A new decade for social changes
Literary tradition and the Egyptian Book of the Dead

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Abstract. The oral literary tradition, which lasted for centuries among different tribes and peoples, preceded the art of the written word, the written literature that was born much later. Thus, written literature was based on the types of oral literature for many important elements of the design of literary works. Of course, writing enabled literature and its types to take a different course and development compared to the creations - works of oral literature, which were passed down orally from one person to another, from one generation to another, and over time many of them were forgotten and disappeared. The poetic language used by the writers in their texts conditioned not only the value of the works they created, but also the way they were accepted and communicated to the recipient not only of the time they were created but also of later times. In the Book of the Dead, Toti, the ruler of heaven, earth, and the underworld, the creator of life and of all nations, says: “I gave breath (air) to him who was in the secret place by the power of the magic words of my discourse, and Osiris triumphed over the enemies”. One of the first forms with literary elements is the Book of the Dead, of Egyptian tradition, consisting of hymns, litany and religious texts and which belongs to the time of the reign of Semt, king of the first Dynasty, which, according to connoisseurs of this work was copied, re-copied and added from generation to generation over a period of close to 5000 years”. Indeed, the book consists of various creations which the Egyptians wrote on tombs and sarcophagi, on coffins and on immortal slabs, on papyri, talismans and pyramid walls to ensure the well-being of their dead in the afterlife. Works that come to us from a distant past, such as the "Egyptian Book of the Dead", testify, in one way or another, the course of the change of the art of speech over time, the enrichment and importance it has had for man and its existence.

Keywords. tradition, literature, work, text, poetic language, art

Introduction
The exact time when mankind began to speak or when the very first language was discovered or even, how come that so many languages developed, is not known. Moreover, it is not exactly known when writing began either. However, "[...] we can go further into the history of mankind and writing: in the ancient Egyptian text "The Teachings of Ptahhotep" kept by many scholars as the world's first book, written 2400 years before Christ. On stone and limestone slabs one can read, The Maxims of the Perfect Word. The ancient text teaches us that this magical word should invariably connect a heavenly reality with an earthly reality. It had to be "complete, beautiful, perfect", but also to hold within the renewal of itself [...] for the ancient
Egyptians there is no light of beauty that is not profoundly useful, but it goes through the word and its absorption by a heart capable of understanding, perceiving bright vibrations” (Alia & Berisha, 2017).

Later, man also compiled books in order to further enrich his inner world, to communicate in various forms with the phenomena related to his life and action.

The importance that the book had and still has for man is very good described by Nichola Turker: "Nevertheless, the possible expansion of the self remains one of the most valuable possibilities that books can offer. Again in the words of C. S. Levvi: ‘In reading great literature I become thousands of people, though remaining the same. I see with a plurality of eyes, but I am always the one who sees […] I change myself and I am never the same as in the previous moment” (Tucker, 1996).

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I

There is no precise date that can be considered as the beginning of men’s creation of the art of speech, namely, literature. However, it can be said that the first kind of speech which contained literary elements, was closely connected to oral narratives and songs that men used to sing about themselves or people around them. All this can be seen as a result of one’s lack of fulfillment from ordinary communication and simple conversations one would do on daily basis with random people. Men had a spiritual need for a more elevated and a special kind of communication, which would differ from the ordinary one. Thus, in the first stories that are mainly related to hunting and what happened to men in everyday life, or to songs where different feelings were expressed, whether about the joys or the pleasures of life, but also for the sufferings and tragedies he faced , men perceived and expressed phenomena in a language other than that used in ordinary conversations between people.

Man used such stories and songs, first of all, for his own pleasure, for his own spiritual and mental enrichment, but also to please others.

The first stories and songs that man created in the distant past, got enriched and perfected over time, becoming more and more definite and complex in form.

Thus, being passed from one individual to another, various and numerous variants were created, which proved their importance for the spiritual enrichment of man in the course of time.

The oral literary tradition, which lasted for centuries among different tribes and peoples, preceded the art of the written word, namely, the written literature that was born much later (Nike Berisha, 2017). Thus, written literature was based upon oral literature because of a lot of elements. Sadly, today it is not known exactly when writing, which significantly influenced human life, has sprung - it was undoubtedly one of the inherent discoveries of its mental and spiritual development and enrichment (Nike Berisha, 1998).

Of course, writing enabled literature and its types to take on a different flow and development compared to the creations - works of oral literature, which were transmitted orally from one person to another, from one generation to another, and over time many of them were forgotten and even disappeared .

Writing enabled poets, prose writers and playwrights to pay close attention to what they created (wrote); to change their works at any time and circumstance whenever they felt they could and should do so in order to raise their expressive and poetic level; to add to and
fulfill their writings according to their spiritual tastes and needs, according to the requirements of their inner world, and to the recipient of their deeds.

The oral narrator and the oral singer were not able to return to the text of their works because they lived and functioned in the direct process, without being able to change and supplement their singing and narration during the performance, or, to justify as much as possible their originality; they aimed to become as much in tune with tradition as possible, to follow the previous ways and patterns of obtaining works, and to enrich the previous tradition or that which existed in their time (Nike Berisha, 1998).

The authors of the written works, although based their ideas on the earlier and contemporary literary tradition, always aimed to prove their originality in front of other writers. This enabled the extraordinary enrichment of the art of speech, its types and the influence it made on men’s inner world enrichment, as well as, world’s recognition in a more genuine and deeper form. Other forms of men’s work would not be able to acquire such great influence. All this change in the art of the written word, as well as its enrichment was caused by the literary texts which were created, their structure, the language used in them, especially the poetic language. It was the poetic language used by the writers in their texts that conditioned not only the value of the works they created, but also the way they were accepted and communicated to the recipient not only of the time they were created but also of later times.

In the Book of the Dead, Toti, the ruler of heaven, earth, and the underworld, the creator of life and of all nations, says: “I gave breath (air) to him who was in the secret place by the power of the magic words of my discourse, and Osiris triumphed over the enemies” (Qazimi, 2011).

Literary works of poetic quality proved their multiple importance through different times and circumstances, depending on their attitude and character.

In other words, through the expressive linguistic structure, the writers put the various life phenomena, thoughts and reflections in a relationship of confrontation, rapprochement or opposition, promoting through them a dialogue that is both lively and special. According to them the word remained among the most special mysteries given to man (Bible, John 1:1). The poetic word is the rise and fall of the writer, song and lament; it is his salvation and suffering. Even when he is silent, his word speaks; it has been entrusted to become his breath, his life, but also of those who have considered it, have made it part of them “the word speaks without speaking”. It is rightly said that the word for poet has the main evidence and possibility of action and resurrection; it is like rain and wind, which are an inseparable part of nature and life.

Evidences that serve as a prove for the existence of writing and the compilation of literary texts about 5000 years ago, belonged primarily to the culture of ancient Egypt, especially the time of the prominent pharaohs, who paid attention to the art of speech, literature (Petrović, 1982).

II

It must be said that belief in ancient Egypt was based on the kingdom of the other world. Beliefs revolved around the gods and their history as well as the lives of ordinary people after death. In Egyptian culture a large number of rites and rituals are associated with the fact of a person's death. By their very nature, the Egyptians were very religious. They were convinced that the process of human activity would decide the fulfillment of their destiny in the future. As a result of these beliefs, the "Book of the Dead" was created, which regulates human life after death.
It is a fact that for centuries the form of the "Book of the Dead" changed constantly, due to the religious and social goals that existed at different times.

So the “Book of the Dead” was formed within a tradition of funeral manuscripts belonging to the Ancient Kingdom of Egypt and that the first funeral texts were the pyramid texts, placed in the Pyramid of Pharaoh Unis of the 5th Dynasty (died about 2350 years before Christ). They are a series of independent texts accompanied by illustrations. Many of the sub-texts start with the word ro, which can mean "mouth", "conversation", "head", "formula"; this plurality of meanings marks the branching of thought about the concepts of ritual formulas and magical powers.

The original title of the Book of the Dead in transcription would be ru nu peret em heru, which could be translated as the Book of the Day of Judgment; another possible translation is the Book that marks the light. The notion of "Book" is more related to the collection as a whole of various texts that are magical religious formulas, short and long (in a 2008 edition with translation and texts by E. A. Wallis Budge of the British Museum, reaches up to 700 pages), which would serve the dead as protection and assistance on the journey to Duat, the world of the dead, respectively immortality. The texts were compiled by various Egyptian priests over a period of one millennium, beginning around the 17th century before Christ.

For the ancient Egyptians life on earth could be very short, so the rituals surrounding death were an integral part of their culture. Many of the most famous finds (relics) from Egypt - pyramids, tombs and mummies - reveal the time and resources of people living on the banks of the Nile who were willing to spend to secure the afterlife.

Formulas that could help on the way to the afterlife first appeared on the walls of the pyramids. Later, in the time of the Middle Kingdom of Egypt, the texts on the pyramids were turned into shroud texts carved on tombstones and sometimes on papyri.

The Book of the Dead has been widely used and there are many copies and examples that have survived to the present day. Carefully written and often beautifully illustrated, the Books of the Dead were beyond the reach of most people, so they were found only in the tombs of people belonging to the upper echelons of Egyptian society. "It was not something you had to have," says Stephen Quirke of the Petrie Museum at University College London. "It was an extra luxury to enhance the chances of the afterlife. "It was a very dominant and desirable addition to a rich funeral."

John Taylor says, "Deut's book is not a final text - it's not like the Bible, it's not a doctrine, a statement of faith, or anything like that - it's a practical guide to the afterlife, with spells that will help you on the journey in that world. This 'book' is usually a papyrus roll with many spells in hieroglyphic writing, which usually had beautiful color illustrations and were quite expensive. "Depending on how rich they were, they could go and buy a ready-made papyrus, which would have empty spaces for their name."

Although we know it as the Book of the Dead, in reality there are not even two books that were the same. John H. Taylor states: "There was no standard book of the dead - each manuscript contained different texts. There were a number of texts, about 200 of them, from which you could choose, but no known manuscript contains all the magic formulas known to date. There are some that exist in more or less every copy of the Book of the Dead and others that are really rare and of which we have only one or two examples.

The texts included in the Book of the Dead were discovered in the 1400s but were not translated until the early nineteenth century. At the time, the French scholar Jean Francois Champollion managed to decipher enough of the hieroglyphs and determined that what he was reading was in fact a funeral ritual text.
It is important to shed some light on whether the Ten Commandments of the Bible were inspired by the commandments of the Book of the Dead. Ani Papyrus contains, among others, about seven stories that can be freely interpreted as inspiration for the Ten Commandments. However, it is hard to say that the biblical commandments were copied from the Egyptian religion.

The ancient Egyptian text "Teachings of Ptahhotep" is held by many scholars as the first book in the world, written 2400 BC, which mentions the importance of the beautiful word: "On stone and limestone tablets we read the Thoughts of the Perfect Word. The ancient text teaches us that this magical word should invariably connect a heavenly reality with an earthly reality. It had to be "complete, beautiful, perfect," but it also had to be self-renewing (Alia & Berisha, 2017).

The Book of the Dead consists of hymns, litany and texts of a religious nature. The Book was often copied, duplicated, and added from generation to generation (Faulkner & Andrews, 1994, p.14).

These texts were written on graves and sarcophagi, on coffins and immortal slabs, on papyrus and talismans, to ensure the well-being of their dead in the afterlife (Faulkner & Andrews, 1994, p.7).

The book of the dead, as it was said, does not include the whole content of that multitude of religious texts, which speak of the dead and of what happens in the world after death.

It is believed that the Book of the Dead is of divine origin. The authorship is attributed to Thoth, the scribe of the gods. During the creation Toti uttered the words that were embodied by Pauta and Khenemu. Being the conciliator and helper of the god Osiris and, consequently, of every believer in Osiris, it is understandable why the authorship is ascribed to him (Faulkner & Andrews, 1994, p.8-9).

The texts that make up the Book of the Dead were mainly placed in coffins with the deceased or in any part of the tomb hall or mummy room, generally in an open niche for this purpose. Based on the data of the findings, the connoisseurs of these texts say that the papyrus was placed in the coffin, mainly placed between the legs of the deceased, on the ankles or near the upper part of the thighs, before the mummy was cooled. Later, when papyri made them smaller, the tradition changed in some elements (Faulkner & Andrews, 1994, p.9).

The texts of the Book of the Dead were deciphered from papyrus and other documents and were discovered mainly in Thebes and are a form of magnificent work of national salutation, which was copied by the scribes, both, for themselves and for the kings of Egyptian queens, princes and nobles, the generous and the common people, the rich and the poor.

It is believed that Osiris had defeated death, had risen from the dead, and lived in a perfect body and as such represented the symbol and emblem of the resurrection. Indeed, it is said that Osiris as a divine creature had lived on earth because he had been treacherously killed and that his sister, Isis, had gathered his limbs and by some magical words, which had been prepared by the god Thoth, had remade him and he had come back to life and had become immortal.

As Ernest A. Vallis Budge points out, “The pious Egyptian, be it a king or a farmer, a queen or a servant, lived by the teachings of the Book of the Dead; he preached in accordance with his instructions and upheld the hope of eternal life and happiness in the effectiveness of his hymns and prayers, as well as in the words of power. He did not regard the chapters of the book as a subject for grammatical exercises, but as omnipotent guides along the way, which, after passing through death and the grave, led him to the kingdom of light and life and to the
presence of the divine being, Osiris, the one who triumphed over death, the one who made possible the 'rebirth' of men and women (Faulkner & Andrews, 1994, p.14-15).

In the texts of the Book of the Dead, the constituent parts of man: physical, mental and spiritual are listed in this way:

1. The physical body, khat, which was prone to decay and which could not be preserved only by mummification.

2. Ka, usually translated as "kipc", an abstract individuality or personality, who possessed the form and attributes of the man to whom he belonged; even though his natural habitat was in the grave with the body, he could wander around as he pleased. They made sure they would place in the grave abundant zahirs of offerings (dedications).

3. Ba, or the soul, bound to Ka-na, in which or with which it was thought to dwell in the grave, and had its share of mortal offerings. He seems to have been able to take, as it were, material or non-material forms; sometimes presented as the man with the falcon head [...] etc.

The trial of the dead takes place in the palace of the Court of Osiris; The judge was Osiris; he is felt by the gods who formed the paut or his society. It is thought that the judgment of each person took place immediately after death. Those who were punished at the end of the trial were washed by the Eater of the Dead and ceased to exist, while those who were not punished entered the kingdom of Osiris, where eternal life and happiness awaited them.

Based on a later discovered text, the idea can be formed of how the deceased's residence could be imagined: a house surrounded by numerous plots (remember: plots, plots of land), or a farm, crossed by canals. This place was called the 'Field of Reeds' (Faulkner & Andrews, 1994, p.13-14).

In conclusion, it is worth mentioning that works that come to us from a distant past, such as the "Egyptian Book of the Dead", testify in one way or another the course of the change in the art of speech over time, as well, the enrichment and importance that it has had for men and their existence.

References


