

## Akhenaten's Hymn to the Aten

Worship (Re-Horakhty who Rejoices in the Horizon) (In his Name as the Shu who is in the Aten Living forever and ever, the *Living* Aten, the Great One who is in Jubilee, Master of all that the Aten encircles, Master of Heaven, Master of the Earth, Master of the Per-Aten in Akhet-Aten; and the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, the one Living on Maat, Master of Regalia (Akhenaten), the long Lived; and the Foremost Wife of the King, whom he loves, the Mistress of Two Lands (Nefernefru-Aten Nefertiti), living, well, and young forever and ever.

He says:

You rise in perfection on the horizon of the sky, living Aten, who started life.

Whenever you are risen upon the eastern horizon you fill every Land with your perfection.

You are appealing, great, sparkling, high over every land; your rays hold together the lands as far as everything you have made.

Since you are Re, you reach as far as they do, and you curb them for your beloved son.

Although you are far away, your rays are upon the land; you are in their faces, yet your departure is not observed.

Whenever you set on the western horizon, the land is in darkness in the manner of death. They sleep in a bedroom with heads under the covers, and one eye does not see another.

If all their possessions which are under their heads were stolen, they would not know it .

Every lion who comes out of his cave and all the serpents bite, for darkness is a blanket.

The land is silent now, because he who made them is at rest on his horizon.

But when day breaks you are risen upon the horizon, and you shine as the Aten in the daytime. When you dispel darkness and you give forth your rays, the two lands are in festival, alert and standing on their feet, now that you have raised them up. Their bodies are clean, and their clothes have been put on; their arms are <lifted> in praise at your rising.

The entire Land performs its work:

All the cattle are content with their fodder, trees and plants grow, birds fly up to their nests, their wings <extended> in praise for your Ka. All the kine prance on their feet; everything which flies up and alights, they live when you have risen for them. The barges sail upstream and downstream too, for every way is open at your rising. The fishes in the river leap before your face when your rays are in the sea.

*You* who have placed seed in woman and have made sperm into man, who feeds the son in the womb of his mother, who quiet him with something to stop his crying; you are the nurse in the womb, giving breath to nourish all that has been begotten. When he comes down from the womb to breathe on the day he is born, you open up his mouth [completely], and supply his needs.

When the fledgling in the egg speaks in the shell, you give him air inside it to sustain him.

When you grant him his allotted time to break out from the egg, he comes out from the egg to cry out at his fulfillment, and he goes upon his legs when he has come forth from it.

How plentiful it is, what you have made, although they are hidden from view, sole god, without another beside you; you created the earth as you wished, when you were by

yourself, <before> mankind, all cattle and kine, all beings on land, who fare upon their feet, and all beings in the air, who fly with their wings.

The lands of Khor and Kush and the land of Egypt: you have set every man in his place, you have allotted their needs, everyone of them according to his diet, and his lifetime is counted out.

Tongues are separate in speech, and their characters as well; their skins are different, for you have differentiated the foreigners.

In the underworld you have made a Nile that you may bring it forth as you wish to feed the populace, since you made them for yourself, their utter master, growing weary on their account, lord of every land. For them the Aten of the daytime rises, great in awesomeness.

All distant lands, you have made them live, for you have set a Nile in the sky that it may descend for them and make waves upon the mountains like the sea to irrigate the fields in their towns.

How efficient are your designs, Lord of eternity: a Nile in the sky for the foreigners and all creatures that go upon their feet, a Nile coming back from the underworld for Egypt.

Your rays give suck to every field: when you rise they live, and they grow for you. You have made the seasons to bring into being all you have made: the Winter to cool them, the Heat that you may be felt.

You have made a far-off heaven in which to rise in order to observe everything you have made. Yet you are alone, rising in your manifestations as the Living Aten: appearing, glistening, being afar, coming close; you make millions of transformations of yourself. Towns, harbors, fields, roadways, waterways: every eye beholds you upon them, for you are the Aten of the daytime on the face of the earth.

When you go forth every eye [is upon you]. You have created their sight but not to see (only) the body . . . which you have made.

You are my desire, and there is no other who knows you except for your son (Nefer-kheperu-Re Wa-en-Re), for you have apprised him of your designs and your power.

The earth came forth into existence by your hand, and you made it.

When you rise, they live; when you set, they die. You are a life span in yourself; one lives by you.

Eyes are upon your perfection until you set: all work is put down when you rest in the west.

When (you) rise, (everything) grows for the King and (for) everyone who hastens on foot, because you have founded the land and you have raised them for your son who has come forth from your body, the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, the one Living on Maat, Lord of the Two Lands (Nefer-kheperu-Re Wa-en-Re), son of Re, the one Living on Maat, Master of Regalia, (Akhenaten), the long lived, and the Foremost Wife of the King, whom he loves, the Mistress of the Two Lands, (Nefer-nefru-Aten Nefertiti), living and young, forever and ever.

(W.K. Simpson, tr.)

## The Song of the Harper

*This poem, which may date back to the 12th dynasty, is one of ancient Egypt's most famous creations and one of the first lyric masterpieces of the world.*

Flourishing is he, this prince,  
For destiny is good, and destruction is complete.  
Bodies pass on while others endure,  
Since the time of those who came before,  
The Gods and those who came into being before me,  
And who rest in their pyramid tombs.

The nobles and spirits too,  
Being entombed in their pyramids,  
They built chapels, but their cult stations are no more.  
What became of them?

Now I have heard the sayings  
Of Iyemhotep and Hardedef,  
Which are quoted in the proverbs so much.

What are their cult places?  
Their walls are dismantled,  
And their cult places exist no more,  
As if they had never been.

There is no one who can return from there,  
To describe their nature, to describe their dissolution,  
That he may still our desires,  
Until we reach the place where they have gone.

So may your desire be fulfilled:  
Allow the heart to forget  
The performance of services for you.  
Follow your desire while you live.

Place myrrh upon your head,  
Clothe yourself in fine linen,  
Anointed with real wonders  
Of the god's own stores.

Increase your beauty,  
And let not your mind tire.  
Follow your desire and what is good:  
Acquire your possessions on earth.

Do not control your passion  
Until that day of mourning comes for you.  
The Weary-Hearted does not hear their sobbing,

[Their] sobbing cannot save the heart of a man from the tomb.

[Chorus]: Make holiday,

But tire yourself not with it.

Remember: it is not given to man to take his goods with him.

No one goes away and then comes back.

(W.K. Simpson, tr.)

## Herodotus on How to Make a Mummy

*Herodotus lived in the middle of the 5th century BC and was called “the father of history” by Cicero. His one great work, from which the following excerpt was taken, tells the story of the great Persian Wars between Greece and Iran. As part of his research—and also because he was an inveterate tourist—he traveled to Egypt and took the trouble to inquire about the famous mummies.*

There are a set of men in Egypt who practice the art of embalming, and make it their proper business. These persons, when a body is brought to them, show the bearers various models of corpses, made in wood, and painted so as to resemble nature. The most perfect is said to be after the manner of him whom I do not think it religious to name in connection with such a matter; the second sort is inferior to the first, and less costly; the third is the cheapest of all.

All this the embalmers explain, and then ask in which way it is wished that the corpse should be prepared. The bearers tell them, and having concluded their bargain, take their departure, while the embalmers, left to themselves, proceed to their task.

The mode of embalming, according to the most perfect process, is the following: They take first a crooked piece of iron, and with it draw out the brain through the nostrils, thus getting rid of a portion, while the skull is cleared of the rest by rinsing with drugs; next they make a cut along the flank with a sharp Ethiopian stone, and take out the whole contents of the abdomen, which they then cleanse, washing it thoroughly with palm wine, then again frequently with an infusion of pounded aromatics. After this they fill the cavity with the purest bruised myrrh, with cassia, and every other sort of spicery except frankincense, and sew up the opening.

Then the body is placed in natrum for seventy days, and covered entirely over. After the expiration of that space of time, which must not be exceeded, the body is washed, and wrapped round, from head to foot, with bandages of fine linen cloth, smeared over with gum, which is used generally by the Egyptians in the place of glue, and in this state it is given back to the relations, who enclose it in a wooden case which they have had made for the purpose, shaped into the figure of a man. Then fastening the case, they place it in a sepulchral chamber, upright against the wall. Such is the most costly way of embalming the dead.

If persons wish to avoid expense, and choose the second process, the following is the method pursued: Syringes are filled with oil made from the cedar-tree, which is then, without any incision or disemboweling, injected into the bowel. The passage is stopped, and the body laid in natrum the prescribed number of days. At the end of the time the cedar-oil is allowed to make its escape; and such is its power that it brings with it the whole stomach and intestines in a liquid state. Then natrum meanwhile has dissolved the flesh, and so

nothing is left of the dead body but the skin and the bones. It is returned in this condition to the relatives, without any further trouble being bestowed upon it.

The third method of embalming, which is practiced in the case of the poorer classes, is to clear out the intestines with a purge, and let the body lie in natrum the seventy days, after which it is at once given to those who come to fetch it away.

The wives of men of rank are not given to be embalmed immediately after death, nor indeed are any of the more beautiful and valued women. It is not till they have been dead three or four days that they are carried to the embalmers. This is done to prevent the embalmers having intercourse with them. It is said that once a man was detected in the act with a woman newly dead and denounced by his fellow-workman.

(George Rawlinson, tr.)