



## Beyond life: Aspects of Communication with the Dead Souls in Ancient Egypt

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### ABSTRACT

The ancient Egyptians believed that after death their souls would continue to exist in the next world. As early as the Neolithic culture, their burial customs tended to preserve the dead in as lifelike a way as possible. Meanwhile, the bodies were buried within the residential settlements. It was through this body treatment, that the living would interact directly with the dead. The Old Kingdom witnessed other early methods of communicating with the departed relatives through writing Letters to the Dead, which extended as long as the Late Period. The ancient Egyptians also erected false doors in their tombs since the Old Kingdom to serve as a link between the worlds of the living and the dead. Additionally, they believed that the dead would come to life in the otherworld together with the souls of their forebears, who were glorified in several manifestations such as the Souls of Pe and Nekhen. In their form as royal ancestral souls, they interacted with the living and the dead. They also blessed the birth, coronation, reigning, and rebirth of the royals. Furthermore, they connected between the sky and the earth and protect, guide, and acclaimed the justification of the dead.

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### 1. Introduction

The ancient Egyptians viewed death as a temporary period of sleep to prepare for the eternal life in the hereafter (Sander-Hansen, 1942, pp. 12-13; Assmann, 2005, p. 104). According to the ancient Egyptian beliefs, the capacity for growth, reproduction, and functional activities of the

living was on earth and of the dead would be in the afterlife. The ancient Egyptians also believed that the life of the living on earth would be replaced after death with the afterlife in the otherworld (Zandee, 1977, p. 1; Binder, 1995, p. 8). In this context, Bommas noticed that as the living live in the earthly world we may consider that the dead are alive as well but in the next world (Bommas, 2011, p. 162).

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The ancient Egyptian attitude towards death influenced by the belief in everlasting and immortality. In this context, the ancient Egyptians thought that only the justified dead could be immortalized and transferred into a

glorified spirit, called  *ꜥh-transfigured spirit* (Gardiner, 1927, p. 550; Faulkner, 1962, p. 4; Erman and Grapow, 1971a, p. 15:1-2; Wilson, 1997, pp. 12-13; Hannig, 2003, pp. 13-15; Hannig, 2006, pp. 27-32), with divine characteristics as well as self-perpetuation and creative powers after death as a kind of their survival in the eternal life (Englund, 1978, pp. 51-52; Friedman, 1981, pp. 18-19, 134, 162, 235; Lloyd, 1989, pp. 120, 129; Friedman, 2011, p. 90; Hays, 2011, p. 123; Smith, 2017, pp. 15-16, 44). Since the time of the Old Kingdom, the deceased king was not only transferred into a transfigured spirit but also glorified and deified and became an embodiment of god Osiris in the afterlife (Gardiner, 1935, p. 28; Silverman, D. P., 1991, pp. 55, 59; Mathieu, 2010, pp. 100-102; Hays, 2011, pp. 120-121; Hays, 2012, pp. 167-174; Smith, 2014, p. 91; Smith, 2017, p. 137). This theme was recorded for the first time in the religious context of the Pyramid Texts. For example, Utterances 258, 259, 437, 468, 535, 600, 624, 650, 684, 687, 690, (Spells § 308a, § 312a, § 793b, § 895d, § 1282b, § 1657a, § 1761d, § 1833a, § 2054, § 2076c, § 2097a, and § 2103d) indicated the assimilation of the deceased king with god Osiris after his death (Sethe, 1908, pp. 166, 169, 435, 500; Sethe, 1910, pp. 220, 375, 424, 449, 498, 505, 511-513; Mercer, 1952, pp. 127-128, 234, 256, 411, 435, 449, 495, 499, 503-504; Faulkner, 1969, pp. 67-68, 144, 157, 203, 247, 258, 268, 294, 296, 298, 299). It was through this concept that the ancient Egyptians believed that the deceased king would be rejuvenated, along with god Osiris, who had been restored to life after being murdered by his brother Seth<sup>(2)</sup>. The rejuvenation of the transfigured spirit of the

deceased, who was assimilated to god Osiris in his form as the Lord of the Dead, required the maintaining of a connection with the living through a mortuary chapel and offerings. On the other hand, the living could also invoke the divine powers of their dead ancestors to protect them on earth and to guide them in the mysterious ways of the eternity.

It seems that the ancient Egyptian beliefs centered around a variety of interactions among living organisms on earth, among the departed people in the subterranean realm of the dead, and between the living and the dead in a hypothetical world influenced by many aspects of Egyptian culture (Lloyd, 1989, p. 130). According to this supreme faith, the dead relatives were perceived as extension of their families and tribes in the otherworld (Gardiner, 1935, p. 19). So evidently, the social interaction among the dead members in their subterranean realm was one of the divine orders. On the other hand, maintaining a connection between the living and the dead was an integral part of the ancient Egyptian doctrine and it had a great tendency to create mutual benefit and social connection between the two worlds.

## 2. Methodology

The aim of this paper is to study and analyze the roles of the dead souls towards the living and the dead described in texts and iconography. Several considerations relating to the preliminaries of communicating with the dead in ancient Egypt and the deification of the royal souls after death will be analyzed. Furthermore, the paper aims to study the context of the Souls of Pe and Nekhen in particular to approach the concept of communicating with the dead souls in details. To do so, a descriptive approach was followed in giving a comprehensive account

(<sup>2</sup>) For this concept, see: (Assmann, 2002, pp. 126-131).

concerning the secular and afterlife roles of the Souls of Pe and Nekhen towards the living and the dead in the royal and private contexts. The researcher used the analytical approach to trace the different aspects of interaction between the livings and the dead on one hand and the dead together on the other hand.


### 3. Interaction with the dead: Preliminaries



The ancient Egyptians were often interested to show appreciation and awe to their dead. They honored their royal and private progenitors profoundly and respectfully because of their value and achievements during their lifetime. They also deified their dead ancestors starting from the kings of the Fourth Dynasty, of whom King Sneferu was the first to reach the stage of sanctification and sanctity (Vandier, 1936, pp. 109-110). The king was also regarded as being an heir and incarnation of the creator god, so that he had to participate in setting the order of the cosmos, preserving the equilibrium of the universe, and repelling the cosmic and earthly enemies (Morenz, 1973, p. 168; Hornung, 1983, p. 138).

There were other several preliminaries of interaction between the living and the dead preceding the deification of the royal ancestors of the reigning king. For example, during the Pre-dynastic Period, there were no separate burials for the dead in the Neolithic culture of the village of Merimda Beni-Salama. Meanwhile, the dead were buried in the so-called “house burial” within the residential settlement of the living as a kind of engaging the dead in the daily life practices and in order to let them sharing the meals and interacting with the living relatives (Junker, 1929, pp. 185-202; Vandier, 1952, p. 101; Kemp, 1968, p. 23; Badawi, 1978, pp. 43-51; Hoffman, 1979, p. 174; Badawi, 1980, pp. 70-76).

### 4. Social connections between the world of the living and the world of the dead in the Dynastic Period: Early Evidence

In ancient Egypt, there were social connections between the living and the dead. This relationship was reinforced through several ways throughout the Dynastic Period. For example, the ancient Egyptian perception towards the glorifying of the dead was apparent since the time of the Old Kingdom through the performing of a ritualistic dance

in the funerals, called  *mww*-dance (Erman and Grapow, 1971b, p. 53: 14), aimed to welcome the new dead by their former forebears in the next world (**Fig. 1**) (Hassan, 1975, p. 26, figs. 3, 9, pl. XVII (a); Brunner-Traut, 1986, pp. 220-221; Seyfried, 2003, p. 62). According to Brunner-Traut

(1958, pp. 54, 57), the  *mww* dancers ( *mww* dancers (Gardiner, 1927, p. 568; Faulkner, 1962, p. 106; Erman and Grapow, 1971b, p. 53: 14; Hannig, 2003, p. 522; Hannig, 2006, pp. 1047) participated in the funeral ceremonies, in which they act as representatives of the burial precinct and the holy places into which the dead would enter. Through their dance, the dancers safely protect the new dead in their way to the netherworld. Moreover, they would dispel any of the doubts that may be casted in the mind of the dead concerning to remain alone after death.

After death, the Egyptians perceived the predecessor to be the guide of the dead kin in the afterlife. In this context, Harrington (2013, p. 58) noticed that the dead forebears could be transferred into a spiritual guardian to his family members. This guardian character was indicated in a text inscribed in the Theban tomb of Amenemhat (**TT 82**), which says about the deceased:



*iri.k s3 n msw.k r nhh hn' dt*

“(May) you be a protection for your children to the infinity and everlasting”<sup>(3)</sup>. (Davies, 1915, p. 102, pl. XXVII; Assmann, 2005, p. 219).

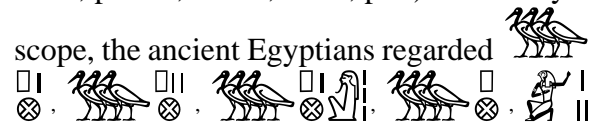
According to the previous caption, it was the responsibility of the deceased predecessor to care for the other family members in the present and future, in another say, on earth and in the afterlife. It is now clear that the forebears created a connection between the two worlds, on earth and in the otherworld, by means of their protective role.

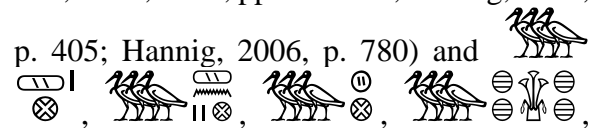
The interaction between the living and the dead could be also evidenced by a corpus of ancient Egyptian texts called the “Letters of the Dead”. The living used to write letters to their dead since the time of the Old Kingdom and through to the Late Period to ask for advice, help, or solutions for the problems of inheritance, illness, or even fertility (Gardiner and Sethe, 1928; Gardiner, 1930, pp. 19-22; Piankoff and Clère, 1934, pp. 157-169; Guilmot, 1966, pp. 1-27; Simpson, 1966, pp. 39-52; Simpson, 1970, pp. 58-64; Goedicke, 1972, pp. 95-98; Wentz, 1975, pp. 595-600; Frandsen, 1992, pp. 31-49; Jasnow and Vittmann 1992, pp. 23-43; O’Donoghue, 1999, pp. 87-104; El-Leithy, 2003, pp. 304-313; García and Carlos, 2010, pp. 133-153; Harrington, 2013, pp. 34-37; Beauquier, 2014).

Erecting false doors starting from the Old Kingdom and throughout the ancient Egyptian history is another evidence of the interaction between the living and the spirits of the dead in the ancient Egyptian beliefs (Gardiner, 1935, p. 8; Badawy, 1948, pp. 232-243; Vandier, 1954, pp. 389-431; Wiebach-Koepke, 1981, pp. 8-17, 35-71; Haeny, 1984, pp. 563-574; Strudwick, 1985, pp. 9-50; Roeten, 2014, pp. 169-191).

## 5. Spiritual doctrine in ancient Egypt: General glimpse

In ancient Egypt, there was a strong relationship between the living king and the soul of his forebears. He needed to appeal them through their veneration to obtain their complete assistance, protection, and support. On the other hand, they relied on him in commemorating their memorial and establishing their individual cult to ensure their survival in the realm of the dead (David, 1981, p. 153; Plater, 2001, p. 1). In the royal

scope, the ancient Egyptians regarded  *b3w-Pi* i.e. “Souls of Pe” (Erman and Grapow, 1971a, p. 413: 7-8; Wilson, 1997, pp. 297-298; Leitz, 2002, pp. 721-722; Hannig, 2003,

p. 405; Hannig, 2006, p. 780) and  *b3w-Nhn* i.e. “Souls of Nekhen” (Erman and Grapow, 1971a, p. 413: 9-10; Wilson, 1997, pp. 297-298; Leitz, 2002, pp. 724-725; Hannig, 2003, p. 405; Hannig, 2006, p. 780)

as divine personifications of the ancestral spirits of the living king in Upper and Lower Egypt, since the time of the Old Kingdom. This incarnation was a kind of deifying the souls, which continued into the Late Period as was noticed by Žabkar (1968, p. 154).

Glorifying the souls of the royals and keeping a connection with them after death could also be witnessed through the celebration of the Beautiful Feast of the Valley since the time of the Middle Kingdom and onwards (Redford, 1986, p. 172). Meanwhile, the ceremonial processions had proceeded to the mortuary temples then interacted with their dead through presenting offerings to them in order to bless them, bring them closer to the

<sup>(3)</sup> For the difference between the two terminologies


 “nhh” and “dt”, see: (Thausing,


1934, pp. 35-42; Bakir, 1953, pp. 110-111; Otto, 1964, pp. 92-93; Bakir, 1974, pp. 252-254; Assmann, 1975, pp. 10-15; Lamy, 1981, p. 19; Hornung, 1992, pp. 64-69).

god, pay their respects, and ensure the revival of their souls (Winlock, 1947, p. 84; Schott, 1953, pp. 33-39).



## 6. The royal cult in ancient Egypt: Souls of Pe and Nekhen

The Souls of Pe and Nekhen were always regarded as divine embodiments of the pre-dynastic dead rulers of the old Pre-historic capitals of Lower and Upper Egypt

respectively.  *P* (Gauthier, 1925, p. 35; Gardiner, 1927, p. 564; Faulkner, 1962, p. 86; Erman and Grapow, 1971a, pp. 489: 8-9; Altenmüller, 1975, pp. 887-889; Hannig, 2003, p. 431; Hannig, 2006, p. 831) was the city of Buto that was situated in Lower Egypt

and  *Nhn* (Gauthier, 1926, p. 99; Gardiner, 1927, p. 575; Faulkner, 1962, p. 138; Erman and Grapow, 1971b, p. 310: 8-13; Adams, 1977, pp. 1182-1186; Hannig, 2003, p. 468; Hannig, 2006, p. 1322) referred to the city of Hierakonpolis in Upper Egypt and the both were regarded as cult centers of god Horus (Gauthier, 1925, p. 35; Gauthier, 1926, p. 99; Montet, 1957, p. 95; Montet, 1961, p. 42). According to Kees (1956, pp. 279, 285), deifying the Souls of Pe and Nekhen as divine incarnations of the spirits of the royal predecessors of the reigning king in the cult centers of god Horus is a great verification of thinking about the living kings as his followers and representatives on earth until their death and deification by his side.

The Souls of Pe and Nekhen were constantly represented as gods in human bodies with the

heads of the falcon  and the jackal  respectively (**Fig. 2**) (Calverley, Broome, and Gardiner, 1935, pl. 36; The Epigraphic Survey, 1940, pl. 235; Brunner, 1964, Tf. 9, Szene IX (L); Helck, 1968, Bl. 2-3; Lepsius, 1972, pl. 75 (c); Lacau and Chevrier, 1979, pls. 2 (196), 3 (178); Nelson, 1981, pls. 38,

152; Habachi, 1982, p. 226, Abb. 6; Minutoli, 1982, pl. XXI (4)). However, sometimes the Souls of Pe also depicted with the head of the jackal and the Souls of Nekhen appeared with a falcon head as a kind of considering the two groups as a compound unit sharing the same protective and guidance characteristics of the falcon and jackal respectively (The Epigraphic Survey, 1940, pl. 235; Piankoff, 1957, p. 199, pl. IX (A); The Epigraphic Survey, 1964, pl. 526; Abitz, 1984, p. 94, Abb. 41; Hornung, 1991, Tf. 144, 146; Leitz, 2002, pp. 721, 724). Scheil (1922, pp. 618-619) viewed in the Souls of Pe and Nekhen the characteristics of the protective and procreative genies, who appeared at the beginning of the creation to be in the company of the primordial-god Nun. In addition, offerings were presented to them by King Niuserre of the Fifth Dynasty as was indicated in the inscriptions of his Sun-Temple of King at Abu Ghurab, to the north of Abusir (von Bissing and Kees, 1928, pls. 14 (nos. 44, 50), 17 (no. 289)). Making offerings to the deified souls of the dead kings might emphasize the theory, which said that after the death of the individuals they must join the gods and keep in touch with the living through oblations.

As divinities, the Souls of Pe and Nekhen were mediators between the sector and netherworld spheres<sup>(4)</sup>. They interacted with the living and the dead through practicing several roles in the earthly world and the realm of the dead that can be summarized as follows:


### 6.1 The secular roles of the divine Souls of Pe and Nekhen in the world of the living:

#### 6.1.1 In the divine birth ceremony:

Owing to their divine protective abilities, the divine Souls of Pe and Nekhen were always postured in the birth scenes dancing

the heavenly and earthly worlds during the Eighteenth Dynasty (Hornung, 1992, p. 48).

(<sup>4</sup>) Compare with the later assigning of King Amenhotep III and Queen Teye as mediators between


in a ritual gesture of jubilation called *hmnw*  (Gardiner, 1927, p. 579; Faulkner, 1962, p. 159; Erman and Grapow, 1971b, p. 493: 15-23; Wilson, 1997, p. 606; Hannig, 2003, p. 750; Hannig, 2006, pp. 1566-1567) in a kneeling position with one arm raised beside the body and another rest on the chest (Junker, 1940, p. 26; Baines, 2006, p. 277). In this pose, they powerfully hailed and protected the birth of the ancient Egyptian rulers on the ground of their divine protective and procreative abilities. This functional posture was conceived in the divine birth of King Amenhotep III in Luxor Temple (**Fig. 3**) and of Queen Hatshepsut in the Temple of Deir El-Bahari (**Fig. 4**) (Horeau, 1841, Fig. on p. 18; Gayet, 1894, pp. 102-103, pl. LXXV (199); Naville, 1896, p. 16, pl. LI; Weindler, 1915, Abb. 13-15; Brunner, 1964, Tf. 9, Szene IX (L); Otto and Hirmer, 1966, pl. 32; Lepsius, 1972, pl. 74 (c); Porter and Moss, 1972, pp. 326 (152), 348 (18)).


### 6.1.2 In the coronation ceremony:


The Souls of Pe and Nekhen played a great role in granting the kingship of the supreme god to the reigning king. During the reign of King Amenhotep III of the Eighteenth Dynasty, they participated in the coronation ceremonies of the ancient Egyptian king as a kind of blessing the reigning king by the souls of his royal ancestors (Gayet, 1894, pp. 86-87, 117-119).

This theme was portrayed in the third antechamber in the Temple of Luxor, where the Souls of Pe and Nekhen witnessed and blessed the crowning of King Amenhotep III by god Amun in the presence of god Horus (**Fig. 5**) (Gayet, 1894, pl. LIV (98-99); Porter and Moss, 1972, p. 323 (131)).

The Souls of Pe and Nekhen played the same role in the Birth Chamber of Luxor Temple, where god Amun is shown introducing the new King Amenhotep III to the divine Souls of Pe and Nekhen during the presentation of

the  *dšrt*-Red Crown of Lower Egypt and

the  *hdt*-White Crown of Upper Egypt to him (**Fig. 6**) (Rosellini, 1832, pl. XL (2); Gayet, 1894, pls. LXXII (183), LXXV (184); Campbell, 1912, pp. 58-60, pl. facing p. 60; Lepsius, 1972, pl. 75 (c); Porter and Moss, 1972, p. 327 (154)). In the scene of Luxor Temple, the divine Souls of Pe and Nekhen hailed the king during his coronation and

according to the accompanying inscription  *di.sn 'nh* *dd w3s nb 3wt-ib nb snb nb*, “They give all life, stability, and dominion, all happiness, and all health” to him (Gayet, 1894, pl. LIV (98-99)).

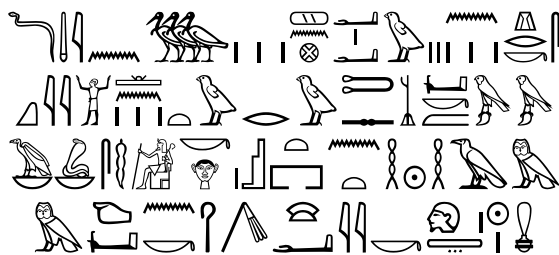
Definitely, it was necessary for the ancient Egyptian king to appear in the company of the Souls of Pe and Nekhen in the religious occasions. It was through this accompaniment that the living king merged with the spiritual power of his royal ancestors, who had supported him since time immemorial and emerging of monarchy in Egypt (Frankfort, 1948, p. 91). Furthermore, it confirms the legitimacy of the ruler as a king and inheritor of the property of his ancestors, who ruled the kingdoms of the north and south before the unity as descendants of god Horus, the patron of kingship in ancient Egypt (Baines, 1995, p. 9).

### 6.1.3 In the enthronement and homage ceremony:

The Souls of Pe and Nekhen also often depicted while conducting the living king to a superior god, specially god Amun. In this case, the Souls of Pe and Nekhen protectively connected between the realm of the gods in the sky and the world of the kings on earth. Additionally, they transferred the heavenly kingship of the superior god Re to the ancient

Egyptian ruler on earth. They also witnessed the legitimacy of the rule of the king as the one, who would receive the sacred kingship of the gods.

The example of the role of the Souls of Pe and Nekhen in the enthronement and homage ceremony was attested in the Birth Chamber of King Amenhotep III at Luxor Temple. Therein, he appears sitting on a palanquin carried by the Souls of Pe and Nekhen as a kind of their sharing in granting the divine monarchy of the god Re to the him (**Fig. 7**) (Rosellini, 1832, pl. XL (1); Champollion, 1845, pl. CCCXLII; Gayet, 1894, pl. LXXV (185); Porter, and Moss, 1972, p. 327 (154)). The same theme appeared during the Nineteenth Dynasty, when Kings Seti I and Ramesses II were also carried by the Souls of Pe and Nekhen in the Chapel of King Seti I in the Temple of Abydos (**Fig. 8**) and on the Enclosure Wall of King Ramesses II around the inner Sanctuary of Karnak (**Fig. 9**) (Mariette, 1869, pl. 31 (b); Calverley, Broome, and Gardiner, 1935, pl. 36; Helck, 1968, pp. 5-6, Bl. 2-3; Porter and Moss, 1991, p. 11 (103)). The accompanying texts of the scene of King Seti I at Abydos indicate the role of the ancestral souls in protecting the king during his enthronement and sitting on his eternal throne as representative of the sun-god Re on earth (David, 1981, p. 158). The inscriptions say:



*dd-mdw in b3w-Nhn 'wy.n hr.k sky.n tw r wts.k m nbwy nbty sndm.k hr st nt nhh 3mm.n.k hk3 nhh h'y.k tp t3 mi R'*

*“Words spoken by the Souls of Nekhen, Our arms (are) under you (that) we (may) lift you up, that you (may) be raised as the Two Lords and the Two Ladies. You sit upon the throne*

*of eternity, you has grasped the scepter and the flail, you appear upon earth like Re”* (Calverley, Broome, and Gardiner, 1935, pl. 36; David, 1981, p. 155).



*dd-mdw in b3w-P twt R' nb pt nb t3 nswt bity Mn-M3't-R' f3y.n tw... di.n n.k t3 m htpw*

*“Words spoken by the Souls of Pe, (Oh), image of Re, Lord of Heaven, Lord of Earth, King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Seti I we carry you... we give to you the earth in peace”* (Calverley, Broome, and Gardiner, 1935, pl. 36; David, 1981, p. 155).

Similarly, the caption, which accompanies the representation of King Amenhotep III being carried by the Souls of Pe and Nekhen during the declaration of his kingship in Luxor Temple (**Fig. 7**), alludes to the same context and it can be read as follows:



*(t)wt h'ti m hqt d3rt hr st Hr nt 'nhw mi R' dt*

*“Image rising with the crown of the south and the crown of the north on Horus seat of the living as the eternal sun”* (Gayet, 1894, pl. LXXV (185)).

The Souls of Nekhen were also depicted together with other deities including Montu and Atum conducting King Seti I before a seated god, whose figure is destroyed (**Fig. 10**) in his private chapel in Abydos temple (Mariette, 1869, pl. 29; Calverley, Broome, and Gardiner, 1935, pl. 30 (upper); Porter and Moss, 1991, p. 10 (99)). The accompanying caption illustrated the inheriting of the throne of the sun-god Re by the reigning king and it says:



“Sit you upon the throne of your father (i.e. Re)” (Calverley, Broome, and Gardiner, 1935, pl. 30 (upper); David, 1981, p. 153).

Similarly, during the Twentieth Dynasty, King Ramesses III was also portrayed while being conducted by the Souls of Pe and Nekhen before the Theban triad in his Mortuary Temple at Medinet Habu (Fig. 11) (France. Commission des Sciences et Arts d'Égypte, 1817, pl. 13 (upper left); Champollion, 1844, p. 353; Piehl, 1886, pl. CLI; Piehl, 1888, pp. 116-117; Lepsius, 1900, p. 177; The Epigraphic Survey, 1940, pl. 235; Porter and Moss, 1972, p. 500). The text, which accompanies the figures of the Souls of Pe and Nekhen in the latter scene, includes their speeches to the king. Their words are considered the best evidence of their role in legitimizing the role of the king. The text says:



“Your holiness proceeds to the great seat of your father Amun” (Piehl, 1886, pl. CLI; Piehl, 1888, p. 116).



“You (being) on earth as the king of Egypt, as the prince of each country” (Piehl, 1886, pl. CLI; Piehl, 1888, p. 116).

6.1.4 In ensuring eternal rule for the king:

On the exterior east wall of the Mortuary Temple of King Ramesses II at Abydos, the figures of the Souls of Pe and Nekhen formed the ladder of the throne of King Ramesses II,

to whom the bound prisoners were led to destroy evils and maintain his eternal rule on earth (Fig. 12) (Iskander and Goelet, 2015, pp. 130-133, 473, pls. (2.4.4)-(2.4.7)). Thus, the divine Souls of Pe and Nekhen played a great role in leading the prisoners to their final destination as a kind of declaring the triumph of the living king over his enemies and ensuring the continuity of his rule on earth.

6.2 The afterlife roles of the divine Souls of Pe and Nekhen in the world of the dead:

6.2.1 In ensuring immortal life for the deceased king and the individual dead:

In the royal and private spheres, the divine spirits of Pe and Nekhen were also responsible for giving a new life to all the dead in the hereafter in addition to protect them and provide a safe transition to them into the afterlife to ensure their rebirth and resurrection.

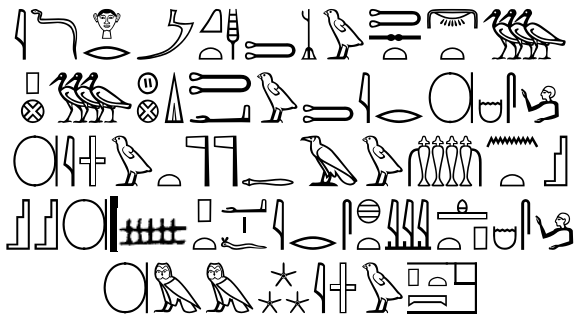
In Utterances 306 and 530 (Spells §478a-479a and §1253a-e) of the Pyramid Texts, the Souls of Pe and Nekhen were functioned to set up the ladder for the deceased king to ascend the sky and start a new life there. The spells discussed their importance to the deceased king, in which they would help him to reach the realm of the gods and to occupy a prominent position there. Additionally, they played a great role in assisting the deceased king to reach the Field of Offerings and to ensure his resurrection in the heaven among the gods. The spells say:





*ii n.f ntrw b3w-P ntrw b3w-Nhn ntrw ir(y)w pt  
ntrw ir(y)w t3 iri.sn n.k wtsw hr '.sn pri.k r.k  
r pt izk.k hr.s m rn.s pw n m3kt*

“(There) come to him the gods; the Souls of Pe, the gods; the Souls of Nekhen, the gods who are in the sky, and the gods who are on earth. They make supports for you upon their arm(s); (may) you come to you to the sky and (may) you mount up on it (literally she) in this its (literally her) name of a ladder” (Sethe, 1908, pp. 246-247 (478a-479a); Mercer, 1952, p. 162 (§478a-479a); Faulkner, 1969, p. 94 (§478)).



*i(n)d hr m3kt.t wtst nbwt b3w-P b3w-Nhn di.t  
'w.t ir N hmsi N imywt ntrwy '3w(y) hnti swt  
N šspt 'f ir sht-htp hmsi N mm sb3w im(y)w  
pt*

“Greetings to your Ladder, (which) the Souls of Buto and the Souls of Nekhen have set up and gilded. You give your arms to N. (that) N. may sit between the two great gods (that) the places of N. (be) in front and that his arm be held as far as the Marsh of Offerings, (so that) N (may) sit among the stars, which are in the sky” (Sethe, 1910, pp. 208-209 (1253a-e); Mercer, 1952, p. 327 (§1253a-e); Faulkner, 1969, p. 199 (§1253)).

The textual evidence of the Pyramid Texts, which referred to the erecting and gilding of a ladder by the divine Souls of Pe and the Souls of Nekhen to protect and support the justified king in his everlasting, finds its echo in the private sphere in Spells 648 and 832 of the Coffin Texts, which say:



*b3w P Nhn ii m tp(y)-' m-htw.i*

“(O) you Souls of Pe and Nekhen, come behind (and) before me”.

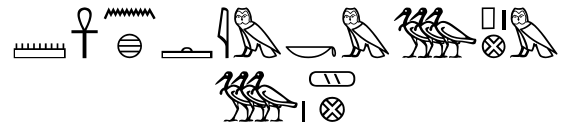
(De Buck, 1956, p. 270 (j); Faulkner, 1977, p. 223).



*in.n.f n.f ntrw b3w-P in.n.f n.f ntrw b3w-Nhn  
in.n.f ntrw b3w-Iwnw ink.n.f n.f ntrw ir(y)w pt  
ir(y)w t3 iri.n.sn n.f wtsw hr 'wy.sn zk.f hr.s m  
rn.t pw n m3kt*

“He (i.e. Atum) has brought to him the gods; the Souls of Pe. He has brought to him the gods; the Souls of Nekhen. He has brought (to him) the gods; the Souls of Heliopolis. He has unit for him the gods who (are) in the sky (and) who (are) on earth. They made supports for him on their arms. (May) he mount up on it (literally she) in this its (literally her) name of a ladder” (De Buck, 1961, pp. 32 (h)-33 (a); Faulkner, 1978, p. 21).

In the private sector, the ancestral Souls of Pe and Nekhen also played the same role of giving a new life to the dead in the afterlife. This concept was the focal point in Spell 920 in the Coffin Texts, which says:

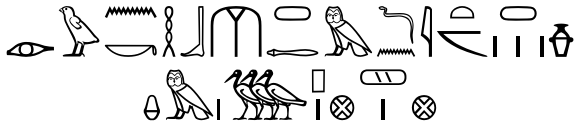


*mn 'nh im.k m b3w-P m b3w-Nhn*

“(May) life (be) established in you through the Souls of Pe (and) through the Souls of Nekhen”.

(De Buck, 1961, p. 125 (j); Faulkner, 1978, p. 64).

Among the roles of the Souls of Pe and Nekhen was to hail and celebrate the justified deceased in a great festival celebrated on his/her honor with offerings of bread and beer in the next world as was recorded in Spell 258 in the Coffin Texts, which says:



*irw n.k h3b- '3 m dnit krht t m b3w P Nhn*  
 “A great festival (is) made for you with portion of beer (and) bread with the Souls of Pe (and) Nekhen” (De Buck, 1947, p. 372 (d-e); Faulkner, 1973, p. 198).

6.2.2 In guiding the individual dead:

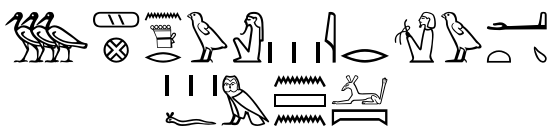
The function of the Souls of Pe and Nekhen was also to guide the deceased in the sky as was recorded in Spell 398 in the Coffin Texts, which says:



*b3w P Nhn r m3 'w.s 3ht*  
 “The Souls of Pe (and) Nekhen (are) for her (i.e. deceased) guide-lines (to) the horizon” (De Buck, 1954, pp. 146 (b)-147 (a); Faulkner, 1977, p. 35).

6.2.3 In protecting the limbs of the individual dead:


The Souls of Nekhen are specially described as the protectors of the limbs of the deceased in Spell 1135 in the Coffin Texts, which runs as follows:

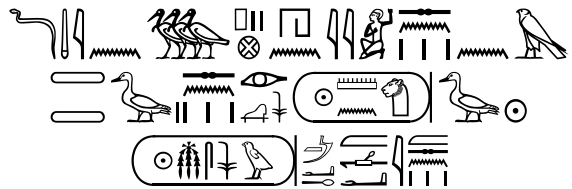


*b3w Nhn ndrww ir(y)w 'wt.f m nšni*

“The Souls of Nekhen. Those who seize, the guardians of his limbs in rage” (De Buck, 1961, p. 479 (a); Faulkner, 1978, p. 172).

6.2.4 In acclaiming justification of the deceased king:

In the divine sphere, King Ramesses I was shown in his tomb (KV 16) being assimilated with the Souls of Pe and Nekhen and performing the  *hny*-gesture between them (Fig. 13). In this case, the reigning king became an exalted spirit and raised to the rank of the divinities among the Souls of Pe and Nekhen (Porter and Moss, 1964, p. 534 (8)). The accompanying text is written on the left wall of the sarcophagus chamber and it refers to the declaring of the king as being justified among the souls of his ancestors. It says:



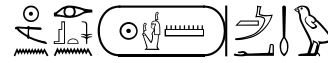
*dd-mdw in b3w-P hny(w).sn n Hr-3hty s3.sn*  
*Wsir-nsw mn-ph3ty-R' s3-R' R'-ms-sw m3'-*  
*hrw m-w3' im.sn*

“Words spoken by the Souls of Pe (when) they acclaim to Horus of the Horizon, their son, Osiris King, Ramesses I, son of Re, Ramesses I, justified (as) one of them” (Piankoff, 1957, pp. 198-199, pl. IX (A)).



*dd-mdw in b3w-Nhn iry.sn hnww n nbw-nhh*  
*iw Wsir nsw nb-t3wy mn-ph3ty-R' m3'-hrw m-*  
*w3' im.sn*

“Words spoken by the Souls of Nekhen when they make acclamations to the masters of eternity and when, the Osiris King, master of the Two Lands, Ramesses I, justified (as one of them” (Piankoff, 1957, pp. 198-199, pl. IX (A)).



*dd-mdw in b3w-Nhn iry.sn hnww n 3hty hwy.sn s3.sn pri m h'w.sn nb-t3wy mry-n-R' Wsir-nswt mn-M3't-R' m3'-hr*

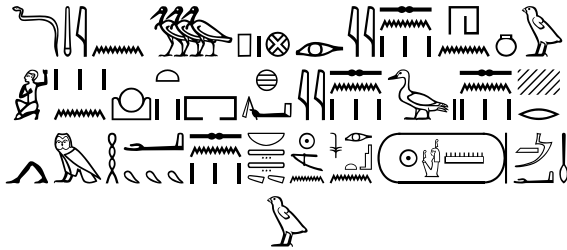
“Words spoken by the Souls of Nekhen: They do the henu-gesture to the two horizons, they protect their son, (who) has come out of their bodies, the lord of the Two Lands, the beloved of Re, the Osiris King Seti I, justified” (Lefébure, 1886, pl. XXII (2)).

**7. Conclusion**

The question of what happens after death has been addressed by the ancient Egyptian religious beliefs. In the ancient Egyptian ideology, the departed people remained connected to the world of the living in addition to interact among the dead in the otherworld. The spirits of the dead were revived and became able to access the space of the living through the false doors since the time of the Old Kingdom. By that time and onwards, the dead also lived on and one could even communicate with them through writing letters to them. There were also various interactions demonstrated in ancient Egypt. The living communicated on earth, the departed people interacted in the subterranean realm of the dead, and the living connected with the dead as well.

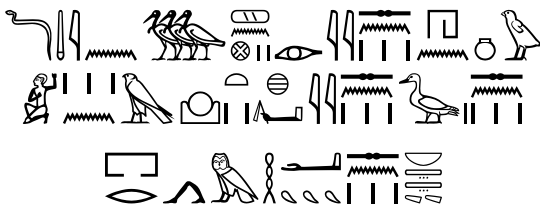
**6.2.5 In protecting the deceased king:**

In relation to the sun-god Re and the reigning king, one of the main functions of the Souls of Pe and Nekhen is to cheer him in the horizon in his form as Rehorakhty and to protect their royal son and successor, who has come out of their bodies to role the earth (Assmann, 1983, p. 22: 2. Leitz, 2002, p. 721). This function was attested in details in two identical texts inscribed on the third pillar of the Grand Hall in the Tomb of King Seti I (KV 17) and say:



*dd-mdw in b3w-P iry.sn hnww n 3hty hwy.sn s3.sn (p)ri m h'w.sn nb-t3wy mry-n-R' Wsir-nswt mn-M3't-R' m3'-hrw*

“Words spoken by the Souls of Pe: They do the henu-gesture to the two horizons, they protect their son, (who) has come out of their bodies, the lord of the Two Lands, the beloved of Re, the Osiris King Seti I, justified” (Lefébure, 1886, pl. XX (4)).



The most remarkable evidence of interaction between the living and the dead and among the dead was the existing of the Souls of Pe and Nekhen, who personified the primeval force of the divine kingship and from whom the king inherited his throne and continued to function his role as a divine ruler according to their heavenly order. The communication with the Souls of Pe and Nekhen was emphasized in the worlds of the living and the dead as follows:

1. In the Earthly world:

- I. They powerfully protected the birth of the ancient Egyptian rulers in Luxor and Deir El-Bahari Temples because of their divine protective abilities (**Figs. 3-4**).
  - II. They granted the kingship of the supreme god to the reigning king Amenhotep III in the Temple of Luxor and participated in his coronation ceremonies as a kind of blessing him by the souls of his royal ancestors (**Figs. 5-6**).
  - III. They witnessed the legitimacy of the rule of kings Amenhotep III, Seti I, and Ramesses II through carrying their palanquins in the Birth Chamber of King Amenhotep III at Luxor Temple, the Chapel of King Seti I in the Temple of Abydos, and the Enclosure Wall of King Ramesses II around the inner Sanctuary of Karnak (**Figs. 7-9**).
  - IV. They conducted the living king to the superior god to transfer his heavenly kingship to the ancient Egyptian ruler on earth in the Chapel of King Seti I in his temple at Abydos and in the Mortuary Temple of King Ramesses III at Medinet Habu (**Figs. 10-11**).
  - V. They declared the triumph of the living king over his enemies and ensuring the continuity of his rule on earth in the Mortuary Temple of King Ramesses II at Abydos (**Fig. 12**).
2. In the subterranean realm of the dead:
    - I. They were responsible for giving life to all the dead in the hereafter in addition to protecting them and providing a safe transition to them into the afterlife. In Utterances 306 and 530 (Spells §478a-479a and §1253a-e) of the Pyramid Texts and Spells 648 and 832 of the Coffin Texts, they were functioned to set up the ladder for the dead kings and individuals to ascend the sky and start a new life there.
    - II. They gave life to the dead in the afterlife in Spell 920 of the Coffin Texts.
    - III. They glorified the justified dead in a great festival, celebrated on their honors with offerings of bread and beer in the next world in Spell 258 of the Coffin Texts.
    - IV. They guided the dead in the sky in Spell 398 of the Coffin Texts.
    - V. The Souls of Nekhen protected the limbs of the dead in Spell 1135 of the Coffin Texts.
    - VI. They acclaimed the justification of the deceased King Ramesses I in his tomb at the Valley of the Kings (KV 16) (**Fig. 13**).
    - VII. They protected their royal son and successor, King Seti I, who has come out of their bodies to role the earth in his tomb at the Valley of the Kings (KV 17).

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Figs.	Evidences of Interaction	Interactive Dead Souls	Roles of Dead Souls Towards Living and Dead	Aspects/ Reasons of Communication	Spheres		Contexts	
					Secular	Afterlife	Royal	Individual
.....	Utterance 306 (Spells §478a-479a) of the Pyramid Texts	Souls of Pe and Nekhen	Providing a safe transition to the dead kings into the afterlife	Protective	.....	√	√	.....
	Utterances 530 (Spells §1253a-e) of the Pyramid Texts							
.....	Utterance 306 (Spells §478a-479a) of the Pyramid Texts	Souls of Pe and Nekhen	Providing a safe transition to the dead kings into the afterlife	Protective	.....	√	√	.....
	Utterances 530 (Spells §1253a-e) of the Pyramid Texts							
.....	Utterance 306 (Spells §478a-479a) of the Pyramid Texts	Souls of Pe and Nekhen	Setting up the ladder for the dead kings to ascend the sky and start a new life there	Helpful	.....	√	√	.....
	Utterances 530 (Spells §1253a-e) of the Pyramid Texts							
.....	Spell 648 of the Coffin Texts	Souls of Pe and Nekhen	Protecting the dead individuals in the hereafter	Protective	.....	√	.....	√
.....	Spell 832 of the Coffin Texts	Souls of Pe and Nekhen	Providing a safe transition to the dead individuals into the afterlife	Protective	.....	√	.....	√
.....	Spell 832 of the Coffin Texts		Setting up the ladder for the dead individuals to ascend	Helpful	.....	√	.....	√


Figs.	Evidences of Interaction	Interactive Dead Souls	Roles of Dead Souls Towards Living and Dead	Aspects/ Reasons of Communication	Spheres		Contexts	
					Secular	Afterlife	Royal	Individual
		Souls of Pe and Nekhen	the sky and start a new life there					
.....	Spell 920 of the Coffin Texts	Souls of Pe and Nekhen	Giving life to the dead individuals in the afterlife	Regenerative	.....	√	.....	√
.....	Spell 258 of the Coffin Texts	Souls of Pe and Nekhen	Glorifying the justified dead in a great festival, celebrated on their honors with offerings of bread and beer in the next world	Festive	.....	√	.....	√
.....	Spell 398 of the Coffin Texts	Souls of Pe and Nekhen	Guiding the dead individuals in the sky	Guiding	.....	√	.....	√
.....	Spell 1135 of the Coffin Texts	Souls of Nekhen	Protecting the limbs of the individual dead	Protective	.....	√	.....	√
(3)	Birth scene of King Amenhotep III in Luxor Temple	Souls of Pe and Nekhen	Protecting the birth of the ancient Egyptian king	Protective	√	.....	√	.....
(7)	Birth Chamber of King Amenhotep III at Luxor Temple	Souls of Pe and Nekhen	Carrying the palanquin of the reigning king	Legitimizing	√	.....	√	.....
(5-6)	Coronation scene of King Amenhotep III in the Temple of Luxor	Souls of Pe and Nekhen	Participating in the coronation	Blessing	√	.....	√	.....

Figs.	Evidences of Interaction	Interactive Dead Souls	Roles of Dead Souls Towards Living and Dead	Aspects/ Reasons of Communication	Spheres		Contexts	
					Secular	Afterlife	Royal	Individual
			ceremonies of the ruling king					
(5-6)	Coronation scene of King Amenhotep III in the Temple of Luxor	Souls of Pe and Nekhen	Granting the kingship of the supreme god to the reigning king	Legitimizing	√	.....	√	.....
(4)	Birth scene of Queen Hatshepsut in Deir El-Bahari Temple	Souls of Pe and Nekhen	Protecting the birth of the ancient Egyptian queen	Protective	√	.....	√	.....
(8)	Chapel of King Seti I in Temple of Abydos	Souls of Pe and Nekhen	Carrying the palanquin of the reigning king	Legitimizing	√	.....	√	.....
(10)	Chapel of King Seti I in Abydos Temple	Souls of Pe and Nekhen	Transferring the heavenly kingship of the superior god to the ancient Egyptian ruler on earth	Legitimizing	√	.....	√	.....
.....	Tomb of King Seti I in the Valley of the Kings (KV 17).	Souls of Pe and Nekhen	Protecting their royal son and successor, who has come out of their bodies, to rule the earth	Protective	.....	√	√	.....
(13)	Tomb of King Ramesses I in the Valley of the Kings (KV 16)	Souls of Pe and Nekhen	Acclaiming the justification of the deceased king	Justifying	.....	√	√	.....
(9)	Enclosure Wall of King Ramesses II			Legitimizing	√	.....	√	.....

Figs.	Evidences of Interaction	Interactive Dead Souls	Roles of Dead Souls Towards Living and Dead	Aspects/ Reasons of Communication	Spheres		Contexts	
					Secular	Afterlife	Royal	Individual
	around the inner Sanctuary of Karnak	Souls of Pe and Nekhen	Carrying the palanquin of the reigning king					
(12)	Mortuary Temple of King Ramesses II at Abydos	Souls of Pe and Nekhen	Declaring the triumph of the living king over his enemies and ensuring the continuity of his rule on earth	Judging	√	.....	√	.....
(11)	Mortuary Temple of King Ramesses III at Medinet Habu	Souls of Pe and Nekhen	Transferring the heavenly kingship of the superior god to the ancient Egyptian ruler on earth	Legitimizing	√	.....	√	.....



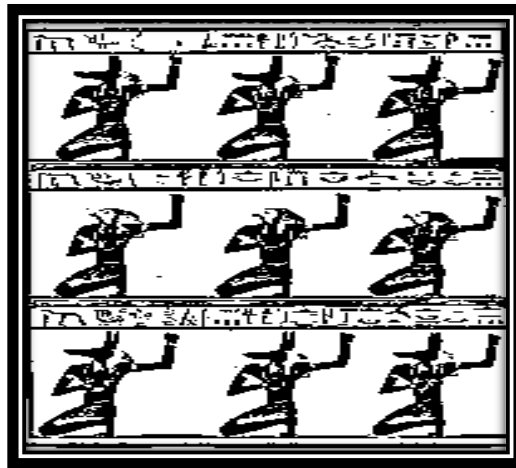
## Figures

**Figure 1:**  *mww*-dancers from the Old Kingdom Mastaba of Neb-Kaw-Ḥer at Saqqara (left) and the New Kingdom Tomb of Antefoqer (TT 60) at Thebes (right).



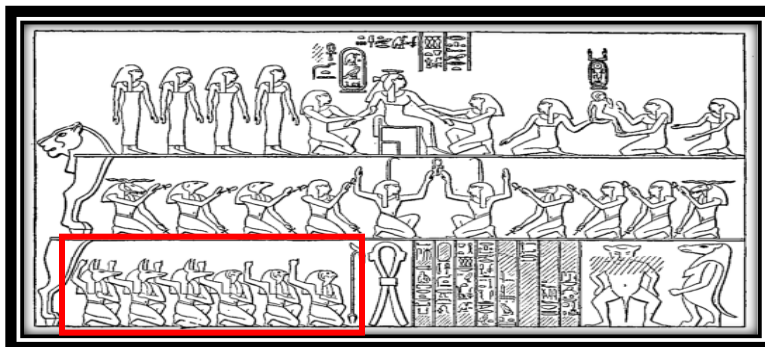
After: Right (Hassan, 1975, fig. 3); Left (Davies and Gardiner, 1920, pl. XXII).

**Figure 2:** Souls of Pe as falcon-headed kneeling gods and Souls of Nekhen as jackal-headed kneeling gods from Luxor Temple.



After: (Minutoli, 1982, pl. XXI (4)).

**Figure 3:** The divine birth of King Amenhotep III in the presence of the Souls of Pe and Nekhen in the Temple of Luxor.



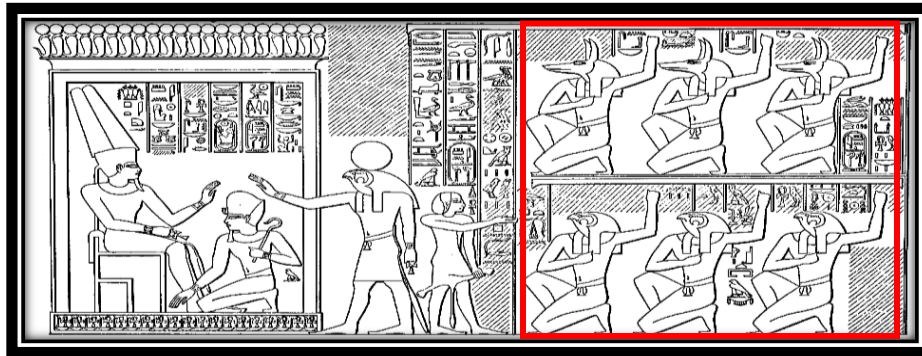
After: (Gayet, 1894, pl. LXV (199)).

**Figure. 4:** The divine birth of Queen Hatsheput in the presence of the Souls of Pe and Nekhen in the Temple of Deir El-Bahari.



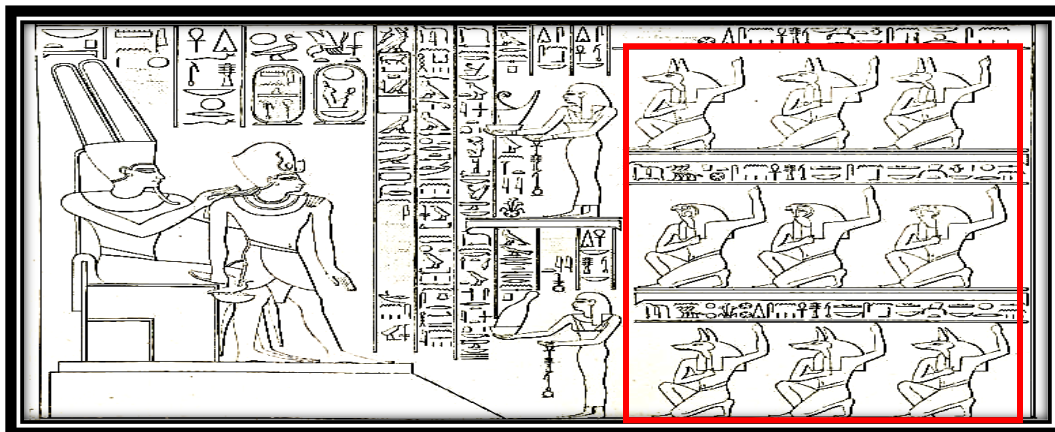
After: (Navelle, 1896, pl. LI).

**Figure. 5:** God Amun crowning King Amenhotep III before the Souls of Pe and Nekhen in Luxor Temple.



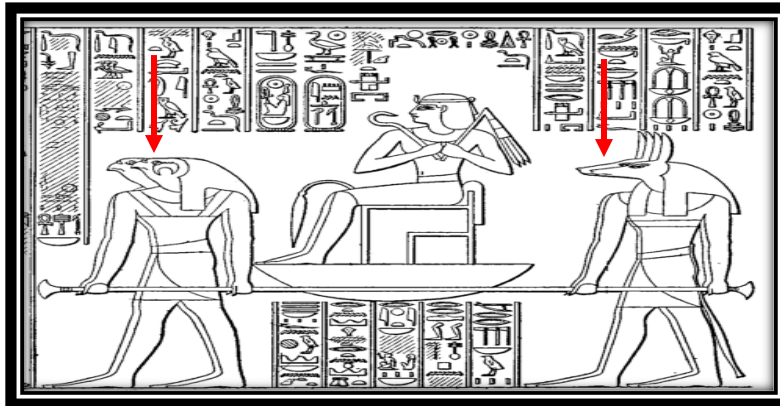
After: (Gayet, 1894, pl. LIV (98-99)).

**Figure. 6:** God Amun presenting King Amenhotep III to the Souls of Pe and Nekhen in Luxor Temple.



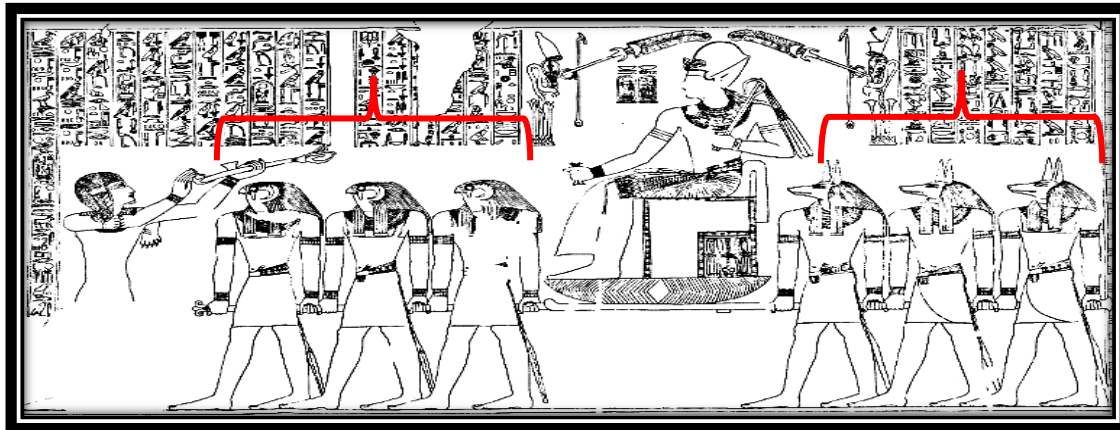
After: (Lepsius, 1972, pl. 75 (c)).

**Figure. 7:** King Amenhotep III being carried by the Souls of Pe and Nekhen in Luxor Temple.



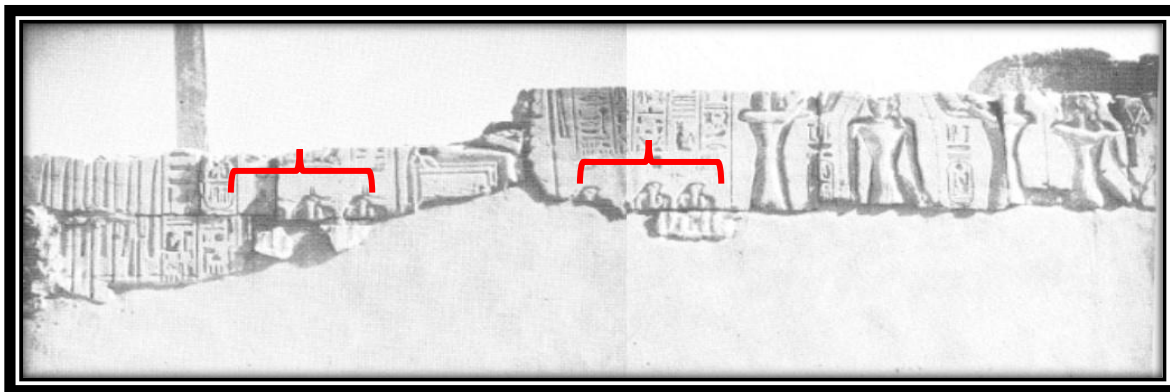
After: (Gayet, 1894, pl. LXXV (185)).

**Figure. 8:** King Seti I being carried by the Souls of Pe and Nekhen in Abydos Temple.



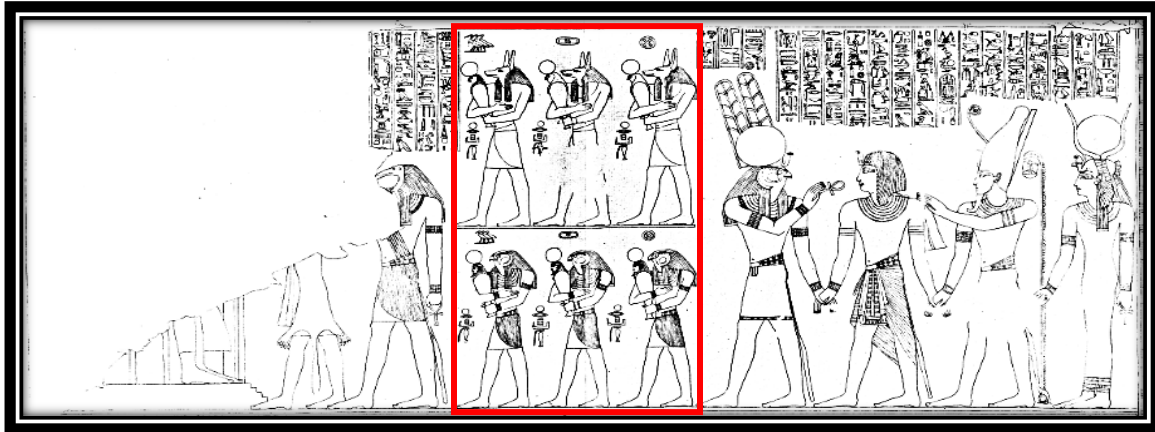
After: (Calverley, Broome, and Gardiner, 1935, pl. 36).

**Figure. 9:** King Ramesses II being carried by the Souls of Pe and Nekhen at Karnak.



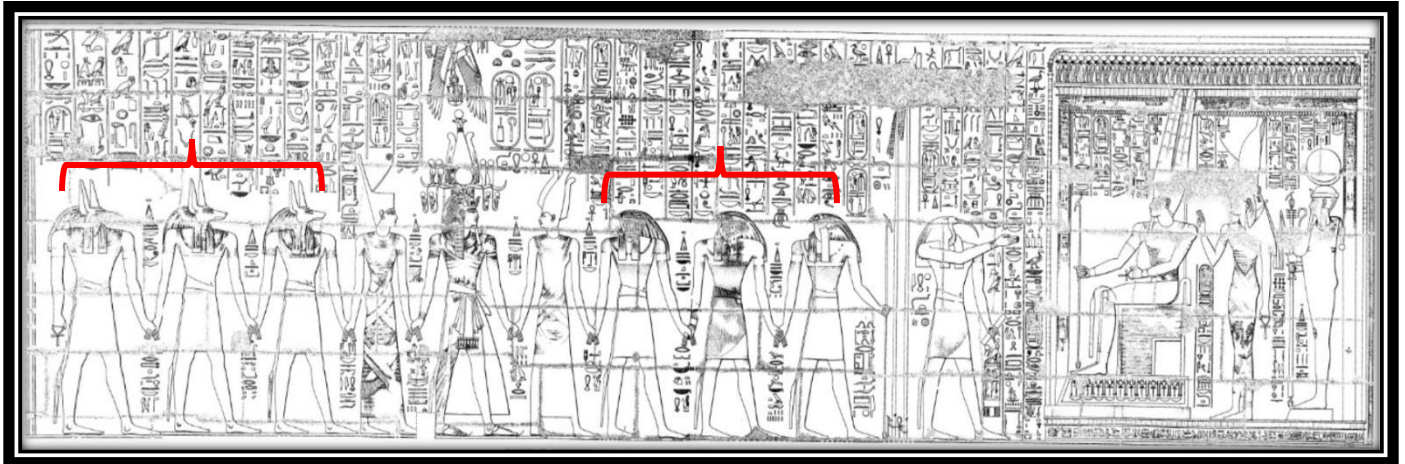
After: (Helck, 1968, Bl. 2-3).

**Figure. 10:** King Seti I conducted by the Souls of Pe and Nekhen in Abydos Temple.



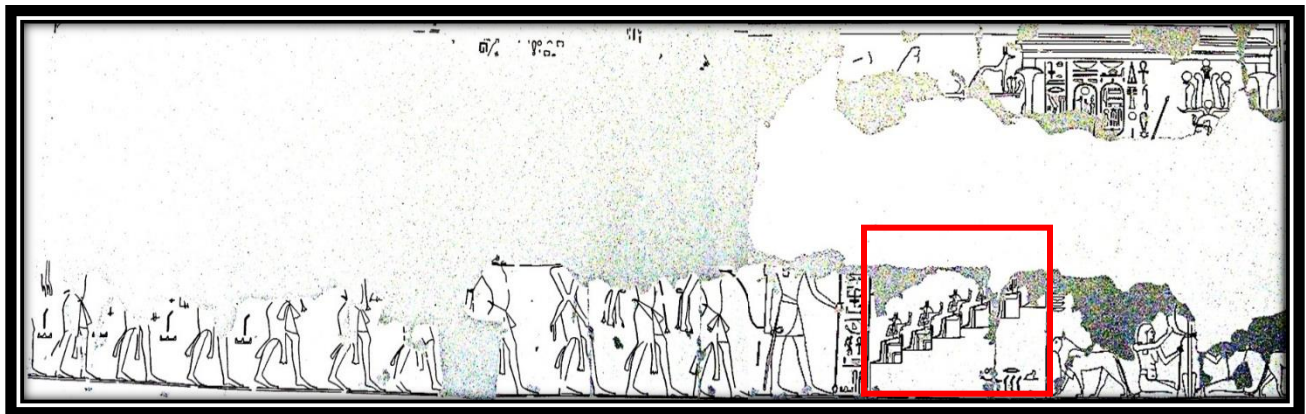
After: (Calverley, Broome, and Gardiner, 1935, pl. 30 (upper)).

**Figure. 11:** King Ramesses III being conducted by the Souls of Pe and Nekhen in Medinet Habu Temple.



After: (The Epigraphic Survey, 1940, pl. 235).

**Figure. 12:** The Souls of Pe and Nekhen forming the ladder of the throne of King Ramesses II in the procession of leading bound prisoners before the enthroned king.



After: (Iskander and Goelet, 2015, pls. (2.4.4), (2.4.6)).

**Figure. 13:** King Ramesses I between the Souls of Pe and Nekhen in (KV 16).



After: (Piankoff, 1956, pl. IX (A)).