spell, the generic recipient *s* “man” is mentioned. By chance there exists an older parallel of this spell which was inscribed on a statue of king Ramesses III in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo (JE 69771).<sup>15</sup>

The retention of the original beneficiary’s name when a royal text was appropriated evidently provided some guarantee of the spell’s effectiveness. But we must not be tempted to conclude that the mention of the king’s name was

<sup>10</sup> Sauneron (1970).

<sup>11</sup> Quack (2006a: 53-64).

<sup>12</sup> Sauneron (1970: 5) is prudent in proposing a date for the manuscript.

<sup>13</sup> Sauneron (1970: 11); O’Rourke (2002).

<sup>14</sup> Goyon (1971: 154-159).

<sup>15</sup> Goyon (1971).

an invention, to give a greater effect to the magic formula. The existence of the parallel to pBrooklyn 47.218.138 effectively excludes this possibility.

### 3.1.2. pCairo 58027

The manuscript, dated on the paleographic evidence to the beginning of the Roman era,<sup>16</sup> contains two texts that comprise the book of “the bedroom of the royal palace” (*n sh-hnkt n pr-nswt*), as is expressly stated in the colophon (x +4,8c). We do not know the precise origin of this papyrus, however, it should be the Thebaid. However, the royal character of the book is certain. The first of the two texts is a ritual for the protection of pharaoh’s sleep, articulated according to the twelve hours of the night (such an articulation is also common to several other religious compositions); it derives from the ritual of divine worship in mammisi of Edfu and Dendera for the protection of the child god, Harsomtut and Ihi, respectively. The second text is a short formula for the protection of the pharaoh from the dangers that occurred during the year.

In addition to the formula to be recited, each also includes practical instructions for the performance of the ritual. The concrete evidence of the secondary use of the text for the benefit of non-royal persons is evident precisely in this section. In fact, unlike in the body of the formula, where the recipient is always and only the pharaoh (regularly mentioned with the title *pr-ꜥ3*), here, in the section with instructions for the execution, the sovereign is replaced by the general *s* “man”. In the ritual for the protection of the sovereign’s sleep, the instructions (x +3,11) stipulate: “Recite before these deities shown here after they have been drawn with ochre around the bed. Then it is necessary to draw on the ground an udjat-eye in front of the bed and make a man sit in the middle of his (the udjat eye) iris”.<sup>17</sup> The indications also require the preparation of an ointment (x +4,11a) “with which a man and every window of his house is anointed”.<sup>18</sup> In the formula for the protection of the pharaoh from dangers that occurred throughout the year, the instructions (x +4,2c) state: “the man is anointed with it (the prepared ointment) and likewise every window of his house; honey is put on the fire”.

Until now, the mention of the generic *s* “man” does not seem to have been considered valid grounds for suggesting that this manuscript is a copy adapted to a generic non-royal beneficiary, since the designation *s* “man” is the typical expression for expressing a generic recipient in medical and in magical-ritual texts, regardless of its status.<sup>19</sup> It seems to me that if this papyrus was actually intended exclusively for a pharaoh, he would have been mentioned as such (through the anonymous expression *pr-ꜥ3*), even in the section of in-

<sup>16</sup> The dating of the manuscript presents some problems, exposed in: Pries (2009: 14).

<sup>17</sup> Pries (2009: 80 ff.).

<sup>18</sup> Pries (2009: 89).

<sup>19</sup> Pries (2009: 83-84).

structions. On the other hand, it cannot be ignored that even the instructions in the magical text pBrooklyn 47.218.156 mention the woman *st* and the child *nḥn* as the recipients (in the first formula) and the man *s* (in the second formula), despite the fact that the two formulas are addressed to pharaoh. It seems clear, therefore, that such a distinction demonstrates how these spells, designed for pharaoh, were reused for the benefit of ordinary mortals.<sup>20</sup>

### 3.1.3. The Embalming Ritual

Although embalming was practiced since ancient times, chance would have it that the first manuscripts with a ritual of embalming only date back to the first century A.D. There are three scrolls, all from a funerary context and personalized with the names of the deceased.<sup>21</sup> The most complete manuscript, which is missing an unknown number of columns of text from the beginning, is the pBoulaq 3; pLouvre E 5158 retains only a part of the ritual corresponding to the concluding section of pBoulaq 3 (from x+9,9 to x+10,22). A third, very fragmentary parallel is divided between the Oriental Museum, Durham (pDurham 1983.11)<sup>22</sup> and the Eremitage in St. Petersburg (pSt. Petersburg ΔB 18128).<sup>23</sup>

The ritual is articulated in a number of sections, reflecting the various stages of the embalming process. Each section contains, in addition to the formula itself, practical instructions about its execution, interpreting such actions in terms of mythology, which were to be recited during that particular act (or at its conclusion).

The manuscripts – that clearly refer to a common model text, because they present a textual version that is essentially identical – were in turn personalized by the insertion of the name of the deceased. In the case of pBoulaq 3 it is evident that such personalization did not occur when the text was copied, but subsequently. In other words, a ready-made manuscript was used, with blank spaces for inserting the name of the purchaser. Some of the spaces were, however, left empty; but in those filled, it was the intervention of a clearly different hand from the one that wrote the ritual.

The ready-made manuscript was intended for one of the many members of the priestly class, with the title *it-nṯr* “god’s father” inserted in the body of the text immediately before the spaces left blank for the name. Evidently it was the temple staff, which also represented the local ruling class, which copied and transmitted texts, simultaneously appropriating the texts for their own purposes.

<sup>20</sup> It is possible that even the ritual for the renovation of royalty in the new year, pBrooklyn 47.218.50 (Goyon, 1972), might find an application also outside of the royal sphere (see the allusion in 16,13).

<sup>21</sup> Sauneron (1952).

<sup>22</sup> Reeves (1985: 121-124).

<sup>23</sup> Töpfer (2011: 182-192). Extensive studies may show that the fragments belonging to pDurham and pSt. Petersburg are actually part of pLouvre E 5158, reducing to two the total number of manuscripts with the Embalming Ritual.

Manuscripts concerning the embalming ritual, unlike all the other manuscripts considered in 3.1.1 and 3.1.2, do not include mention of pharaoh. This absence obscures the fact that the ritual could be originally intended for the sovereign and only later adapted for an individual. In fact I do not think that scholars have ever seriously considered the possibility of the text's royal origin.<sup>24</sup> The entire text, however, is full of expressions and phrases that can only refer to a pharaoh. Among these, the following seems particularly significant to me, referring to the act of inserting golden toe stalls on the feet of the mummy: "To you will come the gold which has emerged from the mountains, the beautiful protection of the gods in their places. It will illuminate your visage in the underworld. You will breathe by means of the gold (3,19). You will go forth thanks to the fine gold. Those who are in the necropolis in the Abydene nome will receive you, while the inhabitants of the great mansion are jubilant. [...] (3,20). You will tread the ground with your feet in Thebes. You will walk upon the earth in Karnak. You will see Amun in all of his appearances (3,21). Your ba will join with the Ogdoad. You will behold Amun-Re king of the gods in his beautiful feast of the 19<sup>th</sup> of Paope. Amenopet will pour out water for you upon the offering table when he is in the valley (3,22) pouring out water for his father and mother each decade. [...] Your ba will associate with Imhotep when you are in the valley, your heart being happy. You will not be distant from the mound of Djeme, for you are like a son in the house of his father. (4,1) [...] You will be given the vestments of the gods and goddesses who are in Karnak. [...] Your name endures within the temple of Amun-Re king of the gods for ever, while your son whom you love occupies your place (4,3)".

The expression "You will tread the ground with your feet in Thebes. You will walk upon the earth in Karnak. You will see Amun" seems to refer to the (filial) bond between the pharaoh and the god Amun and to the role of the sovereign officiating at divine worship, who when crossing the vast halls of the temple of Karnak to access the cell within the Holy of Holies in solitude, can see the face of the god Amun. "Your name endures within the temple of Amun-Re, King of the Gods, for ever" would then refer to the prerogative of the pharaoh in performing on the god's behalf all building work for the glory of the god. Finally, "while your son whom you love occupies your place" refers to the transmission of royal power to his son.

In the ritual there are several references to the filial bond between the deceased (sovereign) and the god (You will receive a cool libation in the West beside your father in the mound of Djeme. [5,14]). This characterization of *post-mortem* destiny can only refer to a sovereign: "Your ba will endure in the sky, your corpse in the underworld, and your effigies in the temple. (7,18). You

<sup>24</sup> The Emblaming Ritual is considered by Smith (2009: 209ff.) a text in which the deceased is the original beneficiary.

will do what you wish in the sky, being among the stars (8,13).” The fact that he will fly up into the sky, finding a place among the imperishable stars, is a royal image of ancient tradition dating back to the Pyramid Texts (PT 245, 509). The memory of the pharaoh, however, remains alive on earth through his representations in the temples.

### 3. 2. *Rituals originally intended for the cult of the god*

Amongst the texts adopted by individuals, the largest group by far consists of rituals originally designated for divine worship, especially for the cult of Osiris, the god of the dead.<sup>25</sup> They were recited during specific times of the year and were also related to the yearly regeneration embodied in the agricultural cycle. This feature obviously contributed to their proliferation in the private funerary sphere, reinforced by the fact that every deceased person was identified with the god Osiris himself.

Some of these rituals were compiled as an anthology or were inserted at the end of the Book of the Dead, a collection of funerary formulas intended for the use of non-royal persons. Rituals for Osiris can be divided into two groups: 1) rituals for the recovery of Osiris’s body, for his resurrection, and transfiguration; 2) offering rituals. This distinction is only theoretical with no correspondence to actual practice, since the two groups of texts are, as a rule, found in one and the same manuscript.<sup>26</sup> There follows some examples of the many manuscripts, to illustrate the importance of the phenomenon.

The texts of the first group were celebrated on special occasions; the most important took place in the second half of the month of Khoiak, when a mummiform figure of Osiris was made of earth, sown with grain. The figure was watered and eventually germinated. This new image replaced the old one made the previous year. The germinating image symbolized Osiris who was reborn from the dead, and it is easy to imagine how the adoption of similar rituals was auspicious for the deceased who might then enjoy the same effects.

The resurrection of the god Osiris – which on a cosmic scale represented a vital passage for the stability of the cyclic rhythm of nature, and on an individual level, the prospect of rebirth and life after death – was favored by recitation of specific rituals like the “Glorifications which the two sisters [Isis and Nephthys] made”.<sup>27</sup> It is preserved in four copies, including one of particular importance which was written for the benefit of a woman, added at the conclusion of a Book of the Dead pBerlin 3008 (Ptolemaic period). The purpose of this text was to transfigure the *ba* of Osiris, stabilize his corpse,

<sup>25</sup> Many of these texts are collected in Smith (2009: 67-206).

<sup>26</sup> Among the various manuscripts of this kind I quote pBerlin 3057 (Schmitt papyrus), which clearly shows its origin from the cult of the god.

<sup>27</sup> Text also known under the name of Lamentations of Isis and Nephthys. Kucharek (2010).

make his *ka* jubilant, grant breath to the nose of him whose throat is constricted, gladden the hearts of Isis and Nephthys, and place Horus upon the throne of his father. These glorifications, like all rituals, were written in Middle Egyptian, the ancient language of tradition, which is very different from Demotic, the language spoken at the end of the first millennium. Demotic was indeed used for writing the glorifications of pBM 10507, which dates to the end of the first century B.C. The initial section is entitled “The book which Isis made for Osiris, Foremost in the West”.<sup>28</sup> The text is very different from the “Glorifications which the two sisters made”, being pronounced only by the goddess Isis who ends her prayer to Osiris by presenting him with her son Horus and asking him to commend him to the Ennead. However, the text presents significant similarities with texts recited in the mysteries of Osiris during the month of Khoiak: mourning over the body of the deceased Osiris, his mummification, the revivification and activities performed on his behalf by his son, his judgment and victory over his enemies, the offerings presented to him.

The process of Osiris’s resurrection concluded with his installation as ruler in the underworld. A copy of this text entitled “The Great decree issued to the name of the silent land”, is preserved in a lengthy papyrus of the fourth century B.C.; it is a compilation of many other Osirian rituals which belonged to a certain Imuthes (pMMA 35.9.21).<sup>29</sup>

The increasing difficulty of reading ancient hieratic writing was probably responsible for the transition to Demotic for the redaction of some rituals, even though that the language of the text continued to be Middle Egyptian. This is the case of pBodl. MS. Egypt A 3(P), second half of the first century B.C., in which adaptation for the benefit of the deceased was not completed.<sup>30</sup> In fact, of six of Osirian rituals, three cite Osiris or Sokar as the beneficiary, one cites the deceased, and two are addressed both to Osiris and the deceased. It is noteworthy that the deceased remains anonymous, as the impersonal expression ‘Osiris of so and so’ is used. Probably this scroll was to serve as a manual, being included in the funerary equipment without personalization. Among the rituals contained, there is a “Spell for striking the copper” which refers to the clashing of the cymbals that accompanied the glorification recited by Isis and Nephthys in the place of embalming. The noise served to aid in awakening their deceased brother and had an apotropaic function as well. This papyrus also contains the “Rite of bringing Sokar out of the shrine”, a ritual act to awaken and to give life to the god Sokar who is in turn identified with the god Osiris.<sup>31</sup> This text is preserved in some papyri written in hieratic, i.e., in a script which, from the first millennium B.C., had become the script for writing sacred books, while declining in use for the preparation

<sup>28</sup> Smith (1987).

<sup>30</sup> Smith (1993: 491-495).

<sup>29</sup> Goyon (1999: 17-47).

<sup>31</sup> Goyon (1968: 63-96).

of literary and administrative texts – Demotic was used for them. Among the various manuscripts (eg. pMMA 35.9.21, pLouvre 3176, pLouvre 3129) which preserve the text, only pBM 10188 (pBremner-Rhind) mentions the pharaoh (evoked in the anonymous form *pr-ꜥ*) as celebrant of the divine ritual.<sup>32</sup> Of course, on analogy to other divine rituals, such as the Offering ritual or the Daily cult ritual, it is necessary to imagine that the celebrant could not in actuality be the pharaoh but that a priest of high rank should act as his substitute. This was especially true in the Greco-Roman Period, when the pharaoh was a foreigner, and even absent from Egypt. Unlike all these documents, pCarlsberg 656<sup>33</sup> is the only papyrus so far known with this ritual, found in the library of the temple (of the god Sobek at Tebtynis) and, therefore, not reused within a funerary context.

The process that led to the resurrection of Osiris, and therefore by assimilation even that of deceased individual, could be seriously threatened by hostile forces, personified by the figure of Seth (the murderer of his brother Osiris) and by Apopis (the evil serpent that hindered the daily rebirth of the sun god). As a protection from these forces there were the “Ritual of overthrowing Seth” and the “Ritual of overthrowing Apopis”. The formulas to be recited had an apotropaic value and therefore recourse was also made to them on other occasions, such as during the execution of the Daily cult ritual. As part of the rebirth of the dead these formulas were included in pLouvre N3129 (Ritual of overthrowing Seth)<sup>34</sup> and in pBM 10188 (pBremner-Rhind).

The second category of the Osirian rituals consists of the formulas for glorification and for offerings to sustain him,<sup>35</sup> recited during the presentation of offerings to Osiris. In pBM 10081, the officiant of such glorification, when it was not modified with the name of the deceased, Paurem, is the pharaoh (in its anonymous form *pr-ꜥ*).<sup>36</sup> PBM 10209, adapted for the benefit of a certain Nesmin who lived in the fourth century B.C., is a compilation of a series of offering formulas recited on occasion of the Beautiful Feast of the Valley, when the living visited the tombs of their ancestors. It clearly reflects the character of a ritual usurped from divine cult, since, beyond mentioning Osiris Foremost in the West as the recipient of offerings the pharaoh is also mentioned as celebrant of the ritual (“Presentation of offerings by the king himself”).<sup>37</sup> The presence of the king as the officiant of the divine ritual is documented in another manuscript of the late fourth century B.C. (pHohenzollern-Sigmaringen II), included with the funerary equipment of a certain Pasherikhonsu.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>32</sup> PBM 10188 20, 26-27; Faulkner (1932: 40).

<sup>34</sup> Schott (1929: 5-59).

<sup>36</sup> Assmann (2008: 235ff.).

<sup>38</sup> Quack (2000: 86).

<sup>33</sup> Quack (2006b: 65-68).

<sup>35</sup> Assmann (2008).

<sup>37</sup> PBM 10209 1,2; Haikal (1970: 25).



#### 4. RITUALS NOT EXCLUSIVELY INTENDED FOR EITHER THE KING OR A GOD

The phenomenon of appropriation of rituals originally intended for the sovereign or deity is not confined to those rituals dedicated exclusively to either, but also to a funerary ritual commonly used for the benefit of non-royal individuals.

The Ritual for the opening of the mouth was primarily executed on the mummy and the statue (of a pharaoh but also those of non-royal persons), so that they might receive life and live an autonomous life.<sup>39</sup> It could also be carried out on objects and tools used in the magical-religious sphere to 'activate' them; according to this concept, a temple, too, might even benefit from it.<sup>40</sup>

The Ritual for the opening of the mouth included a series of actions such as purification by water and incense, offerings of food and beverages, the presentation of clothes, and the 'opening' of the mouth itself with various instruments. Every act was accompanied by formulas, often of considerable extension and complexity. The ritual originated in the Old Kingdom (middle of the third millennium) when references to it are present in the Pyramid Texts and in wall depictions inside the tombs of dignitaries. But it is only in the New Kingdom that the text appears in a very developed form. The number of formulas varied from one copy to the next, and they could present significant variations between one witness and another, so that one cannot speak of the existence of a canonized version to which all copies conformed.

Despite the fact that the Ritual for the opening of the mouth was widely used for centuries in the private sphere, some exemplars are based on a model text for the cult of the god, rather than for the benefit of a private individual.<sup>41</sup>

In this sense, two versions are particularly significant: one of them was written on the inner surface of the basin and the lid of the sarcophagus of Butehamon, who lived in Dynasty XXI (around 1000 B.C.) in Thebes, now in the Egyptian Museum in Turin; the other is preserved on a papyrus now in the Louvre which belonged to a woman who lived in the Roman period (around the first century A.D.) whose name was Sais.<sup>42</sup>

The scribes who wrote the texts clearly used copies of the Ritual for the opening of the mouth for the benefit of a god. In fact, they have not only added formulas absent in those versions for the benefit of individuals and present exclusively in those for the god, but they have also left traces of the original beneficiaries in the text. Let us examine the clues demonstrating the

<sup>39</sup> Otto (1960).

<sup>40</sup> Blackman - Fairman (1946: 75-91).

<sup>41</sup> The following considerations arise from the study of J.F. Quack (2006c: 69ff.).

<sup>42</sup> These two versions of the Ritual for the opening of the mouth respectively correspond to witnesses 4 and 7 of the Otto's synopsis (Otto, 1960).

dependence of a model text intended for a god, starting with Butehamon's version.

The beginning of the entire lengthy ritual reads: "Make the Ritual for the opening of the mouth to Osiris, King Djoser-Ka-Ra Amenhotep, and to Butehamon in the house of gold".<sup>43</sup> Two features emerge: 1) the name Butehamon, the recipient of the ritual, is preceded by the mention of pharaoh Amenhotep I; 2) the "house of gold".

Amenhotep I was a sovereign at the beginning of Dynasty XVIII (i.e. 500 years before Butehamon) who enjoyed a posthumous cult in the Theban necropolis, and in particular, in the area of Deir el Medina. The evidence for a personal cult which he shared with his mother Ahmes-Nefertari is well documented by steles and inscriptions which reveal the existence of a real phenomenon of personal piety, as well as its representation on the walls of tombs of the Theban area. The "house of gold" refers to the laboratory within a temple, where the statues and sacred furnishings were produced. Thus from this incipit, it is clear that the model which Butehamon drew upon benefited Amenhotep I, and that it probably derives from the house of gold where it was used upon one of the many statues created for his worship.<sup>44</sup> When Butehamon appropriated the text, he entered his name without deleting the name of the illustrious sovereign, most probably out of respect and devotion. Also, keep in mind that the ritual for Butehamon was for the benefit of his mummy, since it was written on the inner walls of the sarcophagus, while the model text for Amenhotep I was evidently intended for 'animating' the statue of the king, to judge precisely from the incipit.

Dozens of formulas follow, which are all personalized with respect to Butehamon, except for the concluding segment of an anointing formula:<sup>45</sup> "Priest *sem*, *hknw* ointment. Oh Osiris! O Osiris King Djoser-Ka-Ra, Amenhotep, I fill your face with the ointment!" It is likely that the name of the king was left standing simply due to an oversight of the scribe.

These two passages are not the only ones that reveal the dependence on a model linked to the royal/divine cult, but also those related to episodes that are shared by other rituals for the cult of the god and which are missing in those versions normally intended for a non-royal individual. The purification with the *nmst* vessel, for example, is an episode that occurs in the offering ritual for the worship of the gods, since it is present in pCairo 58030 and regularly on the walls of temples.<sup>46</sup> A further link with the sphere of the divine cult exists in a fumigation formula addressed to all the gods.<sup>47</sup>

The other ritual for the opening of the mouth derived from a model text for a deity is preserved in the papyrus of the lady Sais. Here even a formula of purification with the *nmst* vessel is included and the fumigation for all the gods.

<sup>43</sup> Otto (1960: I, 1).

<sup>44</sup> Quack (2006c: 140f.).

<sup>45</sup> Otto (1960: scene 55A).

<sup>46</sup> Otto (1960: scene 62); Contardi (2009: 99ff.).

<sup>47</sup> Otto (1960: scene 59C).

In the first part of the offering formula, which corresponds to scene 65C, the model text shines through: “Oh Sais, your son, the pharaoh, whom you love, I have given to you one thousand bread-cakes, beer etc.”<sup>48</sup> followed by the list of offerings. From this statement it is clear that the model benefited of a deity, since the person who should recite the formula is the pharaoh himself. The name of the initial divine recipient was simply replaced with the name of Sais. A few lines later the name of the divine recipient is revealed: “the offerings are pure and presented to your Ka, oh Sokar-Osiris”.<sup>49</sup>

Thus Lady Sais’s Ritual for the opening of the mouth was based on a model text written for the benefit of Sokar-Osiris, which was probably executed on mummiform statues of that god during the month of Khoiak to activate them magically.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, papyri have been preserved with the ritual for Sokar-Osiris’s benefit: five manuscripts from the library of the Temple of Sobek at Tebtynis, dating back to Roman times.<sup>51</sup>

In some manuscripts that refer to the ritual for Sokar-Osiris, the name of the new beneficiary is inserted immediately after the mention of that god (pCairo CG 58031); in others the scribe sometimes simply forgot to insert the name of the new beneficiary (pCairo CG 58036).<sup>52</sup>

The fact that relatively many manuscripts with the Ritual for the opening of the mouth used precisely the versions for Sokar-Osiris indicates, in my opinion, the precise intention of the non-royal individual to enjoy the efficiency ensured by that god of rebirth.

##### 5. THE PHENOMENON VIEWED IN A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Religion, magic, and rituals are cultural phenomena understandable only if they are considered as part of a larger story. To understand the phenomenon of appropriation of royal and divine rituals for the benefit of non-royal persons it is essential to consider the particular moment in history when it occurred and the context.

The evidence available reveals that the phenomenon slowly begins to manifest itself at the onset of the first millennium B.C. as a direct result of the loss of the pharaonic power throughout southern Egypt and the simultaneous gain in influence there of the college of priests of Amun-Re at Karnak, facilitating the appropriation of the royal funerary texts in the non-royal sphere (cfr. *supra* 2). But it is from the fourth century B.C. that the phenomenon is full-blown, precisely at a time when Egypt lost its political independence: a

<sup>48</sup> Otto (1960: scene 65C, section b) has not interpreted correctly the signs that express: “your son, pharaoh, whom you love”, but has read “oh Sais, your beloved daughter... I have given you one thousand bread-cakes...” (Otto, 1960 II: 150). The rectification has been proposed by Quack (2006c: 116 note b); see also Contardi (2009: 87).

<sup>49</sup> Otto (1960: scene 65C section k).

<sup>51</sup> Quack (2006c: 136).

<sup>50</sup> Quack (2006c: 137ff.).

<sup>52</sup> Golénischeff (1927).

new phase of history began which lasted until sunset of the pharaonic civilization. The pharaoh is a stranger from another culture – not comparable to previous Libyan and Nubian rulers who came, it is true, from different cultural backgrounds but who fully assimilated to Egyptian culture. He lives in a faraway city, sometimes even outside Egypt. Between the fourth and the end of the first century B.C., the ruler is a Greek who resides in a newly founded city (Alexandria), outside the Black Land, with the administration of the country in the hands of a Greek elite. With the end of the first century B.C., the situation is even more extreme with a Roman pharaoh reigning from thousands of miles distant. Reality for the indigenous population turns inward, marking its own cultural identity through identification with the temple, which becomes the exclusive place where the values of pharaonic civilization are preserved in an environment that was becoming increasingly Greek.<sup>53</sup>

The temple becomes the reference point for the Egyptians; it is the institution that embodies the cultural and therefore traditional values of Egyptian civilization. Above all, this meant promoting the celebration of the feasts, the practice of the rituals of the cult, and therefore rediscovering, preserving, and passing on all the literature of the past. The library becomes the workshop of this cultural operation. The ancient texts are busily copied, stored, and transmitted, becoming the subject of a philological study not unlike that of the contemporaneous library at Alexandria. Even the stone walls of the temple itself (in particular of the great temples) are transformed into enduring media, available for inscribing with every kind of ritual. The temples of the Greco-Roman Period (in particular at Edfu, Dendera, Esna, Kom Ombo, Philae) – unlike the great temples of the New Kingdom where the walls bore depictions of ritual with the text limited primarily to captions and brief quotations of the formulas (in fact, there are relatively few cases where entire formulas are given, if one thinks for example of important temples such as Karnak, Luxor, Medinet Habu etc.)<sup>54</sup> – provided ample space for lengthy formulas. In a sense it is appropriate to speak of the temple as a veritable library in stone.

The priests who studied and passed on these ancient texts were the sole custodians of this heritage and therefore of cultural values, since the ruler was no longer a reference person, on whose behalf they acted as in the past. In such a context, I imagine that they considered all that heritage their property and were privileged to dispose of it freely, drawing heavily upon ritual texts, much more than may have been possible earlier – for example, in the Ramesside Period, judging from the types of texts found in the settlement

<sup>53</sup> Assmann (1992: 9-25); Osing (1992: 37).

<sup>54</sup> In this context it is noteworthy that the shrine made by Sethi I for the Sun god retains entire formulas of the Daily cult ritual and the Offering ritual (Contardi, 2009).

and tombs of non-royal inhabitants at Deir el-Medina (e. g. the Chester-Beatty series); or at the end of the Middle Kingdom, judging from the private library known as the Ramesseum papyri. The possibility was given to usurp texts intended for the benefit of the king and of the god for personal use (certainly in the funerary sphere, but perhaps also even outside it). The development was moreover favored by the fact that any ritual which foresaw the pharaoh as officiant was in any case performed by a priest acting as a substitute. Although even in the past there had necessarily been recourse to substitutes for those rituals which called for daily, simultaneous execution in several temples (such as the offering ritual), during the Greco-Roman Period the absence of the sovereign was a concrete and actual fact in all circumstances.

Those who appropriated the rituals originally intended for the sovereign and the cult of Osiris, god of death and rebirth, could enjoy their benefits; furthermore, the fact that they were for the king or the god acted as a guarantee of effectiveness. A ritual to protect pharaoh from danger (papyri with the magical text of nine-headed Bes) was considered effective to the extent that it became a magic formula applicable to any person and useful for this purpose, as shown clearly by the mention of the general user in the technical instructions for the execution in the typical modality of medical texts. The reception of the ritual for the opening of the mouth for Amenhotep I by Butehamon should probably not be considered simply appropriation, but rather as an intentional identification of Butehamon with King Amenhotep who was highly venerated at the time. If that were not the case, it becomes difficult to account for the retention of Amenhotep I's name in the *incipit* (cfr. *supra* 4).

As the titles of the owners of many preserved texts indicated, the person using them was a member of the same priestly class. This was so obvious that in pBoulaq 3 the scribe wrote the priestly title (*it-ntr*) before leaving spaces blank for insertion of the name of the purchaser of the manuscript.

The extent and spread of this phenomenon of reception caused the adoption of Demotic for the redaction of rituals, it being a type of script closer to that historical moment when compared to the venerable hieratic script, then certainly much less accessible for the indigenous population which represented the prospective market. At first the adoption of Demotic was limited to the script, not involving the language, given that the text continued to be written in Middle Egyptian: pLouvre 3452,<sup>55</sup> the oldest ritual text for private use written in Demotic script, dates to 56-57 B.C., and pBodl. MS Egypt. A. 3 (P) (cfr. *supra* 3.2) dates to the same period, written both in Demotic and hieratic script.

<sup>55</sup> Smith (1993: 494 note 15).

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