

## THE NARRATIVE STRUCTURE OF THE PAPYRUS OF ANI

by

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I take it for granted that the reader of this essay be already fairly acquainted with *The Book of the Dead*; and, specifically, with Ani's version of it. In fact I do not intend to give an umpteenth description of that papyrus and of its various chapters, already treated by and large by many scholarly works. My modest aim is to reconstruct its inner working, namely to find out the consistency of the logic that ties together the series of chapters of this particular papyrus, provided **there is** such a logic.

There are many *Books of the Dead*. Each one follows its own course and, I am convinced, each one should be analysed first individually and then in its structural relation to the others. Each chapter has a value according to its place in the organic whole of the single papyrus. To treat it “taxonomically”, out of its specific context, is, in my opinion, a highly questionable critical approach.

I look at the *Book of the Dead* as a text that basically describes a *rite of passage* which the deceased/initiand must go through in order to assess her/his qualifications to be a citizen of the *Realm of the Dead* and become an active and effective member of it. I think that the several remarks about the usefulness of the knowledge of certain chapters when still alive point clearly in the direction of the “initiation rites” a living being had to go through in order to proceed successfully, at the moment of departing, along the perilous pathways of the afterlife so as not to experience the second and ultimate death.

I consider Ani's papyrus a guide that runs along two specific levels of esoteric knowledge (the *Realm of the Dead* is, among other things, an esoteric landscape): what we may call the *little mysteries* and the *great mysteries*, which are generally found in all initiation rites. Two levels that express the “depth” or the degree of the initiand's psychological attainment; which, in our case, is materially shown by the carefully planned sequence of the various chapters. What is the reason behind their specific choice? Are there norms that direct their sequence and positioning? That's what I'll try to make out; that is, to read the vignettes as components of a story-board (the various phases of the rite of passage); and the text, in its wholeness, as a sort of “movie script” composed of scenes which are then skilfully edited in order to give it a

narrative coherence, which must not necessarily be linear, although in our case I am convinced that there is a definite Ariadne's thread.

It goes without saying that the psychological involvement of the initiand was substantially different from that of a modern audience, which, no matter how emotionally involved, can view the "movie" only from a basically "critic" perspective; whereas the ancient Egyptian, in his initiation rite, could be affected by it in such a manner that would modify, dramatically, his own psychic structure. Which is in fact the aim of any rite of passage; attained, in our case, by cultural means specific to the Egyptian historical environment and to specific social classes.

This relatively short essay is nothing more than a preliminary research, a sort of skeleton key, with the only aim of pointing out a general outline of the inner structure of the dramatic process; so I will not expand more than is strictly necessary on the symbolic values of the vignettes and on the textual meaning of the various chapters. A detailed study would need several complementary approaches. To name just a few:

- 1) A translation of the chapters pointing out the various readings, which in many occasions may be very different; filtering them according to their consonance with the general and specific contexts; accompanied by very accurate grammatical and anagrammatical commentaries; and by the analyses of the rhetorical devices (be they just tropes or word-plays) used to give different textual weight to the sentences.
- 2) An elucidation of the vignettes in: (a) their symbolical and mythological meaning; (b) their correspondence with the text; (c) their specific values in the expository course; (d) the juxtaposition of similar vignettes, pointing out the significance of their differences.
- 3) The logical grouping of various "narrative" blocks according to their themes and their positional values in the papyrus...

... and so on. It goes without saying that such an impossible mission is by far definitely out of my reach; thus I'll limit myself to the exposition of what I deem be the basic traits of Ani's *prt m hrw*.

Let's begin, then, with our story-board, which is based on the plates shown by Budge in his work on Ani's papyrus, corresponding to those of Ogden Goelet's publication (Chronicle Books, 1998).

[N.B. Faulkner's translation in Goelet's book does not always follow Ani's text. In many instances it is substantially different. Thus the reader should only consult the original script, in order to avoid misunderstandings.]

## PROLOGUE ( PLATEs 1, 2, 3, 4: hymns to Ra, Osiris & Chapter 30B)

What is particularly interesting is the fact that the story does not begin with Chapter 1, which is basically the description of the funeral cortège and entombment, as we shall see. It begins, instead, with two hymns praising Ra [Plate 1] and Osiris [Plate 2], followed by what is probably one of the most renowned scene of the *Book of the Dead*: the weighing of the heart [Plates 3, 4: Chapter 30B].

This last scene should in fact mark the end of the process, the moment in which the deceased's doings are judged in order to establish whether he is qualified to become a living member of the *Realm of the Dead* and thus be promoted to the blessed sphere of the *Akh* spirits. Being placed at the beginning, the rest, though, could seem redundantly superfluous.

But I am convinced that the skilful scribe who planned the logic structure of Ani's papyrus, our screenwriter, did so on purpose, in order to create a more pregnant emotive involvement. In a certain sense, the logic block that precedes the description of the funeral functions as a prologue, a sort of movie trailer, which condenses and anticipates the spirit of the book. Thus a psychological preparation.

Ra and Osiris represent the complementary polarities of *Existence*: day and night, light and darkness, life and death. Traits that the deceased must integrate, so that, like the sun, s/he may dawn, shine on high, go down and rise again: forever and ever. The *weighing of the heart* is then the final phase (devoutly to be wished) of the rite of passage (in fact a successful passage); but also, from another possible and complementary perspective, the preliminary judgement of Ani's qualification for his ensuing journey. Only s/he who has lived according to righteousness and justice is worthy of staying in the *Realm of the Dead*, safe from Ammit's jaws, not dying a second death.

But - I anticipate what I deem will become evident in the course of my analysis - only s/he who does show his psychic power shall be able to enter and come forth from the *Realm of the Dead*. And only a few shall be able to penetrate and possess the deepest mysteries of Existence and attain the glorious state of the blessed spirits, who can thus be beneficial to those who live on earth.

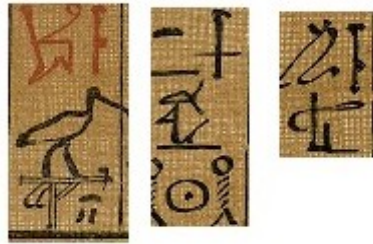
We have then three levels of experience: (i) the moral one (*mAat*); (ii) the psychic, individual one (the *bA* level); (iii) the spiritual, collective one (the *Ax* level). But, please, let's leave aside Plato's Body-soul-mind concepts. Ani's book is not philosophy, but a phenomenological experience.

## SCENE 1 [ PLATEs 5,6: Chapters 1, 22, 21 ]

Now, having created an emotional theatrical expectation, the scribe proceeds with the first scene (Chapter 1) and a series of vignettes which describe the funeral cortège and Ani's entombment. In the text we may find several visual correspondences (the mourners; the *wab, sem, lector priests*; the tomb; the god's ship [coffin drawn by ropes]; the offerings; Anubis; etc.); but what is particularly interesting is the fact that Thoth and Horus, who, especially in the first part of the

chapter, play a major role in the ritual, are not depicted.

There probably is a founded reason behind this apparent invisibility. The text says:



*jn dhwtj nswt nhj jm =j*

I am of the opinion that "im =i" refers to Thoth's figure which is within Ani: "Thoth it is, the king of Eternity, in me." In other words it is the Thothean energy (**in DHwti**) immanent to Ani's body. Just like Thoth fought for Osiris's vindication, so he shall/should fight for Ani's.

As a matter of fact the figure of Thoth does always mark, in this papyrus, a *quantum leap*, the passage from one level of experience to a new, more profound and significant one. In this specific case the passage from the earthly realm to the *Realm of the Dead*: the most apparent and obvious existential modification. The same applies to Horus, not shown in the vignettes, who represents the archetypical aspect of resurrection. It's his own immanent Horusian energy which Ani must activate, through Thoth's aid.



*jr n =j dhwtj wn =j hn<sup>c</sup> hrw*

*"Act, Thoth, on my behalf, so that I may be with Horus."*

Now, getting back to our dramatic structure, we should note how the whole scene is treated in a theatrical form, with characters who introduce themselves, showing their roles, as in a mummer's play. (I am a *wab*-priest; I am a *lector*-priest; I am a *sem*-priest). The invocations to those who conduct the **BA**s in the house of Osiris may legitimately be ascribed to Ani's wife, Tjutju, shown embracing her husband's mummy.



The final phase of the scene describes the ritual of the *opening of the mouth*, once again in a very vivid theatrical setting. First Ani's wish to be given the mouth so that he may interface himself with the superior beings and share Osiris's state and Ra's solar aspect (Chapter 22). Then it's Anubis who speaks (Chapter 21), telling Ani that he has come to help him in his process towards blessedness:



*jj .n =j   hr =k   ʒh =k*

Ani states that he is pure (*wab=kw*). Anubis assures him that he will sustain him in his (Ani's) numinous (and terrible) encounter with the ancestral powers



*dnj =k   tpjw-ʿ =k*

[Brief excursus. I interpret “*tpiw-a*” as a noun (*those who were before, the ancestors*), because of the determinative. They are the primeval energies (we might even say the energies of the collective unconscious), present *ab ovo* in the most inner core of each and every human being and which can be unleashed during the course



of the individuation process, of which Ani's initiation represents a possible aspect. They are filled with such a numinous power that they might annihilate the subject who, not suitably provided, faces them. That's why Thoth, via his teachings, will help Ani to restrain them, to build a dam (*dni =k*) against their potentially destructive force.]

## SCENE 2 [ PLATEs 7-10 : Chapter 17]

Having obtained the capability of speaking with the superior beings through the *opening of the mouth* ritual, Ani has to go through a very strict theological examination; namely he has to show how well acquainted he is with the basic teachings of Egyptian religion. In many other papyri this chapter has a remarkable extension. Ani's version, though not short, is an abridged one, although the internal cuts have been carefully planned in order to give the adjusted text a consistent shape. The lesson is built around a series of questions, asked by Atum, which must be elucidated, in a sort of catechism; with a series of vignettes displaying, basically, the various topics that have been carefully grouped in order to trace a specific theological course which, for reasons of space, I can't expand upon. Suffice it to say that, having passed successfully the theological examination, Ani can now display his knowledge of *Rosetau's* physical and psychic topography.

## SCENE 3 [ PLATEs 11: Chapters 147, 146]

What's interesting in this scene is the fact that texts and vignettes are placed on two superimposed registers, so as to underscore their synchronicity.

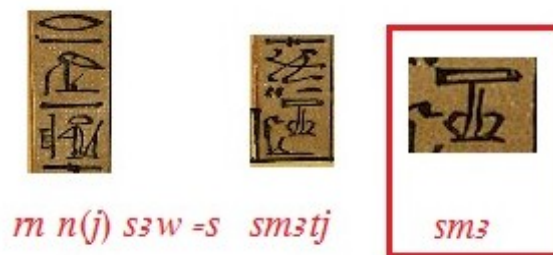


Both deal with “entrances”. Those of the upper register look like “doors”; whereas those of the lower register look more like niches or shrines. Let's have a closer look at them, starting from the upper register, which shows seven doors. Each one has three protective figures: a door-keeper, a guardian and a herald, whose names are told in advance, probably indicating that Ani knows them. Then Ani asserts his qualities as servant of Osiris, as one who fights for his lord. Eventually he asks and is granted the entry permit.

In the lower register there are ten “enclosures”. But in this case Ani is expressly requested to describe them and to say the name of their unique guardian. What is to be remarked is that the enclosures have all feminine traits, which are either protective and merciful (most of them), or frightening and destructing. In fact the guardians hold either a besom (which can be a magic wand, a cleansing tool, a symbol of prosperity such as a bundle of ears of wheat) or a knife. The only figure who has both is the sixth one, who has indeed a very strange shape,



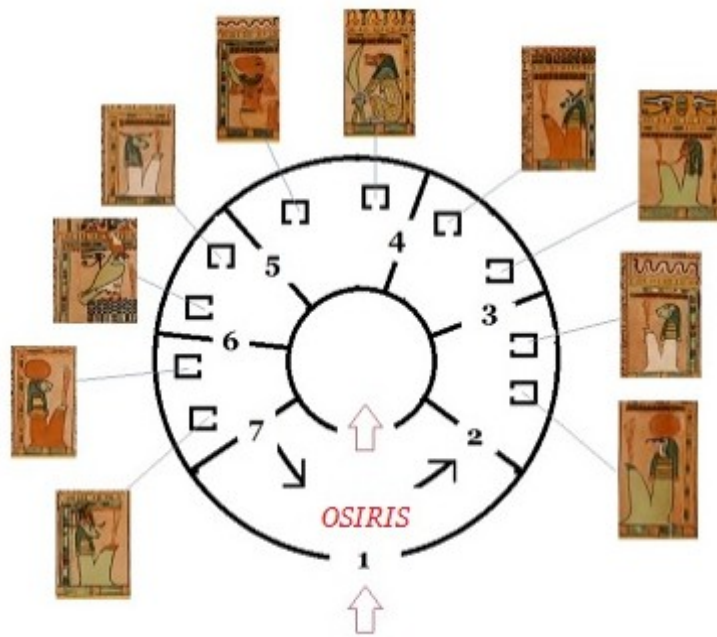
with a pronounced hydrocephalous or dolichocephalic head. Since his name is "*He who rejoins*" or "*the united one*", I have come to the conclusion that the elongated head may in fact be a reference to F36 glyph, namely “*smA*” (to unite, to join): the original name of the guardian being "*smAtj*".



Thus the seven doors have basically dynamic masculine traits, whereas the ten enclosures have feminine ones, like sacred wombs; their knowledge being the assimilation of their magic energies.

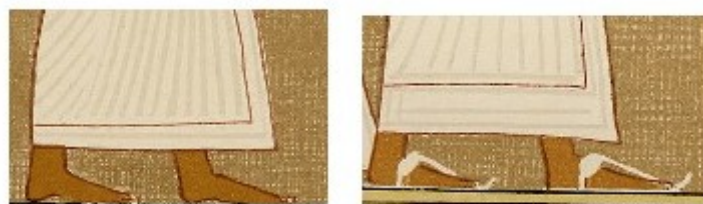
Now I think it's important to ask the reason behind the synchronic display of the different entrances. Is there a logic that ties together the seven doors and the ten shrines?

In fact doors #1 and #7 have a lot of similarities, both in images and words, centred specifically on the figure of Osiris. They form a sort of Ourobouros, an eternal circularity, of which the five doors [# 2-6] are links of a virtual chain. Thus the ten shrines (in groups of two) may be in relation to the five doors; each one ushering into a space that contains two shrines.



The seventh door - which ushers (after the circular course) into the Osirian space of the first door - marks in fact the beginning of a new scene, the entrance in a new psychic space, at a deeper level.

At the end of the scene the double vignettes of Ani and Tjutju, the upper and lower registers, are the same ones that opened it; and they form, in a certain sense, a sort of common space leading into the next existential experience. But a more sacred one, indicated by the white sandals of Ani, which he did not have in the other symmetrical vignette.



Even the texts of the upper and lower vignette show two different approaches: the upper one is dynamically oriented, aimed at the free unhindered entrance and exit from the *Realm of the Dead*; whereas the lower one is statically oriented, in its wish for a proper place in the *Field of Offerings*. And the texts related to the two *sem-priests* reflect the same orientation: the upper one pointing to Ani's blameless state and to his capability to move through sky, earth, underworld; the lower one more concerned with his place in the *Field of Offerings*. Each priest faces two different superimposed doors. The upper one, with symbols of Maat and Wadjet, pointing to moral values; the lower one showing the *Wadjet* eye, which can be both the eye of Ra and the eye of Horus; and Wepwawet (or Anubis), definitely pointing to *Rosetau* and its secret mysteries. Once again a reaffirmation of the two complementary states.



One further remark which should not be left unnoticed: the *sem*-priests have a lock of hair typical of young people. That is of course the normal feature of *sem*-priests, but in the preceding vignettes the *sem*-priests have the typical normal long hair of adult people.



So I am of the opinion that it was done on purpose, in order to show the quantum leap ready to take place, from childhood (new-born naive dead) to adulthood (knowledgeable dead), that is: towards becoming a member of the *Realm of the Dead*, coming into possession of the proper knowledge concerning the process of rebirth.

#### SCENE 4 [ PLATEs 12-14 : Chapter 18]

As a matter of fact the theological lesson of chapter 17 and the excursus through the doors and shrines of the previous scene may be considered an *exoteric* knowledge, concepts and ideas that may be rationally apprehended. That's the theoretic level. Initiation expects an effective assimilation of them. That presupposes the modification of the mental approach towards *esoteric* knowledge. As I have already pointed out quantum leaps are usually connected with the presence of Thoth, the god of wisdom, who acts as a magic aid. It's his numinous energy that Ani must absorb, as he did in Scene 1. But, since at this point, the descent into **Knowledge** will reach a deeper level, Thoth must be invoked in a more effective way.

There is a sequence of ten invocations. As a matter of fact eleven, but the last one has a different character from the others, forming a sort of epilogue. Each one is built according to a precise model, in which Thoth is asked to act on behalf of Ani as he had done on behalf of Osiris in specific circumstances and in specific places, which are then elucidated. Even in this case the sequence and the events follow a logical path which describes Osiris in his victorious process towards his kingly seat in *Rosetau*.

The invocations have definitely magical traits; and it is not a coincidence that the rubric at the end of the chapter clearly states that the person who recites them aloud shall not suffer any injuries in the *Realm of the Dead*. That may explain also why the first invocation is *headless*, that is, why it lacks the part that tells the event and the place where it happened. Many scholars are convinced that it is nothing more than a scribal mistake. I am convinced, instead, that it was a planned “decapitation”, just to make sure that the spell could not be executed by unauthorized subjects.

Something like the well known mutilated glyphs found in tombs and stelae. Only he who knows the first part can execute the program, the concealed “head” working as a sort of password.

### SCENE 5 [PLATE 15: Chapters 23, 24, 26, 30B, 61, 54, 29a, 27]

Now, having activated his Thothean forces, that is, having acquired the due qualification to proceed at a deeper level of experience, Ani is given possession of the magic powers with which he can face the trials he must go through in order to *come forth by day*.

Chapters 23, 24, 26 follow each other without graphic discontinuity, with no vertical strips that separate them: they form a unique logical block. There is a new opening of the mouth ritual [23] celebrated by mighty gods (Ptah, Thoth, Atum, Shu) who stand at Ani's side: a ritual symbolizing Ani's birth at a deeper level (a new state of conscience/knowledge). Then the conferral of magic powers [24] done by Khepri (symbolizing the power of rebirth, the dawning ability). Finally Ani is given the heart [26], namely sense (*HAti*) and intelligence (*ib*) that will keep under control his body and faculties, allowing him, as a *bA*, to go in and out of the *Realm of the Dead*.

As a matter of fact it is Ani himself who asserts the strength and goodness of his heart, in front of Anubis, whom he seems to present it to. That is probably an allusion to the *weighing of the heart*, that Anubis performs, as seen in the prologue. And chapter 30B is basically a repetition of what Ani said in that occasion, asking his heart not to be hostile towards him. The result is a sort of psychological enthusiasm, in the etymological sense of the word. The elated Ani compares himself to Atum in his first emerging from the primordial waters [61]; then to the sun god Ra who emerges from the cosmic egg of the Great Cackler [54]. Probably to Shu as well, in his breathing air. And he warns the *magnificent gods of Egypt* that he is going to come forth from his nest, as a youngling, and that they should beware him. That's what Jung calls *psychic inflation*, a danger always present in initiation rites, the risk being the annihilation of one's own personality with psychotic results. That's typical of the initiand who is in a new-born state, in our case underlined by the term "*nxn*" (young one).



*nhn pr-f r-tn*

(A very impressive description of this psychological attitude is found in the "*cannibal hymn*" of Wnjs's pyramid. ) This aggressive theme is repeated, in very clear terms, in chapter 29a as well; where the vignette shows Ani holding the staff symbolizing power and authority.

The next vignette and concomitant chapter [27] leads indeed to multiple interpretations.



It may be the “elated heart” of the enthusiastic Ani; his arrogance (*aA-jb, qA-jb*), thus an image of his psychic inflation. But his respectful attitude towards the four seated gods (probably the overseers of the four cardinal points), may be an act of submission; that is Ani's awareness of the perils of his megalomania, which needs to be controlled by superior forces. In fact the big heart is resting on a divine standard, with a papyrus scroll under it; and there is a textual reference to the heart of “*one who is great of names*” and who acts as Ani's protector; the big heart being thus his concrete manifestation. In other words this chapter marks the conclusion of the ritual ceremony of the conferral of the magic means through which Ani may proceed with his journey.

#### SCENE 6 [ PLATE 16: chapters 58, 59, 44, 45, 46, 50, 93, 43 ]

Having acquired magic means - which are not common “instruments”, but the awareness of his own divine potentialities - Ani has to face the first real obstacle. The entrance of the new existential space is guarded by a warden who asks him who he is, where he comes from, who is his companion. The identity of this warden is somewhat obscure. The vignette shows Ani and Tjutju immersed in a river, in front of a group of palm/date trees: a big one, with fruits hanging from its branches; and two smaller ones. I read it as a mother image, a fruitful mother, whom Ani asks to “open up”; namely to let him emerge from her womb into the new psychic space. Asking her to feed him.

Something shown in the next vignette, where the mother is Nut/Hathor, within a sycamore tree, offering Ani water (or milk) and fruits, nurturing him. The titles of chapters 58 and 59 are in fact exactly the same, aimed at breathing air and having power over water: images of birth and “*coming forth*”. (Atum/Ra emerging from the primordial waters. Or Nefertum, the fragrant lotus, half in the water, half in the air). But whereas chapter 58 shows what could be seen as the *labouring phase* (Tjutju acting as a sort of midwife and Ani saying the names of the components of the sacred barque on which he wishes to embark); chapter 59 displays Ani within the protective shield of his mother's. The lady in the sycamore tree can be seen as a mixed image of Nut and Hathor, both motherly figures, celestial and earthly (who will reappear, under

different guises, in the final scene).

The remaining chapters of this scene apparently are apotropaic spells aimed at preventing Ani's destruction (second death, decaying, annihilation, slaughtering). But on a closer look the central theme may be seen as the psychological elaboration of the process of conception, inner development and regeneration through a "grain-oriented" general metaphor.

First [44] we see Ani, solemnly seated, contemplating a table where ears of corns have been placed. The text talks about a cavern (metaphorically: the furrow in which the seed is buried); about the energy the seed gathers inside the earth (development of the seed); of the divine aid helping the seed to traverse the underground, pierce it and emerge in the air (blossom); lastly about the fluttering ear of corn, as if like a speaking tongue. In other terms, Ani is experiencing, face to face, in front of the ears of corn, the phenomenology of resurrection. Which prevents decaying [45] and favours the cycle of rejuvenation [46]. Chapter 50 - dealing mainly with images of neck and vertebrae, with an allusion to the ear of corn firmly standing on its stem - is once again a metaphor of Ani's reached solidity, an expression of his built-in divine state, which he is gradually drawing out of himself.

Of course, in his progress, Ani must have the consent of the gods who could manifest hostility towards him. In chapter 93 the vignette shows Ani fronting three gods. Ani's attitude could be seen either respectful, in prayer; or aggressive, holding back the gods. Although not expressly stated, I wouldn't exclude that the three gods signify the manifestation of the sun's triple aspect: Khepri, Ra, Atum; mentioned, each of them, in the text. And it is Khepri, according to my (highly questionable) textual interpretation, who allows Ani the permit of passage. He may be the double-horned (scarab claws) executioner of the Feast of the Rebels (the slaughtering of evil subjects). Letting him pass means giving him the right of dawning, namely of *coming forth by day*.

The last chapter of the scene [43] marks Ani's psychological integration of the Osirian figure. The vignette is indeed interesting.



Ani is displayed twice. As an adult, standing on the ground, with a papyrus scroll in one hand (like a *lector*-priest) and waving goodbye to a very young Ani, alone, in a

boat sailing on the same water that was shown in the two vignettes at the beginning of this scene. But that now is *celestial* water. The young Ani has a reversed head, as if looking backwards, perhaps in fear of the journey he has to go through by himself, without help. In Jungian terms it is the solitude and the anxious state of the divine child; the exact opposite of the neophyte's enthusiasm mentioned in scene 5. The text alludes to Ani's head, first cut off, then put back on to his neck. That's the new state of the initiand; his former state as a living being has been cut off by death; but the ritual means have made him a new being, who proceeds in a reverse direction, as a “*dead*” who is nonetheless alive, like Osiris.

#### SCENE 7 [PLATE 17 chapters 89, 91, 92 ]

This marks the beginning of Ani's *going forth* into the day. A movement which has been introduced by the previous vignette. The psychic agent appointed to carry out this task is the **bA**. Of course this is not the place to expand on this very complicated figure, but, in our context, chapter 89 makes it clear that the **bA** is hidden somewhere and that it should be brought to the recumbent Ani, as shown in the corresponding vignette. In fact the **bA** manifests itself at the time a person dies; nonetheless it may be considered immanent to the living being and should be activated at the moment of death, without delay, so as to allow the deceased to move about, without hindering (chapter 91), as shown in the vignette with the **bA** standing before the door.

Chapter 92 introduces another important psychic aspect: the *Shadow*, which goes together with the **bA** and which can be interpreted as a virtual image, Ani's avatar, which is the concrete manifestation of the living dead, under the **bA**'s control. In modern terms we might say that the Shadow is the application that the program (**bA**) puts into execution. The corresponding vignette shows clearly Ani (left) before the door; and Ani (right) as the Shadow, his avatar, who has crossed the threshold under the **bA**'s guide, who, with an extended feather does show him the direction he should take.

#### SCENE 8 [PLATE 18 chapters 74, 8, 2, 9, 132, 10, 15 ]

The central theme of this scene is Ani's *coming forth by day*, his emergence from the *Duat* to the Sunlight, in fact the main goal and the final stage of the *Book of the Dead*. Although the correspondence between the texts and the vignettes may be, in some places, somewhat problematical, nonetheless the basic meaning seems to be acceptably clear. There are in all five vignettes. The first four deal basically with nether-worldly figures.

(1) There's the *Henu*-barque of Sokar, alluding to the journey through the *Duat* and to the ritual procession of the *Khoiak* feast, symbolizing resurrection (the solarization of Sokar-Osiris).



(2) Then Ani, who stands before the emblem of the Amentj, holding the staff of the Great Ones so as to make a display of his authority over the *Realm of the Dead*.

(3) Then there's the figure of Ani in adoration of a great **bA** who stands on a pedestal which looks like *Rosetau*. Considering the crown on the ram's head we might see in him both the **bA** of Osiris (*atef* crown) and the **bA** of Ra (the solar disk); that is, the two complementary aspects of existence. Their psychological integration requires both the journey through the *Duat* and the *coming forth by day*.

(4) Then we see Ani, once again holding the symbols of power, before what we may infer from the text is his house on earth; and next to it Ani spearing a huge serpent which is the symbol of hostile forces. The figurative sequence of this vignette seems to follow the model of a circumstantial sentence. Ani looks at his house, after having speared the snake. Something like: "*mAA.f pr.f tbtb.n.f aApp*"

In conclusion: first the vision of the gods (1, 2); then a nostalgic look at his former abode (3, 4).

The fifth and last vignette



shows clearly Ani adoring Ra in his sailing through the *Field of Reeds* (the bundle on the prow of the boat, on which there is a figure of a child,



as an emblem of rebirth: probably referring to *Hrw-pA-Xrd* / *Harpocrates*, the young Horus). In fact this marks the end of Ani's journey, who has thus shown that he is qualified to go in and out of the *Realm of the Dead*. The text is an hymn of joy and jubilation, which, in a certain sense, manifests Ani's elation for the success of his enterprise.

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AT THIS POINT we are in the middle of the scroll; and I am convinced that it is not a coincidence. According to my interpretation this marks the beginning of the second part of the voyage, at a deeper level, the one leading towards knowledge of divine mysteries. Having mastered his application (going in and out of the *Realm of the Dead*), now Ani, as a hacker, must get to the core of the source code (the divine structure). Not theological knowledge, though; but a face to face encounter with the gods. Plates 19, 20, 21 being evident examples of it: once again two hymns in adoration of Osiris and Ra. But in reverse order from that of the prologue, in which Ra preceded Osiris.

### SCENE 9 [PLATE 19 : hymn to Osiris ]

The vignette is built symmetrically: Ani and Tjutju facing Osiris and Isis, as if mirroring each other. This hymn is a little bit different, in images and themes, from the one of the prologue; which underscored what we may call the static traits of the god, whereas in this hymn are highlighted, more specifically, his dynamic traits. The use of litanies in the second part of the hymn is instrumental in giving the scene a more enhanced sacral aura. The implicit meaning being the knowledge of Osirian mysteries.

### SCENE 10 [PLATES 20-22 : hymn to Ra, chapter 133, 134 ]

Here we have instead an opposite perspective. Whereas in the prologue the hymn to Ra underlined his practical traits, his capability to defeat hostile forces; in this hymn are shown, more specifically, the beauties and greatness of his divine qualities. As a matter of fact the function of Ra in this second voyage is that of a guide who sheds the light of “*divine*” knowledge into the darkness of “*earthly*” ignorance. Whereas in the individual coming forth by day of the first voyage Ani looked at the solar barque from an external point of view; in this second voyage he is going to integrate psychically Ra's constitutive traits; in other words he is going to attain the state of blessedness, becoming an *Akh*.

What is particularly interesting from a visual perspective is the fact that plate 20 has no vignettes. The scroll keeps rolling for many columns without images. Only at about the end of the hymn (first half of plate 21) the scribe placed a vignette which is almost a reproduction of the last one of plate 18, with the significant difference that here Ani is inside the boat; and on the mat/field-of-reeds on the prow, instead of the young Horus/Harpocrates, there is a bird which may be Horus in his adult shape, thus a definite quantum leap.



The absence of the vignette in the course of the chapter may be also a stylistic device aimed at creating an emotional suspense, while waiting for Ra's positive response; which is expressed in the textual passage, starting with a rubric, placed exactly under Ra's vignette.



The next two chapters are closely related with the hymn, dealing in particular with the solar boat and its graphic manifestation on the papyrus. They both have a definite magic character, underlined by the rubrics at the end of the texts. The first one [133] is centred around the solar investiture Ani receives by the gods attending on Ra; with technical specifications concerning the graphic rendering of the boat, as drawn in the vignette; putting special attention to the secrecy of its figurative procedure. The other chapter [134] deals specifically with Horus, defender of the solar boat against hostile forces represented by the followers of Seth.

As a matter of fact the solar investiture may be seen as the preliminary step towards *akhization*, which can be accomplished only at the end of the second voyage. As mentioned above this new journey takes place at a deeper level of conscience that can be reached by the means of what we might call a “compensation chamber”, already met up with in the fourth scene: the invocations of Thoth.

## SCENE 11 [ PLATEs 23-24 : chapter 18 ]

Now, the text is the exact copy of that of scene 4, having the same mutilated beginning. Disagreeing with the common opinion that considers it a scribal mistake, I am convinced that the scribe did that on purpose, just like, on purpose, he mutilated the spell. If we compare the vignettes we see that in scene 4 the chapter was introduced (or performed) by two *sem*-priests; whereas in this scene there is Ani, by himself, kneeling in front of a row of divine figures (more or less the same who are present in scene 4, although, in that case, they are disposed in vertical groups). I am therefore of the opinion that the peer-to-peer exactness of the text is a way to show how Ani has learned *by heart* the magic spell that the *sem*-priests taught him and that he can thus put it into effect on his own; reaching, on his own, the deeper level.

There is in fact something to be remarked. The vignette, at the left side, shows what in other circumstances would be one of the two wings of a door (as in the *Rosetau* figure of plate 8, in the negative confession of plate 31, in the sacred vision of plate 35). But in our case there is only this wing, which is kind of strange. I am of the opinion that it is not the wing of a door, but a ladder, pointing thus to the “descent” into a deeper level of conscience (or an “ascent” if we prefer the image of a “higher level” of knowledge). The function of this chapter being, once again, a further and more profound acquisition of *Thothean* traits, specifically related to Magic and Knowledge.



## SCENE 12 [PLATE 24 : chapter 124 ]

So Ani, asserting his divine attributes, expects that the gods who act on behalf of Osiris (his staff, his Council) confer him, officially, the status of blessed spirit. And to show how qualified he is, he begins to perform a series of divine transformations.

## SCENE 13 [ Plates 25-28: chapters 86, 77, 78, 87, 88, 82, 85, 83, 84, 81a, 80 ]

Now, this is a very peculiar and significant scene, with a definite shamanistic character. Ani shows his ability to physically integrate multiple divine energies, so as to use them in specific contexts. An elucidation of this scene and of the relation between text and vignettes would need dozens of pages. For the moment, suffice it to



say that this is what may indeed be defined a phenomenological experience, the “somatization” of psychic structures, the last one being that of the god who bestows light and darkness, namely Ra. This is in fact the parallel of the *conferral of magic powers* shown above in scene 5, but on a deeper level. (Hackers would call it *bare metal*.) A concrete display of psychic mutation. At this stage of his process of transformation Ani is in a position to be taught, by the original source, the mysteries of *Existence*.

#### SCENE 14 [ PLATE 29 : chapter 175 ]

There is only one vignette in this chapter, showing Ani and Tjutju in adoration before Thoth, the god of wisdom and of sacred knowledge. In the first part Ani declares his reliability. He is not one who divulges, and consequently abases, esoteric teachings. As for the rest of the chapter I reconstruct it as a dramatic representation of the primal encounter between Atum, the Creator, and Osiris, who has just entered the *Realm of the Dead* and asks the father of the gods to make him acquainted with that new level of existence. In a certain sense Ani is being taught, as spectator of the *original scene*, the roots of the ultimate things. And from now on there shall be no more theoretical teachings, but only ritualistic behaviour.

#### SCENE 15 [ PLATE 30 : chapter 125a ]

The vignette of this scene is very similar to the one of plate 19.



I shall not go into details, but the most remarkable difference is Osiris's attire. The white linen of Plate 19 has morphed into what might be viewed as snake-scales, with possible allusions to renewal (the moulting of the skin). In front of him, on a lotus plant (symbol of emerging life) stand the four sons of Horus (wardens of Osiris's viscerae - the descendants who preserve the ancestor's continuity and inner heritage). The previous vignette was basically appearance, an empty container. Here we get to the core of the mytheme. To underscore this view: in Plate 19 Ani has a sort of crown on his brow, a richly decorated bandage; here instead he has only a sort of halo.





Now the vignette represents the basic theme of this chapter: Ani's desire to contemplate Osiris in his archetypical image (in his “true name”, as the text says), so as to get imbued of his qualities, so as to transform himself, phenomenologically, into that divine figure. To carry out that transformation he has to go through a very extensive examination in the *Hall of the Two Truths*. But, in order to be granted entry, he has to satisfy some preliminary conditions. He must have a warrantor; and he must answer some questions. The warrantor is Anubis, who states Ani's qualification in front of the blessed spirits who preside the Hall. As for the questions, they concern the door that leads into the Hall; and Ani makes clear that he knows its name and the name of its hinges (its structural character and its inner working).

Having passed successfully the test Ani can make his entrance into the Hall. What is particularly interesting is the fact that, although the texts refers to Anubis and to the judging Councillors, they do not appear in this scene. But they are definitely present, as shown in the next grandiose vignette. Once again that may be a rhetorical device in order to create an enhanced psychological suspense. The closed door before which Ani is standing, what shall it reveal as soon as it opens its wings? Let's picture, for a moment, the gradual and solemn scrolling of the papyrus roll, showing the sequence of gods, as if proceeding along a peristyle hall.

### SCENE 16 [PLATE 31 : chapter 125 ]

This is one of the most renowned chapters of the *Book of the Dead*, commonly referred to as “*the negative confession*”. There are 42 judges, each one supervisor of the 42 faults which the deceased must declare to be innocent of . The position of this scene at this specific point of the process might seem indeed strange. If the intention is to verify whether the deceased has the expected moral qualities, how comes that he had to go, beforehand, through a long and difficult series of trials? The moral stature should be a prerequisite. In fact, in our case, the *weighing of the heart*, which corresponds to the judgement, has already taken place at the very beginning, in our prologue.

Of course there could be another interpretation: no matter how expert the deceased is in questions concerning the *Realm of the Dead*; no matter how clever he is to go in and out of it; if he is not morally fit he shall nonetheless be rejected.

I must say that I am not convinced at all. That would be indeed a too sophisticated attitude, alien to the mood of our rite of passage. The declaration of innocence - that would be no more than a formality for Ani, since he has been judged morally qualified at the beginning - is in fact a way to manifest to the gods his

knowledge of the laws which direct the true and righteous course of existence, the laws of *mAat*. Whereas each god has power over his assigned jurisdiction, Ani comprehends the totality of the moral space, which he does integrate in his own personality. He is like a federal agent who can traverse each state and substitute each local authority. Ani in fact does know the name of each god (thus having power on him) and each region that that god comes from. Perhaps it's not a coincidence that 42 is also the number of Egypt's nomes, underscoring the image of totality.

On the right side of the main vignette there are four superimposed smaller drawings which form a sort of résumé of the events that have taken place up to that moment:

- (1) the two Truths : Ani's moral righteousness;
- (2) adoration of Osiris: Ani's aim of resurrection;
- (3) weighing of the heart : Ani's knowledge of the moral laws;
- (4) Thoth : Ani's official *nihil obstat*.

For what concerns the third vignette (the weighing of the heart) I'd say that it is not a repetition of the scene shown at the beginning, but a different modality of it. Whereas in the first weighing Ani was just the passive subject of the judgement, here (not shown, from an external point), he contemplates the working of the scale; an instrument that now he himself could use to give judgements.

#### SCENE 17 [PLATE 32 : chapters 62, 155, 156, 29c, 166 ]

Thoth's *nihil obstat* at the end of the negative confession works as an introduction to the official divine investiture of Ani. In this chapter each part of his body is compared to a specific trait of various gods, which is assimilated through sympathetic magic. The magic character of the ceremony is underscored by the fact that there is a rubric describing the right procedure to draw the images related to that sacred ritual.

To be honest, the vignette superimposed to the rubric seems to have no relation with the text. It shows the *Lake of Fire* guarded by four apes, at the four cardinal points.



But, on a closer look, this may be interpreted as the final phase of Ani's divinization, his passing through the space that divides the earthly creatures from the godly ones. A text would be not only superfluous, but misleading. A psychic experience cannot be described.

At this point Ani is in a position to contemplate, in their essence, four archetypal images which explain symbolically the basic course of Existence, its structural roots:



- (1) the *Djed* pillar (Osiris): male energy;
- (2) the *Tjt* figure (Isis) : female energy;
- (3) the *Heart* : life's dynamism, outcome of male and female union;
- (4) the *Head-rest* (sleep/awakening): experience of death and resurrection.

#### SCENE 18 [PLATE 33 : chapter 151 ]

This may be considered the conclusion of the divine investiture. There are fifteen vignettes disposed in a 5 x 3 matrix. The central vignette shows Anubis working on Osiris's mummy, and it may be seen as the core of the new personality, a sort of Jungian *Self*, protected by the remaining 14 images. Fourteen, just like the fourteen pieces of Osiris's dismembered body.

In a certain sense it is the symbol of the putting together of all the sparse data Ani has gathered in the course of his rite of passage. The reassembling of his *body of knowledge*. His *Self* guarded and protected by the *armour* of his magic aids. An established and solid totality.

#### SCENE 19 [PLATE 34 : chapter 110 ]

In this powerful shape Ani can now make his entrance in the *Field of Offerings*, qualified to be conferred the status of *Akh*. A detailed account of the symbolic meaning of the richly decorated vignette is of course out of question. Suffice it to give it a cursory look, taking note of the salient points of the four superimposed registers, anticipating the fact that the apparent ocean which surrounds the vignette hints at the vault of the sky; as stated by the text in various passages.



(1)

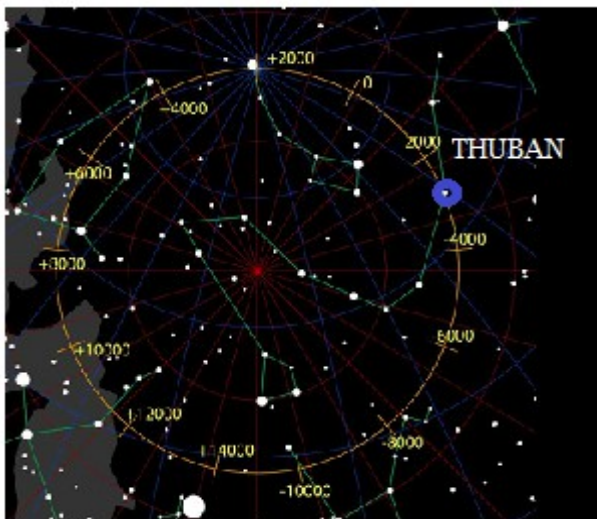
This is a brief résumé of Ani's rite of passage, with Thoth writing down the account of Ani's transformation from the status of a child (with a side-lock) to that of an adult who offers a vessel (his essence?) to three primeval gods. They allow him to sail through the *Field of Reeds* towards the *Field of Offerings* (shown in the boat's prow), where Horus gives breath, vivifies “*he-who-was-a-mummy*” (Osiris/Ani).

(2)

Here we see how Ani, working the field, gathers an abundance of grain, food of the blessed spirits, whom he governs; and can thus make them beneficial for those who live on earth, alluded by the three ovals.

(3)

Ani ploughing the *Field of Reeds* may seem rather strange. It would have been more proper if he were placed at the beginning of the previous register, where he is shown harvesting and threshing the grain. So then the ploughing must have a different meaning. It has not much to do with “earthly” matters. The juxtaposed text describes in fact a river whose length and width cannot be told, with no fish or serpents in it. That's a riddle pointing to a stellar path. The allusion to the “*door of the White Hippopotamus (female)*” may in fact refer to *Taweret* (whom we will meet on the final plate), the goddess of maternity and childbirth; who, from an astronomical perspective, was linked to the Draco constellation:

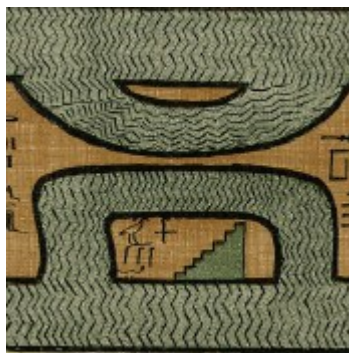




a long series of stars of which the antepenultimate was alpha Draco, *Thuban*, the polar star of ancient Egypt (from the 4th to 2nd millennium BC). Thus everything seems to point to a stellar status, that of a luminous *Akh*, who has his visible and effective place in the firmament. In a certain sense: the celestial polarity of the **bA** of the underworld. *The Field of Reeds* is thus the celestial course leading to the *Field of Offerings*, the place of spiritual nourishment and of perfect peace.

(4)

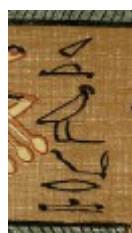
The last register has a definite theosophical aspect, the text stating clearly that it is the place of the blessed spirits, who are the only ones allowed to gather its abundant products. The drawing shows images of the primordial flood, that lets emerge a land (upper curve) from which a mound arises (lower rectangle, primeval hill).



The same mound which appears on the boat placed over a huge wave (the Nile's inundation);



a boat inside which resides Osiris Unnefer; a boat which can travel backwards into dissolution (primordial waters); or towards the holy land (Egypt) bringing it the nourishment (*df3*) of the beneficial effective *Akhs*. There is an evident pun on the glyph which refers to the land. Namely: *tA-dSr* (red land, with a possible allusion to the arid land before the inundation); and *tA-Dsr* (holy land).





Although the "w" could point to "*tA dw Dsr*" (*dw* infinitive of *wdi / d* : give, place, put), with possible multiple meanings, open to debate.

At any rate the general meaning of it seems to point to the beneficial aspect of the blessed spirits for those who live on earth. The text states clearly "*doing that which is done on earth*".



I interpret this not as a nostalgic imitation of earthly manners, but as a ritual of sympathetic magic. The actions of the celestial *Akh* exercise a positive influence on the corresponding earthly matters.

**SCENE 20 [PLATE 35 : chapter 148 ]**

The previous scene was just a vision of Ani's fate. Now he must be appointed officially as a blessed spirit. Once again the vignette displays a secret space; the wings at both sides of the door being an evident proof of it. This seems indeed the real *sancta sanctorum*, where Ani can look, face to face, at Ra in his solar essence. There is no shrine that divides them. Ani and Ra are facing each other.



Ani asks expressly to be promoted *Akh*, and the last line may be seen as Ra's official consent.



*zht = f   m jmnt   nfrt*

And then he renders homage to the seven cows (representing the seven Hathors who decree the fate of a baby at the moment of birth) and to the gods of the four cardinal points (represented by four rudders). They may allude to space and eternity. The space of the cardinal points, the eternity of time: the lunar cycle of four times seven days, which the bull of the sky keeps fertilizing.

### **EPILOGUE** [PLATEs 36, 37 : chapter 185 ]

Ani has already attained his divine status. In this last scene he presents his homage to the double figure of Sokar-Osiris as if to show him his successful accomplishment.

Ogden Goelet has brilliantly remarked that the shrine inside which the god stands shows what seems to be a curtain. Thus Ani may look only at the face of the god, whereas the god's body is hidden from his view.



The white body of Osiris may hint at the fact that its empty space must be filled with the initiand's worked out contents. There is an interesting similarity with the last drawing of Plate 8 (in the long scene describing the funeral cortège) where Ani's head is shown emerging from the mound of Abydos, whereas the rest of his body is invisible inside the tomb/sarcophagus, with silhouetted images of the four canopic jars, containing his interiors; and the four sons of Horus (two on the left and two on the right) fronting him.



Just like, in our scene, Ani & Tjutju stand on the left and Taweret and Hathor on the right of the god, as if in a protective embrace.



The text refers to *Unnefer* in the middle of Abydos. The determinative of the god shows the unusual glyph of a god with the *atef* crown, like that of Sokar-Osiris.



In Plate 8 Ani's head is exactly in the middle of the mound of Abydos; and the four columns of text under the mound describe the fight of Horus and Seth, their reciprocal injuries and how Thoth restored Horus's injured eye. As if to state that Ani, as Horus, overcomes the hostile forces that would prevent his transformation, through the help of Thoth. And in this parallel scene Ani manifests the positive result of his efforts. The female figures who usually accompany Osiris (Isis and Nephtys), in this case have the shape of Taweret and Hathor, both mother images in their celestial (Taweret) and earthly (Hathor) aspects.

What one should not leave unnoticed is the *whiteness* present in all the five figures: the clothes of Ani and Tjutju; the white body and the white crown of Osiris; the pedestal on which Taweret stands; the whiteness of the tomb under Hathor/sacred cow. A symbolic, luminous purity: the radiance of an *Akh*.

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Now, before overthrowing my charms, let us resume together the milestones of our trip.

PROLOGUE : hymns to Ra, Osiris and moral pre-examination

**THE LITTLE MYSTERIES** : first half of the scroll

- 1) Funeral : social rite: departure from the realm of the living
- 2) Theological examination
- 3) Topographical examination
- 4) Mining of Thothean energies : **first level of descent**
- 5) Conferral of magic powers
- 6) Awareness of the of the process of resurrection
- 7) Acquisition of the bA
- 8) Coming forth by day and hymn to Ra

**THE GREAT MYSTERIES**: second half of the scroll

- 9) Hymn to Osiris
- 10) Hymn to Ra
- 11) Mining of Thothean energies : **second level of descent**
- 12) Declaration of fitness
- 13) Shamanistic transformations into several forms
- 14) Vision of the ultimate things
- 15) Preliminary examination before entering the Hall of the Two Truths
- 16) The negative confession
- 17) Official divine investiture
- 18) Establishment of the new personality
- 19) Admission in the Field of Offerings
- 20) Direct vision of Ra : conferral of the status of Akh

EPILOGUE : Integration of the Osirian status.

*And deeper than did ever plummet sound*

*I'll drown my book*