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THE CONCEPT OF THE REVIVIFICATION OF THE DEAD BODY BY THE SUN RAYS

Teodor Lekov

Recently Holger Kockelmann¹ drew attention to the Vignette of Book of the Dead spell 154 and the image of the mummy illuminated by the sun light. I was pleased to see that some of my conclusions that I reached in 2001² were confirmed and shared by his study. So, I decided to publish a short paragraph from my original thesis dedicated to this topic.

The image of the vitality of the sun's rays is one of the common images of Egyptian thinking. Through the sun's rays, life in nature is created³. The Hymn of Akhenaten is particularly indicative of representing this idea:

“Your rays (*stwt.k*) ... create offspring in women and create seed in humanity, giving birth to a son in the womb of his mother”⁴.

The art of Amarna is characterized by the image of the solar disk, the rays of which descend to the nose and body of the king⁵.

In the texts about the afterlife, the idea of reviving through the light of the Sun-god in the underworld is perhaps most clearly reflected in the Book of Caverns⁶.

In the underworld, only the righteous can see the sun's rays until the punished possess this ability. “They do not see the rays of the sun and do not hear his voice; they are in the original darkness”⁷. They are dark and have no light⁸.

Seeing the light is also hearing the voice of the sun god. This “hearing” / “seeing” brings the spirit of life and makes them breathe. As Jan Assmann notes⁹: “Cu-

¹ Kockelmann 2017.

² ЛЕКОВ 2001, 381-394.

³ Morenz 1973, 185.

⁴ Davies, Amarna VI, 27, 6 = Sandman 1938, 94, 10-11.

⁵ This idea has been attested since the Middle Kingdom, see CT III, 361a-b, where the god gives the life of the deceased through his arms – Hornung 1971, 75 note 8, and even earlier in the Pyramid Texts.

⁶ This book appears in the time of the XIXth Dynasty and it is possible that it reflects in some way the teaching of Amarna about the Sun disc and the light.

⁷ Quererts. Pl. 33, 9 and 48, 9.

⁸ Quererts. Pl. 101, 5; Hornung 1965, 78.

⁹ Assmann 1994, 60-61.

riously enough, the linguistic communication of the sun god with those in the underworld, which is referred to throughout, next to seeing the light, as a life-giving act and is obviously considered to be just as important, is expressed not only as hearing and granting, but also as giving the breath of life.”

In the Litany of Re, the Sun god is called:

hshd h3.wt imj 3ht pn
ntj k.f m krrt.f

“This one, who illuminates the corpses in Akhet, who enters his cave.”¹⁰

The inhabitants of Duat breathe and therefore live, hearing his voice. This notion is also found in Amduat and later Netherworld books¹¹.

An eloquent example is a text from the tomb of Ramesses VII:

“His Voice is the Light. Those who are with him breathe through his Voice.”¹²

In the Litany of Re, the Sun God is described as:

mdw b3 htp.f hr ts.w.f pn ntj
nd.f 3h.w imntj.w srk.sn im.f

“This one with the speaking Ba,
who is content (united) with his utterance,
who protects Spirits-Akhu,
the Westerners, so they could breathe through him.”¹³

The idea is also embedded in the solar theology of the New Kingdom and is present in the hymns of the Sun and Creator gods. In the hymn from the end of XX Dynasty it is said:

“You lead your Disc towards the caverns (*sšm.k itn.k n krrt.wt*)
and your light illuminates the Corpses (*h3j.k hrj-tp h3.wt*).
The one who is suffocated can breathe.
The wind is in the nostrils.”¹⁴

¹⁰ Anbetung. 15.

¹¹ Amduat. 33; 53; Pfb. 349; Anbetung. 7; Creation, 1, 3-4; Quererts. Pl.3,3; The notion is also connected with the creative power of the word – the instrument of creation; For this “Sprachtheorie der Jenseitsbuecher” – see Assmann 1969, 144-145 note 26.

¹² Piankoff 1958, 153.

¹³ Anbetung. 10.

¹⁴ Vittmann 1980, Pl. 2-3 line 12-13 (also Assmann 1994, 61, note 137); See also the examples collected by Assmann – Assmann 1994, 61 note 134-138 – Mariette, Abydos. I, 52; pap. Berlin 3048, 7, 6; pap. Leiden I 344; BD. 15 B II = AHG. no. 44, 28-30.

The image is also permanently present in the late mortuary literature.¹⁵ The dead are given rays and light¹⁶.

The embalming ritual makes it clear that this is one of the reasons for making a funeral gold mask. In addition to gold being divine, solar flesh, gold „rejuvenates“ the dead: *snfr:k m nbw* - “you are rejuvenated by gold”¹⁷ and beyond: *šhd.f ḥr:k m-ḥnw dw3t sns:n.k m nbw* “It illuminates your (gold) face inside the Duat. You breathe through gold.”¹⁸

Here gold is a substitute for the sun’s rays, which illuminate the corpse/face, allowing it to breathe again¹⁹.

For the first time in the royal tombs of the New Kingdom, in the tomb chamber of Merneptah (XIXth Dynasty) this idea of life giving sun light is represented as a light-illuminated body. Osiris’ lying and mummified image is enclosed by a series of red solar discs (the night sun) with star images in between. Image is related to the Book of Caverns²⁰.

A similar image was later found in the Book of Earth in the sarcophagus chamber in the tomb of Ramses VI²¹. The descending disks and stars around the recumbent body start from a larger disc with the falcon head down, and above this image is the body of Aker, on which the solar boat is positioned.

We find this iconography in the mythological papyri of the XXIst dynasty as well as on the coffins of the same period in different variants²².

Unlike royal tombs, where the body is enclosed in a semicircle by a succession of alternating disks and stars, in most of these cases there are shaped rays that de-

¹⁵ Pap. Skrine No.1, Text I 8; II 50-55; IV 4 and JEA. 4, p.124 ff; Pap. Skrine No.2, 11.2.5.15 and JEA. 5, p. 27-31 - Reymond 1972, 132, j).

¹⁶ Pap. Edinburg 212.113.3,6-7 = Reymond 1972, 131.

¹⁷ Pap. Boulaq III, 3.17 = Sauneron 1952, 9.6.

¹⁸ Pap. Boulaq III, 3.19 = Sauneron 1952, 9.9-10 and 29.11-12 for gold as the skin of the dead; the regulations here apply to the placing of mummies’ golden rings - see also Troy 1993, 67-68.

¹⁹ That’s why the amulet of Ba, which is laid on the corpse according to Chapter 89 of the Book of the Dead, is made of gold – see Лекков 2001, IV.3.5.

²⁰ Hornung 1982, 118, fig. 94.

²¹ Hornung 1982, 182.

²² 1) Vignette from the mythological papyrus of Padjamon – XXIst Dynasty in Cairo – Piankoff/Rambova 1957, No. 10-I.60, Fig. 47, 114; II, Pl. 10 = Assmann 1983, 54; 2) from the papyrus of Bakenmut – XXIst Dynasty. Piankoff/Rambova 1957, No. 20 p. 167-168 = ZÄS. 98 (1972), 93, fig. 25; 3) from a coffin of XXIst Dynasty – Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge – Hornung 1982a, 181; Hornung 1992, 104 with sprouting plants from the body of radiated by the rays Osiris’ mummy; 4) from the coffin of the same period – Coffin Turin 2238 = Niwinski 1987-1988, fig. 10; 5) from the coffin in Cairo Mus. - Cairo J. 29668 = Niwinski 1987-1988, fig. 11.

scend on the body (the rays can be shaped just like such a sequence of disks and stars as in the papyrus of Bekenmut).

Images of this motif are found in the vignettes of the Chapter 154 of the Book of the Dead in the Sais version (there is no vignette in the Theban recension)²³. The chapter is titled: “Spell for not letting the corpse to perish in the necropolis”. In the spell, the deceased is identified with Khepri in order that his members continue their existence and his flesh would not be decomposed²⁴.

The same image – of a lying mummy lit by the rays of a solar disk is present on the later anthropoid coffins. This image on a wooden coffin from the Rio de Janeiro Museum is accompanied by three chapters of the Book of the Dead - 89, 26, 27²⁵. The sequence of the chapters of the Book of the Dead clearly shows the sequence of the process of revitalizing the body – connecting Ba to the body, giving the heart and protecting the heart after it has been returned. Revitalization through sun rays can also be seen as Ba descending onto the corpse, with Ba carrying the heart to the body (on the vignette from the papyrus of Turin, Chapter 26 – “A Spell for giving the heart” the man is represented against his Ba²⁶).

The same image of a disc illuminating a mummified body is found on stone sarcophagi from the Late period²⁷.

The image of the body illuminated by the rays is placed at the place (on the chest) where we expect the image of the Ba descending on the body. Apparently, both images are intertwined in iconographic terms²⁸.

This image is associated with the Chapter 89 of the Book of the Dead - “The Spell for letting the Ba to join his Corpse in the Necropolis”²⁹.

It turns out that the revivification of the body through the sun’s rays is represented by two images: A) The image of the Sun that descends in the caves of Duat, which illuminates lifeless bodies through light / voice and causes them to breathe

²³ Lepsius 1842, LXXV.

²⁴ Allen 1974, 153-154.

²⁵ Kitchen 1990, II, 152.

²⁶ Lepsius 1842, Pl. XV.

²⁷ Maspero 1914, Pl. III.1.

²⁸ See for example the images from the coffin of Harsiese – Berlin 8237 = Ikram/Dodson 1998, 237, fig. 314; from the coffin of Irethoreru - Brit. Mus. EA20745 = Shaw/Nicholson 1995, 190-191.

²⁹ Nav.Todt. CI; Saleh 1984, 51-52 with the sole representation of the vignette among the Theban tombs - TT.106 (Paser) = Nina Davies 1938, Fig. 9. A striking correspondence with the scene from the tomb of Paser, in which Ba descending to the nose of the mummy signs of life and wind (mast with sail) is the image on the wooden coffin of the priest Hor (XXVth Dynasty), where above the mummy lying on a funeral bed is depicted a winged solar disk with arms that extend the sign for life to the nose and body of the mummy – BM EA 27735 = Taylor 2001, fig. 14.

the breath of life and B) On a personal level (no longer an object of solar activity), the image of illuminating the body is tantamount to lowering Ba to the corpse and joining it.

The images of descending of Ba and the illumination of the body as interconnected processes are found in the imagery associated with the cult images of the gods. The ritual of “merging with the disk” (*hnm itn*) is known in the late Graeco-Roman temples. The ritual is usually performed on the roof of the temple or in the shrine of a small open courtyard in the temple. The liturgical texts show us the mechanics of the process of this “merging with the disk”. At the temple in Edfu: “The sun is shining, the storm is gone, the sky is clear and without clouds... Horus of Edfu shone to unite himself in his Ba. His rays penetrated his body”³⁰.

Commenting on this passage, L. Žabkar notes: “the incarnation of the sun-god (or other divinities) in their cult statues was effected through the rays of the sun, which transmitted the Ba of the divinity to its statue and imbued it with renewed divine substance”³¹.

In performing the same ritual in the temple at Esna, when the statue of Khnum is being carried, “his Ba descended from the sky on his statue. His person (*hm*) settled down in his statue”³².

The idea of animation through rays is also connected with Sah (*s^ch*) (a mummy of the deceased properly prepared for the afterlife with the help of rituals, or rejuvenated body). Sah plays a role in the episode merging with the Sun’s rays from the temple in Edfu³³. Sah exists through the rays of the sun³⁴.

Also, among the liturgical texts of the same period, we find a clear manifestation of this circle of ideas. Among the blessings addressed towards dead in the pap. Bremner-Rhind, one of the formulas uses the concept of Ba and the terms describing this imagery. Only, instead of Ba which descends upon the corpse, here, *descending* are the rays of the sun:

iw rdjt.sn h3 stwt itn hr h3t.sn r^c nb

“It will be given to them that the rays on the disc will descend on their corpses every day.”³⁵

³⁰ Edfou. I.417.

³¹ Žabkar 1968, 40.

³² Esna V, 127-128.

³³ Edfou. IV.318,6; V.8, 1.

³⁴ Pap. Skrine No. 1, 1.53-54; JEA. 4,p. 126; Reymond 1972.

³⁵ Pap. Bremner-Rhind – Colophon 32-33 = Faulkner 1933, 34; In the same text, Bremner-Rhind Colophon. 37-38 the foreign enemies who could harm the owner of this papyrus and its script, were condemned *nm m33w stwt itn* “not to see the rays on the disc”. This is the

In a sun hymn of a funerary papyrus of XXIst Dynasty, the illumination of the body is connected with the possibility of the dead to move freely and the doors of the afterlife being opened for him:

psd.k dt.j
shd.k krs.j
mnh iw.f.j n st iw.f.k
inn.k n šnbt.j
sdw h3t.j mn r st irj st
sp 3hw.j r-ht smw
ng^c.k n.j krrt n.t'Igrt
swn.k n.j 3.w dw3t
pr.w.j h3.t.j ib.j 3w
hnw.j r bw mr.j
šsp.j 3w m-b3h k3.k

“You illuminate my body,
 You shine over my grave.
 Perfect is my flesh in the place of your flesh,
 your skin is over my breast.
 My corpse is placed(?) firmly in the proper place,
 Prepared is my Akh after Ashemu.
 You open for me the Cave of Igeret,
 Unclose for me the doors of Duat.
 I go out, I descend, my heart is glad,
 I fly towards the place I wish to be.
 I take the boons in front of your Ka.”³⁶

In the funerary papyrus of Rhind I we could see that the merging with the sun rays gives the opportunity of the Ba of the deceased to ascend and to unite itself with the sun disc (compare this with the examples taken from the ritual for “uniting with the disc” attested in Greco-Roman temples and uniting with the disc as a description of the death of the king):

wbn sw R^c hr h3t.f
hnm stwt.f m h^cw.f
3k b3.f r pt

antithesis of the concept “the rays on the body”. Therefore, the examples where the dead wants to observe the sun also mean “the sun’s rays come to life”.

³⁶ Pap. Louvre 3292 = Nagel 1928, 91.

hnm.f itn
smʒ.f m isw Wsjr
iw.f m wʕ m šms.f

“The light of Re shines over his body.
 The rays were united with his flesh.
 The Ba entered in the sky.
 It merged with the Disc.
 He joined the entourage of Osiris,
 as he was one of his suite.”³⁷

In other words, besides the movement of Ba of the Creator to his statue/body, equivalent to the illumination of the statue/body, here we encounter the opposite process. The sun’s rays illuminating the body cause Ba of the man to ascend into the sky and merge with the disk.

On the lid of the stone sarcophagus of Ankhkhi³⁸ chapters 89, 90, 30, 26, 42 and chapter 72 from the Book of the Dead are written. Chapter 89 describing the unification of Ba with the body corresponds to the representation of the Ba with outspread wings, chapters 30 and 26 are dedicated to the Heart (Chapter 26 is “A spell for the giving the heart to the deceased”), chapter 42 is dedicated to the the deification of the members of the body (compare with the observation of Milde³⁹ for the interconnection of these chapters). The *hṭp dj njswt* formula of the same monument contains a text that summarizes the destiny of the deceased. This text is a brief sketch of the above-mentioned examples with the ideas from Book of the Dead (even one sentence at the beginning coincides):

hnj bʒ.f r wjʒ n Rʕ
iw.f m wʕ m šms Wsjr
sns.f Ḃw ndm n mhjt pr m Itm
ʕk.f pr.f r bw nb mr.f
nn hsf rd.wj.f m pt tʒ dwʒt
ʕnh bʒ.f m stwt itn
rnp hʒt.f m Imntt
ir.f mr.f hr-tp tʒ m wd.t.n Rʕ hnʕ Wsjr
hʒt.f dd.t(j) m Imntt nfr.t
nn sk dt nhḥ

³⁷ Rhind I.IX.12-13 = Moeller 1913, 44.

³⁸ Cairo CG 29310 = Maspero 1914, 4-8.

³⁹ Milde 1991, 224.

“May his Ba fly to the bark of Re,
 (because) he is one of the suite of Osiris.
 May he breathe the sweet wind of the north, which came from Atum,
 May he enter and go out to every place he wishes,
 without stopping his feet in heaven, earth and Duat.
 His Ba lives through/in the rays of the Disc.
 His corpse rejuvenates in Imentet.
 He does what he wishes on the earth
 as ordered by Re and Osiris.
 May his corpse be firm in the beautiful West,
 without perishing forever and ever.”⁴⁰

Here the expression “Ba lives” is referred by “through/in the rays of the Disc”, i.e. the movement of the Ba is realized through the power of light. Through the light, Ba ascends towards the sun, and again through the light Ba returns, illuminates and revives the dead body.

Several other examples shed additional light on the phenomenon. In a prayer to Amun from the second half of XVIIIth Dynasty, it is said:

dj.k b3.j m-m šms.k stwt.k ttfw41 hr šnbt.j
dj.k ḥtp.j m ḥwt ir.t.n.j mj irtt n m3^c tp t3

“May you let my Ba to be among your followers,
 until your rays pour over my breast.
 May you let me calm down in the house made by me,
 as is to be done for the righteous on earth.”⁴²

In a stela dated from XXXth Dynasty or the early Ptolemaic period, as a part of the *ḥtp dj njswt* formula, the deceased is addressed with such blessings:

ꜥpj b3.k r pt m-ḥt itn
sm3(.w) m i3ḥw.f m kj.k
sdm njs.k in R^c

⁴⁰ Maspero 1914, 9.

⁴¹ *ttf* – “flow down” - Faulkner 1962, 308. A clear example for understanding the meaning of the verb is Urk. IV, 502.5: *ꜥnd ttfw hr ḥꜥw.j* – “the oil is poured on my flesh”. Apparently here the illumination is represented as a pouring substance of light. For the image of the breast, cf. Assmann 1983, Text 182, p. 254, note c): *dw3.j tw nfr.w.k m ḥr.j ḥpr i3ḥw.k hr šnbt.j* – “I praise you when your beauty is in my face. And your light appears/manifests itself on my breast.”

⁴² Berlev/Hodjash 1982, No. 55, p. 111-112.

s3ḥ tw dḥwtj m tp-r3.f
ḥnh rn.k tp ʔ n sk dt

“May your Ba fly to heaven after the Disc,
 united with his rays/light in your form.
 Hear your calling on behalf of Re,
 Thoth makes you Akh through his utterance.
 May your name live on earth without perishing forever”⁴³

Particularly noteworthy here is the image of merging. Ba follows the Disc, which is possible because it is merged with his light in/as a form (*kj*) of the deceased.

SEEING THE SUN

The desire to watch the sun is another manifestation of the idea of revivification through the rays of the sun. The dead in Duat are devoid of light. The god Sokar, the lord of darkness, does not allow those in Duat to look at the sun:

“Oh, you who deprive the one who is in Duat of seeing the sun.”⁴⁴

“Oh, whose darkness is more resilient than the light of the sun.”⁴⁵

That is why the desire to see the solar disk is so strongly emphasized in the texts. The discussed example from the colophon of pap. Bremner-Rhind⁴⁶ reveals that “seeing the disc” and “illuminating the bodies” are connected acts. “Seeing the sun” is attested in those texts connected with the idea of classification of the terms representing the human personality⁴⁷. In those cases, “seeing the sun” is integral part of the abilities of Ba to move freely, to transpass the boundaries between worlds. As a part of the offering formula “seeing the disc” appears for the first time in the first half of XVIIIth Dynasty⁴⁸. The expression plays important role in the concept of Ba, its returning in “every form” it wishes.

In the Stela of Iamu-nedjeh (Thuthmos III):

ssnt ʔw ndm n mhjt
irt ḥprw m [...]

⁴³ Stela Brit. Mus. EA 8462, 5-6 = Quirke 1992, 29, ill. 14.

⁴⁴ Pap. Bremner-Rhind, 18, 31.

⁴⁵ Pap. Bremner-Rhind, 18, 24.

⁴⁶ See ЛЕКОВ 2001, IV.2.3.

⁴⁷ See ЛЕКОВ 2001, IV.3.1.

⁴⁸ Barta 1968, 93 (Bitte 89).

*m33 itn tp-dw3jt
nn hnj b3 m mrwt.f*

“Breathing the sweet wind of the north,
making transformation in
seeing the sun disc in the time of dawn,
without stopping the Ba in its wishes...”⁴⁹

Stela of Pakhekamen (Thutmos III/Amenhotep II):

*irt hprw mrr.f
h^c r t3 ^ck pr m hrt-ntr m šms.w n Nb-r-dr
ssnt Bw ndm n mhjt ... n r^c nb
prt m b3 ^cnhj
swrj mw hr bbt itrw
m33 itn tp-dw3jt
nn hnj b3 m mrt.f*

“Making the transformation he wishes,
descending to the earth, entering and going out in the necropolis
among the followers of Neberdjer (The master of the Universe (lit. “to the limits”)),
breathing the sweet wind of the north... in every day,
going out as a living Ba,
drinking the water from the source of the river,
seeing the Disc at dawn,
without restraining the Ba in its wishes”⁵⁰

An inscription from the statue of Nakhtmin (also from the reign of Thuthmos III):

*Nht-Mnw m3^c-hrw
ntj m ssn imj hrt.f m šmsw Imn-R^c
pr:f^ck.f m hwt.f r m33 Itn n hrw*

“Nakhtmin, true of voice, who is in the likeness (the statue) in his tomb,
as a follower of Amun-Re. He goes out, he enters in his house (tomb)
in order to see the Disc of the day”⁵¹

⁴⁹ Urk. IV.938.3-6.

⁵⁰ Urk. IV.1469.15-20-1470.1-2.

⁵¹ Urk. IV.1183.13-15.

The importance of being able to observe the sun, as before the moment of death, and also Ba to go out from Duat and to leave the realm of darkness, is particularly emphasized. Numerous examples that use the formula *m33 itn/Rc* speak to this assertion. A text from the time of the XXIInd Dynasty is particularly appropriate example in the case of conveying the idea of this value. It is inscribed on a statue of a priest in the temple of Karnak (CG 42206):

“One moment (*3t*) when one observes the rays of the sun is more valuable (*3h*) than eternity (*dt*) as the lord of Duat.”⁵²

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