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Ancient Egypt

Pyramid Texts

(selection)

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Egyptian priests

E. A. Wallis Budge (1914)

Credits

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About:

The Pyramid Texts are the oldest religious writings of Egypt and among the oldest in the world: spells carved on the walls of the burial chambers of the pyramids at Sakkara, from King Unas onwards (c.

2350 BC), so that the dead king might rise again, ascend to the sky and live for ever among the gods.

The Liturgy of Funerary Offerings shows the priest presenting the king with water, wine, bread and oils, each called "the Eye of Horus", with the rubrics that direct each gesture.

Then come the hymn to Nut, the sky-goddess who stretches over the king like a mother, and the hymn to Tem-Kheprer, the Sun who created himself; the passages on the ascent of Unas to heaven by the ladder of Ra and Horus; the famous "Cannibal Hymn", in which the king hunts and devours the gods to absorb their power; and the text in which Pepi declares himself born of Nu before heaven and earth existed.

The texts were discovered in 1880–1881 by the Egyptologist Gaston Maspero, and many of their ideas return, centuries later, in the Coffin Texts and the Book of the Dead.

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THE LITURGY OF FUNERARY OFFERINGS

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1 This libation is for thee, Osiris, this libation is for thee, Unas. (Here offer cold water of the North.) It cometh forth before thy son, cometh forth before Horus. I have come, I have brought unto thee the Eye of Horus, that thy heart may be refreshed thereby. I have brought it and have set it under thy sandals, and I present unto thee that which flowed forth from thee.

1.2 There shall be no stoppage to thy heart whilst it is with thee, and the offerings that appear at the command shall appear at thy word of command. (Recite four times.)

2 Thou hast taken possession of the two Eyes of Horus, the White and the Black, and when they are in thy face they illumine it. (Here offer two jugs of wine, one white, one black.)

3 Day hath made an offering unto thee in the sky. The South and the North have given offerings unto thee. Night hath made an offering unto thee. The South and the North have made an offering unto thee. An offering is brought unto thee, look upon it; an offering, hear it. There is an offering before thee, there is an offering behind thee, there is an offering with thee. (Here offer a cake for the journey.)

4 Osiris Unas, the white teeth of Horus are presented unto thee so that they may fill thy mouth. (Here offer five bunches of onions.)

5 O Rā, the worship that is paid to thee, the worship of every kind, shall be paid [also] to Unas. Everything that is offered to thy body shall be offered to the Double of Unas also, and everything that is offered to his body shall be thine. (Here offer the table of holy offerings.)

6 O ye oils, ye oils, which are on the forehead of Horus, set ye yourselves on the forehead of Unas, and make him to smell sweet through you. (Here offer oil of cedar of the finest quality.)

7 Make ye him to be a spirit-soul (khu) through possession of you, and grant ye him to have the mastery over his body, let his eyes be opened, and let all the spirit-souls see him, and let them hear his name. Behold, Osiris Unas, the Eye of Horus hath been brought unto thee, for it hath been seized for thee that it may be before thee. (Here offer the finest Thehenu oil.)

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HYMN TO NUT

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[1] [O] Nut, thou hast extended thyself over thy son the Osiris Pepi,
Thou hast snatched him out of the hand of Set; join him to thyself, Nut.
Thou comest, snatch thy son; behold, thou comest, form this great one [like] unto thyself.
[O] Nut, cast thyself upon thy son the Osiris Pepi.
[O] Nut, cast thyself upon thy son the Osiris Pepi.
Form thou him, O Great Fashioner; this great one is among thy children.
Form thou him, O Great Fashioner; this great one is among thy children.
Keb [was to] Nut. Thou didst become a spirit.
Thou wast a mighty goddess in the womb of thy mother Tefnut when thou wast not born.
Form thou Pepi with life and well-being; he shall not die.
Strong was thy heart,
Thou didst leap in the womb of thy mother in thy name of "Nut."
[O] perfect daughter, mighty one in thy mother, who art crowned like a king of the North,
Make this Pepi a spirit-soul in thee, let him not die.
[O] Great Lady, who didst come into being in the sky, who art mighty.
Who dost make happy, and dost fill every place (or being), with thy beauty,
The whole earth is under thee, thou hast taken possession of it.
Thou hast encompassed the earth, everything is in thy two hands,
Grant thou that this Pepi may be in thee like an imperishable star.

Thou hast associated with Keb in thy name of "Pet" (i.e. Sky).
Thou hast united the earth in every place.
[O] mistress over the earth, thou art above thy father Shu, thou hast the mastery over him.
He hath loved thee so much that he setteth himself under thee in everything.
Thou hast taken possession of every god for thyself with his boat (?).
Thou hast made them shine like lamps,
Assuredly they shall not cease from thee like the stars.
Let not this Pepi depart from thee in thy name of "Hert".

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HYMN TO THE SUN-GOD

✦

[1] Hail to thee, Tem! Hail to thee, Kheprer, who created himself.
Thou art the High, in this thy name of "Height."
Thou camest into being in this thy name of "Kheprer."
Hail to thee, Eye of Horus, which he furnisheth with his hands completely.
He permitteth not thee to be obedient to those of the West;
He permitteth not thee to be obedient to those of the East;
He permitteth not thee to be obedient to those of the South;
He permitteth not thee to be obedient to those of the North;
He permitteth not thee to be obedient to those who are in the earth;
[For] thou art obedient to Horus.
He it is who hath furnished thee, he it is who hath builded thee, he it is who hath made thee to be dwelt in.
Thou doest for him whatsoever he saith unto thee, in every place whither he goeth.
Thou liftest up to him the water-fowl that are in thee.
Thou liftest up to him the water-fowl that are about to be in thee.
Thou liftest up to him every tree that is in thee.
Thou liftest up to him every tree that is about to be in thee.
Thou liftest up to him the cakes and ale that are in thee.
Thou liftest up to him the cakes and ale that are about to be in thee.
Thou liftest up to him the gifts that are in thee.
Thou liftest up to him the gifts that are about to be in thee.

Thou liftest up to him everything that is in thee.
Thou liftest up to him everything that is about to be in thee.
Thou takest them to him in every place wherein it pleaseth him to be.
The doors upon thee stand fast [shut] like the god Anmutef,
They open not to those who are in the West;
They open not to those who are in the East;
They open not to those who are in the North;
They open not to those who are in the South;
They open not to those who are in the middle of the earth;
But they open to Horus.

2 He it was who made them, he it was who made them stand [firm], he it was who delivered them from every evil attack which the god Set made upon them. He it was who made thee to be a settled country in this thy name of "Kerkut." He it was who passed bowing after thee in thy name of "Nut." He it was who delivered thee from every evil attack which Set made upon thee.

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THE ASCENSION OF UNAS

✦

1 The sky hath withdrawn the life of the star Septet (Sothis, the Dog-star); behold Unas a living being, the son of Septet. The Eighteen Gods have purified him in Meskha (the Great Bear), [he is] an imperishable star. The house of Unas perisheth not in the sky, the throne of Unas perisheth not on the earth. Men make supplication [there], the gods fly [thither].

1.2 Septet hath made Unas fly to heaven to be with his brethren the gods. Nut, the Great Lady, hath unfolded her arms to Unas. She hath made them into two divine souls at the head of the Souls of Anu, under the head of Rā. She made them two weeping women when thou wast on thy bier (?). The throne of Unas is by thee, Rā, he yieldeth it not up to anyone else.

1.3 Unas cometh forth into heaven by thee, Rā. The face of Unas is like the [faces of the] Hawks. The wings of Unas are like [those of] geese. The nails of Unas are like the claws of the god Tuf. There is no [evil] word concerning Unas on earth among men. There is no hostile speech about him with the gods. Unas hath destroyed his word, he hath ascended to heaven.

1.4 Upuatu hath made Unas fly up to heaven among his brethren the gods. Unas hath drawn together his arms like the Smen goose, he striketh his wings like a falcon, flying, flying. O men, Unas flieth up into heaven.

2 O ye gods of the West, O ye gods of the East, O ye gods of the South, O ye gods of the North, ye four groups who embrace the holy lands, devote ye yourselves to Osiris when he appeareth in heaven. He shall sail into the

Sky, with his son Horus by his fingers. He shall announce him, he shall make him rise up like the Great God in the Sky.

2.2 They shall cry out concerning Unas: Behold Horus, the son of Osiris! Behold Unas, the firstborn son of Hathor! Behold the seed of Keb! Osiris hath commanded that Unas shall rise as a second Horus, and these Four Spirit-souls in Anu have written an edict to the two great gods in the Sky.

2.3 Rā set up the Ladder in front of Osiris, Horus set up the Ladder in front of his father Osiris when he went to his spirit, one on this side [and] one on the other side; Unas is between them. Behold, he is the god of the pure seats coming forth from the bath (?). Unas standeth up, lo Horus; Unas sitteth down, lo Set. Rā graspeth his hand, spirit to heaven, body to earth.

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UNAS, HUNTER OF THE GODS

✦

1 The skies lower, the Star-gods tremble, the Archers quake, the bones of the Akeru gods tremble, and those who are with them are struck dumb when they see Unas rising up as a soul, in the form of the god who liveth upon his fathers, and who turneth his mothers into his food. Unas is the lord of wisdom, and his mother knoweth not his name.

1.2 The adoration of Unas is in heaven, he hath become mighty in the horizon like Temu, the father that gave him birth, and after Temu had given him birth Unas became stronger than his father.

1.3 The Doubles (i.e. vital strength) of Unas are behind him, the soles of his feet are beneath his feet, his gods are over him, his serpents are [seated] upon his brow, the serpent-guides of Unas are in front of him, and the spirit of the flame looketh upon [his] soul. The powers of Unas protect him. Unas is a bull in heaven. He directeth his steps where he willeth.

1.4 He liveth upon the form which each god taketh upon himself, and he eateth the flesh of those who come to fill their bellies with the magical charms in the Lake of Fire. Unas is equipped with power against the spirit-souls thereof, and he riseth in the form of the mighty one, the lord of those who dwell in power (?).

1.5 Unas hath taken his seat with his back turned towards Keb (the Earth-god). Unas hath weighed his words with the hidden god (?) who hath no name, on the day of hacking in pieces the firstborn.

2 Unas is the lord of offerings, the untier of the knot, and he himself maketh abundant the offerings of meat and drink. Unas devoureth men, and liveth upon the gods, he is the lord of envoys whom he sendeth forth on his missions. 'He who cutteth off hairy scalps,' who dwelleth in the fields, tieth the gods with ropes.

2.2 Tcheser-tep shepherdeth them for Unas and driveth them unto him; and the Cord-master hath bound them for slaughter. Khensu, the slayer of the wicked, cutteth their throats, and draweth out their intestines, for it is he whom Unas sendeth to slaughter [them], and Shesmu cutteth them in pieces, and boileth their members in his blazing caldrons of the night.

2.3 Unas eateth their magical powers, and he swalloweth their spirit-souls. The great ones among them serve for his meal at daybreak, the lesser serve for his meal at eventide, and the least among them serve for his meal in the night. The old gods and the old goddesses become fuel for his furnace.

2.4 The mighty ones in heaven light the fire under the caldrons wherein are heaped up the thighs of the firstborn; and he who maketh those who live in heaven to go about for Unas lighteth the fire under the caldrons with the thighs of their women; he goeth about the Two Heavens in their entirety, and he goeth round about the two banks of the Celestial Nile.

2.5 Unas is the Great Power, the Power of Powers, and Unas is the Chief of the gods in visible forms.

3 Whatsoever he findeth upon his path he eateth forthwith, and the magical might of Unas is before that of all the spirit-bodies who dwell in the horizon. Unas is the firstborn of the firstborn gods. Unas is surrounded by

thousands, and oblations are made unto him by hundreds; he is made manifest as the Great Power by Saah (Orion), the father of the gods.

3.2 Unas repeateth his rising in heaven, and he is crowned lord of the horizon. He hath reckoned up the bandlets and the arm-rings [of his captives], he hath taken possession of the hearts of the gods. Unas hath eaten the Red Crown, and he hath swallowed the White Crown; the food of Unas is the intestines, and his meat is hearts and their words of power.

3.3 Behold, Unas eateth of that which the Red Crown sendeth forth, he increaseth, and the words of power of the gods are in his belly; his attributes are not removed from him. Unas hath eaten the whole of the knowledge of every god, and the period of his life is eternity, and the duration of his existence is everlastingness.

3.4 He is in the form of one who doeth what he wisheth, and who doth not do what he hateth, and he abideth on the horizon for ever and ever and ever. The Soul of the gods is in Unas, their spirit-souls are with Unas, and the offerings made unto him are more than those that are made unto the gods.

3.5 The fire of Unas is in their bones, for their soul is in Unas, and their shades are with those who belong unto them.

4 Unas hath been with the two hidden (?) Kha (?) gods, ...; the seat of the heart of Unas is among those who live upon this earth for ever and ever and ever.

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PEPI, BORN OF NU

✦

1 Pepi was brought forth by the god Nu, when there was no heaven, when there was no earth, when nothing had been established, when there was no fighting, and when the fear of the Eye of Horus did not exist.

1.2 This Pepi is one of the Great Offspring who were brought forth in Anu (Heliopolis), who have never been conquered by a king or ruled by chiefs, who are irresistible, whose words cannot be gainsaid. Therefore this Pepi is irresistible; he can neither be conquered by a king nor ruled by chiefs. The enemies of Pepi cannot triumph. Pepi lacketh nothing.

1.3 His nails do not grow long [for want of prey]. No debt is reckoned against Pepi. If Pepi falleth into the water Osiris will lift him out, and the Two Companies of the Gods will bear him up on their shoulders, and Rā, wheresoever he may be, will give him his hand.

1.4 If Pepi falleth on the earth the Earth-god (Keb) will lift him up, and the Two Companies of the Gods will bear him up on their shoulders, and Rā, wheresoever he may be, will give him his hand.... Pepi appeareth in heaven among the imperishable stars. His sister the star Sothis (the Dog-star), his guide the Morning Star (Venus) lead him by the hand to the Field of Offerings.

1.5 He taketh his seat on the crystal throne, which hath faces of fierce lions and feet in the form of the hoofs of the Bull Sma-ur. He standeth up in his place between the Two Great Gods, and his sceptre and staff are in his hands.

2 He lifteth up his hand to the Henmemet spirits, and the gods come to him with bowings. The Two Great Gods look on in their places, and they find Pepi acting as judge of the gods. The word of every spirit-soul is in him, and they make offerings to him among the Two Companies of the Gods.

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