

PAPYRUS OF ANI

PLATE 25

[Chapter 86]

The Transformation Chapters

{ SWALLOW }

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This chapter gives the start to the extended series of eleven transformation spells covering Plates 25-28. In fact it contains the general caption “*h3t-^c m r3w n(j) jrt hprw*” (Beginning of the spells of making transformations), followed then by the specific “Making a transformation into a swallow”.

As I have already said in previous annotations I am convinced that these spells are deeply rooted in ancient shamanistic tradition, although by the time they were “written down” they had probably lost their performative impressiveness, becoming more digestible and politically correct symbolic rituals.

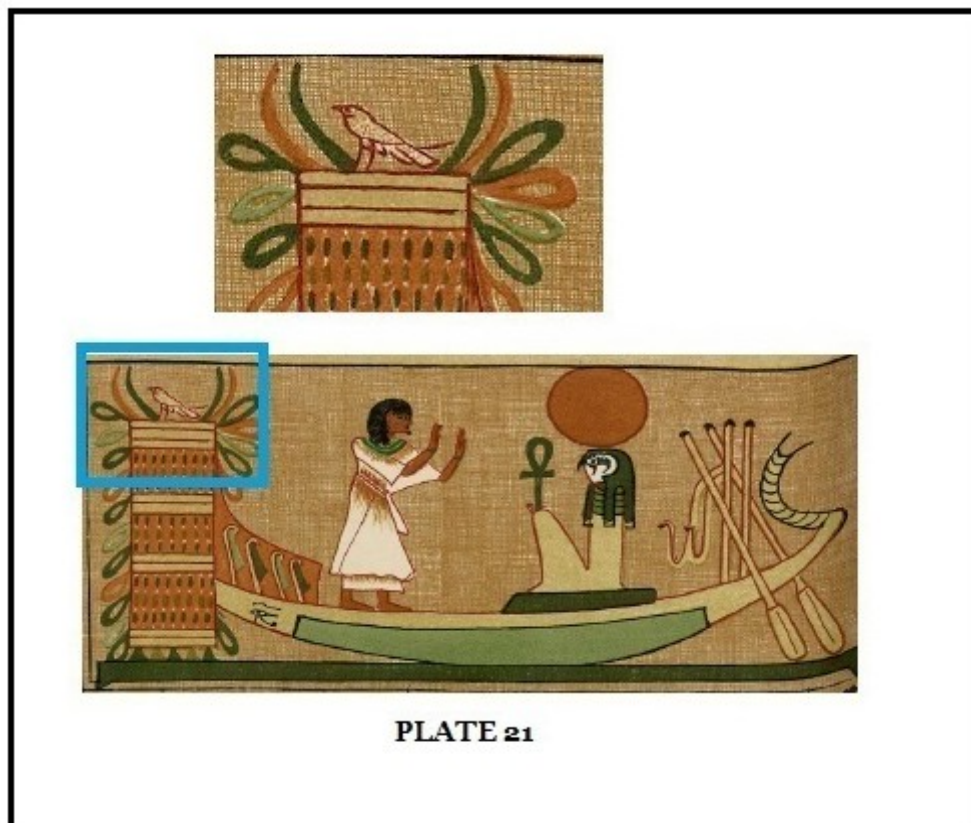
For what concerns our chapter we may say that the general meaning is relatively easy to grasp. Ani states that he has positively accomplished the task he has been assigned; namely to report the

events that have taken place in the *Island of Fire* (the victory of the triumphant Horus over Seth); implying his ability to safely pass through a purification ritual and being thus promoted to a godly status.

But, of course, the obvious question is: what has all that to do with our swallow? Answer: that delicate and gracious bird flies over a vast symbolic landscape. In the vignette we see it standing on the multicoloured primordial hill.



That is an image of the first “transformation”: the original act of creation, the coming into being of time and space. The swallow is a sort of herald of the rising sun, present also in the prow of the solar boat (where it can hint as well at the new-born Horus).



A symbol, thus, of rejuvenation. As a matter of fact, the particular drawing of the hill may point to the “ordered form” of the “disordered chaos” (the multicoloured strips alluding to the waves of the primordial waters and to the serpentine coils of Apophis).

But the swallow is also an avatar of Isis and in the first lines of our spell



she assumes the aspect of *Hedjedjet*, the scorpion goddess (daughter of Ra) who is also a possible symbol of Isis, especially when depicted nursing a child. Thus a motherly figure whom Ani can identify with so as to make of her his own protection. And that might explain the apparent oxymoron (gentle swallow ↔ aggressive scorpion): the mother, tender with the child, aggressive towards the dangers that might threaten her creature.

Add to it that this female trait could symbolically allude to the “autogeneration” motif (the self-created Atum). And that this “androgyny” may also have points of contact with the transgender character of many shamans, which has nothing to do with homosexuality, but with the psychic completeness of the medicine “wo/man”.

In our specific case the swallow may also indicate that Ani has returned after his sojourn in the *Island of Fire*:



with a possible reference to the “migration time” of our symbolic bird. Its absence/return may allude, in a certain sense, to the cycle of the eternal rejuvenation. Just like the sun that vanishes and *Ra-appears* every day.

PLATE 25 -- CH 86

1 **Beginning of the spells of making transformations.**

2 Making a transformation into a swallow.

3 Words to be spoken by Osiris Ani, justified:

4 I am a swallow - that swallow

5 (that is) Hedjedjet, Ra's daughter .

6 O gods, how sweet your perfume! (Twice)

7 O flame that comes forth from the horizon,

8 O you who are in the City,

9 I have brought there "*He who guards his bindings*";

10 outstretch to me your hands!

11 I have spent the day in the *Island of Fire*.

12 I went on a mission,

13 I have returned to report it.

14 Things have been opened [revealed] to me

15 and I say what I have seen therein.

16 Horus is the controller of the Barque (of the Sun);

17 he has been given the throne of his father;

18 and this Seth, the son of Nut,

19 he feels the sorrow that he would have caused to him [to Horus].

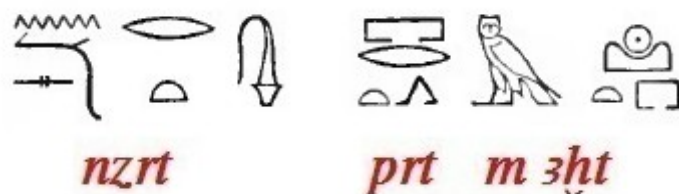
[Variant: *he feels the sorrow that he caused to him(self)*]

20 I have scrutinized the one who is in Letopolis [Horus],

21 so that I may celebrate (the rites of) Osiris.
 22 I went to take note,
 23 I have returned to tell.
 24 Let that I pass so that I may report the news.
 25 I am he who entered to be examined and came forth, promoted,
 [variant: *I am he who entered to take note and came forth, instructed,*]
 26 at the Gate of the Lord of All.
 27 I have been purified on this vast plateau,
 28 so that I might chase away my wrongs, banish my evils.
 29 And I banished the evils in me.
 30 I am cleansed, I am divine.

 31 O guardians, free the way,
 32 since I am the like of you.
 33 I come forth by day, I walk on my legs,
 34 I have in my power the course of the Light.
 35 I have knowledge of the secret ways
 36 of the gates of the Field of Reeds
 37 where I shall exist. Look, I have returned.
 38 I have thrown down my foes;
 39 and I have buried my corpse.

The androgyny we talked about seems to be present once again in lines 7-8. The figure referred to may legitimately be interpreted as that of the Sun, but in a double aspect. There is first the flame [7] coming out of the horizon:



“*nzrt*” is feminine and, with a modified determinative, points also to the Uraeus, symbol of the goddess Wadjet.




Whereas “the one who is in the City”



is definitely “masculine”. But we should decide what city is the matter about. The term is so vague and neutral that it must refer to something “taken for granted”. Thus it could be either “the Underworld city” Ra traverses in the course of his night journey; or, more probably, Heliopolis: the city of the sun. In that case we might detect a phallic allusion (*jwnw*, the pillar) as well . The repetition of line 6 (a sort of *Magnificat* to heavenly perfumes) may in fact be addressed to the double aspect of Ra (*nzrt* / *jwnw*).

Then comes line 9 which poses interpretive problems:



jn .n =j

jn n =j

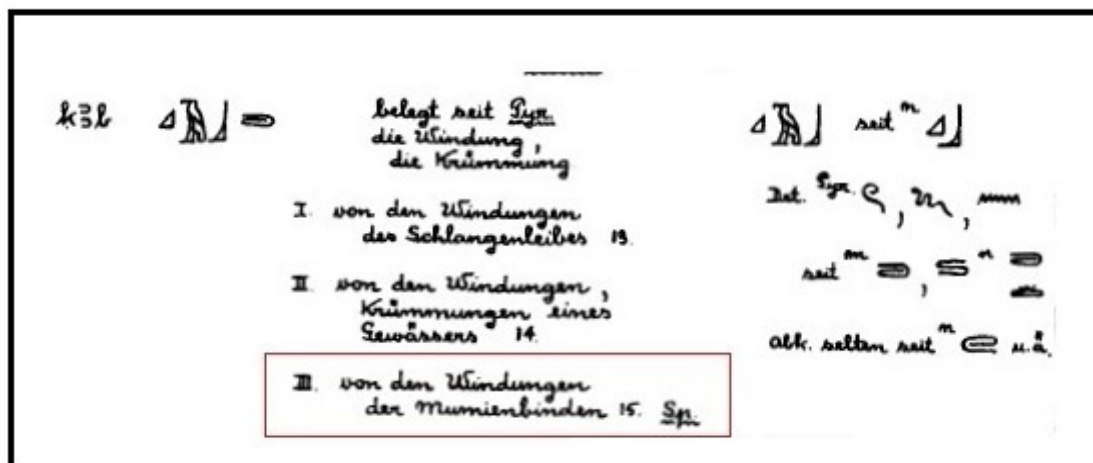
s3w

k3b =f

is it the adverb "jm"
or a scribal error (repetition of "jm")
for the following verb "jmj" ?

We should first decide whether the verb form is a “*sdm .n=f*” [*jn .n =j*] or an imperative [*jn n =j*]; who or what is exactly the enigmatical “*s3w k3b =f*”; and lastly whether the first “*jm*” is just a scribal error or whether it is adverbially linked to the preceding sentence. I am for this last hypothesis, considering thus “*jm*” in relation to the “city” of line 8.

Let us now try to get an idea of who “*s3w k3b =f*” may be. The word “*k3b*” is semantically connected with the image of “winding”; it can in fact refer to the “coils of a snake”, to the “intestine”, to the “interior of a land”. According to WB it can also point to the bandages of mummies (Windungen der Mumienbinden):



Now I'd exclude the reference to a snake; unless we consider it as an allusion to the *Uraeus*. In that case Ani would ask to be given (imperative “*jn n =j*”) a symbolic *Uraeus* as a prize for the positive accomplishment of his task (which he will report in the following lines). But I have doubts about the *Uraeus* described in such a *convoluted* way.

One might also look at the possible snake as a hostile force that, no matter how good in protecting itself, has been nonetheless defeated by Ani, who then offers it to Ra, showing thus his valour. Once again I am not much convinced.

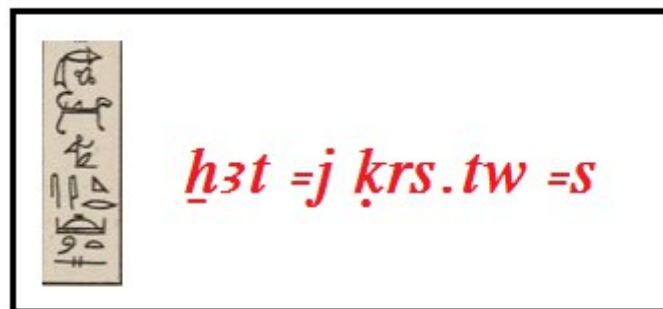
I am instead of the opinion that with “*s3w k3b =f*” Ani points to himself as one who can take care of his “interior self”, be it psychic or physical. It's a way to say to Ra how safe and sound he has come back; thus he (Ani) has brought (*jn .n =j*) in the city (*jm*) of Ra his “personality”, which came out “whole” from the *Island of Fire*; and

whose “exterior appearance” (his mummy wrapped in bandages [*k3b*]) has been given the attention it deserves, as shown in the last line of the text:



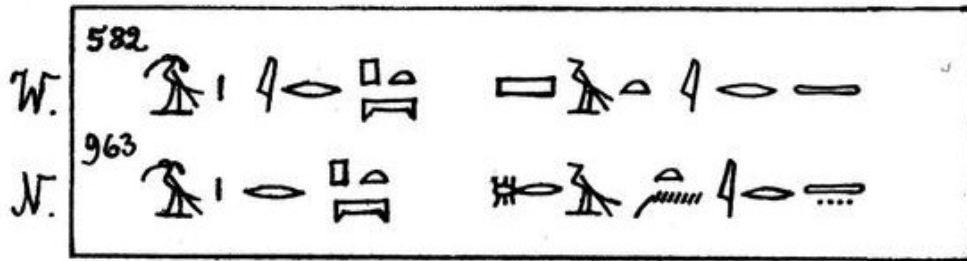
This writing poses also problems. It seems evident that there is a topicalised “*h3t =j*”, followed by a “*sdm .n=f*” form with unexpressed subject. There is then a dependent pronoun (*sw*), apparently a masculine which would contradict the feminine *h3t*. But that is not necessarily an error. In Late Egyptian “*sw/sj/st*” may be used interchangeably (Junge: Late Egyptian Grammar p. 77).

However the real crux is the unexpressed subject. According to logic it should be a plural “*sn*”, a sort of general neuter. “My corpse, *they* [=sn] buried it → my corpse has been buried.” But as far as I know an unexpressed “=*sn*” suffix would be quite unusual, if not impossible. Adding that one might wonder why not use a simpler “*krs.n.tw=s*” like the “*krs.tw =s*” of pTurin:



Thus an unexpressed “*j*” is definitely more probable. But the obvious objection would be: “How can a deceased bury his own corpse?” I think we should make recourse to our imagination and consider it a “poetic license”. Ani's self-burial would in fact correspond to all the means he used for the preservation of his mummified body against his enemies [38].

But there could be also another subtle nuance. As we know from the Pyramid Texts: “*The Akh to the sky, the corpse to the earth*” (*3h jr pt h3t jr t3*):



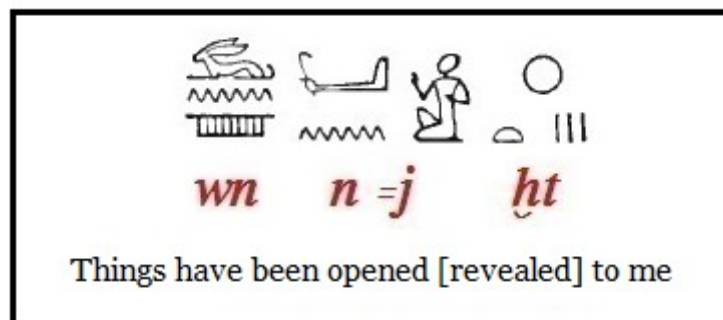
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Thus Ani has arranged the preservation of his corpse on earth and is preparing his heavenly ascension, his progress towards the *Akh* status, which, in line 39 is only implicit, but which has been expressly wished in the previous sentences, especially the block starting from line 30.

One final annotation: “He who buries himself” could be the counterpart (I don't know how conscious) of “He who gives birth to himself” (Ra/Atum). Thus the mound on which the swallow stands could be both the primordial hill (the origin) and the tomb (the end).

The rest of the spell describes Ani's mission in the *Island of Fire* [11-13], where he has been allowed to be a spectator of the secret happenings [14-15]:



the victory of Horus over Seth [16-19]. There are only a couple of problems. In line 16



we can detect a possible metathesis: “*m hrw*” instead of “*hrw m*”. The sense points to Horus playing the role of the solar barque's guide (*m hrp*). I doubt that the written form “*m hrw*” refer to “He who has the aspect of Horus”. That would be indeed quite an unusual rendering.

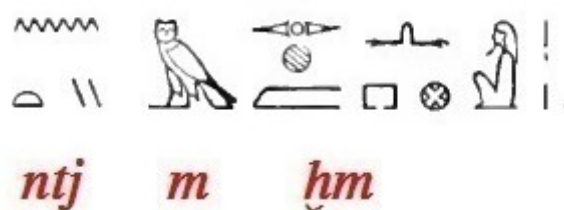
In line 19 we see Seth who:



He feels/carries the sorrow (*hr jnd*) of what he did.

Now “*jr .n =f r =f*” may be read from two perspectives. It may refer to the evil that Seth would have done against Horus (*r =f*) and which turned around against himself. Or it may point to the evil that Seth made against himself (*r =f*) the moment he thought to defeat Horus. As the Italian saying goes: “*Chi è causa del suo mal pianga sè stesso!*” [Lit. He who is the cause of his own affliction, let him cry over himself]. Nearer in mood to our Egyptian text than the English “*As you make your bed, so you must lie on it.*”

In line 20 we find a god who is in Letopolis:



whom Ani has scrutinizingly studied (*sjp .n =j*). Since Letopolis (*hm*) was a centre of worship of *hntj-hm* or *hntj-jrtj*, which were forms of Horus (usually the Elder : *hrw-wr*), I deem it legitimate to see in him Horus the son of Osiris, whom Ani attentively takes note of in order to assimilate his traits and be thus able to celebrate, like him, the rites of Osiris [21]



kḥ = j

ʿ.wj

ḥr wsjr

I read in fact “**kḥ = j ʿ.wj = j**” as “to sanctify, consecrate”, according to what WB suggests:

<p>I. jemandem (m) die Arme „beugen“ als Handlung der Begrüßung (neben: die Arme öffnen) 6. auch von mumienförmigen Söttern, die mit gebeugten Armen da- stehen 7</p>	
<p>II. Seit D.18 gewöhnlich als Ausdruck für das Ausstrecken des leicht gebeugten Armes beim Weihen des Opfers:</p>	

Although “my shoulder (**kḥ = j**) and my arms (**ʿ.wj = j**) over Osiris” (as a sign of deference) could be an additional reading.

A multiple reading that we may find also in 25:



jnk

k

jp

pr

tnw

The verb “**jp**” has a lot of possible meanings basically pointing to “reckoning, examining, taking notes” and so on. And in our context it may be a participle, either active or passive. In the first case Ani is he who entered (**k**) the *Island of Fire* in order to take note (**jp**) of the events and he came out (**pr**) as one who took possession of the facts, becoming thus “distinguished” (**tnw**). A passive “**jp**” would on the contrary allude to Ani who entered the *Island* in order to be examined and came out “promoted”; which is in fact described in the rest of the logic block [27-30].

After all that Ani can legitimately assert of being qualified to travel on his own [33] along the luminous pathway [34] that leads to the Field of Reeds, the *sh-t-j-rw* [35-36] where he shall dwell as a blessed spirit [37].

At any rate, what is particularly important is the fact that studying and taking note of Horusian traits Ani is preparing his transformation into the Hawk (Horus) of Gold of the following spell [77], which, as I suggested in my previous annotations (Prologue), is the result of the elaborated ritual described in the Chapter of the Divine Hawk [78].

