

## The Power of Uttering in Ancient Egypt

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### Abstract

The Egyptian perception of an utterance is the words uttered by a deity, what the deities articulated is considered instructions and regulations. The utterance was a collection of magical words, which were sacred. Whatever comes from the mouth of a deity was believed to be made in his heart, then words were brought or arose from his mouth, which is usually done by the help of the tongue.

This idea is clearly represented in the text of the “Memphite Theology”, which was found in the Temple of Ptah. It states that everything was thought in the heart of Ptah, and then came into existence by his tongue. So, the research focusses on the texts concerning the importance and the power of the tongue and the heart. It also discusses the power of uttering a speech in rituals, in addition to a detailed discussion of the texts concerning the force of articulation, and creation through a speech.

**Keywords:** Utterance, Ancient Egypt, Memphite Theology.

### Introduction

The utterance for the ancient Egyptian was a collection of magical words, which were considered sacred. The words of the god were believed to be made in his heart, then words come out from his mouth. The “Memphite Theology”, which was found in the temple of Ptah clearly discussed this concept. The monument carries the name of king Shabaka, of the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty, it exhibits the British Museum now.<sup>1</sup> It states that, everything was thought in the heart of Ptah, and then came into existence by his tongue. The meaning of the name of Ptah is (ptH) “to open, or “to carve”,<sup>2</sup> and with the absence of source evidence, this means that there is no base for considering god Ptah a creator god. Ptah was known from as early as the Pyramid Texts, and continued to appear in the Old Kingdom tombs, then through the Middle and New Kingdoms.<sup>3</sup> But the Shabaka stone which is dated back to the Twenty-fifth dynasty is considered the first evidence to suggest that Ptah is a creator god. The text states that king Shabaka declared that the text carved on the stone was carved to replace an older version, it states:

*“His majesty copied this text, a new in the house of father Ptah”.*<sup>4</sup>

This replacement of the text may indicate that the original was damaged or was faded and not able to be read.<sup>5</sup> It is hard to date the original text. It might be dated to the late Old Kingdom, or even before that, this is mainly because of the language of the text used.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, some scholars suggested that the text was written in the Ramesside Period.<sup>7</sup>

The text states that the heart and the tongue were the essential and commanding parts of the body, all the organs were working by their command, the text states:

*“By the heart (m ḥ3t) and the tongue (m ns), the image of Atum was established. Ptah is great and important, who gave life to all of the gods, and their kas as well, through this*

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<sup>1</sup> BM 498; Breasted, *ZÄS* 39 (1901), pp. 39-54; Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature* I, pp. 51-57.

<sup>2</sup> Sandman, *The God Ptah*, pp. 9-11.

<sup>3</sup> Sandman, *The God Ptah*, pp. 24-30.

<sup>4</sup> Sethe, *Dramatische Texte*, p.20; Allen, *Genesis in Egypt*, p. 42.

<sup>5</sup> Breasted, *ZÄS* 39 (1901), fig. 1, 2.

<sup>6</sup> Sethe, *Dramatische Texte*, pp. 2-5.

<sup>7</sup> Junge, *MDAIK* 29 (1973), pp. 195-204; Allen, *Genesis in Egypt*, p. 443.

*heart (m h3t pn) and this tongue (m ns pn) through which Horus and Thoth both converted to Ptah. It has developed (hpr.n). The heart and the tongue have controlled (sh̄m ib ns) all limbs, proving that it is prominent in everybody and in every mouth - of all the deities, and all people, all animals, and all creeping things that live - planning and leading everything he wishes (hr k33.t hr wd-mdw h.t nb mrr.t.f) ..... The eyes are seeing (m33 iri.w), the ears are hearing (sdm msdr.w), the noses are breathing the air send up to the heart, and it is what causes every conclusion to emerge (dd pri rky.t nb); it is the tongue that repeats what the heart plans (in ns wh̄m k33.t h3t)”*<sup>8</sup>

So, things are made in the heart of the deity, was a kind of a thought,<sup>9</sup> then the tongue is the way of expressing these thoughts. It is considered a channel in which the thought come true. The thoughts which were formed in the heart of a creator god is then considered the main source of thinking, and planning,<sup>10</sup> So Ptah is considered the source of all thoughts of any divine mind and the source of everything existing. But these things in the mind of deities came into existence when comes out of the mouth. This is similar to the idea found in the Pyramid Texts, and other Old Kingdom texts,<sup>11</sup> in which god Sia who is known as “the perception of understanding” and god Hu, who is known as “the perception of speech”.<sup>12</sup> Sia and Hu were cited in the Pyramid Texts in a very limited spells, however they explain their creative nature. They were also mentioned in Papyrus Leiden 1350, which refers to their relation to creation. Sia is described as “the heart” and Hu is described as “the two lips”, the text states:

*“Sia is his heart (si3 ib.f), Hu is his lips (hw spty.fy)”*.<sup>13</sup>

Furthermore, Spell 261 of the Coffin Text, Hu was cited as a creative element, the text states:

*“Becoming Magic. O noble ones.. I am the one whom the sole word made before two things had developed in this world, when he sent his sole eye, when he was alone, when something came from his mouth (m pr.t m r.i), when ..., when he spoke with the one who developed with him (m mdw.f hn<sup>c</sup> hpr.w hn<sup>c</sup>.f), than whom he is mightier, when he took utterance in his mouth (it.n.f hw tp r.f)”*.<sup>14</sup>

Though, Hu and Sia are not the main focus of the research,<sup>15</sup> but the conception of the heart and tongue as an essential pair of creation is well represented. The conception of the heart as the place of the divine thought appeared as well in Spell 321 of the Coffin Texts. The text clearly stated that the speech was made in the heart of the deity:

*“I am he ... whose speech was what had come forth from his heart (r.f pr.t m ib.f)”*.<sup>16</sup>

The text also states:

*“Hu and Sia said to him: “Come, then, let us go and create the names of this coil according to what comes from his heart” (ir.n rn.w nw k3b.wpf htf pr.t m if)”*.<sup>17</sup>

The idea is more clearly shown in the Spell 714:

*“It was as I wished, I created myself after to my heart (kd.n(i) wi r mrr.i hft ib.f)”*.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Breasted, ZÄS 39 (1901), pp.43-45; Allen, *Genesis in Egypt*, p.43.

<sup>9</sup> CT Spel175, CT Spell 714.

<sup>10</sup> Breasted, ZÄS 39 (1901), p. 46.

<sup>11</sup> *Urk* I. 38.

<sup>12</sup> *Pyr* 267-8.

<sup>13</sup> Leiden Papyrus I 350 5, 16-17; Gardiner, ZÄS 42 (1905), p.38; Junker, *Die Götterlehre von Memphis*, p. 44.

<sup>14</sup> CT III 382a-389a. Translated after Allen, *Genesis in Egypt*, p. 37.

<sup>15</sup> For more detailed data see Gardiner, *PSBA* 38 (1916).

<sup>16</sup> CT IV, 147h. Translation is after Clark, *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt*, p. 75.

<sup>17</sup> CT IV, 147k-I.

<sup>18</sup> CT VI, 344c-d.

The same concept is shown the hymn of Ptah and Sekhmet, from NY Carlsberg Museum stela, it has a text which clearly shows that the ancient Egyptians well-thought-out of the concept of perception, which took place in the heart of the creator-god, and as a result of the act of speaking things which were said in his heart (*dd.tw m ib f*) come true (*hpr.sn*).<sup>19</sup>

### The Power of Uttering

Speaking is the articulation of the divine thought in the mind of the deity, so the ancient Egyptians believed that everything that articulated by the mouth has its divine power. The mouth was theoretically and physically an important element of the human body, as it is considered the channel of many things, such as: breathing, eating, and speaking. This means that the mouth is a representative to divine contact. This concept is shown in spell 173 of the Coffin Texts:

*"hpd.i r.i wnm.i nh nh.i m t3w whm.i nh m-ht"*

I opened my mouth, I eat life, I live on air, I live again forever.<sup>20</sup>

The power of uttering the words is shown in many texts, as shown in the text from the Speech of Seshat, in the temple of Seti I at Abydos, the spell is described as a guarding spell, the text states:

*"I establish your goodness in writing as Re has commanded, my mouth is efficient as your protection (jw 3h.w r.i m s3.w.k), and my words are as a safeguard for you (md.t.i n.k m wd3w); my handwriting is your support like a brother of Thoth"*.<sup>21</sup>

This means that the ancient Egyptians believed that uttering from the mouth had a magical power. The (*r*) stands for the mouth and (*md.t*) are words, which were defined as (*s3w*) which is protection and *wd3w* which is safeguard. It appears also that there was a variation and a type of homophonous between *3h.w* and *s3.w.k* and *md.t.i* and *m wd3w*. The fact that the two lines: (*iw 3h.w r.i m s3.w.k*) "My mouth is efficient as your protection", and (*md.t.i n.k m wd3w*) "My words as a safeguard for you" have a very close meaning, this may propose that the words were very carefully chosen to make the phonetic matches.

This explains that the uttering or the articulation of the word has a power, saying it was considered like have the power of doing its action. Saying has the exact same effect when doing it.

### Creation through Words

The ancient Egyptians thought of the creation of the universe. They recorded their ideas of the creation in several ways. Ancient Egyptian cosmology has also been well known and shows that the ancient Egyptians did not limit their concepts of the creation of the universe to a single idea.

The theoretical principle of the heart as conception or thought and the tongue as speech has been mentioned earlier. In the Shabaka stone, the mouth of god Ptah is considered a way to express the divine thoughts, therefore the articulation works as an identity, and all creation happened through the pronounced words, or speech. Three types of verbal creation can be proposed in Egyptian texts.

Firstly, the use of the verb *dd* appears in the Coffin Texts. In Spell 320, *dd.i* is used to express a mode of creation. The text states:

*"dd.i hpr hw I speak, Hu came into being"*.<sup>22</sup>

In the Nineteenth Dynasty Kuban stela, the spoken action also works as a mean of creation:

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<sup>19</sup> Stela Ny Carlsberg Glyptothek Nr. 897: Assmann, *Ägyptische Hymnen und Gebete*, no. 223, 7.

<sup>20</sup> CTIII, 57e-h.

<sup>21</sup> KRI I, 187.16-188.1.

<sup>22</sup> CT IV, 145.

*“If you say (dd.k) to the water: “Come up on the mountain!” the flood comes forth quickly after your utterance”.*<sup>23</sup>

The flood occurs because the utterance ordered the water rise high. It is clearly representing that the act of the word Dd “to speak” was thought to have a power of creation.

Another type of verbal creation is the action of coming from the mouth of the creator-god. “*pri m r.f*”, which literally means “going forth from his mouth”. This is a commonly exploited expression used to describe divine utterances as a reason of creation. This is most explicitly found in the tomb inscriptions of Nyankhsekhmet, in which everything in the world created when they are pushed out of the divine mouth:

*“If anything comes out (pry) from the mouth of his Majesty (m r n hm.f), it will happen immediately (hpr hr cw) as gods gave him perception of things, while having been in the belly”.*<sup>24</sup>

The above text contains a remarkable information explaining how things were firstly named or came into being. This is described as xpr in ancient Egypt, and therefore it was necessary for the gods to provide a perception of things, which were “in the belly”<sup>25</sup> before their existence in the world. It can be suggested that this might explain the Egyptian concept of names that represent their core. More examples are illustrating the link between the action of pri and the creation, as follows:

CT Spell 261:

*“... when he was alone, gone forth from his own mouth (pr.i m r.f), when his million ka were there, protection for his retinue, when he spoke with one who comes to being with him (m mdw.f hn<sup>c</sup> hpr hn<sup>c</sup>.f), over whom he rules, when he took Hu upon his speech (m iti.f hw tp r.f)”.*<sup>26</sup>

Stela of the Assistant Seal-bearer, Mery from Abydos:

*“Who comes from the mouth of Re himself (prw m r n R<sup>c</sup> ds.f) upon which Abydos was sanctified?”.*<sup>27</sup>

Limestone Theban stela with Goddess Meret:

*“O, stop, stop, turn back, it is Heka who comes forth from my mouth (hk3 pw pr m r.i), hey, hey”.*<sup>28</sup>

The gods are described as being originated from the mouth of a creator-god, while humans came from his eye or tears. Divine tears are often word-played with homonyms, and it is often the verb *hpr* that is used to manifest their creation. The examples are:

Papyrus Bremner-Rhind 26, 22:

*“All development developed after I developed (hpr bpr.w nb m-ht bpr.i), developments becoming many in emerging from my mouth (c<sup>s</sup>3 hprw m pr m r.i)”.*<sup>29</sup>

Ramesside Hymn to Sobek-Re:

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<sup>23</sup> Lines 17-18, KRI II, p.356, 7, and lines 21-22, KRI II, p. 357, 3-7.

<sup>24</sup> Urk I, p. 39.12-15.

<sup>25</sup> Ritner noted that the idea of “enclosing” is essential in ancient Egyptian religion, which is shown in many things like the royal names, which are so important, so it is enclosed by a cartouche, and coffins of the New Kingdom and later periods are surrounded with layers of outer coffins. Ritner, *The Mechanics of Egyptian Magical Practice*, p. 143.

<sup>26</sup> CT III, 383c-384c.

<sup>27</sup> Louvre C3. Vernus, *RdE25* (1973), pl. 13, line 16.

<sup>28</sup> Both the text and translation in Kakosy and Moussa, *SAK 25* (1998), fig 2 and 155, the back of the stela, line 12.

<sup>29</sup> Faulkner, *Papyrus Bremner-Rhind*, p. 60, 3-4; The translation is cited from Allen, *Genesis in Egypt*, p. 28.

*“He settled the earth and caused ? primeval hill to emerge through his first utterance  
(shpr tnw hr tp r3.f) by the providence of his heart”.*<sup>30</sup>

Ramesseid Tomb Hymn, Papyrus Cairo 58038:

*“Humans are issued (pr.w) from (m) his eyes, the gods emerged (hpr.w) from his  
mouth”.*<sup>31</sup>

This text emphasizes the difference in the perceptions of pri and xpr,<sup>32</sup> as practices of creation. But Assmann in his study of the creation theories, explained that xpr was the central focus of the universe, and the world was seen as a secretion of the god.<sup>33</sup>

The third type of the uttered creation is the action of naming. Everything in the cosmos was created when it was named, so as indicated in Papyrus Berlin 3055, the text states:

*“When the name of anything was not yet named”.*<sup>34</sup>

In the Shabaka stone, we noticed the concept of creation process which took place by the creator-god, in the heart of Ptah and delivered into his mouth. This creation can be classified as an act of separation, which was figured out in Assmann’s study of the creation theories.<sup>35</sup> The same text continues to clearly clarify that Ptah was a divine creator whose utterances became the name of everything, and because the name which was supposed in his heart is spoken out, everything came into being or created:

*“His Ennead is before him as the teeth and semen/the lips and hands of Atum.....the  
Ennead is the teeth and the lips in this mouth which uttered the name of everything (m3t  
rn n h.t nb.t) and Shu and Tefnut came forth (pr. n) from it”.*<sup>36</sup>

To understand the concept of the phase between the first stage of creation as a perception in the heart and the final stage of the object becoming real with its identity when being named, we still lack detailed data. But, Spell 335 of the Coffin Texts provides a good explanation, which shows the relation between this concept of the perception of creation process and the act of naming, the text states:

*“The word developed (hpr mdw.i), all was mine when I existed alone. I am the Sun in his  
first appearances. I am the great self-developing god, who created his identities (km3  
rn.w.f)”.*<sup>37</sup>

It is suggested that the text indicates creation as the development of the word, and relates the process of Atum's self-realization to this concept by explaining how he created the identities “names of his parts”.<sup>38</sup>

This could describe the final stage of the creation process as stated in the Memphite Theology, in which everything is first thought of or planned in the heart of the creator-god. What originated in the heart is only completed by being given their names, since the names appeal their reality or

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<sup>30</sup> Assmann, *ÄHG*, no. 144c, p. 38. The translation is cited from Assmann, *Egyptian Solar Religion in the New Kingdom*, p. 170.

<sup>31</sup> p Cairo 58038, vi, 3. The translation is cited from Assmann, *Egyptian Solar Religion in the New Kingdom*, p. 167, (1).

<sup>32</sup> Allen explains this action of xpr as a development, see: Allen, *Genesis in Egypt*, p. 36, on the other hand Assmann, *Egyptian Solar Religion in the New Kingdom*, p. 157, describes it as a metaphor of secretion.

<sup>33</sup> Assmann, *Egyptian Solar Religion in the New Kingdom*, p.157.

<sup>34</sup> pBerlin 3055, XVI, 3. Morenz, *Egyptian Religion*, p. 165.

<sup>35</sup> Assmann, *Egyptian Solar Religion in the New Kingdom*, p.157.

<sup>36</sup> Shabaka Stone, BM498, Breasted, *ZÄS* 39 (1901), Tafel II, line 55.

<sup>37</sup> *CT* IV, 184a-190a. The translation is after Allen, *Genesis in Egypt*, p. 31.

<sup>38</sup> Allen, *Genesis in Egypt*, p. 36.

their identity. Most of the naming in Egyptian texts are known as the “Name Formula”, which states: “in the name of (*m rn n*), or (*rn*)”.

### The Performative Utterance

The perception of sound in ancient Egypt is considered a part of divinity and the idea of utterance was based on a feature of its recitation. The offering recitation, as an example, refers to this idea, and considered a kind of speech, which can be categorized as “A performative speech”. Recitation or performance of utterances shows that the delivering of the utterance is focused in the performance of the action. Austin in his study of the words articulation stated that “to utter the sentence is not to describe my doing of what I should be said in”, so uttering to be doing or to state that I am doing it, it is to do it.<sup>39</sup>

Uttering a speech is by stating it, this achieves the action stated, and linguistically form a close relation between the speech and the action, and between texts and contexts. Gunn in his study of the Egyptian rituals argued that in some ritual scenes verbs have a specific conception of “synchronous present”.<sup>40</sup> He confirmed that this was the case with some formulas, especially speeches spoken by deities in ritual scenes, like the *sdm.n.f* form, which described the action or the performance which was done at the time when the speech was uttered.

Gardiner,<sup>41</sup> and Perdu,<sup>42</sup> agreed with Gunn's theory that there was a special use of *sdm.n.f* as “an action simultaneously spoken of and performed, and therefore treated it as present tense. However, other scholars like Wente,<sup>43</sup> Junge<sup>44</sup>, and Žabkar<sup>45</sup> do not fully agreed with Gunn's theory, and they consider this a special use of the *sdm.n.f* as a present perfect, but only when the *sdm.n.f* form happens exclusively in ritual contexts. But, Vernus rejected this theory also, as he considered the *sdm.n.f* form in the offering ritual scenes as “ritual or performative *sdm.n.f*” and the action or performing of ritual was in the past, in respect of the time of uttering. He figure out that their argument is based on “conveying a time indication either present or past relating to an action which is performed or being performed”,<sup>46</sup> and debates that Gunn's theory is unlikely to be right as speeches and pictorial representations in ritual scenes are not always matched.<sup>47</sup> If Gunn's theory was right, then the captions or heading should always be a statement describing the action of the pictorial representation.

Vernus go further with his theory, giving an example of a text recitation of the offerings of the eye in the texts where it states:

“*sd.n.i irt.i ḥsrt.k*” Hereby, I take my eye, your cameol-bead”.<sup>48</sup>

He concluded that the treatment of the *sdm.n.f* form in the ritual scenes suggests a new feature to the *sdm.n.f* form which is understood by him, to be used to describe “an action marked as definitely performed, outside performative statements”.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, p. 6.

<sup>40</sup> Vernus, *Pharaonic Egypt*, p. 307. It means that it come true at the same time of the recitation.

<sup>41</sup> Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, p. 414-415.

<sup>42</sup> Perdu, *RdE* 30, (1978), p. 104.

<sup>43</sup> Wente, *The Beit el Wali Temple of Ramses II*, p. 31.

<sup>44</sup> Junge, *Studien zum mittelägyptischen Verbum*, p. 18-20.

<sup>45</sup> Žabkar, *ZÄS* 108 (1981), pp. 168-70.

<sup>46</sup> Vernus, *Pharaonic Egypt*, p. 307.

<sup>47</sup> Vernus here provided an example from an offering scene in the White Chapel of Sesostris I at Karnak: Vernus, *Pharaonic Egypt*, p. 308.

<sup>48</sup> Vernus, *Pharaonic Egypt*, p. 313; Sethe, *Dramatische Texte*, p. 180, p. 72-73.

<sup>49</sup> Vernus, *Pharaonic Egypt*, p. 301.

Understanding of the ritual scenes in ancient Egypt is not easy; they are not essentially a reflection of real actions. Vernus believes that this special use of the *sdm.n.f* form in ritual scenes has two different characteristics, and that they should be regarded separately: a tense as "synchronous" and the other is the "performative utterances".

According to Vernus, "performative utterance" in Egyptian cannot be considered as a grammatical kind, since the sentence is sensed by performance, and this totally depends on a context and usually with no time frame.<sup>50</sup> It is the characteristic that shows that the speech is performative or not, the tense is not involved. Performative utterances according to his theory are uttered by the person performing the act.<sup>51</sup>

The assumption that there is verbal performativity in ancient Egypt is possibly a result of the belief that the speech has an equivalent power as doing the action. This concept of performativity of utterances or speaking can be seen in several Egyptian rituals, for example, the reading of the offering list and the royal decrees. One of the texts that clearly expresses the idea of the performative utterance is the text of the Semna Stela, Senusret III says:

*"ink nsw dd.w irri.w k33t ib.i pw hpr.t m-ꜥ.i"*

"I am a king, who speaks and who acts, what my mind plans is what happens by my arm".<sup>52</sup>

This utterance of speech and performance (*dd.w irri.w*) shows that certain words could have been equal to performing the action. The formulae like (*mi dd.in*) which means "according to what you say" This is frequently used in hymns and autobiographies, can be considered an evidence that there is a kind of performativity of the utterances or words.

A stela dating back to the Eighteenth Dynasty, belongs to Wepuauetmose, He is the son of a royal scribe, inscribed by two hymns addressing Osiris and Re. The text states that the owner of the tomb asked the local deity for his favour, as he says:

"May your gods of your city favour you, according as you speak (*mi dd.in*)".<sup>53</sup>

Early Dynastic monuments declares that the offerings were physically placed for the deceased, and the offering lists were listed on the walls of the tomb. These were extravagantly lists in the Middle and New Kingdoms. In some texts, the offering list were described as being recited by priests. This is, well shown in a hymn dated back to the Twelfth Dynasty tomb, in which was found a stela of Shetepibre from Abydos. The text states:

*"iri n.f hbyw.t nb.t šd.n hm-ntr.w"*

"All the offerings (which) were done to him, recited by the priests".<sup>54</sup>

Another example is found in the Fifth Dynasty mastaba of the vizier Ankhmahore, located at Giza plateau, the text states:

*"šdi.t n.f sš krs.t.f"*

"Reciting for him the writing of his burial equipment. This was donated by the king as an offering".<sup>55</sup>

Another text was found on the eighth pylon of Queen Hatshepsut's temple at Karnak, the text declares that the offering were spoken rather than physically given, the text states:

*"wđ mꜥw.t hr hm.w.sn"*

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<sup>50</sup> Vernus, *Pharaonic Egypt*, p. 309.

<sup>51</sup> Vernus, *Pharaonic Egypt*, p. 309.

<sup>52</sup> Sethe, *Leses*, p. 83, 23.

<sup>53</sup> Berlin 7316; Roeder, *Ägyptischen Inschriften aus den Königlichen Museen zu Berlin*, II, p. 134.

<sup>54</sup> CG 20538. Sethe, *Leses*, p. 68,7-8.

<sup>55</sup> *Urk I*, 203.7. Wilson, *JNES* 6 (1947), p. 241.

“Who donates the deities and utters offerings to their majesties.”<sup>56</sup>

It is clearly shown that the offerings were consisting of a list of objects which were presented through uttering of the text. The Uttering process of the offerings was considered a performative action. The recitation of the name of the object offered was done. This is clearly confirming the idea of the performative utterance.

This idea is also shown in the Pyramid Texts, Spell 217. It states that the statement of the king's transfiguration by the god is essential. The text clearly states that the king appears as a god, and it has to be declared by gods.<sup>57</sup> The dead king is shown as a god, and the text narrates that the act of transfiguration needs its declaration, though the text does not contain any clear declarative sentences or words. So, it is suggested that in this divine declaration of the king as a god, the main issue was not to make a simple phrase, but to figure the act of transfiguring of the King to a god by uttering a speech.

Another example is also shown in the Hymn of Aten, the process of the creation of god Aten was done. This offers credibility to the idea:

“*r wd.t r dmdy.f* He comes out from the egg, to announce his completion; he goes upon his legs, he comes out from it”.<sup>58</sup>

At this point, it declares that the creation process is completed through the description of the creation not as a finished process of creation. Uttering the speech made the process of the coming out of the egg done. So uttering has an equal power as performing an action in ancient Egypt. Parkinson figures out that the performative utterances create their items.<sup>59</sup>

Two other texts belong to Senusret III, illustrate also that utterance in ancient Egypt has performative power. The Semna Stela texts relates that the king's speech is as powerful as a weapon against his enemies, the text states:

“A true coward is the one who is driven from his border, since the Nubians only have to hear to fall at speech (*sdm r hr n r*); it is answering him which makes him retreat (*in wšb.f ddi hm.f*)”.<sup>60</sup>

And again in the Hymn to Senusret III:

“*ns n hm.f rth sty ts.w.f sbh3 stiw*”

“Tongue of his Majesty restrains Nubians, his speeches make Asiatic flee”.<sup>61</sup>

And Spell 335 of the Coffin Texts:

“It is in accordance with my saying (*hft dd.i*) that the gods' battleship was made”.<sup>62</sup>

This last example is shown from The Story of Sinuhe. Who finally returned to Egypt, he was warmly welcomed at the royal court, and royal children sang a song to greet him, saying:

“South-crown fares north, North-crown south, joined and made one in the words of your Majesty (*sm3 twt m r n hm.k*), on whose brow the uraeus is placed”.<sup>63</sup>

The text depicts that the Egyptians strongly belief in verbal power and that the kings has the ability to unify the two lands. This text declares that the utterance in ancient Egypt used the idea

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<sup>56</sup> *Urk* IV, p. 269.3-4.

<sup>57</sup> *Pyr.* 152-160.

<sup>58</sup> Sandman, Texts from the Time of Akhenaten, p. 94.15-16.

<sup>59</sup> Parkinson, Poetry and Culture in Middle Kingdom Egypt, p. 78.

<sup>60</sup> Sethe, *Leses*, p. 84, 4-5.

<sup>61</sup> Sethe, *Leses*, p. 66, 68.

<sup>62</sup> *CT* IV, 194a. The translation is after Allen, *Genesis in Egypt*, p. 31.

<sup>63</sup> Parkinson, *The Tale of Sinuhe*, p. 273-4.



of “the performative speech, which is uttering something and performing something by speaking about it and speaking about doings.

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