

Weaving the Cloth of Reality

Word and Sound in Egyptian Ritual

Matt Whealton

Temple of Ra, San Francisco

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Our Agenda

- Examine Goals, Problems, and Tools for meeting them
- Look at an example from current scholarship
- Examine Egyptian Ritual
 - The Eye of Horus – Offering Par Excellence
 - Examine The Broad Collar (Wesekh) Offering
 - Listen to how it sounds in reconstructed vocalization
 - Pronounce two brief ritual texts together

Goals

- Make modern Ritual for Egyptian Gods and Goddess more alive and more effective
 - Expose the complex richness of meaning in the texts and gestures
 - So our understanding deepens
 - Give them the sounds that better reflect the language of the originals
 - So they can be more poetic, evocative, invocative
 - So they can be sung and chanted
 - So these elements can perhaps unlock more keys to the meanings and sounds.
- Non-Goals (!)
 - No need to say every ritual in Egyptian! Find what resonates and use it like spices in a cake.
 - No need to exhaustively analyze every action. Get a feel for the main themes and dynamics. Think of this as material for enrichment and maybe experimentation.

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Problems

- Dead language
- No guidebooks to theology (except Greek and Roman accounts)
- Much scholarship and popular books in the 19th and 20th Centuries were decidedly Orientalist – reflect Judeo-Christian and European Classicist outlooks, see Egypt through the lens of biblical and classic texts, do not let the Egyptian material speak for itself.

Why tackle this now? What are our Tools? New data, new research, new viewpoints

- **Translations and Primary Sources**
 - French Missions – Primary Source Publications: Temple of Hathor at Deir el Medina, Temple of Isis at Deir el Shelwit (French)
 - Edfu Projekt - Edfu Primary Source updates of Chassinat (German)
 - Cauville – Corrections and Completions of Chassinat (French)
 - Chicago Epigraphic Survey – Primary Source Publication of 18th Dynasty Temple at Deir el Medina (English)
- **Comparative and Synoptic Material**
 - Tacke – Temple Offering Ritual (German)
 - Allen – Pyramid Text Concordance (English), Pyramid Texts Translations (English)
 - Lapp, Lüscher - Book of the Dead Synoptic Monographs (German)
 - Coppens – Developmental and Comparative study of the Wabet in Temple Architecture – includes Primary Source Material from Philae (English)
- **Ritual, Iconographic and Theological Studies**
 - Braun – New Kingdom and 3rd Intermediate Period Temple Statue Ritual (German)
 - Hussy – Ptolemaic Temple Statue Ritual (German)
 - Edfu Projekt – Waitkus, Kurth, others – Edfu Translations, Edfu and Luxor Temple Monographs (German)
 - Cauville – Dendera Translations (French), Osiris Theology at Edfu (French)
 - Eaton – Temple Ritual as Performance, Pattern and Practice (English)
 - Richter – Theology of Hathor at Dendera (English, forthcoming)
 - Bommas – Investiture Ritual (German)
 - Tempeltagung – series of conferences focusing on Temples – 9 volumes so far (various languages)
 - Quacke – Graeco-Roman ritual, The Book of the Temple (not yet published except in excerpts in preliminary papers)
- **Linguistic Studies - Rethinking of grammatical theory and approaches since 1990**
 - Allen – update of linguistic overview of Egyptian (English)
 - Lingua Aegyptia – dedicated journal of Egyptian Linguistics - 22 volumes so far (various languages)
 - Allen, Schenkel, Stauder, Loprieno, and others use reconstructed vocalizations as part of the evidence for analyzing Egyptian (various languages)

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Egyptian Recon Database

- My own Project – a Vocalization Reconstruction database
 - Ongoing project, built on SIL FieldWorks Language Explorer
 - Methodology – assemble available reconstructions from the literature, weighting recent studies over earlier ones
 - Target for reconstructions:
 - Linguistic Stage: Middle Egyptian
 - Time Period: 18th Dynasty
 - Genre/Register: Ritual Texts
 - Speech Community: Educated Priests
 - Speech Events: Ritual Practice
 - Use the database tools to produce a ‘Pronouncing Dictionary’ of Egyptian...

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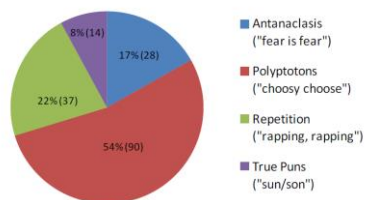
Pronouncing Dictionary

- seb* [suʔabá < suwʔabá] cleanse (sDm.f stem) *seb, ssuʔabás* she will cleanse [Allen: Possible dialectical variant of swab] Allen LingAeg 2011, 4; Allen AEPT 2005, 109 (Pepi I, 45) (for gloss) suʔabá < suwʔabá Allen LingAeg 2011, 4; Allen AEPT 2005, 109 (Pepi I, 45) (for gloss)
- sḥt₂* [saʔhú:ʔ] *ptcp* upright (passive participle) [saʔhú:ʔ from 18th Dynasty Amarna Archives cuneiform: ḥanu-ú-un ša-ḥu-ú 'upright box'] Ray LingAeg 2003, 123 saʔhú:ʔ Ray LingAeg 2003, 123 saʔhú:ʔ from 18th Dynasty Amarna Archives cuneiform: ḥanu-ú-un ša-ḥu-ú 'upright box' comp. *hnn-sḥt*
- sḥt₁* [sáʔHaʔ > sáʔHaʔ] *v* erect (infinitive) Allen AEL 2013, 99 sáʔHaʔ > sáʔHaʔ Allen AEL 2013, 99 sáʔHaʔ > sáʔHaʔ *cooꜣe*
- sḥš* [saʔšáʔ] *v* multiply (infinitive) Allen AEL 2013, 99 saʔšáʔ Allen AEL 2013, 99 saʔšáʔ ꜣaꜣo
- sbš* [*mjw sibaʔ : from sí:bʔ3 / sí:b(a)3 Osing] *n* star Osing NB 1976, 140, 291, 308, 628 *mjw sibaʔ : from sí:bʔ3 / sí:b(a)3 Osing *cioꜣ* Osing NB 1976, 140, 291, 308, 628 *mjw sibaʔ : from sí:bʔ3 / sí:b(a)3 Osing *cioꜣ*
- sbšw* [síbʔw] *n* stars Osing NB 1976, 140, 291, 308, 628 sībʔw Osing NB 1976, 140, 291, 308, 628
- sbí* [súbí] *n* rebel Allen LingAeg 2013b, 12 súbí *cm* enemy Allen LingAeg 2013b, 12 súbí *cm*

Example (and a Prolog) – Why sound matters

“Of the 80 scenes and text groups in the Per-wer, 69% (55) contain word play, for a total of 179 individual examples”.

Types of Word Play in the Per-wer



sk3=i k3=t r k3 n p.t
 “I make high your
 ka to the height of
 heaven”
 (D III, 56,7).

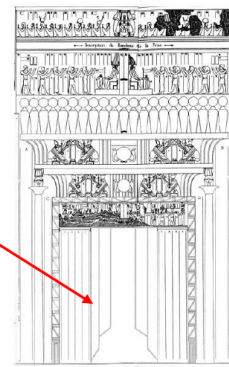
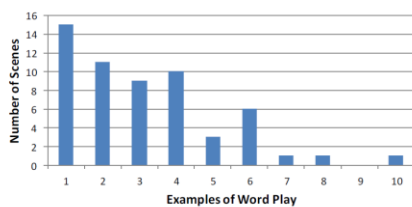


Fig. 2.24. Per-wer Entrance; D II, pl. 94, © IFAO

Frequency of Word Play in a Single Scene



The two occurrences of root, *k3* (“be high”), first as the causative verb, *sk3* (“make high”), and then as the substantive, *k3* (“height”), create a polyptoton. These two forms of “be high” bracket the word, *k3* (“the soul” or “embodiment of Hathor”), thus emphasizing the height to which the king praises her. The word, *k3*, sounds very similar to the root meaning “be high,” but it comes from a different root and has a different initial consonant. There is a rhythm to this expression, emphasizing the element, *k3*, three times. Additionally, the hieroglyph of a man raising his arms in adoration, on either side of the *k3* of the goddess, creates the visual image that she is surrounded by praise.¹³⁴

Source: Richter, *The Theology of Hathor at Dendera*.
 Forthcoming. Retrieved from:
<http://escholarship.org/uc/item/8np4d4hf> 2/9/2016

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Egyptian Ritual – What this Talk is About

- Ritual occurs on the mythic / divine plane
 - Spacially: The Temple is a cosmogram for the moment of creation the 'Original Occasion'
 - In terms of Practitioners: The Priest/King is 'becomes' a God to perform the ritual
 - Textually and Materially: The offerings are equated with Gods or parts of the bodies of Gods. They are addressed directly as living entities, divine in themselves.
- Ritual reawakens/revivifies/rejuvenates the God each day, recreates creation itself and thus upholds the order of the Universe.
- Ritual forms and words are (roughly) conserved over all Egyptian history and occur in many contexts – Temples, Funerals, Tombs, Magic, Healing.
- Ritual Texts are richly poetic and weave multiple elements into 'effective' utterances. Words are reality. Words create reality.

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Eye of Horus – The Offering Par Excellence

- Symbol of Healing, Wholeness, Return of something lost
- Represents the Moon, in its waning and waxing and also the Sun, in its setting and rising.
- The eye was ripped out and thrown away by Set during his struggle with Horus (Horus also did the same with Set's testicles).
- Djehuty finds the Eye, magically restores it to wholeness, and restores Horus's essential powers with it. Horus is the 'Distant One' – he must be able to see to watch over the world from high in the sky.
- Almost any and every offering in Temple ritual is equated with the Eye of Horus. It is the 'default' mythical and symbolic background of every offering and ritual act.
- The word for 'Eye' (*irat) is a close homonym for the noun *irit – 'making, doing, deed, something made, etc.'

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Wesekh Collar Offering – Weaving Myth and Word

- Mythic Elements
 - Solar and Creation
 - Reanimation through the Ka Embrace
 - Eye of Horus
- Verbal techniques
- Visual Techniques



Image Source: Don Frew, Jan 2016, Egyptian Museum, Cairo



Image Source: <http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/547900>

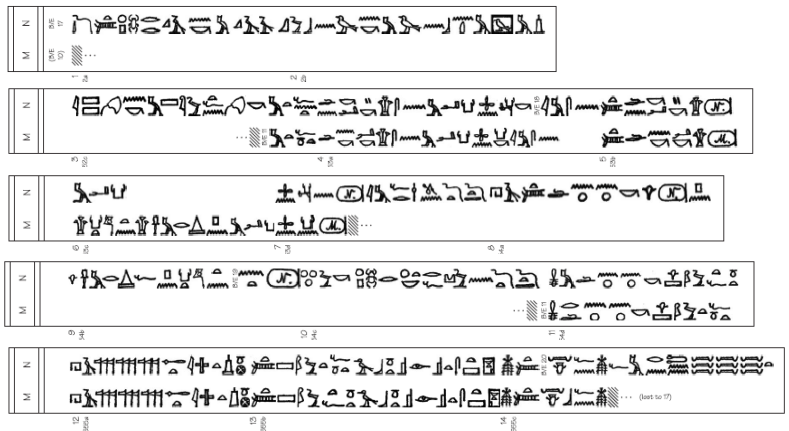
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History – Old Kingdom

- Pyramid Texts 600, 660
- 6th Dynasty Pyramids of Merenre and Pepi II

PT 600 (MN)

- | | | |
|----|-------|--|
| 1 | 1652a | tm ḥprṛ q3.n.k m q33 |
| 2 | 1652b | wbn.n.k m bnbn m ḥwt-bnw m jwnw |
| 3 | 1652c | jšš.n.k m šw tf.n.k m tfnt |
| 4 | 1653a | d.n.k ʿwj.k ḥ3.sn m ʿwj.k3 wn k3.k jm.sj |
| 5 | 1653b | tm d.n.k ʿwj.k ḥ3 NN
tm d.k.n.k ʿwj.k ḥ3 NN |
| 6 | 1653c | ḥ3 k3t tn ḥ3 mr pn m ʿwj.k3
m ʿwj.k3 |
| 7 | 1653d | wn k3 n NN jm.f rwḏ n ḏt ḏt |
| 8 | 1654a | ḥ3 tm dnḥnh.k hr NN pn |
| 9 | 1654b | ḥr mr.f pn k3t tn nt NN |
| 10 | 1654c | ḥw.k ḥpr ḥt nb r.f ḏw n ḏt ḏt |
| 11 | 1654d | mr dnḥnh.k hr šw tfnt |
| 12 | 1655a | ḥ3 psḏt ʿ3t jmt jwnw |
| 13 | 1655b | tm šw tfnt gbb nwt jsjr jst stš nbt-ḥwt |
| 14 | 1655c | ms tm pḏ jb.f n ms.f m rn.tn n pḏwt |

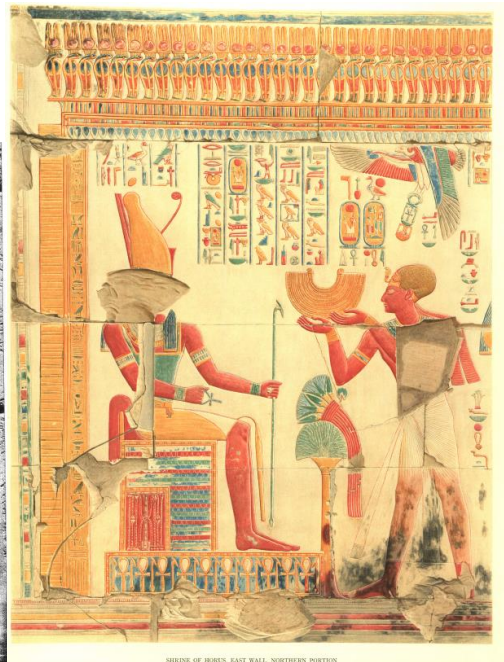
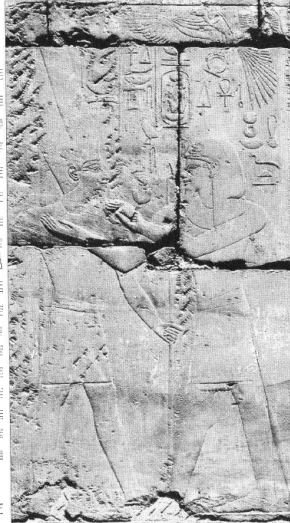


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Source: Allen, *A New Concordance of the Pyramid Texts*

History – New Kingdom & Later

- Temple of Seti I, Abydos, Chapels of Amun and Horus, etc; Luxor Temple
- Many others, tombs as well



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Source: Calverley, Broome, Gardiner. *The Temple of King Sethos I at Abydos*, Vols 2 and 3; Eaton, *Temple Ritual as Performance, Pattern and Practice*

The Ritual Text for Offering the Wesekh Collar

Greetings to you, Atum
 Greetings to you, Khepri
 May you be high upon the Original Mound!
 May you shine as the Benben Stone in the House of the Benben in Heliopolis
 After you coughed out as Shu
 After you spat out as Tefnut
 After you laid your arms around them as Ka
 After Your Ka was in them.
 Oh Atum, you have placed your two arms around Amun-Ra, ... , eternally.
 May you protect him, so that no evil thing can occur to his body forever.
 Words to be spoken by the King ... :
 "Amun-Ra, ..., take to yourself your Two Thousand!
 Oh, may you be given your Eye, Amun-Ra,
 Your Eye is pure for You"

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Main Structure of the Text

Addressing the Collar:
Historiola/Identification



Greetings to you, Atum
 Greetings to you, Khepri
 May you be high upon the Original Mound!
 May you shine as the benben Stone in the House of the Benben in Heliopolis
 After you coughed out as Shu
 After you spat out as Tefnut
 After you laid your arms around them as Ka
 After Your Ka was in them.
 Oh Atum, du have placed your two arms around Amun-Ra, ... , eternally
 May you protect him, so that no evil thing can occur to his body forever.

Addressing the God's image:
Activation/Presentation



Words to be spoken by the King ... :
 "Amun-Ra, ..., take to yourself your Two Thousand!
 Oh, may you be given your Eye, Amun-Ra,
 Your Eye is pure for You"

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Mythic Elements – Solar and Creation

- The ritual text opens with Solar and Creation elements.
- Atum and Khepri are forms of the Sun God – in evening and Morning respectively.
- Atum is the primal creator God in the Heliopolitan Cosmology.
- Shu and Tefnut are the first created Male/Female pair, and represent the cosmic elements of Dryness (Wind/Air/Space) and Moisture.

Mythic Elements – The Ka Embrace

- Shu and Tefnut are 'ensouled' and vivified through an embrace during creation.
- The Wesekh offering recalls this creative moment as a key element.
- The embrace gives Shu and Tefnut individual identities and their essential vital force – their Kas.
- The embrace itself is equated symbolically with the 'Ka'.

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Mythic Elements – The Eye of Horus

- Towards the end, the Wesekh offering is equated with the Eye of Horus, as it is presented to the Divine Image.
- This ties the ritual action to the story of Osiris and especially his rightful successor Horus.
- Carries implications of (re)vivifying the God's statue during the ritual.
- Also carries implications of the King's (Priest's) filial duty to his Father / Mother (The God or Goddess being served in the ritual).

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Verbal Elements

- Puns between the verbs ‘cough out’ and Shu, and ‘spit out’ and Tefnut.
- The words themselves, and especially the sentences formed from them have a marked onomatopoeic aspect – repeated ‘sh’ sounds for Shu = Wind, repeated ‘tf’ sounds for Tefnut – spitting, moisture in the air, perhaps even resonating with the sound of rain.
- Also consonant puns between to shine (wbn) and Benben Stone (bnbn)


'ašišnak ma šaw After you coughed out as Shu

tafinak ma tifnawat After you spat out as Tefnut

wabinnak ma banbín ma ḥawt-banbín ma 'awá:nu May you shine as the benben Stone in the House of the Benben in Heliopolis

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Visual Elements – Color, Shape, Gesture

- Wesekh Collar is Gold, the Color of the Sun
- Wesekh collar is round, like the Solar Disk
- It very often is made and/or depicted with Falcon Heads at the terminal ends, which also are solar symbols.
- Placing the Collar on the image of the God or Goddess is an embrace, a visual echo of the Ka sign itself – 

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The Wesekh Offering Text – Weaving the Web

ind-hr = k itm

ind-hr = k hpri

k3 n = k m k33

wbn = k m bnbm m hw.t-bnbm m iwnw

iss.n = k m sw

tfn = k m tfnw.t

rd.n = k .wi = ki h3 = sn m k3

wn.n = k |k3 = k| im = sn

h3 itm rd.n = k .wi = ki h3 imn-r' hri-ib hw.t mn-m3't-r' n d.t

hw = k sw

nn hpr ih.t nb.t <dw.t> r = f n d.t d.t

dd mdw.w in s3-r' nb h'.w (mri.n-pti)

imn-r' hri-ib hw.t mn-m3't-r' mn n = k im = sn h3.wi = s

h3 rd n = k irt.k imn-r' hri-ib hw.t mn-m3't-r'

w'b n = k ir.t = k

Solar

Creation

Ka embrace

Eye of Horus

Verbal Plays

Reanimation

The Wesekh Offering Text – Weaving the Web

Greetings to you Atum

Greetings to you Khepri

May you be high upon the Original Mound!

May you shine as the benben Stone in the House of the Benben in Heliopolis

After you coughed out as Shu

After you spat out as Tefnut

After you laid your arms around them as Ka

After Your Ka was in them.

Oh Atum, you have placed your two arms around Amun-Ra, within the Mansion of Men-Maat-Ra, eternally.

May you protect him, so that no evil thing can occur to his body forever.

Words to be spoken by the Son of Ra, Lord of Crowns, Seti I:

“Amun-Ra, within the Mansion of Men-Maat-Ra, take to yourself your Two Thousand!

Oh, may you be given your Eye, Amun-Ra, within the Mansion of Men-Maat-Ra.

Your Eye is pure for You”

Solar

Creation

Ka embrace

Eye of Horus

Verbal Plays

Reanimation

© Matthew J Wheeler Sources: Braun, *Pharao und Priester – Sakrale Affirmation von Herrschaft durch Kultvollzug*

Full Recitation of the Wesekh Offering

'anḡá-ḥarúk 'atámu
'anḡá-ḥarúk ḥáprai
ḡa'yínak ma ḡa'i:'
wabínnak ma banbín ma ḥawt-banbín ma 'awá:nu
'ašišnak ma šáw
tafínak ma tifnawat
radyínak 'uwá:ka: ḥa'sin ma ka'
wanínak ká'ak amásin
ha' 'atámu radínak 'uwá:ka: ḥa' 'amánu-rí:'u ḥari-yíb ḥawt man-mú'at-rí:'u ni ḡat
ḥawyák su
nan ḥaprá 'ihát níbat ḡawat 'aráf ni ḡút ḡát
ḡad madú:w 'iní sí'-rí:'u níbu ḥa'yáw | (maryína-pitáh)|
'amánu-rí:'u ḥari-yíb ḥawt man-mú'at-rí:'u minník amásin ḥa'wá:s
ha' radyí: ník 'irtak amánu-rí:'u ḥari-yíb ḥawt man-mú'at-rí:'u
wa'bá ník 'irtak

Scholarly pronunciations (intentionally artificial)

Eenedj herek atum
Eenedj herek khepri
Ka-enek em ka-ah
Webenek em benben em het-benben em ee-oo-noo
Eesheshenek em shoo
Tefenek em tefnoot

.....

Reciting Two Short Offerings Together

Offering Beer to a Goddess:

Lifting the **beer offering (2 red jugs)** before the sacred image, the Ritualist repeats the following:

m-n=ṯ nbtw nḡmw ḥwt-ḥrw dpt=sn
min-niṯ nábtyaw nágmu ḥat-ḥára banyáwa dipátsun

Take to yourself these jugs of sweet beer, Oh Hathor! How sweet their taste is!

I have come before you, O Goddess, and before the Mistress of Drunkenness in the place of Drunkenness. I bring to you beer to gladden your heart.

Adapted from Dendara I, 24. See Cauville Dendara-I: Traduction, 1998, 46-47.

Offering Wine to a God:

Lifting the **wine offering** before the sacred image, the Ritualist repeats the following:

m-n=k irp ḥr wṯdt
min-nik 'úrṗ irat ḥáru wá'ḡat

Take to Yourself wine, the green Eye of Horus, which I offer to your Ka.

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