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Abstract:
Upon death, the Egyptian was the object of a series of ceremonies performed by priestly officiants. The stages of the procedure largely correspond to the practical steps taken following death. These were: taking the corpse to a place of embalming, the embalming itself, taking the corpse to the tomb, and interment. The words and actions of the rituals superimposed upon these practical matters had a clear metaphysical purpose: funerary rituals were intended to elevate the mortal to the superhuman.

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الطقوس الجنائزية (العصر الفرعوني)

Harold M. Hays

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FUNERARY RITUALS (PHARAONIC PERIOD)
الطقوس الجنائزية (العصر الفرعوني)

Harold M. Hays

Bestattungsrituale (pharaonisches Ägypten)
Rituels funéraires (Égypte pharaonique)

Upon death, the Egyptian was the object of a series of ceremonies performed by priestly officiants. The stages of the procedure largely correspond to the practical steps taken following death. These were: taking the corpse to a place of embalming, the embalming itself, taking the corpse to the tomb, and interment. The words and actions of the rituals superimposed upon these practical matters had a clear metaphysical purpose: funerary rituals were intended to elevate the mortal to the superhuman.

قام الكهنة المصريون بمجموعة من المناسك عند وفاة اي انسان، وتكونت هذه المناسك من عدة خطوات مماثلة للخطوات العملية التي تقام بعد الوفاة. وهذه الخطوات هي: نقل الجسد إلى مكان التحنيط ثم التحنيط نفسه، يليه أخذ المتوفي إلى المقبرة وأخيراً دفن المتوفى فى المقبرة. ان كلمات وأفعال هذه المناسك التي تصاحب هذه الخطوات العملية كان لها غرض خارق للطبيعة (ميتافيزيقي)، حيث أن الطقوس الجنائزية كانت بغرض رفع المتوفي من مقام بشري إلى مقام إنسان خارق.

Upon death, the Egyptian was the object of a series of ceremonies performed by priestly officiants. The stages of the procedure largely correspond to the practical steps taken following death. These were: taking the corpse to a place of embalming, the embalming itself, taking the corpse to the tomb, and interment. The words and actions of the rituals superimposed upon these practical matters had a clear metaphysical purpose: funerary rituals were intended to elevate the mortal to the superhuman. Where best preserved and represented, the rituals make him out to be a god, specifically Osiris, and also to be an *akh* (an exalted spirit; see Assmann 1989: 136 - 137), and one "true of voice" (*mꜣʿ ḫrw*).

As to the social differentiation of funerary rituals, it is commonplace in Egyptological literature to mention a "democratization of the afterlife." This is a historical model which supposes that in the earliest times, the Egyptians believed that a beatified afterlife was accessible exclusively to royalty, and only in later periods to non-royal persons (Allen 2006; Assmann 2002a: 89; Breasted 1912: 272, 1933: 223 - 249; Kees 1926: 169 - 178; Moret 1922; Sethe 1931: 522; Sørensen 1989). But the premise of this model rests merely in an absence of Pyramid Texts in the tombs of elites in the Old Kingdom. Recent research has put forth evidence showing the model to be deeply flawed (see Mathieu 2004: 256 - 258; Nordh 1996: 168 - 172; Silverman 1996: 140 - 141; Willems 2008; see also Leclant and Labrouse 2006: 107 and fig. 4; and Baines and Lacovara 2002: 10). Since the Old Kingdom, the elite aspired to ascend to the great god after death and had the knowledge to get himself there; moreover, throughout the Pharaonic period and beyond, both elite and king used the same stereotyped scenes in

pictorial representations of mortuary service. In short, there is, after all, a fundamental commonality in belief and in practice, evident from even before the first attestation of the Pyramid Texts. Nevertheless, it must be borne in mind that the theoretical authorization for funerary rituals in all cases ultimately stemmed from the king and the gods (Assmann 1986a: col. 663; Hays fc.). Finally, note should be taken of the poverty of evidence outside that of the elite and royal strata (Baines and Lacovara 2002).

Since death was one of the most powerful generators of Egyptian culture (Assmann 2000: 14 - 18; cf. Metcalf and Huntington 1991: 52), there is a wide variety of evidence related to Egyptian funerary rituals: textual, pictorial material, and architectonic. As ritual consists principally of speech and action, the first two kinds of sources are by far the most informative in terms of what was said and done during the rites. Therefore, the present entry relies mainly upon them.

Painted and inscribed pictorial scenes of rites from funerary rituals appear in all periods of Pharaonic Egypt, from the Old through New Kingdoms. They occur principally in the cultic areas of tombs prepared for non-royal elite males, and such scenes usually cluster around cultic foci, above all, the false door. They do appear elsewhere, notably in certain vignettes in *Books of the Dead* beginning in the New Kingdom. Also, there are scenes showing women as the principal object of precisely the same rites as for men (e.g., at Davies, Norman de Garis 1920: pl. 21, and Budge 1912: pl. 2). As one might expect, the data from a timespan of about a millennium and a half is not homogeneous: the activities represented differ in smaller and greater degrees over time (Altenmüller 1975b; Barthelmess 1992; Settgast 1963), with such differences presumably reflecting changes in practice. Also, since transport was involved, local topography must necessarily have had influence. Running counter to the impulse to show contemporaneous and local practice were impulses of tradition and idealization (cf. Settgast 1963).

Many texts giving information about funerary rituals are directly associated with the pictorial scenes. In the New Kingdom Theban tomb of Rekhmire and elsewhere, the longer hieroglyphic recitations embedded within the scenes and abutting them are often verbatim parallels of texts that were already ancient. The parallels are from the mortuary literature, a principally textual tradition beginning in the Old Kingdom with the Pyramid Texts of kings and queens, and transmitted thereafter in the Middle Kingdom Coffin Texts and the New Kingdom *Book of the Dead*. To be precise, the parallels are almost all from one of two categories of mortuary literature, namely, texts of a sacerdotal kind, i.e., those performed by priests for the deceased (Hays 2009). In contrast to the pictorial scenes, in most cases the mortuary literature occurs in the inaccessible portions of tombs - the sealed, below-ground burial chambers. But in Rekhmire's cultic space and elsewhere, numerous Pyramid and Coffin Texts are placed alongside or are embedded within the scenes (Assmann 2005b: 59 - 146; Hays and Schenck 2007). Even so, the later, largely pictorial, material only tangentially overlaps the ancient textual material. For this and other reasons, Egyptological reconstructions of an entire funeral ritual from one or several pyramids' texts are speculative and widely divergent from one another (see Barta 1981: 39 - 49).

Though details vary between different chronological periods, seven major complexes of funerary rituals may be discerned (see below). The following discussion gives a general account of the sorts of rituals performed for the dead, from death through interment and afterwards. It takes scenes from the first part of the 18th Dynasty as a point of reference, in particular those from the tomb of Rekhmire (see fig. 1).

A. Procession to the Necropolis
   dw/rḏjt r tꜣ, zmꜣ tꜣ "landing"
B. Procession to the Embalming Place
   prt ḥr tꜣ "debarking"
   spr r zḥ-nṯr "approaching the God's Booth"

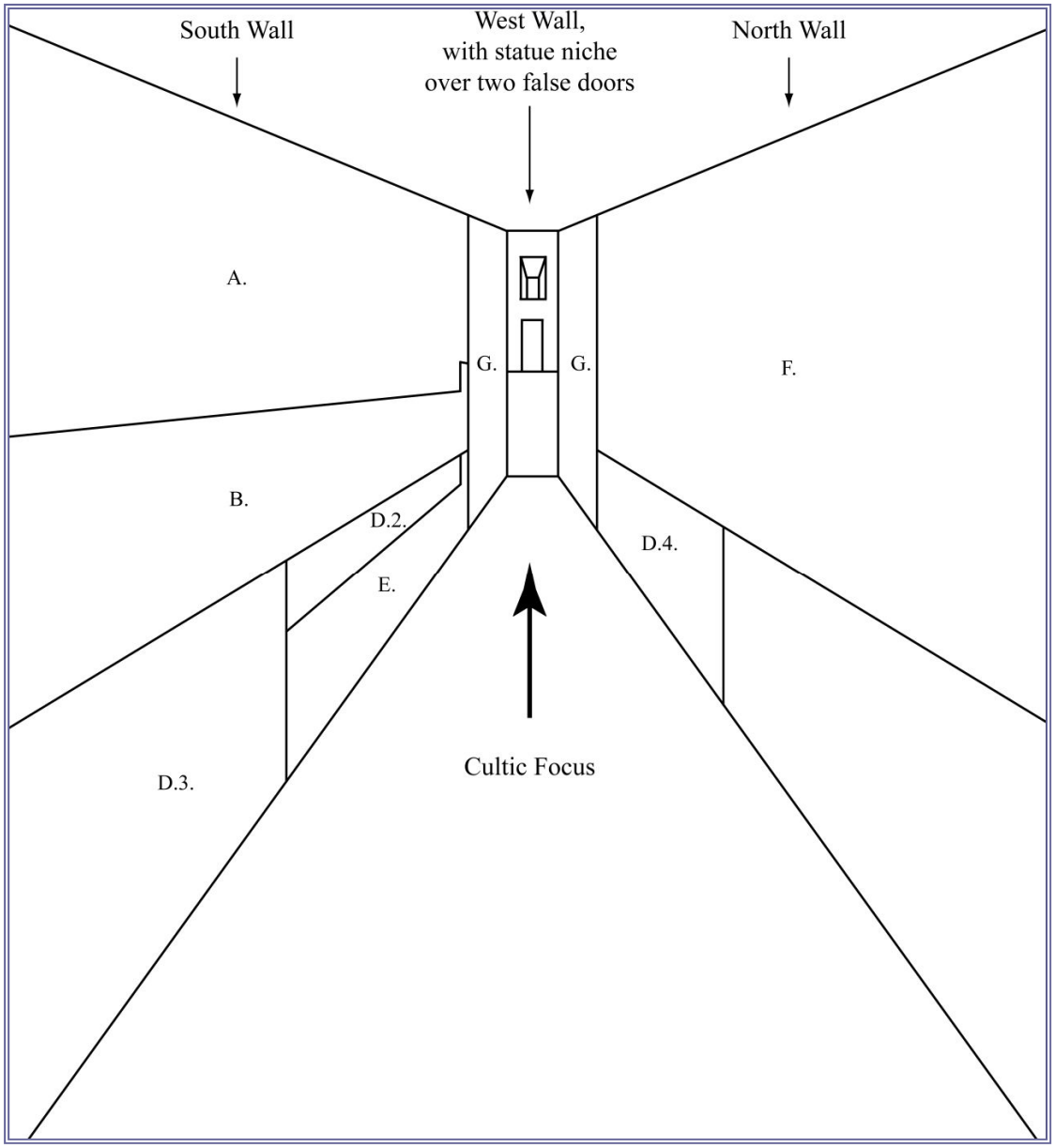

Figure 1. Plan of Funerary Ritual Representations in Tomb of Rekhmire, Theban Tomb 100, New Kingdom.

C. Embalming and Mummification
 wt "wrapping"
D. Post-Embalming Rituals
E. Procession to the Tomb
 jrt ḳrst nfrt "funeral"
F. Opening of the Mouth
 wpt rꜣ "opening of the mouth"
G. Mortuary Service
 prt-ḫrw "mortuary service"

Procession to the Necropolis

Upon death, the corpse was transported from the dwelling to the necropolis. The most important leg of the ceremonial transport was waterborne, corresponding to a transfer across the Nile from the east, the land of the living, to the west, the land of the dead. Usually the crafts are depicted as papyrus rafts, a traditional form (Jones 1995: 29), with the deceased riding shielded from view within

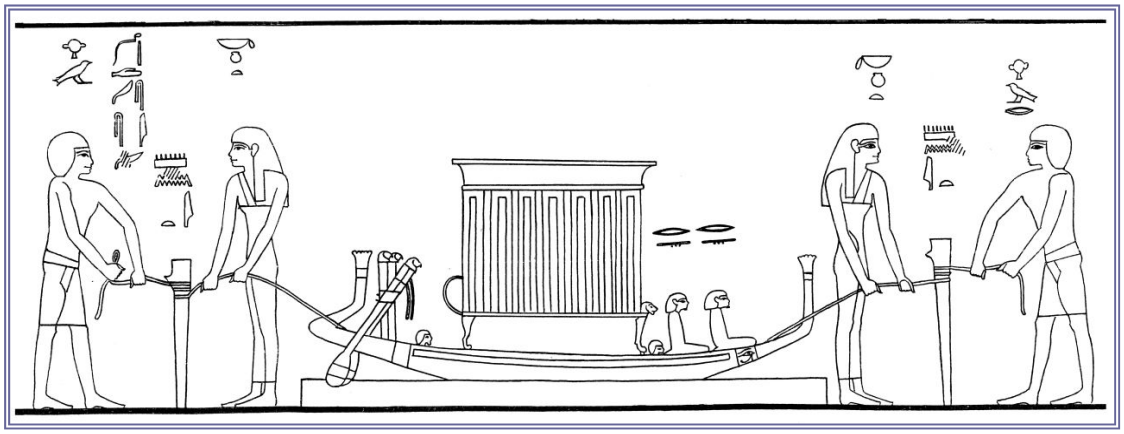

Figure 2. Scene from Procession to the Necropolis: The Deceased in Chest at the Mooring Posts. Theban Tomb 100, New Kingdom.

Figure 3. Scene from Procession to the Embalming Place: The Deceased in Chest Carried by Friends. Theban Tomb 100, New Kingdom.

a sarcophagus, or a vertical chest is shown, representing an enclosure for the deceased's statue. The weight of significance is placed upon the arrival at the west bank, where the gods of the netherworld are informed that the deceased has arrived *ḫpr m nṯr*, "transformed into a god" (Davies, Norman de Garis 1943: pl. 83, parallel to Pyr. 272b). The especially detailed scenes in the tomb of Rekhmire give the craft the same form as the Neshmet boat of the god Osiris, the boat which bears that god at his mysteries celebrated at the city Abydos (fig. 2; Assmann 2005a: 304). Actual crafts of this form, which is the same as that depicted for the sun-god Ra as he passes through the netherworld, were sometimes buried within mortuary complexes (Jones 1995: 15, fig. 3; Partridge 1996). Along with the landing, extensive royal offerings (*hetep di nesut*) are consecrated to the *ka* of the deceased, consisting of offerings from important gods. The sacerdotal recitations accompanying the actions already name the deceased as the god Osiris (Davies, Norman de Garis 1943: pl. 81, parallel to Pyr. 609a).

Priestly roles were gender specific in this and all of the rituals to follow. Two of the most important were a pair of women identified as mourners (*ḏrtj*), filling the roles of the goddesses Isis and Nephthys as they attend their dead brother, Osiris (Münster 1968: 23). Notably, one of these mourners participates in the sacrifice of a bull at the mooring, with such sacrifices occurring at

effectively each following stage of the funeral. The god embodied in the bull was undoubtedly Seth (Willems 1996: 97 note 343), slayer of Osiris. Among other officiants in these and subsequent rites were priests representing the gods Horus and Thoth, called the *sem*-priest and lector priest respectively.

Procession to the Embalming Place

Having arrived at the necropolis and taken command of the denizens of the necropolis, "the ones whose places are hidden" (Davies, Norman de Garis 1943: pl. 90, parallel to Pyr. 2023a), the deceased was borne toward the "god's booth" (*zḥ-nṯr*), a structure intimately associated with Anubis, god of embalming. A censing priest leads overland, followed by the two mourners and nine pallbearers called "friends" (*smrw*) (fig. 3). The friends are said to be the (four) Children of Horus, while the number nine is an allusion to the full plurality of the divine pantheon. Here, the friends carry the corpse in a chest and say, "Let his son Horus give him (*sc.* his enemy, Seth) to him; let his Wereret-crown be presented to him before the gods" (Davies, Norman de Garis 1943: pl. 88), with the crown being emblematic of success at the judgment of the dead. Grave goods contained in boxes are hoisted on shoulders and carried in free hands, and great armfuls of divine offerings from the estates of gods and royal mortuary temples are marched to the god's booth. In the scenes in the tomb of Rekhmire, the arrival is called "a landing to be purified (lit. released) at the stair of libation." The arrival is announced by numerous recitations from a chorus of friends and other officiants (Davies, Norman de Garis 1943: pl. 87).

Embalming and Mummification

Corresponding in length to the annual period of obscurity of the stars just south of the ecliptic, the ritualized process of embalming and mummification is usually stated as lasting seventy days. First, purification of the corpse was conducted over a period of about three days in a tent called the *jbw* or *zḥ-nṯr*. The

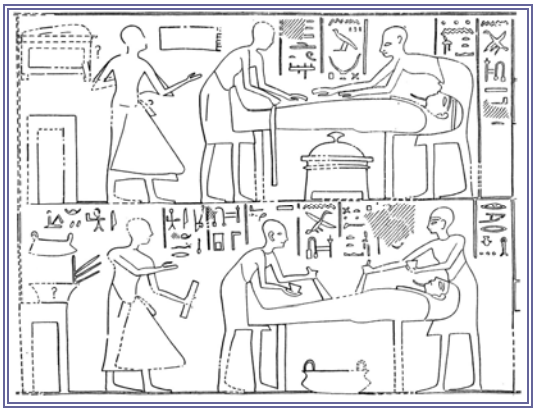

Figure 4. Wrapping and Anointing the Anthropoid Coffin. Theban Tomb 23, New Kingdom.

Figure 5. Anubis Laying Hands on Anthropoid Coffin. Vignette to Book of the Dead Spell 151a, Papyrus of Nebseni, New Kingdom.

mummification proper was carried out in a separate structure, called the *wꜥbt*, "pure place," or *pr-nfr*, "good house," of which Anubis is said to be the *ḥrj-sšt3*, "master of secrets," therein (Donohue 1978; Hoffmeier 1981; Taylor 2001: 46 - 91). As a matter of decorum, representation of the ceremonial anointing and wrapping conducted there is avoided in the Pharaonic period, but the recitations accompanying these acts are attested in Roman-era papyri (Goyon 1972; Sauneron 1952). The ritual instructions of these sources are late in idiom, but the recitations themselves are largely classical in phraseology. From them, one finds at the anointing that the deceased already has qualities of an *akh*, or exalted spirit (Papyrus Boulaq III, 2, 9). The Coffin Texts and *Book of*

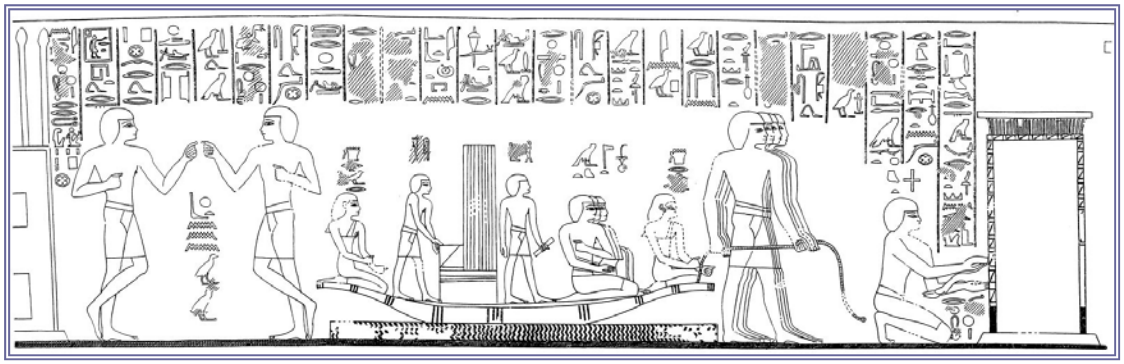

Figure 6. Scene from Procession to Sais. Theban Tomb 100, New Kingdom.

the Dead include copies of several spells for the charging and application of amulets like those discovered within mummy bindings, although these copies are often formulated as if the deceased himself is the ritualist (Eschweiler 1994: 74). Since at least the New Kingdom, the preparation of the coffin (fig. 4; see Assmann 1991: 110 with note 173) was ritualized and was evidently parallel to mummification, as it also involved anointing, wrapping, and recitation.

Post-Embalming Rituals

Since the Middle Kingdom or even earlier (Bommas 2007), the mummified corpse appears to have been the object of a set of rites associated with the night hours (Assmann 1986b, 2002b: 260 - 298, 2005b: 50 - 57). In part, this Hour Vigil resumed the rites of embalming, and vignettes like that of *Book of the Dead* spells 1B and 151 could be understood as emblematic of this aspect of it (fig. 5). The god Seth, nemesis of Osiris, was warded off from the deceased, and a ritualized judgment of the dead may have been enacted during the Hour Vigil, with officiants filling the roles of the gods Isis, Nephthys, Horus, Anubis, and Thoth.

In addition to the Hour Vigil, a set of ritual processions and voyages were conducted within the local necropolis. Just as the Hour Vigil appears to resume the events of embalming and mummification, a ritualized journey to the Delta city of Sais (fig. 6) appears to be a re-enactment of the major funeral processions, including those to the necropolis, embalming place, and tomb (Davies, Norman de Garis 1943: pls. 92 - 93; cf. Settgast 1963: 101 - 102 and pls. 12 - 13). The journey to the sacred city of Abydos (fig. 7) is regularly displayed in connection with other funerary rituals beginning in the 18th Dynasty (Altenmüller 1975a: col. 45; Barthelmess 1992: 14 - 15 and 54 - 55). The point of traveling there was for the deceased himself "to ferry the god (*sc.* Osiris) in his ceremonies" (Davies, Nina de Garis and Gardiner 1915: pl. 12). Notably, husband and wife are sometimes depicted together in this journey (Beinlich-Seeber and Shedid 1987: 95), with both described at this point as having been vindicated at the judgment of the dead (*mꜣʿ ḫrw* "true of voice"). A further and more enigmatic waterborne journey is represented in New Kingdom tombs alongside the journeys to Sais and Abydos (Geßler-Löhr 1991).

Procession to the Tomb

In all periods, the focal point of the procession to the tomb was an overland transport of the deceased on a sledge drawn by cattle and accompanied by citizenry of high and low station and friends (fig. 8, left). Priests burn incense and libate milk before the sledge, which is attended by the two mourners (*ḏr.tj*), and grave goods are carried to the tomb. According to the caption of a depiction of the event, its goal is "to proceed in peace up to the horizon, to the Field of Rushes, to the netherworld, in order to lead him to the place where the great god (sc. the sun) is" (Davies and Gardiner 1915, pl. 11; cf. Davies

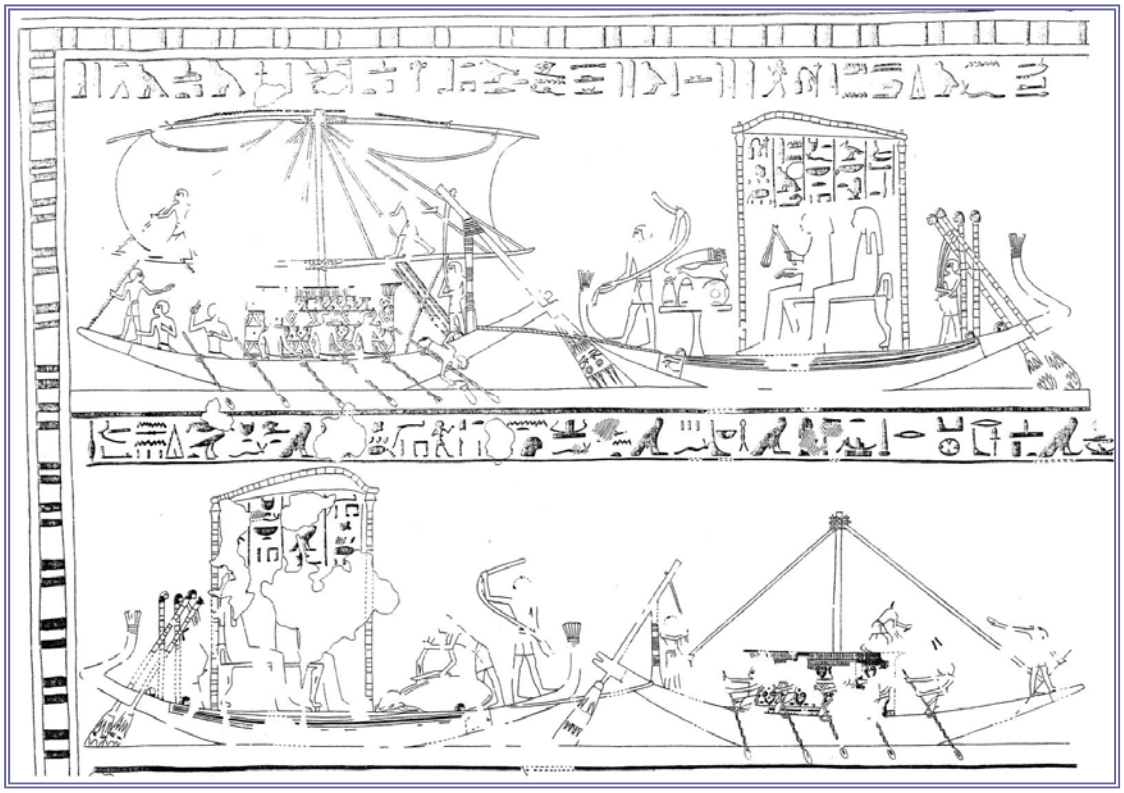

Figure 7. Procession to Abydos. Theban Tomb 82, New Kingdom.

Figure 8. Procession to the Tomb and Opening of the Mouth.Vignette of Book of the Dead Spell 1, Papyrus of Nebqed, New Kingdom.

1943, pl. 93): even as he is transported in this world to the tomb, the deceased is also transported to the world beyond, where he will be reborn with the sun. The procession culminates at a tomb represented as the personified western desert (*zmjt jmntjt*). This goddess is said to call out to the dead "that I embrace you with my arms, that I lead life to you, that I indeed be the protection of your body" (Davies, Nina de Garis and Gardiner 1915: pl. 10).

Opening of the Mouth

With the mummy now arrived at the tomb, it was placed outside with its face to the south, and the Opening of the Mouth ritual was performed (fig. 8, right). Although this ritual is named in sources since the beginning of the 4th Dynasty (Berlin 1105; Königliche Museen zu Berlin 1913: 73 - 87), full pictorial and textual representations do not occur until the 18th Dynasty, when it is seen to consist of a few lengthy sections. First, the mummy was treated as if it were a statue of the deceased undergoing fabrication. Its design and creation was enacted (Fischer-Elfert 1998), and twice a sacrifice was performed and the statue's mouth symbolically opened by means of presenting adze-shaped instruments to the face (fig. 9). The purpose of the mouth opening is explicitly to permit the deceased to

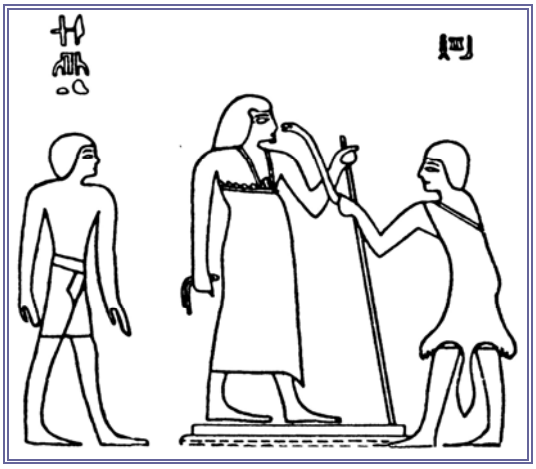

Figure 9. The "Great of Magic" Tool Applied to the Statue: Opening of the Mouth Scene 27 (Reconstructed)/Theban Tomb 100, New Kingdom.

"speak to the Great Ennead in the House of the Noble which is in Heliopolis, that he take the Wereret-crown thereby" (Otto 1960: scenes 26 and 46): it gives him the ability to verbally defend himself at the judgment of the dead and attain vindication. Second, a preliminary offering ritual is performed, the numerous rites of which are called "glorifications," or, literally, "that which makes one into an *akh*" (*sꜣḫw*) (Otto 1960: scene 69A). The mummy is then put into the burial chamber, with this act described as "making the god enter his temple" (Otto 1960: scene 74C). Following the interment, the last portion of the Opening of the Mouth involves further offerings to the gods and a declaration of the ritual's completion.

By virtue of the physical transport involved, the rituals prior to the Opening of the Mouth imply transitional periods between former states of being (in the human experience: living, dying, corpse) and desired ones (god, *akh*, justified dead) even though, by virtue of the symbology of their recitations, the earlier rituals express these desired states as having already been accomplished (cf. Grimes 2000: 103 - 107; Turner 1969: 94 - 95; van Gennep 1960: 21 and 164 - 165). Since, in contrast, the Opening of the Mouth centers upon the exposed and motionless deceased, the achievement of the desired states is stressed. Viewing the funeral proceedings as a "rite de passage," the ritual in its entirety can be construed as consummating the deceased's aggregation with the sacred world. As that may be, it is noteworthy that the attention dedicated to the interment, the actual burial, is attenuated in comparison to the other portions of the Opening of the Mouth: the practical, physical step of interment is submerged beneath non-practical, symbolic acts attending to the well-being of the corpse.

Mortuary Service

After interment, sacerdotal service was regularly performed at the above-ground cult place. Stereotyped scenes, showing rites performed before the deceased while he is seated at an offering table, appear in royal and elite tombs since the Old Kingdom and continue through the New Kingdom (fig. 10). Usually, these scenes are displayed at the very focus of the cult place, and usually a tabular offering list is embedded within them. These offering lists represent a series of rites ideally performed every day at that spot by priests. Chief of these was the *sem*-priest, who was, in theory, the son of the deceased, and therefore the god Horus to the god Osiris. Since the god Horus was involved, this priest was archetypically the king himself (Assmann 1976: 30 - 33). In practice, the royal role was filled by delegates – familial or otherwise – to whom income could be bequeathed in recompense for this service (Hays fc.). The rites of the oldest and most classical offering list are given in full in the Pyramid Texts (Barta 1963: 61 - 63). They integrate speech, actions, and objects, and, as with the Opening of the Mouth's offering ritual, the rites are designated "glorifications" (*sꜣḫw*) (Lapp 1986: 184). These "glorifications" consist mainly of the presentation of food items, but other activities such as censing and the application of oils are involved as well. Beginning in the Middle Kingdom (Hays and Schenck 2007: 102 with note 61), scenes of daily mortuary service are sometimes displayed together with passages of Pyramid Texts involving purely oral rites, as is the case with the scene of Figure 10. Daily performances at the tomb

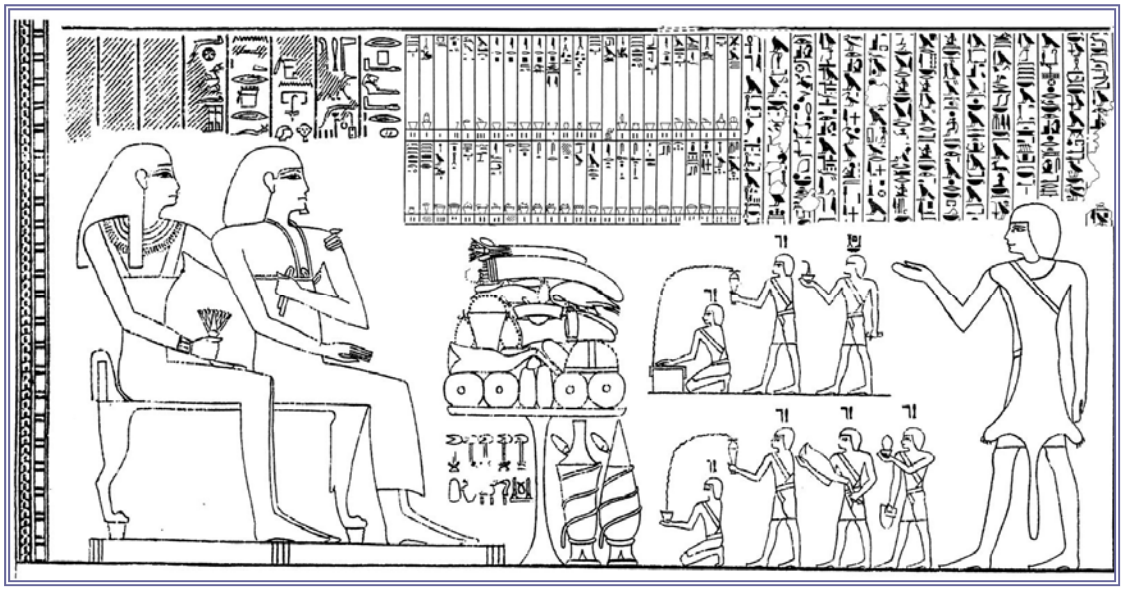

Figure 10. Mortuary Service (Reconstructed). Theban Tomb 100, New Kingdom.

cult place, and at statues of the deceased emplaced in temples, were supplemented by calendrical events such as the Sokar Festival throughout Egypt and the Valley Festival at Thebes. Some of these calendrical events may have sometimes involved temporary access to the sealed, subterranean burial places (Assmann 1984). Occasional rites, such as the presentation and recitation of Letters to the Dead (Willems 2001), would also have taken place in the vicinity of the tomb.

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The most recent comprehensive discussion of funerary rituals for Pharaonic Egypt is Assmann (2005a), especially pages 260-348 (parallel to Assmann 2001: 349 - 452). For the general sequence of funerary rituals as outlined in an important Egyptian text, see Assmann (Assmann 2005b: 273 - 280) and Davies and Gardiner (1915: 56 - 57). For a bibliographic index of pictorial scenes of funeral processions, see Altenmüller (Altenmüller 1975b). The evidence cited above in the section *Procession to the Necropolis* shows that the deceased was associated with Osiris well before embalming (*pace* Smith [2006] and [2008], who furthermore does not present written evidence to prove a genitival rather than appositival relationship between the two before Dynasty 21). For bibliography on the mummification procedure, see Quack (2002: note 45). For a discussion of sources for the Opening of the Mouth and its conceptual organization, see Quack (2006: 130 - 136) and Quack (2005: 168 - 170). The theory of Roth (1992) concerning the origin and purpose of the Opening of the Mouth is speculative (see Lorton [1999: 166 with note 65] and Quack [2006: 148 - 150]), while the ritual itself declares its own purpose, as cited above. On material culture related to funerary rituals, see Op de Beeck (2007: 157 with notes 2 - 5), and add Ikram (2006). On the development of scenes of mortuary service, see Lapp (1986: 153 - 192).

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Figure 1. Plan of Funerary Ritual Representations in Tomb of Rekhmire, Theban Tomb 100, New Kingdom. Plan by Harold M. Hays.

Figure 2. Scene from Procession to the Necropolis: The Deceased in Chest at the Mooring Posts. Theban Tomb 100, New Kingdom. After Davies (1943: pl. 82).

Figure 3. Scene from Procession to the Embalming Place: The Deceased in Chest Carried by Friends. Theban Tomb 100, New Kingdom. After Davies (1943: pl. 87).

Figure 4. Wrapping and Anointing the Anthropoid Coffin. Theban Tomb 23, New Kingdom. After Dawson (1927: pl. 17).

Figure 5. Anubis Laying Hands on Anthropoid Coffin. Vignette to Book of the Dead Spell 151a, Papyrus of Nebseni, New Kingdom. After Naville (1886: pl. 174).

Figure 6. Scene from Procession to Sais. Theban Tomb 100, New Kingdom. After Davies (1943: pl. 92).

Figure 7. Procession to Abydos. Theban Tomb 82, New Kingdom. After Davies, Nina de Garis and Gardiner (1915: pl. 12).

Figure 8. Procession to the Tomb and Opening of the Mouth.Vignette of Book of the Dead Spell 1, Papyrus of Nebqed, New Kingdom. After Naville (1886: pls. 3 - 4).

Figure 9. The "Great of Magic" Tool Applied to the Statue: Opening of the Mouth Scene 27 (Reconstructed)/ Theban Tomb 100, New Kingdom. After Otto (1960: vol. 1, fig. 1).

Figure 10. Mortuary Service (Reconstructed). Theban Tomb 100, New Kingdom. After Davies (1935: pl. 25, 1943: pl. 108).