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Editor in Chief: **Prof. Sergei Ignatov**

Editorial Board and Secretary: **Prof. Sergei Ignatov, Assoc. Prof. Teodor Lekov, Assoc. Prof. Emil Buzov, Svetla Ilieva**

All communications to the Journal should be send to:

Prof. Sergei Ignatov

e-mail: bie@nbu.bg

or e-mail: signatov@nbu.bg

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THE KING AND THE SUN GOD IN THE PYRAMID TEXTS

Desislava Nikolova

The interconnection between the king and the Sun god was a main paradigm in Ancient Egyptian worldview as the Sun god was the supreme power who created everything that exists while the king was his son who ruled on earth (Egypt). This paradigm determined the great significance of the solar cult throughout ancient Egyptian history. However, it is the period of the Old kingdom when this connection was being clearly set and when the first major development and intensification of the solar religion took place. One of the main sources which gives evidence for that matter is the Pyramid Texts. Being the earliest written religious texts, their purpose was to ensure the Egyptian king to reach, after his physical death, the state of luminous and spiritual being of “*akh*” and to continue his existence among the gods, i.e. to become immortal.

The article aims at showing the interconnection between the king and the Sun god as presented in the PT as well as the role of the Sun god in the process of the king’s transformation into an “*akh*”. This is done through analysis of the spells which reflect that connection, having in mind their type, location as well as lexical and grammatical peculiarities.

It is important to note that the selection and even the spell order in any given pyramid is different, which makes each corpus of Pyramid texts personalized for every single king⁸⁸. This gives us the opportunity to trace the changes in the development of the sun cult and the religious beliefs as a whole.

SPELL GENRE AND TYPE OF PT

By genre, the PT spells are divided in two kinds - sacerdotal or ritual and personal⁸⁹. The first kind most probably originated from rituals, read by priests during

⁸⁸ H. Hayes explains this with the three-dimensional disposition of the Pyramid texts, which makes the reading “*multicursal, interacting with choices of the hypothetical reader*”, Hayes 2012, p. 258.

⁸⁹ Allen 2015, p. 6. On the different categories, groups and series of the PT see Hayes 2012.

the funeral, which later were carved in the subterranean rooms of the pyramid in order to ensure their permanent effectiveness. Grammatically, they refer to the deceased in the second person. In regard to their content, there are two types of spells in this genre - the Offering and Insignia ritual and the Resurrection ritual. The personal kind of spells were meant to be recited by the deceased himself and thus were written in the first person. In this genre two types are also distinguished - protection and ascension spells. Most of the spells which reflect the interconnection of the king with the Sun god belong to the Resurrection ritual and the so-called ascension texts.

SACERDOTAL SPELLS THE RESURRECTION RITUAL

The Resurrection ritual consists of spells 213-222 and 245-246. Its purpose is to ensure the revival of the dead king to new life in the netherworld where he would become “*akh*” and live forever among the gods and the Sun god in particular. It is interesting to note that these are the only spells which appear in the same order and disposition in all the kings’ pyramids. Being inscribed on the south wall of the burial chamber, they happen to be just opposite the spells from the Offering ritual on the north wall thus enabling the interrelation between what is done (the giving of offerings) and what happened as a result (king’s resurrection)⁹⁰ and turning the chamber into a magical place where the process of the king’s transformation took place in which the Sun god had an important role. The essence of the process of reviving and transforming the king is connected with going back to his “*ka*” and his father, i.e. the Sun god and becoming “*ka*” himself⁹¹. The way this happens is by “*becoming clean*”⁹², “*releasing his impurity*”⁹³ and “*becoming encircled by Duat*”⁹⁴. The final stage of this transformation is the king’s merger with his father⁹⁵ and his turning into “*an imperishable akh*”⁹⁶. Then it becomes then possible for him to participate in the evergoing lifegiving and life sustaining cycle of the Sun god as his son⁹⁷. It is

⁹⁰ Lekov 2004, p. 256.

⁹¹ Pyr. 136b, Pyr. 140a-b, Pyr. 149d; the king goes back to the initial source of creation as his individual essence or “*ka*” merges with that of his father (Atum) and as a result the dead king becomes “*ka*” himself, i.e. he becomes part of the Creator; on the meaning of “*ka*” and its role in the process of Creation see Lekov 2015.

⁹² Pyr. 137b.

⁹³ Pyr. 207a.

⁹⁴ Pyr. 151c.

⁹⁵ Pyr. 151e.

⁹⁶ Pyr. 152a, 160a.

⁹⁷ Pyr. 209a-210c.

interesting to note that in the Resurrection ritual, we have three different names of the king's father - Re⁹⁸, Atum⁹⁹ and Re-Atum¹⁰⁰. All three refer to the Sun god, but in different aspects of his nature. Re is the manifestation of the Sun god during the day, i.e. he represents the Sun god and is the sun in this world¹⁰¹. That is why every individual king during his lifetime is called "son of Re". Atum is the setting sun and represents the Sun god during his night journey in the netherworld or Duat where he purifies himself from the impurity of the physical world and becomes ready to rise again and to create it all over again. Atum is the invisible source of creation, the ultimate Creator, because he has appeared by himself and created the first divine couple¹⁰². Re-Atum as a composite name combines both the visible and invisible nature of the Sun god¹⁰³. It is interesting to note that it occurs only in three spells in the PT and all of them are sacerdotal¹⁰⁴.

As was mentioned above, the spells from the Resurrection rituals are the only ones which appear in all pyramids in one and the same place. In the pyramids after that of Unas, however, we find more ritual spells written separately or as a part of other rituals, which elaborate further on the king-Sun's connection. Thus, spell 456 inscribed either in the burial chamber or the antechamber, says that the resurrected king knows Re and his utterance and Re knows the king¹⁰⁵. The usage of the verb "*rh*" is very important here, because it designates not just superficial knowledge but profound understanding. It means that after the process of resurrection, the king has gained a deep understanding of the Sun god's nature which allows him to "*do the magical spells of the Horus of the Akhet*"¹⁰⁶. In another spell, also situated mainly in the burial chamber¹⁰⁷, the resurrected king is welcomed by his father Re¹⁰⁸, who "*leans on him with his shoulder*"¹⁰⁹ and he becomes part of

⁹⁸ Pyr. 136b, Pyr. 199c.

⁹⁹ Pyr. 140a-b, Pyr. 151e, Pyr. 207c.

¹⁰⁰ Pyr. 152b.

¹⁰¹ The very word "*rĜ*" has the meaning of "sun", "day" – Wb II, 401 (5-10).

¹⁰² Pyr. 1248a-d, Pyr. 1652a-c.

¹⁰³ Through the composite names we can trace the appearance and development of the different concepts and names of the sun god. In the PT we have three composite names of the Sun god – Atum-Kheprer, Re-Atum and Re-Harakhty. It is obvious that Re as the name of the Sun god appeared last (in the composite names the earlier concepts appear in second place) and that it encompassed the characteristics of Kheprer, Atum and Harakhty.

¹⁰⁴ PT 215, PT 217, PT 606.

¹⁰⁵ Pyr. 855a-856c.

¹⁰⁶ Horus of the Akhet is a form of the Sun god, see Sethe 1962 IV, p. 119. On the terms "*hkĜ*" and "*hkĜw*" see Lekov 2004, p. 51-59.

¹⁰⁷ PT 412 (TPMN).

¹⁰⁸ Pyr. 726b.

¹⁰⁹ Pyr. 730b, *twĜ hr* - lean on somebody, Wb IV, 249(1). According to Sethe the verb should

Re's enduring circuit¹¹⁰ as the one who judges the gods¹¹¹. Similar is the content of spell 603 which says that the king shall “follow Re in his freshening” and shall exist among his followers¹¹². The king also “descends on the boat like Re¹¹³” and “rows his watercourse like Re¹¹⁴”.

One sacerdotal spell found in the later pyramids (Pepi I, Merenre and Neferkare) deserves special attention, because it stands out as a summary of what the nature and role of the resurrected king is and shows his relation to the Sun god:

...Pyr. 1686a j.n.(j) jr.k m jpt hrw

I have come for you as Horus's messenger,

Pyr. 1686b wd.n.f tw jt wsjr NN hr nst rĜ tm

for he has installed you, father Osiris NN, on Re-Atum's throne,

Pyr. 1686c sšm.k ḥnmmt

that you may lead humanity.

1687a hšw.k r.k m wjš pw n rĜ mrrw ntrw jĜ n.f

So, you go down into the boat of Re to which the gods love to ascend

1687b mrrw ntrw hšt jm.f ḥnnw rĜ jm.f jr šḥt

into which the gods love to go down, in which Re is rowed to the Akhet

1687c hšw NN jm.f rĜ js

and into which NN goes down as Re.

Pyr. 1688a ḥmsw.k r.k hr ḥndw pw n rĜ wd.k mdw n ntrw

So, you sit on the chair of Re and govern the gods

not be taken literally, but as an expression for “befriend somebody”, “live with somebody”. The same refers to “*m rmn.f*” which here is probably used as a notion of a place, similar to “*m šḥt*” in Pyr. 732c, while “*rmn*” is used in the sense of “equal in ranking”, Sethe 1937, p. 353.

¹¹⁰ Pyr. 732a, see also PT 554 (PN) - Pyr. 1372a-b and PT 675 (PMN) - Pyr. 2005b.

¹¹¹ Pyr. 731c; see also Pyr. 2045b, 2046b.

¹¹² Pyr. 1679a-c.

¹¹³ Pyr. 1345c (PN).

¹¹⁴ Pyr. 1167a (PN).

1688b *n twt js rꜥ pr m nwt msst rꜥ rꜥ nb*

for you are Re, who comes forth from Nut, who gives birth to Re every day,

1688c *ms NN pn rꜥ nb mr rꜥ*

and NN is born every day like the Sun.

...1694a *jr.sn n.k r pw jr.n.sn n rꜥ tm psd rꜥ nb*

They¹¹⁵ make for you the spell they made for the Re-Atum, who shines every day.

1694b *wdn.sn NN pn hr nswt.sn*

They install NN on their thrones

1694c *m hnt psdt nbt rꜥ js jstj.f js*

as the one at the fore of every Ennead, as Re, as his replacement

1695a *shpr.sn NN pn mr rꜥ m rn.f pw n hpr*

and they make you develop like the Sun in his identity of Kheper.

1695b *jꜥ.k n.sn mr rꜥ m rn.f pw n rꜥ*

You ascend to them like the Sun in his name of Re,

1695c *tnm.k m hr.sn mr rꜥ m rn.f pw n tm*

and you vanish from their sight like the Sun in his name of Atum.

Thus, we can sum up that the ritual spells, inscribed mainly in the burial chamber and the antechamber, reflect the role of the Sun god in the process of king's resurrection, his gaining the ability to "know" and "do" the magical spells of the Sun god and as a result to be installed as his replacement on his throne to lead and govern the gods and humanity.

PERSONAL SPELLS

The personal spells and the ascension texts in particular are exactly the ones which show the solar destiny of the king after his resurrection and his close con-

¹¹⁵ These are "the two great gods" mentioned in Pyr.1690a who are Hu and Sia standing at the two sides of Re, Sethe 1962 IV, p. 238.

nection with the Sun reflected in various roles and aspects. They also allow us to trace the development of the solar religion since they are individually chosen and ordered for each king. Thus, some of the spells can be seen only in one pyramid, while others are inscribed in two, three or all of them. In contrast to the ritual spells which usually show the result of the king-Sun god interrelation, the personal ones emphasize more on the very process of how this happens.

In analyzing the spells related to the subject of our interest, we can outline certain common themes that appear in all kings' pyramids, although not always in the same spells:

- 1) the king becomes clean in the Field of Reeds, where the Sun god becomes clean¹¹⁶;
- 2) the king crosses (the Winding Canal) on the sky's two reedfloats to the Akhet where Re is¹¹⁷;
- 3) the king lands/goes down in Re's boat/the king is admitted in Re's boat¹¹⁸;
- 4) a staircase/a ladder is laid down/made for the king (by his father Re)¹¹⁹;
- 5) the king knows the Sun god/the king belongs to those who know the Sun god and the Sun god knows him¹²⁰;
- 6) the king rows the night and day boat of the Sun god¹²¹/the king rows with Re¹²²;
- 7) the king goes to Re to the sky and takes his seat next to Re¹²³

Here we can clearly see how the resurrected king becomes connected with the Sun god by following his movement/path in the sky. It starts with purification in the Field of Reeds. This is the Egyptian paradise, the place where the spirit disposes of the entire earthly filth and comes out clean and ready to join the gods. It is situated to the south of the Winding Canal or the ecliptic - the sun's apparent path across the sky throughout the year from west to east¹²⁴. The king crosses this Canal on the

¹¹⁶ Pyr. 275a-d, Pyr. 1179a; Pyr. 1245b, Pyr. 1247a-b, Pyr. 1408c-d, Pyr. 1409c-d, Pyr. 1410c-d, Pyr. 1411c-d, Pyr. 1421a-c, Pyr. 1430a-c.

¹¹⁷ Pyr. 337a-d, Pyr. 342a-d, Pyr. 351a-d; Pyr. 358a-h, Pyr. 927a-d; Pyr. 999a-1000c, Pyr. 1706a-c, Pyr. 1086a-b, Pyr. 1206a-f, PT 696B, 736; In another spell, which doesn't appear in all pyramids, we also have a hill where the Sun god and the king become clean – Pyr. 542a (TPN).

¹¹⁸ Pyr. 366b-c, Pyr. 922b.

¹¹⁹ Pyr. 365a, Pyr. 390a, Pyr. 517a-b (WPN), Pyr. 542b (TPN).

¹²⁰ Pyr. 328a-c, Pyr. 495b.

¹²¹ Pyr. 335a-c.

¹²² Pyr. 367a-368c; Pyr. 889c.

¹²³ Pyr. 305a, Pyr. 460c-461a, Pyr. 812c-d, Pyr. 914c-915a, Pyr. 1107c.

¹²⁴ Allen 2015, p. 9.

sky's two reedfloats¹²⁵ and reaches the eastern part of the sky - the Akhet, where the abode of the Sun god is and where he will turn into an "*akh*" - a luminous immortal being. Another way to reach the sky and the Sun god is going up a staircase "*on the smoke of a great censuring*"¹²⁶, a ladder made by the Sun god himself. There is also the possibility of flying like a bird¹²⁷. Here we can testify very well the ancient Egyptians' "multiple of approaches" way of thinking where one and the same idea is presented in different ways. After reaching the sky, the king lands in the Sun god's boat, by which he sails through the sky day and night¹²⁸, and becomes part of his crew taking the seat of the rower. Thus, the king gets to know the Sun god the way the Sun god knows him. Finally, he takes his seat next to the Sun god.

Apart from these common themes, there are specific ones which appear in certain pyramids. In Unas pyramid, for example, we come upon several spells, found only here, which refer to interesting aspects of the king's connection with the Sun god:

1) Spell 249 says that the king "*rises as Nefertem, as the lotus at Re's nose*"¹²⁹. The name of Nefertem means "complete beauty"¹³⁰ and is usually connected with the Memphite triad¹³¹. In the above cited sentence, this deity appears at Re's nose in the form of his symbol – the blue lotus flower. According to R. Anthes here we might think of a daily morning temple ceremony of flowers offering to Re at sunrise. Just like the "*breath of life*" comes in through the nose, the smell of the lotus flower at Re's nose gives him life for his daily journey¹³².

2) In spell 250 the king "*appears as Sia, who is in charge of the god's scroll at the right side of Re*"¹³³. Sia is the deity of Perception. Together with Hu they are at the core of the Creation and are the constant companions of the Sun god. While Sia thinks over things in its heart, Hu pronounces them and they come into being.

¹²⁵ Another way to cross the Canal, which appears in a spell in Teti's pyramid, is with the help of the Sun god, who is presented in the form of a bull whose tail the dead king grasps – Pyr. 543a-b; see Sethe 1937, p. 21.

¹²⁶ Pyr. 365b.

¹²⁷ Pyr. 366b-c.

¹²⁸ on the solar boats see Thomas 1956, Firchow 1957.

¹²⁹ Pyr. 266a-b.

¹³⁰ Lekov 2007, p. 295-296; on the different interpretations on the meaning of Nefertem see Anthes 1955 and Anthes 1957.

¹³¹ On the origin of Nefertem see Anthes 1955. In the Memphis theology, where eight forms of Ptah are listed, the last one is "*Nefertum, who is at Re's nose all day*"; Anthes 1955, 83.

¹³² In Pyr. 483b-c (WP) the king is again identified with Nefertem who is "*above the subjects (rhjt)*" and is in pair with Re who is "*above the two Enneads*". According to Anthes, Re and Nefertem as a ruling couple of primeval gods corresponds to another such couple – Atum and the king, Anthes 1955, p. 87.

¹³³ Pyr. 267d, 268c.

That is why Sia is identified with the heart of the Creator, owns and is in charge of the god's scroll¹³⁴;

3) The king “*is a bull of sunlight in the middle of his eyes*”¹³⁵ in spell 319. “Bull of sunlight” is a name of the Sun god¹³⁶ whom the dead king leads on the sky as his companion. K. Sethe thinks that here, however, we can talk about identification of the king with the Sun god, not accompaniment. Evidence for that is the phrase “(who is) in the middle of his eye” (*hr jb jrt.f*) which corresponds to the later ones “(who is) in his disk” (*imj itn.f*) and “(who is) in his egg” (*imj swht.f*) which designate the Sun god as a dweller of the sun's body which is a part of himself¹³⁷.

4) Spell 205 reveals an interesting connection between Re and the king in a way that Re is the one who provides food and nourishment to the king¹³⁸.

In the pyramids after Unas, there are much more common themes which show the king's connection with the Sun god. The most frequently encountered are stated below:

1) The king is related to/identified with the Sun god

- a) the king is the “eye of Re” (*NN pw irt.k tw*)¹³⁹ – Pyr. 698d, 705a, 1231b;
- b) The king is Re's body (*dt.k m NN rĜ*) – Pyr. 1464a-b;
- c) The king is the one who is the heir to Re's throne (*NN pw stj rĜ*) – Pyr. 1464c, Pyr. 1906c;
- d) The king has Heliopolitan nature like Re – Pyr. 482a-483c, Pyr. 1507b-c¹⁴⁰;
- e) The king is Re and Re is the king (*NN pw*) – Pyr. 703b;
- f) the king acts like Re (*mj rĜ*) – Pyr. 130c-d, Pyr. 888a, Pyr. 953b, Pyr. 1167b, Pyr. 1465e, Pyr. 1582a, Pyr. 1802a, Pyr. 2072c, Pyr. 2196c;
- g) The king ascends in his name as Re (*m rn.k pw n rĜ*) – Pyr. 1449a;

¹³⁴ Lekov, 329, Sethe 1932 I, 273 - Sia is connected to west and the right side, Hu with east and the left side;

¹³⁵ Pyr. 513a.

¹³⁶ Pyr. 889d (PMN), Pyr. 1059c (PN).

¹³⁷ Sethe 1932 I, 376.

¹³⁸ Pyr. 121a.

¹³⁹ Sethe 1937, p. 279.

¹⁴⁰ The Egyptian name of Heliopolis is “*Iunu*” and initially it is connected with Atum as a Creator and the Ennead. Its relation with Re appears much later. Thus, this occurrence in the Pyramid texts shows the increased significance of this city for the solar religion at the time and the role of Re in its mythology.

- h) the king sits on Re's throne as Re (*rꜥ is*) – Pyr. 1906c;
- i) The king is son of the Sun god
 - the king is son of Re – Pyr. 813c, Pyr. 887a, Pyr. 1316c, Pyr. 1479c, Pyr. 1492b;
 - the king is Weneg, the son of Re – Pyr. 952c;
 - the king is son of Kheperer – Pyr. 1210a;
 - the king is son of Atum – Pyr. 605a-b, Pyr.380a, Pyr. 1451a, Pyr. 1466c, Pyr. 1576a-b;
- j) The king was conceived and born by Re – Pyr. 1327c-1318a, Pyr. 1508a-b;
- k) the king is the blood that come out of Re – Pyr. 1263c¹⁴¹;
- l) The king is the juvenile who emerges as Re – Pyr. 1842.

2) The king serves the Sun god

- a) the king is a keeper of Re's compound and is his accountant – Pyr. 490a-491d;
- b) the king cleanses the Nile valley before the rising of the Sun god – Pyr.1179a-c;
- c) the king escorts Re – Pyr. 517a-b; Pyr.948a-b;

3) The Sun god supports the king

- a) Re gives hand to the king to aid his ascending to the sky – Pyr. 531a-b;
- b) The king asks Re to ferry him to the other side – Pyr. 607c-d;
- c) Re defends the king from anything bad – Pyr. 713b;
- d) The king sits on Re's shoulders – Pyr. 813a;
- e) Re's aegis is over the king – Pyr. 1470c;
- f) Re "akhfies" the dead king – Pyr. 795b;
- g) Re places the king as lord of life and authority forever – Pyr. 950b.

The personal spells give valuable information on the process of joining the king with the Sun god and his participation in the evergoing solar cycle. They also reflect some peculiarities in the different pyramids. Thus, the spells in Unas pyramid show the king rather as a helper of the Sun god than as his son or replacement¹⁴², while in later pyramids we clearly see the identification of the king with the Sun god as

¹⁴¹ only in Pepi's pyramid.

¹⁴² see Anthes 1984, p. 2.

well as the more versatile roles which both have in their interrelation. Also, in later pyramids, the occurrence and hence the significance of Re as a Sun god prevails over his other forms.

NOTES ON THE VOCABULARY AND GRAMMAR

The interrelation between the king and the Sun god in the Pyramid texts is expressed through different lexical and grammar structures:

1) Lexical structures:

hmsy hr rmnwj r – the king sits on Re’s shoulders¹⁴³;
twj r hr NN – Re leans on the king¹⁴⁴;
stj¹⁴⁵ r – heir to Re’s throne;
m rn.k pw n r – in your name of Re¹⁴⁶;
dt.k m NN r – Re’s body is in the king;

2) Grammar structures:

NN pw r/jrt r/stj r - NN is Re/the eye of Re/heir of Re’s throne¹⁴⁷;
mj r – like Re;
m r – in (as) Re¹⁴⁸;
r is – as Re¹⁴⁹

CONCLUSION

The Pyramid texts are the most valuable source which reflects the development of the solar religion in the Old kingdom. Combined with the archeologi-

¹⁴³ on the meaning of this expression see Anthes 1984, p. 1.

¹⁴⁴ see n. 22.

¹⁴⁵ WB IV, 8 (3).

¹⁴⁶ The name in Ancient Egyptian mind is an integral part of the human being. In the Memphis theology Ptah creates things when he pronounces their names. Anything which does not have a name, does not exist. Knowing somebody’s name means knowing his essence. On the significance of “*rn*” (name) in Ancient Egyptian anthropology see Lekov 2004, p. 116-126.

¹⁴⁷ identification through use of a sentence with nominal predicate, see Gardiner 1957, §128.

¹⁴⁸ Gardiner 1957, §38.

¹⁴⁹ Gardiner 1957, § 247, 5; Edel 1955, §828; on the difference in the usage of “*mj*”, “*m*” and “*js*” as a way to express comparison or identification see Anthes 1984, p. 3.

cal evidence of that time, they show the gradual increase of the significance of Re who starts to prevail over the other forms of the Sun god. They also give evidence for the different levels of interrelation between the king and the Sun god in all his forms, showing their close connection (in the pyramids of Unas and Teti) and, in later pyramids, identification.

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