

The role of the heart in the purification¹

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Cleaning and purification have been playing a very important role in the life of ancient people in the Nile valley. As a whole there two conditional groups can be distinguished: purification before and purification after death. Purification before death includes: hygiene practice, washing of the feet, shaving, purification before the meal, purification of birth, purification after sexual intercourse, purification of the living pharaoh, purification of the priest and etc.² As for the purification after death, there is purification during the mummification, and in the rite of Opening of the Mouth, as well as in some of the daily rituals in necropolis. In all rites, especially in these after death, purification has double purpose. On one hand it is absolutely necessary of cleaning of dead body in process of mummification, because of saving the corpse in the best way. On the other hand purification possesses magical function and is one of the rites by which individual parts of the dead body are collected together, power is returned in it and repeatedly revived³. Except this by the act of purification the deceased acquires magical protection from all kind of evil, which can overtake him by the long way to the realm of dead⁴.

The object of research in this article is rite for purification after dead and more precisely one definite scene from it, which is very typical and which is depicted by the same way in numerous tombs, all of them in Theban necropolis during the time of the New Kingdom.

1. Tomb of Duauneheh (Hatshepsut) TT 125.⁵
2. Tomb of Amenmosi (Tutmosis III – Amenophis II) TT 42.⁶
3. Tomb of Puimre (Tutmosis III) TT 39.⁷
4. Tomb of Amenemhet (Amenophis II) TT 97.⁸
5. Tomb of Kenamun (Amenophis II) TT 93.⁹
6. Tomb of Amenhotp-si-se (Tutmosis IV) TT 75.¹⁰
7. Tomb of Amenemopet (Tutmosis IV) TT 276.
8. Tomb of Ramosi (Amenophis IV) TT 55.¹¹
9. Tomb of Amenhotp, called Huy (Amenophis IV – Tutankhamun) TT 40.¹²

¹ I owe a great deal to my teacher, Dr T. Lekov for many suggestions, as we discussed this article.

² Blackman 1967, pp. 476 – 482; Arnold *LA V*, 1984 col. 213 – 220.

³ *PT* § 1684 – 1685; § 1916.

⁴ *PT* § 713; § 838.

⁵ Hermann 1940, pl. 6c.

⁶ Davies 1933, pl. XXXVII.

⁷ Davies 1922-3, pl. 71, 4.

⁸ Gardiner 1910, p. 97.

⁹ Davies 1930, pl. 63; Gardiner 1950, p.11.

¹⁰ Davies 1923, pl. XV; Hermann 1940, pl. 6b.

¹¹ Emery 1925, pl. X.

10. Tomb of Userhet, called Neferhabef (Sethos I) TT 51 Image of Aakheperkaresonb.¹³
 11. Tomb of Neferabet (Ramesside) TT 5.¹⁴
 (Register is order by chronological way).

Certainly, this list is not absolutely full, there are more scenes of the kind even within the framework of the Theban necropolis. Their number is probably quite large, which is shown by the index of selected scenes from the Theban private tombs¹⁵. Unfortunately a big part of these scenes remains inaccessible on this stage of research. Here is the place where a weakness, in the study connection with the Theban necropolis must be mentioned, something that is quite unpleasant for everyone who tries to investigate some problems connected with these tombs. Namely, big part of the images, deposited in personal indexes or in very old editions are unapproachable.

All these scenes are monotonous. The owner of the tomb, who is purified stepped on to the sign that depicted big alabaster jar (Gardiner Sign-list W 3 “basin of alabaster as used in purification”). This symbol is included in the sign of sand-covered mountain (N 26). The only exception is No 10 of our list, where Aakheperkaresonb is squatting upon some vessel in the form of a small pool (N 39). Blackman sees in this pool “evidently an ablution-pedestal” which resembles a similar one, found in Karnak¹⁶. Upon the deceased, two or three turned upside-down signs for festival are portrayed and in this way these signs separate a definite space, where the owner of the tomb is purified. In all scenes, the deceased is portrayed standing with one leg forward and holding a mace (*ḥd*) or a scepter (*w3s*, *ʿb3*, *ḥrp* or *šḥm*) in his hands (fig. 1). Exceptions are only two cases in which the deceased holds his heart with his hand. There is no doubt that in these scenes the statue of the deceased is featured. In the two above mentioned scenes, No 10 and No 11, the deceased is presented squatting and in the first one he is holding his heart with two hands, in the second one he is holding his heart with his left hand and in the right hand - a scepter *šḥm*.

The jars that are used during the purification are several kinds: metal vase *ḥs.t* bowl *nms.t* as well as *dšr.t* and *ʿ3b.t*. The vase *ḥs.t* usually is made of copper, while the other jars are of clay. It is possible that they have had archetype produced from stone¹⁷. The jars in most of the scenes are in different colours - when their number is four, two of them are red and the other two - white¹⁸ (fig. 2).

The number of priests who take part in the purification is not precisely established. Actually, they are gods and only sometimes they are introduced as priests. In most of these scenes, there are four priests. An example from the tomb of Huy, where “viceroy of Nubia” is being purified by one priest is very interesting. The idea about the number of jars is depicted by four bowls, which he is holding and from which water is poured out. According to A. Gardiner this “*ḥs* purification was quadrilateral, not bilateral”, but frequently there only two gods or priests are featured, because there is not enough space for all four gods and such important gods as Hor, Thoth or Seth cannot be portrayed in

¹² Davies 1926, pl. XXXV.

¹³ Blackman 1918, pl. XIX.

¹⁴ Berlandini 2002, pl. VII.

¹⁵ Porter, Moss 1994, pp. 471-472.

¹⁶ Blackman 1918, p. 121.

¹⁷ Blackman 1967, pp. 476 – 482; Arnold *LA* V, 1984 col. 213 – 220.

¹⁸ Hermann 1940, p. 63.

miniature. In confirmation of this, there are two examples in our list where purification is made by two figures and they are not priests, but gods. From the time of the Pyramid Texts four gods, taking part in purification are mentioned: Hor, Thoth, Seth and *Dun-ꜥnwy*¹⁹. The number of gods in this rite without doubt is connected with the number of the jars from which water is poured out. During the purification and not only in this rite, the number four of the jars is quite important. This can be seen in a scene in Karnak where king Ramses II purifies with water the statue of his father Sethos I. The king holds four jars *nms.t*²⁰. This scene once again shows how important the number four of the jars is, which must replace the four gods. Unique is the scene in the purification of Aakheperkaresonb, where eight priests pour out water over him. According to Blackman these eight priests represent the four sons of Hor and the four sons of Mekhentiri, that are mentioned in Spell 17 in the Book of the Dead. We do not know exactly if it concerns the four sons of Hor or the gods who take part in this rite from the time of Pyramid Texts (Hor, Thoth, Seth and *Dun-ꜥnwy*). It is true that the four sons of Hor are also mentioned in the Pyramid Texts²¹, but they do not play any role during the purification.

When priests are four, there are two “lector-priests” (*hrj-ḥb*), one “chief lector” (*hrj-ḥb hr(j)-tp*) and one *s(t)m*.²² It is clear that they are just substitutes of the four gods.

After we have described the scenes and their characteristic features we must think about what kind of rite it is. There is no doubt that they have connection with the rites after death. Then those acts can be part of preparing the mummy. But in the scenes, it is clear that the image of the deceased is closer to a statue than to the mummy itself. Representing the rite of Opening of the mouth is another possibility of these scenes. In scenes 2 and 3 of this rite there is a purification of a mummy or a statue by the priest *sm* or *hrj ḥb*²³. It is interesting to note that, in this rite the mummy or the statue must stand on sand and in our scenes this is a sand-covered mountain. But there is some differences perceived by A. Hermann. It is true that the deceased is standing over the sign for a sand-covered mountain but in this sign as we have said, is included the sign “alabaster jar” for festival. There are another two signs for festival above the owner of the tomb. Making this distinction A. Hermann suggests that it is a question of different rite, named by him “Reinigung im Alabastergefaess”, that is done after the rite of Opening of the mouth.²⁴ Then, question arises: what is this rite like and what is its meaning? The answer probably is in one special feature of these scenes, which the former scholars did not pay any attention. The point is that the image of the heart which the deceased is holding in his hand or an amulet of the heart that is hanging on the neck of the man who is being purified (fig. 3). From all the scenes mentioned here, in seven an amulet of the heart is depicted and in two of them the deceased holds his heart in hands. We cannot be sure in some scenes, because of the bad condition of the pictures (for example Amenhotp-si-se and Amenmosi). Exactly this gesture even shown in only two of the images, can help us in finding the point of this rite.

It is important to say that these images of the heart during the purification must be distinctive from the expression *ꜥi ib* “wash the heart”, “satisfy s’one”, “vent o’s

¹⁹ *PT* § 27; § 28; § 315.

²⁰ Nelson 1949, p. 219; fig. 15.

²¹ *PT* § 1983.

²² Gardiner 1950, p. 11.

²³ Otto 1960, ls. I, 3 –8; II, 37 – 44.

²⁴ Hermann 1940, pp. 65-66.

feeling”²⁵, which have a different meaning and a different use. The point of purification is to clean all the body of the deceased (“all his members”), not only the heart. After the preparation of the mummy, it is purified by Hor and Seth with these words: *iw.k w^cb ḥ3tj.k w^cb ʕ.w(t).k nb.t dr(.w)* ”You are clear, your heart is clear and all your members are clear”²⁶.

The accent here is that after the purification or because of it the deceased holds his heart in his hand. To hold your heart in your hand *ib.N m ʕ.f* is an expression which was translated by Faulkner as “with self-possession”²⁷.

The idea of the heart in the hand of its owner is mentioned in Sh. S. 13 - 16 *i^ci tw imy mw hr db^c.w.k iḥ wšb.k wšd.t(w).k mdw.k n nswt ib.k m ʕ.k wšb.k* “Clean your self, give water to your fingers. Answer when you are addressed. Speak to the king. (Let) your heart is in your hand, when you speak (answer)”. As well as in tomb of Paheri (Urk. IV 115, 3-4)²⁸ *ib.k m ʕ.k n wn-m3^c ḥ3tj.k n.k n imj-ḥ3t* “Your true heart (*ib*) is in your hand, and your former heart (*ḥ3ty*) is with you”. And in the left stela from the tomb of Djehuti (Hatshepsut – Tuthmoses III)²⁹ *ib.k m ʕ.k n wn-m3^c ḥ3tj.k n wnn.k tp t3 ij.tj m km3.k imj-ḥ3t mi hrw ms.n.tw.k im.f* “Your true heart (*ib*) is in your hand, your heart (*ḥ3ty*) of your existence upon the earth. You come in your previous form, like a day you were born”.

The expression *ib.k m ʕ.k* is used in two different situations - until the man is alive and after his death. When man is alive there is a striving for control over the heart, because of its double nature³⁰. The heart is the connection between human and god, the unity between the human and his heart is guaranteed for his right activity. There are several cases in which exist a separation between the man and its heart³¹. In addition to this is the purification, by which it is possible to return in a primary condition. The heart in the hand of its owner after death is part of a ritual act for giving the heart to the mummy. This act means the returning of the ability to realize the world around and the revival of the dead body for a new life. A good example of this idea is: “... May your eyes see for you, your feet go for you and your ears be open for you, may your tongue be open for you and your throat be open for you. May your lips speak for you. May your heart create (*gm3*) perfection (*nfrw*) for you similar to our own”³². The role of purification here is very important, because the water is a symbol of Nun, the first unrealized condition of the world in potential, which is an attempt to show the second birth of man.

In other words to have your heart in your hand, when you are alive means that you have power over it, you control it and there is no difference between you and your heart.³³ In our case when we talk about the rite after death, it is better to translate the expression as “posses your heart” i. e., it is part from you. It is possible this fictional image to show scene of giving the heart to the mummy, that repeat its revival. The idea of giving the

²⁵ Faulkner 1988, p.10.

²⁶ Moller 1913, p.32.

²⁷ Faulkner 1988, p.14.

²⁸ Sethe 1906-1909, p.115.

²⁹ Hermann 1940, p. 32.

³⁰ Spiegelberg 1931, pp. 35 – 37.

³¹ Sin. B 255; Edfou VI. 66. 11; Eb. 101, 15. also in T. Lekov. The Concepts of Human Personality in the History of Egypt Religion. IV, 4.1 (unpublished Ph. D. Diss.).

³² Smith 1993, p. 30.

³³ Ignatov 2000, pp 26 – 30.

heart back to the body is already mentioned in the Pyramid Texts³⁴ and passes in the time of the New Kingdom as a separate spell 26 from the Book of the Dead with name “Spell for giving N’s heart to him in the realm of the dead”, where it is described that giving the heart back leads to returning the power over all the body: “I shall have power in my heart, I shall have power in my arms, I shall have power in my legs, I shall have power to do whatever I desire; my soul and my corpse shall not be restrained at the portals of the West when I go in or out in peace”³⁵. The possession of the heart guarantees the deceased that his heart would not testify against him in front the court of Osiris. When the heart is with its owner, the power of life will come back to him and he will continue his existence in the West: “for N’s heart is his own, he has power over it, and he will not say what he has done. He himself has power over his members, his heart obeys him, for he is your lord and you are in his body, you shall not turn aside. I command you to obey me in the realm of the dead”³⁶. This idea is depicted in the Book of the Dead on a vignette from Spell 26, Ta-Amen-iw holds his heart in his hand before the image of his soul (*b3*), which has stepped upon his tomb.³⁷ The same vignette is painted in Turin papyrus of Iuefankh³⁸. Therefore, the gesture under which the deceased is holding his heart in his hand means that he owns his heart. Then what is the role of purification in this case?

The scene of giving the heart is described as following the rite of Opening the mouth and perhaps it depends on it: *ink Hr wpj r3.k hn^c Pth s3h tw hn^c Dhwtj dj(j) n.k ib.k m-hnw ht.k s3h.k sh3.k shm.t.n.k* “I am Hor, who opens your mouth together with Ptah, who made you Ah together with Thoth. (I) give to you, your heart in your body, to remember what you have forgotten”³⁹ and *wn r3.k in Pth wp r3.k in Skr dj Dhwtj ib.k m ht.k* “Open is your mouth from Ptah, thrown is your mouth from Sokar, to give Ptah your heart in your body”⁴⁰.

These scenes which have been describe are standing somewhere between the rite of Opening of the mouth and the act of giving back the heart to the mummy, which revives the deceased. But we do not know such rite. So all these scenes may be a combined image of two different rites - on one hand this is purification which is part from the rite of Opening of the mouth and on the other hand is the return of the heart. The differences pointed out by Hermann concerning these images and the rite of Opening of the mouth, actually are not so big. In this rite except priest (*sm*), often the priest *hrj hb* pours out water over the mummy or the statue and he use again the same jars *nms.t* or *hs.t*. On the vignette of Spell 23 from the Book of the Dead in the papyrus of Hunefer, one priest holds in his hands four jars with which he purifies the mummy. Here we could more accurately define that, distinguishing a particular rite is to some extent conditional and is prompted by the modern manner of thinking and is outward of the ancient Egyptian tradition.

³⁴ *PT.* § 3

³⁵ Faulkner 1990, pp. 52-53.

³⁶ *Ib.* Spell 27 p. 53.

³⁷ *Ib.* p. 52.

³⁸ Lepsius 1842, pl. XV.

³⁹ *CT.* I. 265.

⁴⁰ Sandman – Holmberd 1946, p. 24 n. 112; For these and related examples see T. Lekov “The formula of ‘the giving of the heart’ in Ancient Egyptians religious texts”: *The Journal of Egyptological Studies (JES)*, vol. I (in print).

Those scenes which have been examined from the Theban necropolis during the 18th and 19th dynasty express the purification (Opening of the mouth) and the giving of the heart. These two rituals acts are mixed on unique manner in one general scene which tries to show the necessity of giving back the heart to the mummy of the deceased, which means a return of the consciousness - a compulsory condition for its repeated revival.

SOURCES

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