

PAPYRUS OF ANI

Hymns to Ra (a comparative study) part 1

by

orlando mezzabotta

www.ormezza.it



I think there are no doubts that the basic archetypical figure of “*pṛt m hrw*” texts is that of the Sun in its diurnal and nocturnal aspects, namely Ra and Osiris. Now, although the Book of the Dead deals specifically with the Osirian traits, nonetheless the goal of the night journey is the triumphant rising of the deceased from the horizon, the *coming forth* into glorious *Day-Light*. And that's why in the Books of the Dead are usually present specific hymns to Ra, praising his attributes and magnificence; Ra being in fact the psychic pattern the deceased must conform to in order to become a living *bꜣ* and an effective *ꜣkh*.

And in fact, in our papyrus, we find five “solar” texts strategically placed on significant way stations: Plate 1, Plate 18, Plates 20-21, Plate 22. The last two instances (Chapters 133, 134) have a definite peculiarity, since Ra is basically seen as a model for the magic graphical rendering of a corresponding vignette; whereas the first two texts are canonical hymns. As for the text unfolding along plates 20-21, although apparently a hymn, it is in fact a face-to-face meeting of Ani with Ra, as clearly shown in the vignette, in which Ani is inside the solar boat,



whereas in the similar vignette of Plate 18 Ani is shown praising Ra from the outside.



This marks indeed a psychic quantum leap, which I hinted at in my general introduction when I put forward the hypothesis of the two levels of knowledge of the papyrus viewed as a rite of passage. So, for the time being, I'll limit myself at the interpretation of the first two hymns comparing their inner structures and the different modalities of their approach to the solar theme. Needless to say that my translations are highly questionable, but I'll try to justify, through contextual arguments, my linguistic renderings. Although, hélas, my English may be somewhat unsatisfactory!

PLATE 1

CAPTION

- 1 The adoration of Ra - at his appearing in radiance
- 2 in the sky's eastern horizon -
- 3 by Osiris Scribe of the divine offerings
- 4 of all the gods: Ani.

HOMAGE 1

5 He says: "Hail to you,
6 come as Kheprj, Kheprj,
7 the one who created the gods.
8 When you appear you enlighten the shining back of your mother,
9 (you) appeared as king of the gods.
10 Nut, your mother, does extend
11 her arms in greeting you.
12 The western mountains [Manu] receive you in peace;
13 Truth does embrace you at the two appointed times. [*sunrise and sunset*]

INVOCATION 1

14 May he (Kheprj) bestow effectiveness, strength, justification,
15 going forth as a living Ba
16 to see Harachtj [Horus of the two horizons]
17 to the kA of Osiris Ani,
18 justified beside Osiris.

HOMAGE 2

19 He says: "O you gods of the Temple of the Ba,
20 who judge sky and earth in the scale,
21 who bestow kA and sustenance;
22 O Tatenen, Unique One, who created mankind;
23 O Enneads of the South, of the North,
24 of the West, of the East,
25 give praise to Ra, the lord of the sky,
26 the Soverain – (to him) Life, Prosperity, Health -

27 Creator of the Gods.
28 Adore him - (gods) - in his beautiful form,
29 at his appearing in the Barque of the Day.
30 They adore you - those of the sky and those of the Netherworld.
31 Thoth does register for you,
32 each day, the rightness of the sun's position.
33 Thrown in the flames is your enemy,
34 the rebel fallen down:
35 destroyed his menacing arms.
36 Taken hold has Ra of his strides:
37 the offsprings of the impotent one, they do not exist [they are no more].
38 The mansion of the Prince is on feast;
39 joyful voices in the Great Temple.
40 The gods are in jubilation
41 as they see Ra in his appearing,
42 his rays flooding the lands.
43 Proceeds the majesty of this eminent god,
44 after he has united with the land of Manu (western mountains).
45 Shines the earth at his daily birth
46 once he has attained the state (he had) yesterday.

INVOCATION 2

47 May you be pleased with me, so that I may see your beauties.
48 May I proceed [uninjured] on earth,
49 strike the asses, drive off the enemies:
50 after having destroyed *Apophis* at the time of his potent assault,
51 once seen the *abdu-fish* having accomplished his function,
52 the *jnt-fish* of the sun-boat in his lake;

53 after having seen *Horus* as helmsman,
54 *Thoth* and *Maat* at his sides;
55 having grasped the bow-rope of the Barque of the Night,
56 the stern-rope of the Barque of the Day.

57 May he [Horus] grant that I see the solar disk, that I contemplate the moon,
58 unceasingly, every day;
59 that the Ba come forth to travel
60 to every place he likes;
61 that my name be called out, that it be found
62 on the wooden table where *reversion offerings* are made.

63 May I be given offerings in the presence (of the god),
64 like the followers of *Horus*;
65 may be assigned to me a place in the Barque
66 on the day the god ferries across.

67 May I be received before *Osiris*
68 in the land of Justification.
69 For the Ka of *Osiris Ani*.

PLATE 18 -- CH 15

CAPTION

1 Adoration of **Ra** from his rising in the horizon
2 up to the transformation into *He-who-sets-in-life*.
3 Words to be spoken by *Osiris Scribe Ani*:

HOMAGE 1

4 Hail to you, Ra, in his rising,
5 Atum Harakhtj!
6 I adore you. Your beauties are in my eyes,
7 Sunlight comes into being in my breast.
8 You proceed in peace in the Barque of Night,
9 but your heart does rejoice in the wind of the Barque of Day.
10 Sweet the heart in traversing the high vault like those who are in peace,
11 (since) your enemies are all fallen down.
12 The Unwearying Stars acclaim you,
13 the Imperishable Stars adore you,
14 as (you) set in peace in the horizon of Manu. [the western mountains]
15 Beautiful you are, as the sun of sunrise and sunset;
16 living you are, enduringly, as my Lord.

HOMAGE 2

17 Hail to you Ra in your rising,
18 Atum in your setting.
19 Beautiful your rising, your shining
20 on the back of your mother,
21 (you) appearing as King of the Gods.
22 The Lower Sky [Naunet] does greet you,
23 Truth does embrace you, at the two appointed times. [*sunrise and sunset*]
24 When you traverse, in joy, the high vault of the sky
25 the *Lake of the two Knives* comes into a state of peace.
26 The enemy is overthrown, his arms are bound,
27 since the blade has cut off his spine

28 and Ra keeps being in the fair wind,
29 for the Barque of Night has sunk the Assailant.
30 You are towed by those of the South, of the North,
31 of the West, of the East - praising you [as they tow you],
32 O Primeval God of the Forms,
33 who lifted up the voice when the flooded land was in silence.
34 Unique One who took form in the sky,
35 when soil , water and any guardian [god] had not yet come into being.
36 Unique One, who made what exists,
37 who fashioned and gilded the tongue of the Ennead.

INVOCATION

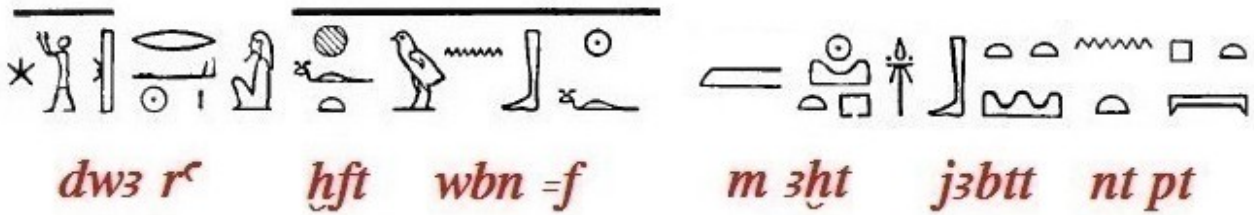
38 He who is in the water, may he inhale (you),
39 when you come forth into him on the surface of the Lake of Horus.
40 I do breath the air that comes forth from your nostrils,
41 the North wind that comes from your mother;
42 and you'll glorify my spirit,
43 make divine my Osiris Ba.
44 I adore you; be in peace, Lord of the gods!
45 I exalt you in your marvelous progress,
46 and your rays shine on my breast, like Ra.
47 Osiris Scribe Accountant
48 of the divine offerings of all the gods,
49 overseer of all the granaries of the Thinite Nome,
50 true royal scribe, whom the king favoured,
51 Ani, justified, in peace.

Now the hymns are built according to a simple three-steps sequence: (i) a caption; (ii) homages praising Ra's magnificent aspects; (iii) invocations so that Ra be at Ani's side. But what should be underlined is the different compositional approach of the two hymns. Whereas the first one is basically “descriptive”, with Ra seen from an external and conceptual point of view; the second hymn, on the contrary, is characterized by a psychological involvement, as if Ra were “integrated” through “breathing” (lines 6,7 and 40,41). That should be no surprise, since the second hymn marks the end of the first part of Ani's coming forth into Day-Light; being thus a sort of anticipation of the more direct “Ra experience” that will take place in the second and deeper part of the rite of passage, starting from Plate 19.

The different approach of the two hymns is shown more clearly by the corresponding vignettes; that of Plate 1 with its graphic exterior magnificence; the other (Plate 18) definitely more intimate and focused on the small image of the “child” in the boat's prow, working as the psychic meeting point between Ra and Ani.



In fact the caption of the first hymn is static, since it limits itself to the moment of “dawning”:



The adoration of Ra at his appearing in radiance in the sky's eastern horizon,

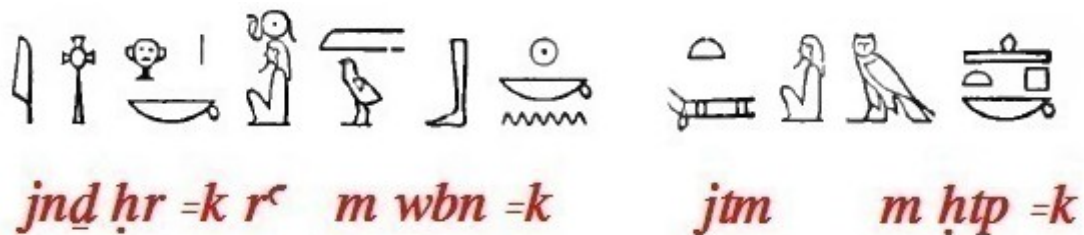
whereas in the second hymn it does extend from dawn to sunset:



Adoration of Ra from his rising in the horizon

up to the transformation into *He-who-sets-in-life*.

A sunset, though, marked by its living force (*m 3nh*) ; as an anticipation of its next-to-come re-dawning. The dynamic perspective is enhanced by the choice of the word “*hpr*”, pointing out the gradual morphing of the dawning sun (*hprj*) into the setting one (the living Atum of lines 17-18).




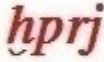

Hail to you Ra in your rising,

Atum in your setting.


Let us now give a more detailed look at the hymns, starting with the first one which marks the beginning of the papyrus. The first homage [5-13] has indeed many correspondences with the vignette and, as I said above, is a sort of graphic description, an ekphrasis. The symbolic meaning is quite obvious and has been explained by and large by many scholars; so I limit myself to point out a few textual and visual correspondences.



6 come as Kheprj, Kheprj






7 as the one who created the gods.



Ra



8 When you appear you enlighten the shining back of your mother's,



10 Nut, your mother, does extend
11 her arms in greeting you.


13 Truth does embrace you
at the two appointed times.
[sunrise and sunset]



15 going forth as a living Ba

The western mountains receive you in peace;





m3nw

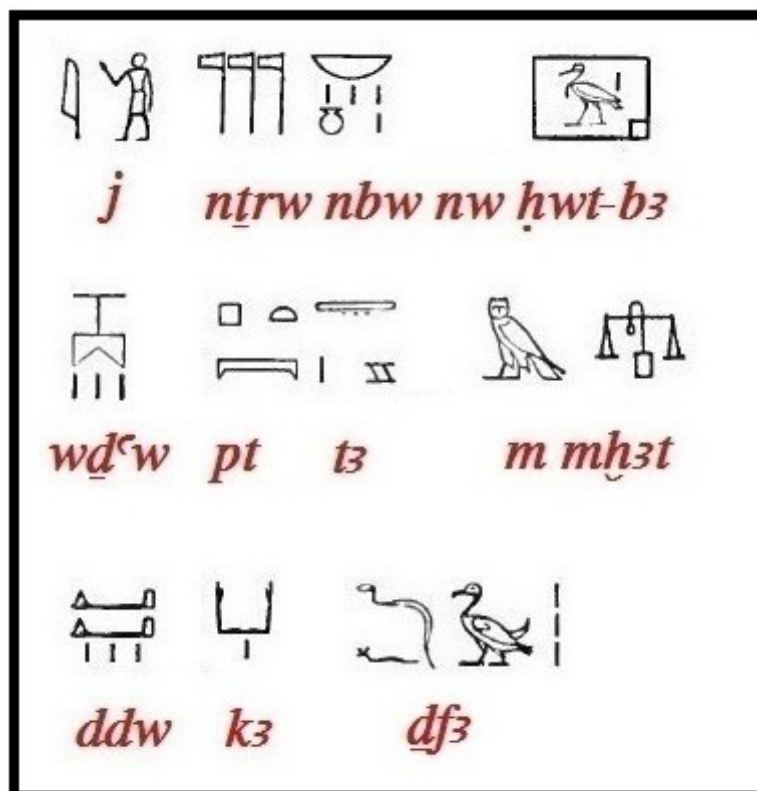


39 Joyful voices in the Great Temple.

Now, focusing our attention on the text, we should note the use of the third person pronoun at the beginning of the first invocation [14], since up to that point the god has been addressed in the second person, as in a virtual dialogue. One might of course look at it as a scribal oversight, but in fact it could be an intended compositional strategy: a sort of “splitting”, a psychological “estrangement process”. The “separated” Ani looks at “himself” in the act of invoking the god's help for his perilous journey. This shift between “dialogic second” and “estranged third” person takes place again in lines 19-29 [third], 30-35 [second], 36-46 [third]; and at the beginning of the second invocation in lines 47-48 [second]. Each shift underlining different psychological modalities.

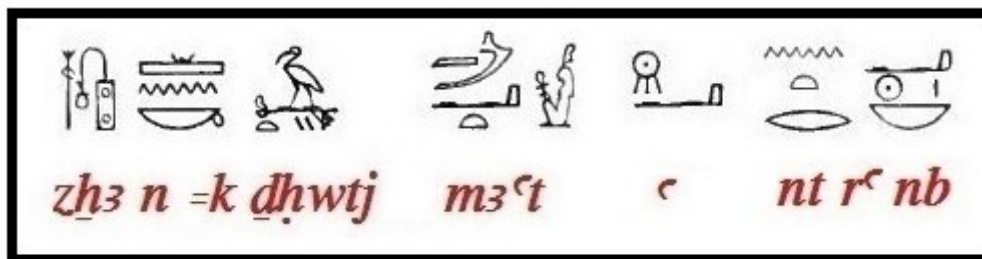
At the beginning of the second homage Ani addresses directly the great gods (important as they may be they are nonetheless in a hierarchically inferior position) inviting them to adore Ra [19-29]. This may be interpreted as a *captatio benevolentiae*: Ani presents himself as a manifest partisan of Ra, acting as his herald. Then in lines 30-35, that describe Ra's triumph, Ani addresses directly the god as if to say: “See, my appeal to the gods, no matter how modest, has been a contribution to the glorious display of your magnificence!” Then the mood shifts again to the “third person” solemn and stately description of Ra's victorious and eternal progress [36-46].

For what concerns the text there is first to observe the stylistic nuances of lines 19-21.

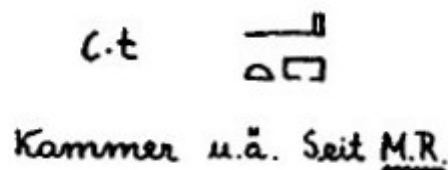


“*ntrw nbw*” refers to “all gods”; but “*nbw*” may also hint at the gods who are Lords (*nbw*) of the “Temple of the bA” (*hwt-b3*). They are those who can discern the celestial and earthly values of the deceased. These two qualities are underscored by the “*k3*” and “*df3*” of line 21. Both terms refer to “nourishment”, but the first one is spiritual, the second one earthly. And one should also note the relation between “*b3*” and “*k3*”, suggesting their “binding (of *k3* and *b3*) after death”, made by the gods of the temple.

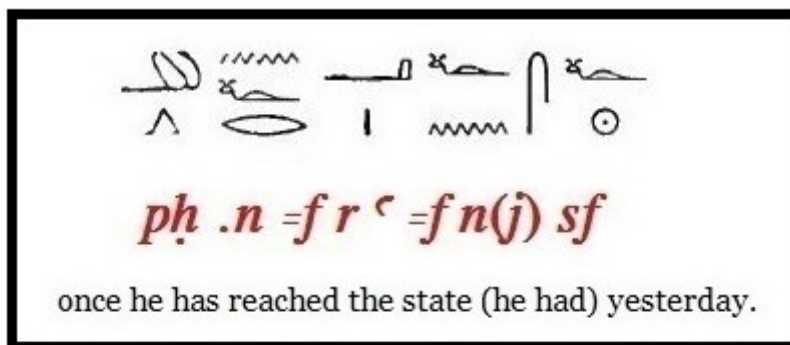
An ambiguous passage is that of lines 31-32



There is first the dubious rendering of “*c*” (the extended arm holding a shining solar disc) and a feminine genitive “*nt*” which cannot but be referred to “*m3't*”. The glyph of the arm with the sun could be a variation of “*c't*”



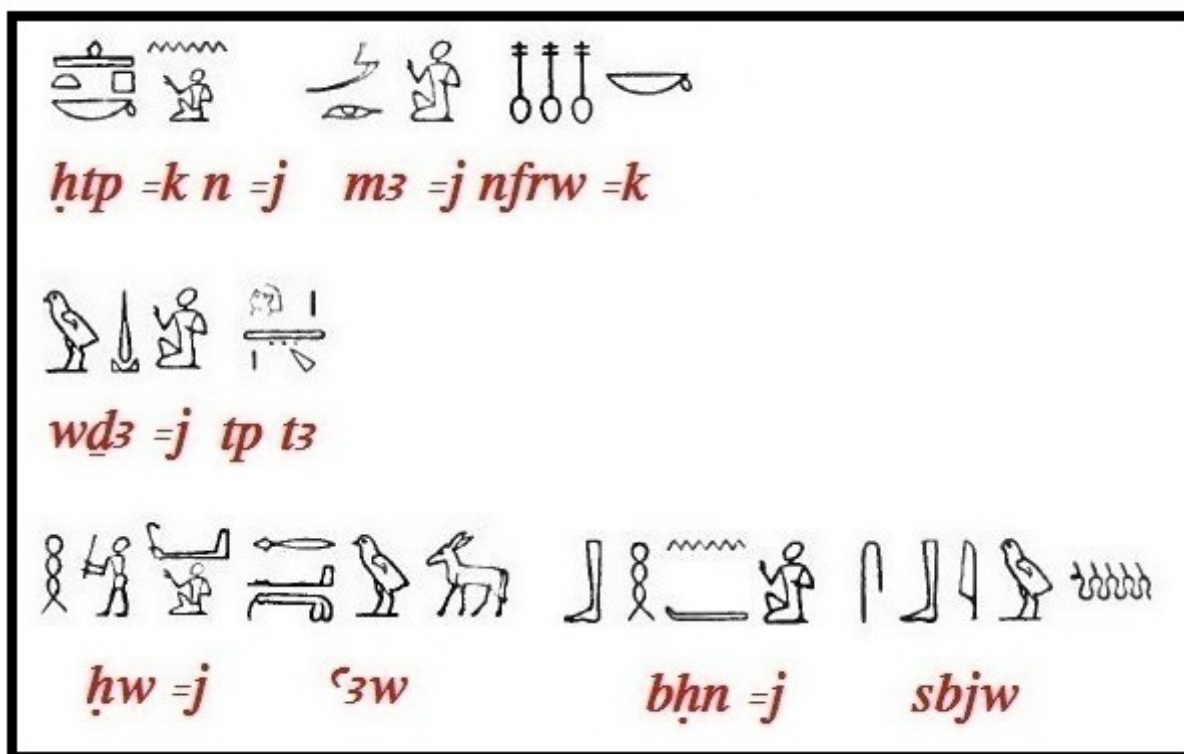
namely, “room/space/position”; or a plain “*c*” (region, province); thus “*m3't c*” would be a feminine term hinting at the “rightness of the region/position”, that is: the “right course of the sun”. Or one might read “*c*” [holding the sun] as a synthetic variation of “*r3*” himself: the hand that presents the solar disc. The sentence would thus suggest the image of Thoth registering the exact position of the sun in its daily, unchangeable course; the one found also in line 46:



The end of the hymn poses some problems especially regarding lines 47-56. The blocks begins in fact with a series of “*sdm =f*” [47-49] followed by a series of “*sdm.n =f*” forms [50-56].

Now, since this first hymn to Ra gives the start to the rite of passage I think that the “*sdm.n =f*” forms cannot be read as regular past tenses; they are events that Ani must yet experience in the course of his journey, that is in the future; thus I am inclined to read them as circumstantial sentences, actions Ani must perform in order to reach his goal: the vision of Ra's magnificence [47].

Before getting into specific details about those actions let us first give a look at the “*sdm =f*” forms.

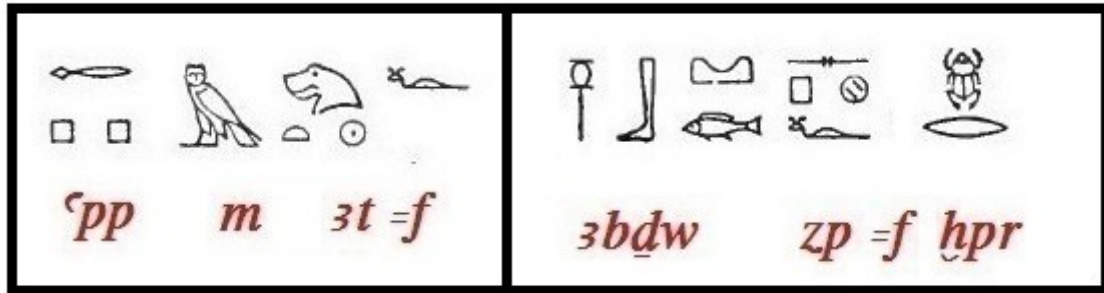


The difficult part is “*wḏ3 =j tp t3*”, since we must make out what “*t3*” refers to and how to read “*wḏ3*”. I think there is no doubt that A1 stands for “*j*”, thus “*wḏ3*” must be a verb (to set out, proceed), lacking though the D54 (walking legs) determinative. But that might have been done on purpose, an invitation to read “*wḏ3*” as an adjective (uninjured, hale) as well. The image would thus be that of Ani proceeding safely in his course “above/upon the earth” (*tp t3*). One might suppose that “*t3*” be a general reference to the “underworld journey” (the Land of justification of line 68) with the expected Ani's fight against hostile forces (*ʿ3w, sbjw*). But that would hardly be grammatically and logically connected with the following “*sdm. n-f*” blocks, which deal specifically with the underworld experience [50-56].

In conclusion I interpret the passage as Ani's wish to proceed in his diurnal voyage (after having successfully accomplished his night voyage and being thus “uninjured”) in a position to fight evil and drive away “earthly” enemies. In fact the ass (*ʿ3*) is a symbol of Seth, and “*sbjw*” may be referred to Seth's followers; and the sentence might allude to Horus, he who successfully fought Seth and his followers. In other words Ani's wish is that of becoming Horus, the resurrected Osiris.

But he can do that only after he has positively gone through the underworld experience [50-56], that is: having driven off Apophis, the arch-enemy, when he appeared (the “*bdw*” fish is the sentinel that detects the snake's approach; whereas the “*jnt*” fish works like a sort of pilot, showing the watery way to the sun-boat). The vision of Horus as helmsman [53] with Thoth and Maat at his sides [54] points to the psychic integration of the right course. Ani takes part in it first “towing” the boat of the Night [55], then letting himself be dragged by the boat of the Day [56].

The block describing the fight with Apophis [50-52] is particularly interesting as regards the use of verbal images. The set of the scene is the “waterway”, the abysmal Nun on which the solar boat is sailing. The figure of the huge serpent (Apophis) is contrasted by two minuscule ones, two fishes: the *bdw* and the *jnt*, working as scout and pilot. A contrast between the snake's might and the fish's humble diligence:

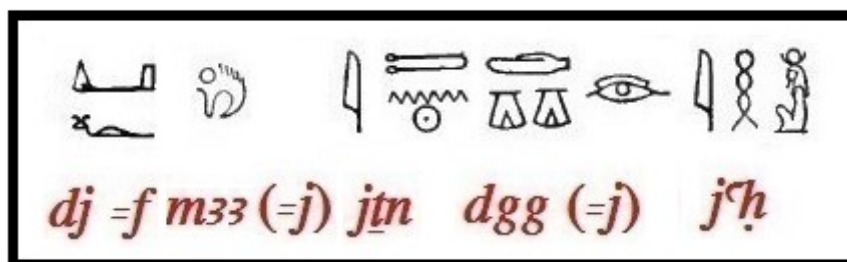


“*3t = f*” and “*zp = f*” refer both to the “moment” of performing a task. But “*3t*” may be also referred to the “striking power of a god”, whereas “*zp*” is just an ordinary task. Nonetheless the small “*3bdw*”, the sentinel, alerts the sun-boat of Apophis's imminent appearance. Which might urge Ani to assume the role of Seth spearing the snake, as shown in other papyri (not Ani's):



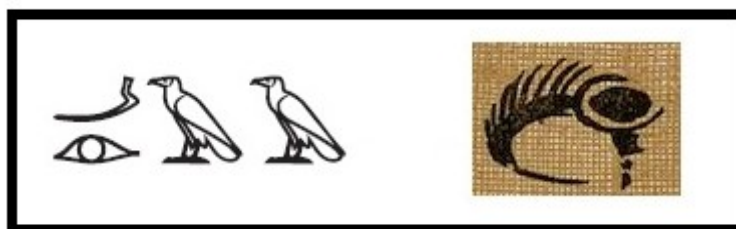
Of course one must not suppose that Ani shall become Seth; he must only integrate Seth's fury. It's not a coincidence that on the prow of the boat there is a small figure of a bird which might be Horus. No matter how minuscule, the “new-born” hero has in himself not only the mental (Horusian) but also the physical (Sethian) power to defeat the mighty SERPENT. It's the same “minuscule vs huge” contrast, an anticipation of the David vs Goliath theme.

Line 57 may pose problems:



I think that the “*f*” is not referred to Ra, but to Horus. He it is, as helmsman, who has the power of letting Ani contemplate both the solar disc (day) and the moon (night); to have a place in the sun-boat, to go in and out of the Realm of the Dead: once again underlining the “resurrection” motif.

The graphic rendering of “*dj =f m33 =j*” is particularly interesting for what concerns the use of the hieroglyphic expressing “*m33*”. Instead of the more common writing the scribe used a very peculiar glyph:



That may represent a variation of the *w3t*-eye of Horus,



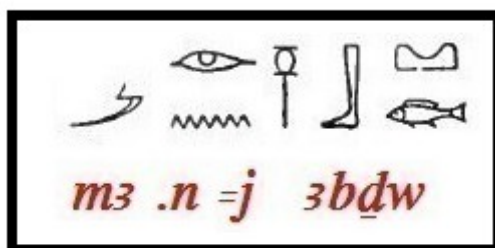
giving thus to the verb “*m33*” (to see) a more sacral and effective meaning. In fact the uninjured eye of Horus is also a symbol of the sun, and there may be thus a hint at the solar disc (*jtn*) the sentence speaks about (*m33 =j jtn*).

The same glyph is read by some interpreters as “*jm3h*” (honour, veneration, the blessed state of the dead); where the eye, if combined with the F39 glyph, would result in something like this:



Very similar to our original glyph, which now, however, acquires further meanings: it is the sacral and venerated sight of a blessed spirit.

But there might also be a further allusion. In line 51 is mentioned the “*3bdw*” fish



whose task, as we have seen, is that of alerting the sun-boat of the incoming appearance of Apophis. Now our glyph may also have, no matter how vague, a similarity with a fish (eyelashes → fins); thus the sight would be not only sacred and venerable, but also “alert”. All this just to observe how the scribe might have used stylistic nuances in order to enlarge the semantic field of specific sentences.

Now, before leaving this hymn, we should note how the last part of it [47-69], underscoring the various actions, does indeed anticipate the dynamic traits of the hymn of Plate 18. But it goes without saying, that all the actions described by Ani are, at this point, no more than wishes; the positive results he would like to obtain at the end of his night journey, with the magnificent vignette of Ra working as a psychic catalyst, or guiding light: the nucleus around which Ani's wishes revolve.

That's the contrary of the hymn of Plate 18, which, as I said above, being at the end of the successful voyage, refers to Ra no more as a wished-for goal, but as an acquired state. Ani has psychically integrated Ra's qualities through breathing (lines 7 and 40), so that there is a sort of identification. In praising Ra Ani praises himself. What he points out is the *circularity* of the sun's course, underlining the double aspect of sunrise and sunset [4-5; 17-18]; the Barque of Night and the Barque of Day [8-9]; the sky and the underworld [10-14; 19-22]; the eternity of the circular route [15-16; 23]. Whereas the first hymn is, in a certain sense, a conceptualization of the figure of Ra, this one is the psychic, effective, dynamic manifestation of it. We can get a clearer idea comparing the different way the two hymns make use of in expressing similar themes and sequences.

[As a matter of fact all the hymns of the many papyri make use of a limited repertoire of images (the splendour of the dawning, the quiet of sunset, the loving welcome of the goddesses, Ra's superiority upon the other gods, his might, his ability in defeating the enemies, his radiance, the joy he gives to gods and men, his triumphant and victorious journey through the sky and the Netherworld &tc). Their only difference pointed out by what images are singled out, by their narrative sequence and their more or less variegated modulations. All in accord with the scribe's compositional strategy.]

As regards the second hymn, the first part [4-16] points out the emotional involvement of Ani and is a sort of prologue to the second part of the homage, of which lines 17-23 are almost the same as lines 5-13 of the first hymn. "Ra in your rising" (II,17) is in fact Kheprj (I,6); Atum (II,18) parallels "the one who created the gods" (I,7); lines 19-21 are more or less the same of I,8-9; II,23 and I,13 exactly identical.

The important difference is that about the goddess who greets Ra. In the first hymn she is "Nut", the sky goddess; in the second one she is "Naunet", the goddess of the *Lower Sky*. That's because the next block [24-29] describes Ra's fight against Apophis (who in fact dwells in the *Lower Sky*); followed by a "theosophical" block [30-37] centred around Ra's coming into being.

On the contrary in the first hymn the sequence is reversed: first a "theological" block [19-32] followed by a "fighting" block [33-37]. That

is logically justified since, as I said, the intention of the first hymn is to exalt Ra's magnificence, praising him as the superior being [19-32], the invincible god, as shown in lines 33-37, which underscore his “might” in general terms; whereas the parallel block of the second hymn [II, 24-29] describes the real “fighting scene”. The victorious Ra is seen on his Barque [29], spearing Apophis [27], who is thus neutralized [26]. Because of this victory he can safely sail through the sky [24-25].

This is quite an interesting point since the “*Lake of the Two Knives*” that rests in peace [25] may be a significant cosmic allusion. A helpful elucidation of this “lake” is given by the *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* under “*Messersee*”; but I venture to propose a personal – although high questionable – interpretation. The “*two knives*” could refer to the constellations of *Ursa Maior* and *Minor* (they may indeed be seen as “cleavers”), with the polar star *Thuban* (the centre of the Imperishable Stars) between them.

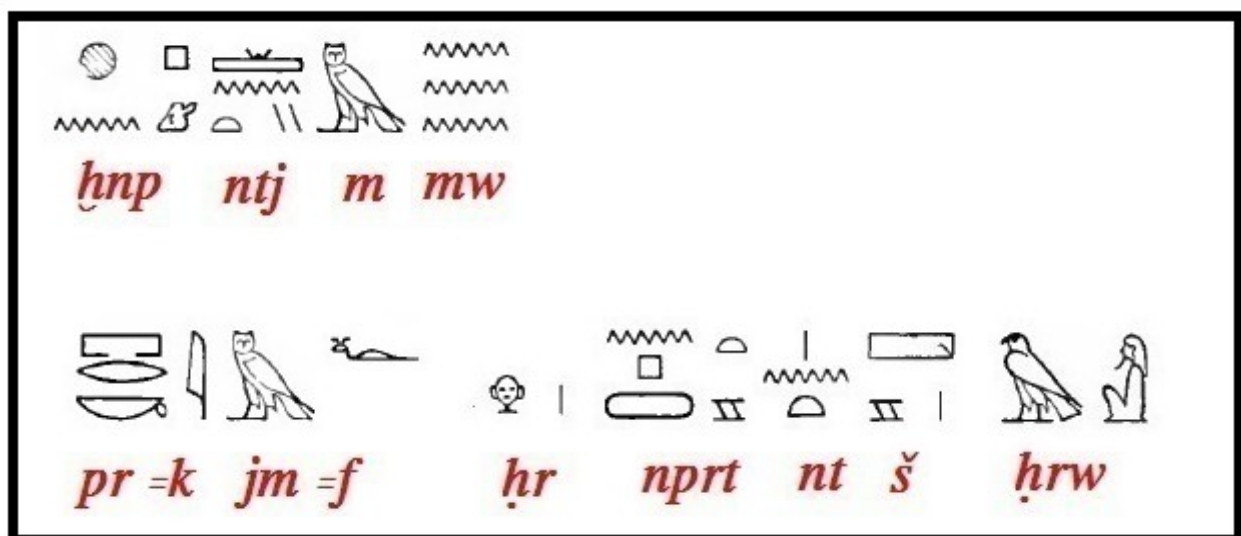


Now *Ursa Maior* or “*The Butcher's Cleaver*” is connected with Seth. In our case, Ra's triumph over the “enemy” [26-29] is an indirect triumph over the cosmic enemy as well; that's why the “Lake” is in peace.

I think there is an evident parallel with Utterance 251 of *The Pyramid of Wnjs* (Antechamber West Gable) which I have treated at large in a specific commentary:

<http://www.ormezza.it/AVVIO/THO/WNJS/AWG/AWG-sub.pdf>

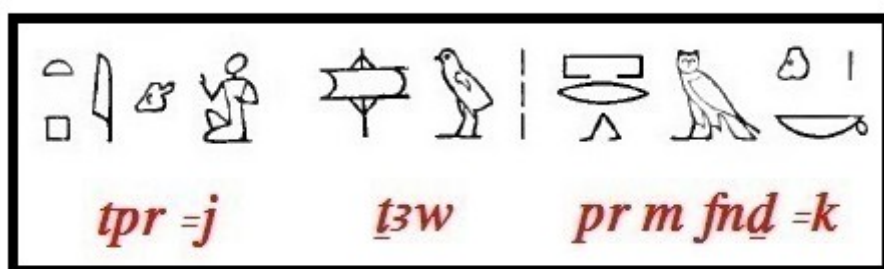
For what concerns the religious aspect we have again “parallel differences”. In both the hymns there are the gods of the four cardinal points (I,23-24; II,30-31) praising Ra as “Creator”. But whereas in the first hymn there is just a passing reference [27], in the other one there is a more ample theosophical interpretation [32-37]. The analytical approach may once again be seen as a dynamic expression of the original creative act which gave form to the universe and to the gods. “Creator” is not just a catechistic label, as in the first hymn; but the quality of the Demiurge viewed in his operative aspect. That is a sort of parallel of Ani's psychic moulding of his own new state. And in fact Ani's final invocation[38-51], according to my interpretation, starts with a passage which may be highly debatable, needing thus a few notes.



I interpret “*ntj m mw*” (he who is in the water) as a general image of the deceased, in his journey in the Barque of Night, who breathes air

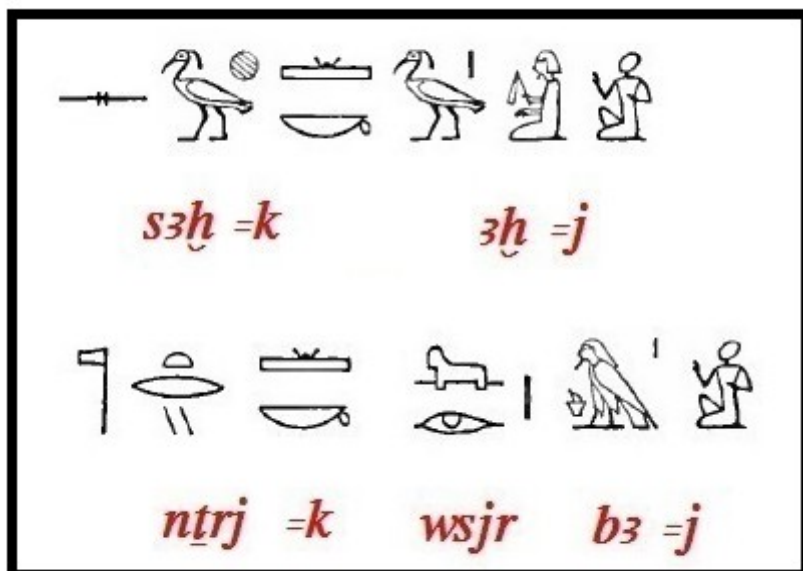
the moment Ra comes forth from the abysmal water (*jm =f* → *mw*) and, in the meantime, goes into the deceased (*jm =f* → *ntj...*) letting him inhale his energy. The “lake of Horus” (*š hrw*) is the radiant surface (*npri*) on which the Day-barque shall sail; “*hrw*” being both Horus and, adjusting the sound, “*hrw*”, the luminous day, as well. And we should also note that “*ntj m mw*” could allude to Osiris, thrown in the Nile by Seth; thus the emerging Ra would be the re-born Osiris (→Horus) in his solar aspect.

In the rest of the invocation, however, the “neutral” deceased becomes Ani inhaling Ra's breath of life. But in this case



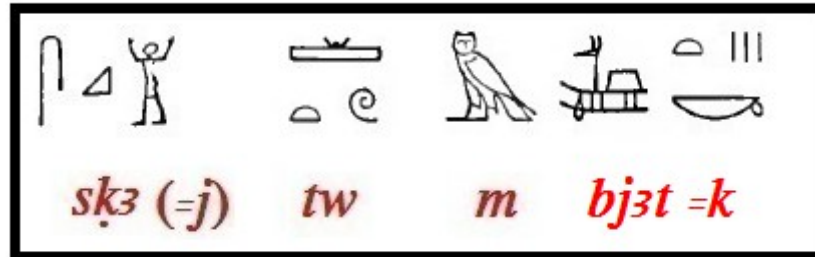
I interpret “*tpr =j*” as a present indicative (I breathe), not a prospective (may I breathe), since he has already reached his goal.

The other “*sdm =f*” forms (*s3h =k* and *ntrj =k*)



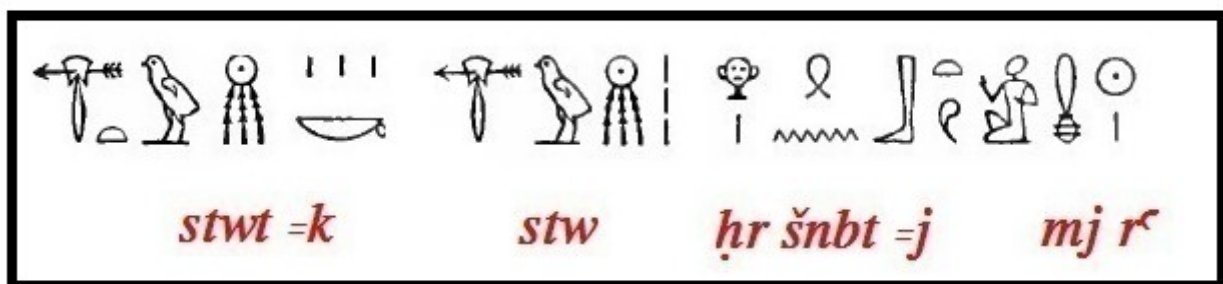
may be read both as indicatives and prospectives. Having inhaled Ra's energy Ani feels as he already were “glorified and divine”, although he would acquire those states only at the end of the second part of his rite of passage.

Now, as a last observation, I would like to point out one more stylistic nuance the scribe made use of in expressing the magnificence and splendour of Ra's ceremonial progress and its psychological effect on Ani. In line 45 we have:



At face value the glyph “*bj3t*” points to “quartzite, sandstone”, a material amply used to build statues. But the image of the sled with a jackal's head (U16) suggests a progress. A jackal which might be Anubis. But “*bj3j*” is also “to wonder, to marvel”. And “*bj3/bj3t*” does also point to “firmament” (although graphically different there is an evident homophony). We have thus the image of Ani raising high praises (*sk3 =j*) to Ra , whom he contemplates in his grandiose and wondrous progress through the firmament, the sled hinting also at Atum.

That is an ecstatic view that works on the deepest strata of Ani's psyche.



Being flooded by the rays of the Sun, Ani becomes like Ra. Is it an anticipation of St Terese's transverberation? Akhenaton, perhaps, might have something to say!



At any rate, quite a spectacular ending!

