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THE RITE OF OPENING THE MOUTH IN ANCIENT EGYPT AND BABYLONIA¹ ✓

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IN Vol. VII of this *Journal*, pp. 133-153, Professor Langdon has drawn attention to what he regards as evidence of direct contact between the peoples of the Nile and Tigris valleys in predynastic times, and in Vol. VI, pp. 4-27, Professor Rostovtzeff has also pointed out that the very early Egyptian, Babylonian, and South Russian civilizations have elements in common, elements which, if not due to direct intercourse between the inhabitants of those widely separated regions, must be derived from the same source, a centre of culture situated perhaps in Northern Syria or Asia Minor, and so still waiting to be disclosed by the excavator's pick.

Possibly this article may throw a ray or two of light on what is at present a quite obscure problem.

In the course of one out of many conversations with Professor Langdon I was telling him about the Ancient Egyptian rite of Opening the Mouth, practised on mummies, statues, and figures used for magical purposes, whereupon he informed me that a similar rite was employed in Babylonia. Later he supplied me with much interesting and valuable material, which indeed forms the main part of this article.

The most important of the texts to which Professor Langdon drew my attention was published by Professor Zimmern in 1901², and of this he has furnished me with the following translation, based upon his own carefully collated copy:—

FRAGMENT I. Beginning broken away... (2) *šadānu-stone*... (3) *mušgarru-stone*, *porphyry*... (4) *dušu-stone*, *silver*, *gold*, *copper*,...-stone... (5) ...*best oil*, *finest oil*, *cedar-oil*, *honey*, *butter* [...*shalt thou pre*]pare; (6) *white wool*, *red wool*, *bluish wool*, *shalt thou bind on his* (the statue's) neck; (7) ...*the door shalt thou shut*, *while thou shuttest it*... (8) the incantation "...*king*, *who dost illumine heaven and earth*, *who dost decree*..." *shalt thou thrice repeat*; (9) [*censer*], *torch*, *holy-water bowl shalt thou bring* [unto him], (10) *with holy* [water] *shalt thou wash* (him); *the ground shalt thou sweep*, *and holy water shalt thou sprinkle*; (11) *cedar and cypress shalt thou place* (i.e. in the censer), *sesame-wine shalt thou libate*, (12) *a heap of meal on the holy-water bowl shalt thou scatter*; (13) [the incantation] "*Mountain of evergreen trees and cedars*" *shalt thou thrice repeat*; (14) [the incantation] "*The...of Azag-šud and Nin-ḫabur-sil-du*" (15) [*before*] *the holy-water bowl shalt thou thrice repeat*; (16) the incantation "...*house* (?) *of Nisaba*" *shalt thou thrice repeat*; (17) ...*before* (?) *the holy-water bowl*; *the cult-installation shalt thou prepare*; (18) *a lamb-offering shalt thou offer*, *a censer with cypress* (in it) *shalt thou place*; (19) *sesame-wine shalt thou libate*; *thine hand shalt thou*

¹ This paper was read before the Royal Asiatic Society during the Centenary Celebrations on July 20th, 1923.

² ZIMMERN, *Ritualltafeln*, Nos. 31-37; see also No. 38.

raise, and (20) the incantation "Holy water, water brought from the Tigris" (21) shalt thou thrice repeat before the holy-water bowl, and (then) kneel.

(22) Then to the...-house shalt thou go, a reed-altar shalt thou set up, at the river shalt thou look.

(23) In the House of the Craftsmen, where they have fashioned the god, (24) shalt thou sweep the ground and sprinkle holy water; for Ea, Marduk, and that god, (25) shalt thou place three censers with cypress (in them); sesame-wine shalt thou libate; (26) on that god Washing of the Mouth and Opening of the Mouth shalt thou perform; (27) censer and torch shalt thou bring him, in the holy-water bowl shalt thou purify him, (28) (and) to that god shalt thou speak thus:—(29) "From this hour shalt thou go before Ea, thy father. (30) May thy heart be happy, thy mind joyful. (31) May Ea, thy father, be full of joy in face of thee!" (32) Thrice shalt thou speak thus, kneel down, and grasp the hands of the god; a sheep shalt thou....

(33) The incantation "Thou art great in thy going forth, in thy going forth" shalt thou repeat, (34) as thou goest in front of the god with a torch from the House of the Craftsmen to the river.

(35) ...the craftsmen, as many of them as... purification for that god (36) ...their tools beside that god on the field (?)... (37) ...a cult-installation on the bank of the river shalt thou set up. (38) That god shalt thou place upon a reed-mat, canopies shalt thou erect, (39) ...for Ea and Marduk a reed-altar shalt thou set up; (40) ...dates, šasku-meal shalt thou scatter, (41) date-wine mingled with honey and butter shalt thou serve up; (42) ...shalt thou place, a lamb-offering shalt thou offer. (43) ...shalt thou mix, pour out, (44) and (then) kneel down; a censer with cypress shalt thou set forth, sesame-wine shalt thou libate; (45) ...an aze, a...a... (46) ...sheep... (47) ...shalt thou place....

FRAGMENT II. ... (2) ...wash his mouth, (3) ...recite to him; ... (4) before Ea shalt thou remove the cult-installation; (5) ...in the midst of the canopies and the reed-spears (6) shalt thou place that god in a covering of linen upon a reed-mat¹; (7) his eyes shalt thou turn towards the sunrise and beside that image (8) shalt thou place, in the midst of the canopies and reed-spears, the utensils of the god, as many as there are of them, (9) and the tools of the craftsmen; thou shalt remove (?), and then kneel down.

(10) For Anu (Heaven-god), En-lil (Earth-god), Ea (Water-god), Sin (Moon-god), Šamaš (Sun-god), (11) Adad (Thunder-god), Marduk (god of Babylon), Gu-la (goddess of medicine), Nin-si-anna (Venus), (12) shalt thou place nine censers to the evening-star, a cult-installation shalt thou prepare, (13) a lamb-offering shalt thou offer, sesame-wine shalt thou libate; (14) Washing of the Mouth and Opening of the Mouth shalt thou perform, (and) then shalt thou remove the installation.

(15) For Maḥ (Mother-goddess), Azag-šud (lustration-goddess), Nin-ḥabur-sil-du (lustration-goddess), Nin-kur-ra (quarry-goddess), (16) Nin-a-gal (smith-god), Guškin-banda (god of gold-workers), Nin-igi-nangar-gid (carpenter-god), Nin-zadin (jeweller-god), and that god, (17) shalt thou place nine censers to the gods of the night, their names shalt thou pronounce, (18) a lamb-offering shalt thou offer, Washing of the Mouth and Opening of the Mouth shalt thou perform.

(19) At dawn for Ea, Šamaš, and Marduk, in the midst of the canopies, shalt thou (20) place three seats, pease-meal shalt thou serve up, a linen cloth shalt thou draw thereover;

¹ Reading *burá* (LANGDON).

(21) *three banquet-tables shalt thou prepare, dates, šašku-meal shalt thou scatter thereon, (22) date-wine mixed with honey and butter shalt thou serve up, (23) an adagur-vessel shalt thou fill with beer, milk,...* (24) *sweet-smelling cane and...shalt thou prepare...* (25) *six... shalt thou fill with sesame-wine...* (26)—(35) ...

FRAGMENT III. ... (2) ...*date-palm...* (3) ...*Ea, Šamaš, and Marduk.* (4) ...*Ea, Šamaš, and [Marduk]* (5) ...*this before Šamaš [shalt thou recite].*

(6) *For Azag-šud, Nin-ḫabur-sil-du, Nin-kur-ra, (7) Nin-a-gal, Guškin-banda, Nin-iginangar-gid, (8) Nin-zadim, shalt thou place a censer with cypress, (9) a lamb-offering shalt thou offer, sesame-wine shalt thou present; (10) Washing of the Mouth and Opening of the Mouth shalt thou perform; (11) censers, and a torch shalt thou bring to him (i.e. to the statue), (12) in the holy-water bowl shalt thou wash him; thou shalt take away and then kneel down....*

FRAGMENT IV. ...*shalt thou remove, (2) ...shalt thou remove, (3) ...[Nin-ḫabur-sil-du shalt thou remove, (4) ...shalt thou remove....*

This text shows clearly that the Washing and Opening of the Mouth of statues, as practised in Babylonia, consisted of a series of episodes, apparently ten in number, which were enacted in at least three different places, the House of the Craftsmen, i.e. the sculptors' workshop (see below, p. 50, Episode 3), some building on the river-bank (see *ibid.*, Episode 2), and the river-bank itself (see *ibid.*, Episodes 4, 5).

Before proceeding to discuss other Babylonian texts that deal with the Washing and Opening of the Mouth, it will be as well to give a general description, based upon the directions laid down in the foregoing document, of each of the ten episodes in the order of their occurrence. The description, which has been read and approved by Dr. Langdon, will be especially useful to us when we come to compare the Babylonian with the corresponding Egyptian rite.

EPISODE 1 (Fragment I, lines 1-21). The beginning of the text, which unfortunately is broken away, would doubtless have told us where the first episode was performed. It is obvious from line 7 that it took place in some building, that building being, so Dr. Langdon is inclined to think, in view of what follows, the House of the Craftsmen.

Judging from the statements in Fragment II, lines 12, 17, 19, the rite was begun at some time during the night and lasted until sunrise. Hence perhaps the directions about the use of a torch¹.

Before he started upon the actual consecration of the statue, the priest had to see that certain objects and commodities were ready to hand. These consisted of various kinds of stones, blocks of gold, silver, and copper, unguents enumerated as "best oil," "finest oil," and "cedar oil," and lastly butter and honey. Our text does not tell us to what use the stones, metals, and oils were put. However, it seems probable that with the last mentioned the priest anointed the statue. The honey and butter were mingled with date-wine and employed as a drink-offering², and they were also used, so another tablet informs us³, for the washing of the statue's mouth. The first act of consecration was to bind strands of white, red, and bluish wool about the statue's neck. The priest then shut the door of the room or building in which this part of the rite was taking place, and, while so doing, recited a formula. He next fumigated the statue with incense, offered it a lighted torch,

¹ See Episodes 1, 4 and 10.
Journ. of Egypt. Arch. x.

² See Episodes 5, 9.

³ See below, p. 51.

and sprinkled it with holy water. After that he swept the floor and sprinkled it also with holy water. Once more the priest burnt incense, placing cedar- and cypress-wood on the censer, poured out a libation of sesame-wine, and scattered meal on the holy-water bowl,—each action being performed to the accompaniment of a thrice-repeated formula.

A ceremony especially connected with the holy-water bowl was performed at this juncture. The priest having made ready the cult-installation in front of the holy-water bowl, offered a lamb, burnt incense, and poured out a libation. Then standing before the bowl with his hands raised in prayer, he recited a formula, the purpose of which, judging from the introductory words that are given, was to identify the contents of the bowl with the water of the Tigris.

EPISODE 2 (Fragment I, line 22). The priest now went to some temple or shrine, evidently situated on the river-bank, and having set up a reed-altar, looked at the river.

EPISODE 3 (Fragment I, lines 23-32). The priest returned to the House of the Craftsmen in which the statue had been fashioned, and there he once more swept the ground and sprinkled it with holy water. After this preliminary performance, he burnt incense and poured out a libation of sesame-wine to Ea, Marduk, and the statue. The priest then washed and opened the mouth of the statue, fumigating it (the statue) with incense and sprinkling it with holy water.

The episode ends with the threefold repetition of a formula which speaks of the joy of Ea and of the god, whose statue was being consecrated, in one another's presence. Having thus spoken the priest knelt down and grasped the hands of the statue.

EPISODE 4 (Fragment I, lines 33-34). The statue was now taken from the House of the Craftsmen to the river-bank, and the priest was directed to walk in front of it carrying a lighted torch and reciting as he went the words, *Thou art great in thy going forth, in thy going forth.*

EPISODE 5 (Fragment I, line 35-Fragment II, line 3). The beginning of the directions for the next part of the rite, which was enacted on the river-bank, is unhappily much mutilated. However, we learn that the craftsmen who had made the statue participated in the performance, and that their tools were laid on the ground beside the statue, which was placed on a reed-mat. Canopies or baldachins were now erected and an array of reed-spears stuck upright in the ground. Having set up a reed-altar for Ea and Marduk in the midst of the canopies and spears, the priest scattered dates and *šasku*-meal upon it and served up a drink-offering of date-wine mingled with honey and butter. After the sacrifice of a lamb and the pouring out of some of the above-mentioned drink-offerings, the priest knelt down. On rising from his knees he burnt incense and made a libation of sesame-wine.

In the much-broken line 45 mention is made of an axe, which suggests that the priest now approached the statue, which stood on its mat at a little distance from the canopies and reed-spears, and lightly touched its mouth to open it.

The broken lines 1-3 of Fragment II show that this episode concluded with the washing of the statue's mouth to the accompanying recitation of a formula.

EPISODE 6 (Fragment II, lines 4-9). The priest's next act was to remove the cult-installation set up in front of Ea in the midst of the canopies and reed-spears, and to replace it by the statue which, wrapped in a covering of linen, was set up on a reed-mat with its eyes turned towards the sunrise. Beside the statue were laid the utensils of the god and the tools of the craftsmen who had fashioned it. These objects the priest seems presently to have removed and then to have knelt down.

EPISODE 7 (Fragment II, lines 10-14). This episode began with the burning of incense in nine censers to nine divinities and the preparing of a cult-installation, after which the priest offered a lamb and poured out a libation of sesame-wine. Then for the third time he washed and opened the mouth of the statue, and, having so done, removed the cult-installation.

EPISODE 8 (Fragment II, lines 15-18). This episode is similar to the preceding one. Nine censers of incense were offered to nine more divinities, among whom, in this instance, was included the statue undergoing consecration. After the offering of a lamb (no mention is made of a libation) the mouth of the statue was washed and opened for the fourth time.

EPISODE 9 (Fragment II, line 19-Fragment III, line 5). At dawn the priest placed three seats for the three lustration-gods, Ea, Šamaš, and Marduk, in the midst of the canopies. Having first offered them a sort of porridge made of pease-meal, which he covered with a linen cloth, the priest made ready three tables. On these he scattered dates and *šasku*-meal, and then laid upon them a drink-offering of date-wine mixed with honey and butter. On, or beside, the tables was also placed a vessel containing beer and milk, and apparently another vessel as well containing sesame-wine.

The rest of the directions referring to this episode are too fragmentary to convey any information, except that a formula was to be recited before Šamaš.

EPISODE 10 (Fragment III, lines 6-12 and Fragment IV, lines 1-4). Having offered incense to seven divinities, presented them with a lamb, and poured out to them a libation of sesame-wine, the priest for the fifth time washed and opened the statue's mouth. This done, he fumigated it with incense, illuminated it with a torch, and sprinkled it with holy water. He then removed the various articles he had employed and knelt down.

The rest of the text is so broken as to be unintelligible, except that the surviving words of Fragment IV seem to indicate that the rite was over, and that it was now the priest's business to remove the images of the different divinities who had participated in it.

A partially preserved tablet in the British Museum¹, so Professor Langdon informs me, contains the formulae by means of which the various materials employed at the celebration of the rite just described were consecrated. Thus one, which is the best preserved, consecrates the butter, which, as we have seen, figures among the food-stuffs used for ritual purposes, by relating that commodity's mystic origin and power. The formula in question which is called in the rubric *An incantation for washing the mouth of a god with butter*², begins as follows:—*The pure butter, the clean butter, which was born from the cow of the cattle stall.*

This formula is preceded on that tablet by another formula recited at the washing of a god's mouth with honey.

"We know from another tablet³," says Professor Langdon, "that formulae were employed to consecrate plants, woods, and similar substances, used in these washing and opening of the mouth rituals. In fact all lustration material was so consecrated." He points out, too, that the burning of incense, the presentation of meal-offerings, animal-sacrifices, the pouring out of libations, and the use of butter and honey, "belong to the

¹ 79-7-8, 68+511.

² On the universal belief in the mystic power of milk and honey see USENER, *Milch and Honig*, in the *Rheinisches Museum* (1902), LVII, 177 ff. and the literature there cited.

³ *British Museum*, K. 5412b.

ceremony of invoking the aid of the great lustration deities and of the deity whose image was being consecrated."

Professor Langdon has also supplied me with the following information, which I give in his own words:—

"A large tablet in four columns, almost entirely preserved, describes the ceremony of consecration employed for the crescent or symbol of Nusku, the god of the new moon'. Here the ritual is called the 'Opening of the Mouth.' The ritual first consists in the recitation of an exorcism to consecrate a ship which is also a symbol of the god Nusku. In the elaborate ritual of lustration which follows, a statue of Nusku is placed upon a throne and arrayed in fine linen, and then the linen is removed. Offerings and libations are made to the lustration gods Šamaš, Ea and Marduk, and to the god whose image is to be consecrated. The image is then washed in holy water. In the directions for the lustration service honey and butter are mentioned.

"Here follows the only known Sumerian incantation which was actually recited during the act of opening the mouth. The glory of the god Nusku and the moon's crescent introduce the exorcism. Then the wood from which the crescent was made is extolled. The image itself is here spoken of as the crescent, so completely is the god absorbed in his symbol:—

*The crescent will not smell incense if his mouth be not opened.
Food he will not eat, water he will not drink.*

Thus runs the exorcism, and the holy waters in which the image and crescent are washed are extolled. The water-god himself is said to have brought the image to the river's bank where the consecration is performed. *The great god of lustration brings this image, bathed in honey and butter, and casts the waters of exorcism in its mouth.* Thus the act of opening the mouth actually consists in washing it with the magic water.

"A Semitic inscription of Nabuapaliddin, king of Babylon in the eighth century B.C., describes how that king ordered a statue of the sun-god to be made of gold and jewels. The account, which gives only an historical notice of the event, then reads:—*By the lustration-rites of Ea and Marduk in the presence of Šamaš in the 'house of the pure quay,' at the bank of the Euphrates, he washed its mouth and put garments upon it.*"

"The phrase 'washing of the mouth,' and probably also the synonymous one 'opening of the mouth,' finally lost its literal sense and became a general term for consecrating any sacred object. So in a well-preserved ritual of the consecration of a bronze tambourine as a symbol of music in the hall of the temple musicians in Babylon we have the rubric employed in this perverted sense. A liturgy of consecration is followed by the rubric, *Prayer for the washing of the mouth of a bronze tambourine*¹. The term as here employed refers to a ritual of consecrating an object with holy water, incense, and other magic material, accompanied by prayers.

"Finally a tablet of rituals exists in which the ceremony of washing and opening the mouth is concerned with small images, apparently of the god of the lower world, the pest-god. The ritual is written for the expulsion of demons from the body of a sick person, and part of the magic operation consists in censuring and baptizing these little images of the

¹ *British Museum*, K. 63, published in IV RAWLINSON, Pl. 25. A translation in C. FOSSEY, *La Magie Assyrienne*, 338 ff.

² V RAWLINSON, 60-61, Col. IV, 22-28.

³ IV RAWLINSON, 23, No. 1, Rev. 1, 23.

old
Resurrect

pest-god. They are then subjected to the ceremony of mouth washing and mouth opening. The object of this ritual is obviously not consecration, but to induce the pest-god to issue an order of departure to the devils. In fact the entire ceremony of mouth washing and mouth opening appears to have its *raison d'être* in the idea of 'opening the mouth' so that sacred revelation or sacred commands may be uttered."

We will now turn to the Egyptian rite of Opening the Mouth¹ and see what are to be found therein in the way of comparisons with the corresponding Babylonian rite.

Though in the period of the New Kingdom the rite of Opening the Mouth seems often to have been performed on the actual mummy on the day of its interment, that rite was clearly in the first instance instituted for the purpose of identifying a statue with the divinity or human being (king or private individual) whom it represented, and of imbuing it with that divinity or human being's life and personality².

EPISODE 1. Proceedings opened with the placing of the statue upon a heap of sand with its face to the south (see Fig. 1). In respect of orientation the Egyptian and Babylonian rites are

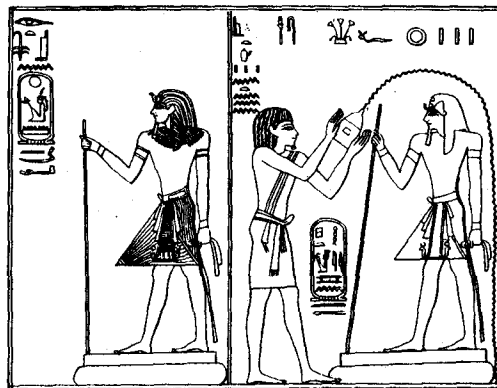


Fig. 1. The statue standing upon a heap of sand with its face to the south.

Fig. 2. The statue being sprinkled with water from one of the four *nmst*-vessels.

not in agreement. In Episode 6 of the Babylonian rite, the only episode in which the orientation is mentioned, the priest is directed to place the statue with its face towards the sunrise. Again, whereas according to the Babylonian rite the statue was placed upon a mat, according to the Egyptian it was set upon a mound of sand. With regard to the mat, however, it might be pointed out that according to the *Papyrus Rhind*³, the body, on being brought into the embalmer's workshop, rested on a mat of green rush. As I have pointed out in this *Journal*, v, 157 ff., the rite of preparing the body for burial and that of

¹ See E. SCHIAPARELLI, *Libro dei Funerali*, two vols., Rome, 1882-90; E. A. W. BUDGE, *The Book of Opening the Mouth*, two vols., London, 1909.

² See A. M. BLACKMAN in *Journal*, v, 159, with note 8.

³ G. MÖLLER, *Die beiden Totenpapyrus Rhind*, Leipzig, 1913, 16, 56.

Opening the Mouth are closely connected, both being based upon the supposed matutinal lustration and toilet of the sun-god.

EPISODE 2. A preliminary censuring of the statue. There were also other fumigations with incense at intervals during the course of the rite.

It will have been seen that in the first episode of the Babylonian rite the statue was fumigated with incense, and that there were also subsequent fumigations as in the Egyptian rite.

EPISODES 3 and 4. The statue was sprinkled with water from two sets of vessels, four to each set (see Fig. 2). The formula pronounced during the sprinklings asserts that *thy purification* (i.e. that of the divinity or person with whom the statue is being associated) is *the purification of Horus, the purification of Horus is thy purification. Thy purification is the purification of Sêth, the purification of Sêth is thy purification.* At the third repetition of the formula the divinity's name is Thôth, and at the fourth, Sepa. The formula, therefore,

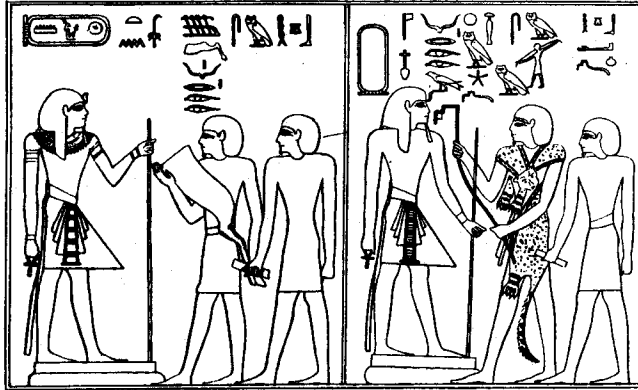


Fig. 3. The statue being presented with a foreleg of beef.

Fig. 4. The mouth and eyes of the statue being opened with the adze called *dwt-wr*.

consecrated the water here employed by identifying it with that used by the four great Heliopolitan lustrator-gods, Horus, Sêth, Thôth, and Sepa¹.

According to the Babylonian rite the statue, after being censured, was illuminated with a torch and then sprinkled with holy water, this censuring and lustral washing taking place during the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd episodes. In Episode 1 of the Babylonian rite the contents of the holy-water stoup were identified with the sacred waters of the Tigris. In the Egyptian rite the water used for lustration was, as has just been pointed out, identified with that used by the four Heliopolitan lustrator-gods, i.e. with that drawn from a pool or tank sacred to the sun-god².

¹ See A. M. BLACKMAN, *ibid.*, 156 ff.

² *Ibid.* The provenance of the water is only implied in this particular lustration-formula used in the rite of Opening the Mouth, by the mention of the names of Horus, Sêth, Thôth, and Sepa. But in other

EPISODES 5-7. The statue was presented with ten balls of natron and five balls of incense for the purification of its mouth.

In the Babylonian rite the mouth of the statue was washed and opened five times (see Episodes 3, 5, 7, 8, and 10), not with natron but apparently with butter and honey.

EPISODE 8. The actual purificatory ceremonies were brought to a close with the fumigation of the statue with incense.

These eight ceremonies are followed by several (Nos. 9-24) which are peculiar to the Egyptian rite of Opening the Mouth as distinct from the other related Egyptian rites, and include the twofold slaughter of an ox, the slaying of two gazelles, and a duck or goose, the presentation of the foreleg (see Fig. 3) and heart of either ox to the statue, the touching of the mouth of the statue with various adzes (see Fig. 4) and other implements, such as a chisel (see Fig. 5), and the rubbing of the statue's mouth with milk. These acts were

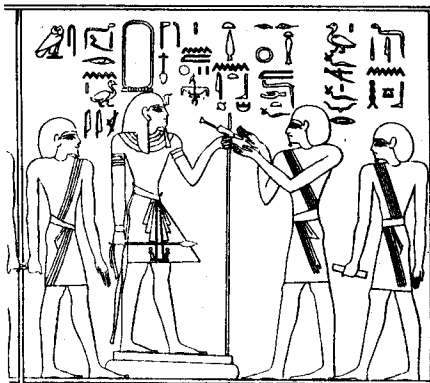


Fig. 5. The mouth of the statue being opened with a chisel.

supposed to open not only the mouth of the statue, but the eyes and ears as well, indeed endow it with the faculties of a living person.

As we have seen, the tools of the workmen figure in the Babylonian rite, and Professor Langdon has suggested that they were employed in the same way as the adzes and other implements in the Egyptian rite, *i.e.* the officiant touched the lips of the statue with them. The sacrifices of the oxen, gazelles, and goose correspond, perhaps, to the offering of a lamb on three different occasions in the Babylonian rite. Again, the smearing of the lips of the statue with milk may be compared with the washing of the mouth of the Babylonian statue with butter (see the rubric quoted on p. 51).

In lustration-formulae, used in closely connected rites, it is definitely asserted that the water is that of a pool sacred to the sun-god, or is actually the god's own efflux. In Osirianized lustration-formulae, the water is identified with that which wells up from the source of the Nile at the first cataract, *i.e.* it is an exudation from the body of Osiris. See A. M. BLACKMAN, *Rec. de Trav.*, 40, 49-78.

EPISODES 25-33. The officiant now placed the white head-covering (*nms*) upon the statue and arrayed it in various coloured cloths, white, green, red, and dark red; he also hung the "broad collar" (*wsh*) about its neck.

These cloths may perhaps be compared with the white, blue, and red wools tied round the neck of the statue in the Babylonian rite. It will be remembered also that the statue of Nusku is described as being placed upon a throne and arrayed in fine linen, and that at the consecration of the statue of the sun-god, made by the order of King Nabuapaliddin, the officiant *washed its mouth and put garments upon it*.

EPISODE 34. The statue was anointed with various unguents and the eyes were painted with green and black cosmetic.

The mention of oils at the beginning of the text given in full on pp. 47-49, suggests that in the Babylonian rite also the statue was anointed at one stage or other in the proceedings, though we are not actually told when this anointing took place.

EPISODES 35-37. The statue was now invested with various insignia of royalty for which there seems to be no parallel in the Babylonian rite.

EPISODES 38-41. After another censuring of the statue, incense was burned to the uraeus-goddess and then to all the divinities of Egypt. This last-mentioned proceeding finds perhaps a parallel in Episodes 7 and 8 of the Babylonian rite, in each of which incense is offered to nine divinities.

After a further censuring of the statue and other preliminaries, such as the bringing in and purifying of the altar or offering-table, a meal was served. This ended, the floor was swept, and then the statue was solemnly borne away by *nine companions* or *courtiers*.

The sweeping of the floor was an important act in the Ancient Egyptian temple and funerary liturgy. At the close of the service, before he left the sanctuary or tomb-chapel, the officiant carefully obliterated all traces of footprints with a besom or cloth. In the temple liturgy the officiant also swept the floor early in the proceedings as well as at the end¹.

This sweeping of the floor seems likewise to have been an important ceremony in the Babylonian rite of Opening the Mouth, occurring in Episodes 1 and 3.

The meal at the end of the Egyptian rite is to be compared with the constant presentation of food- and drink-offerings to the statue in the Babylonian rite.

It will have been observed that at the end of the Babylonian rite the priest is instructed to take away the statues. Similarly at the end of the Egyptian rite the statue was removed, not by the chief officiant however, but by the *nine courtiers*.

It will also have been observed that the Babylonian priest is directed in Episodes 1, 4 and 10 to illuminate the statue with a torch,—or is it a candle? In the Egyptian rite of Opening the Mouth the ceremonial use of the torch or candle is not enjoined. But as a matter of fact the ceremonial use of lighted candles is frequently referred to in Egyptian inscriptions. Candles were burned in tomb-chapels on the occasions of certain annual festivals². They were also burned before the statues of divinities in the temples. Thus we find Tuthmosis III ordaining that a candle should be burned every day in the presence of both Ptaḥ and Hathor in the temple of Ptaḥ at Karnak³. It would seem, indeed, that a candle was regarded as the most ordinary and as the cheapest offering that could be made

¹ See A. M. BLACKMAN, *Rock Tombs of Meir*, IV, 50 with note 1, where full references are given.

² See NINA DE G. DAVIES and A. H. GARDINER, *The Tomb of Amenemhät*, 97 ff.

³ SZÉKELY, *Urkunden*, IV, 771 ff.

to a divinity¹. This custom still survives in the cult of modern Egyptian saints, both Moslem and Christian².

Professor Langdon has pointed out (see pp. 52 ff.) that in Babylonia the rite of Opening the Mouth was performed over small images of the pest-god, to make them efficacious for expelling demons from the body of a sick person. In Egypt the rite was employed for similar purposes. In *Pap. Turin*, 131, 1-8 = *Metternich Stele*, 3-8, quoted by Dr. Gardiner in an article by him on Egyptian magic³, there is a spell for curing a person who has been bitten by a poisonous snake. The magician is to take a hawk made of *isy*-wood crowned with two feathers, *open its mouth and offer it bread and beer* (the staple food and drink of the Egyptians) *and incense*. He is then to *place it on the face of one suffering from the bite of any snake and recite* (the prescribed spell) *from beginning to end*. The spell in question conjures the poison to leave the sufferer, and the conjuration is definitely said to be the utterance of Horus, whom, of course, the feather-crowned hawk represented. By means of the Opening of the Mouth the image was identified with the god, and mysteriously imbued with his life and power, and he thereupon became immanent in it (see above, p. 53, note 2). Accordingly when the magician recited these words of Horus in the presence of the image, it was as though Horus recited them himself. The figure was offered food, of course, because it was regarded as being endowed with life and therefore requiring sustenance, the Egyptians always supposing that the gods and the dead needed food and drink no less than living men.

Again the *shawabty*-like wooden figure, which was set on a brick pedestal and placed on a hole in the north wall of the burial chamber of an Egyptian tomb, was made efficacious for the protection of that chamber by having the Opening of the Mouth performed on it⁴. By the same rite also the so-called heart-scarab was made efficacious for securing its possessor justification at the posthumous trial⁵. The purpose of the rite in both these cases was not so much to identify the object consecrated with any particular divinity or entity (though the charm engraved upon it speaks of the heart-scarab as the dead man's *ka*) as to imbue it with life. Thus mysteriously alive both wooden figure and scarab would be truly efficacious.

Professor Langdon considers that the term *Washing of the Mouth*, which is probably synonymous with *Opening of the Mouth*, is used in a "perverted sense" when referring to the ritual of consecrating a bronze tambourine, which seems to have been placed as a symbol of music in the hall of the temple musicians in Babylon (see p. 52).

But perhaps there is not quite so much perversion as Professor Langdon is inclined to suppose. Was not the tambourine thus consecrated with a view to its becoming a vital and potent object, partaking of the same mysterious power as was conferred by the performance of the rite on images of divinities?

I know of no Egyptian instance of the rite of Opening the Mouth being put to exactly such a use. The nearest approach is perhaps the Opening of the Mouth of the heart-scarab; yet the scarab represents a living thing, a beetle. But was the tambourine the symbol of a divinity? If so, then the employment of the rite in this instance is easily understandable from the Egyptian standpoint. For example, the sistrum and *mnht*-collar were not only

¹ See above, pp. 9 ff. Also GARDINER in *Rec. de Trav.*, 40, 79.

² See W. S. BLACKMAN in *Discovery*, IV, 11, 283, 286; V, 67, 71.

³ HASTINGS, *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, VIII, 264.

⁴ DAVIES and GARDINER, *Tomb of Amenemhät*, 117.

⁵ *Op. cit.*, 112 ff.

closely associated with the cult of the goddess Hathor and regarded as her emblems, but she was supposed to be immanent in them; Hathor appears not only as "Possessor of the *mnt*," but is actually herself the *mnt*. It is more than likely that the image venerated in the temple of Denderah, which represents Hathor as a *mnt*, had its mouth opened before it was installed there as an object of worship.

It might be pointed out in this connection that the separate parts of the censer used in an Egyptian temple, namely the bronze holder and the small pottery brazier in which the burning charcoal was placed, were regarded as separate entities and were addressed as such in the formulae pronounced by the priest when he laid hands upon them and proceeded to put them together.

In Babylonia the rite of Washing and Opening the Mouth was also performed on priests at their consecration and on other occasions. Professor Langdon has supplied me with the following particulars:—

"Two classes of priests, and in fact the two most important kinds of priests, are known to have passed through this ritual, not only, apparently, at their consecration, but at any time when by inadvertence they had lost power over demons or favour with the gods. The sacramental priests who alone operated in magical ceremonies were the *asipu* order or representatives of the water-god and ministers primarily of his cult. An incantation performed by an *asipu* over a sick man supposed to be possessed by the demons begins:—*I am of the river-god, I am of the god* []; *the asipu who gives life to the land; the great magician who walks in the city am I; the asipu of Eridu whose mouth has been washed am I*. The priests of divination (*bar*) were submitted to the same ritual whenever they failed to obtain revelations from the gods. It is probable that any one admitted to the order of the augurs was consecrated by washing and opening of the mouth."

I know of no such extended use of this rite in Egypt. The nearest approaches to such a usage are the following:—

Part of the purification of a priest, before entering upon his course of service in the temple to which he was attached, was his *drinking of natron* for a certain number of days. The purification undergone by the Pharaoh in the House of the Morning, or temple-vestry, before he officiated in the temple liturgy, included the chewing of natron for the cleansing of his mouth, this substance being spat out when sufficiently chewed. Lastly we are informed that the wailing women who bemoaned Osiris had to purify themselves four times before they could stand within the *door of the Broad Hall*, and they also washed their mouths, chewed natron, and purified themselves with incense, in order that they and the lamentations with which they *beatified* the dead god might be pure.

It will have been seen that the Egyptian and Babylonian rites of Opening the Mouth have several features in common. Is this just a coincidence, as is by no means impossible? If, however, there is any connection between the two rites, I personally incline to the view that they are both derived from a common ancestor, rather than that one was derived from the other. The Babylonian rite is clearly so thoroughly Babylonian and the Egyptian rite

¹ A. M. BLACKMAN in *Journal*, VII, 14.

² *Ibid.*, 23.

³ MORET, *Rituel du culte divin journalier en Egypte*, 16-20.

⁴ City of the water-god Ea.

⁵ *C.T.*, 16, 5, 170-177.

⁶ ZIMMERN, *Ritualtafel*, No. 1009.

⁷ ZIMMERN, *op. cit.*, 116, 20.

⁸ A. M. BLACKMAN in HASTINGS, *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, I, 480².

⁹ *Ibid.*, 478¹; A. M. BLACKMAN in *Journal*, V, 156 ff.

¹⁰ JUNKER, *Stundenwachen in den Osirismythen*, 6, 70.

so thoroughly Egyptian. In the Egyptian rite not only has every episode an Egyptian signification, but, apart from certain interpolations, the series of episodes forms a continuous whole, *viz.* the Solar-Pharaonic toilet followed by a meal. These two elements, the royal toilet and the meal, are the basis of all the other main Egyptian religious rites, namely the preparation of the body for burial, the funerary liturgy, the temple-liturgy and the purification of the Pharaoh in the temple-vestry¹.

If there is any connection between Babylonia and Egypt in respect of this rite, it must date back to very early times, perhaps to times when the ancestors of certain racial elements that found their way eventually into Egypt on the one hand and Mesopotamia on the other, lived together in North Syria or Asia Minor². Those people may have had some rite of Opening the Mouth of statues, which they carried into either country, where it underwent modifications in accordance with the ideas with which it came in contact.

One thing seems certain and that is that the Egyptians did not get the rite from the Babylonians. It is essentially Egyptian as we know it and, as already stated, is closely linked with all the main Egyptian religious rites.

It should here be pointed out that because of its close association with the Solar-Pharaonic toilet, which took place at dawn, the rite of Opening the Mouth of an Egyptian statue was also supposed to be celebrated at dawn³.

It will have been observed that the Babylonian rite was likewise celebrated in the small hours of the morning, terminating just after dawn. The question I should like to put to Assyriologists is: Was there any reason why the Babylonian ceremony should take place at that time? If not, then it is just possible that the Babylonians borrowed the rite from Egypt⁴ and adapted it thoroughly in course of time to Babylonian ideas and mythology, meaningless incidents like the night to dawn celebration of the rite surviving. Finally, were the coloured wools of significance in Babylonian ritual, or are they survivals from, or misunderstandings of, the Egyptian coloured cloths?

¹ A. M. BLACKMAN in *Journal*, v, 155-164.

² A. M. BLACKMAN, *ibid.*, 155.

³ See above, p. 47.

⁴ Cf. LANGDON in *Journal*, vii, 137-145.