

**Spells 258 and 259 from the Pyramid Texts:  
Translation and Commentary**

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**Table of Contents**

Introduction .....	2
1. PT 258 and PT 259: Translation .....	4
1.1. The different versions in translation, side by side.....	5
1.1.1. Notes on translation .....	6
1.1.2. Translation inconsistencies Allen .....	8
2. PT 258 and PT 259: Commentary .....	9
2.1. PT 258-W .....	11
2.2. PT 258-T .....	15
2.3. PT 259-T .....	15
2.4. Textual variations in PT 258 – PT 259 .....	17

## Introduction

PT 258 and PT 259 display so much common ground that a very close relationship is immediately recognizable – but they also exhibit significant differences: enough to warrant different spell numbers. This combination of common roots and diverse developments holds a special promise for sampling and examining the work of the ancient Egyptian editors of these texts.

*This paper follows the model of two previous publications:*

- “Spells 224 and 225 from the Pyramid Texts: Translation and Commentary” (hereafter: PT224/5-1;
- and “Spells 33 and 423 from the Pyramid Texts: Translation and Commentary” (hereafter: PT33/423).

*Those publications are available for download on the same locations as the present paper. The remainder of this Introduction is an exact copy from the Introduction to the aforementioned papers.*

## Translation

My original plan was to simply use the most acclaimed modern translation: that of James P. Allen.<sup>1</sup> I began with writing out Allen’s translations in adjacent columns, marking the differences between versions. One problem I encountered was, that some differences in his translations did not correspond with differences in the original hieroglyphic texts. In other words: the same word or expression in ancient Egyptian was sometimes translated in different ways – even when there was no difference in context. In a study that focuses on the differences between text versions, such inconsistencies should clearly be avoided.

On further working with the texts, I found there were some other areas as well in which I disagreed with Allen. Some of these points are purely on grounds of personal preference; when a matter of grammar is involved, it will (mostly) be explained in the notes to the translations.

When we are studying versions of a text in translation, it is obviously important that the translations follow the text close enough to allow this. This means that I will stay as closely as possible to the literal meaning of the text, provided I can avoid invalid expressions or word orders. In “standard” translations, one has more room for making small adaptations to the text, to prevent an over-technical translation. An example: *šm.f jw.f* means literally: “he goes (and) he comes”. In a standard translation, one would prefer to translate as follows: “he goes (and) comes” – or even: “he comes and goes.” But for the present exercise, we have to stick to the more literal translation. As will be the case with “this NN”, for *NN pn* and the like – much as I regret it.

## Conventions

In the table with translations, the first row gives the following information:

- PT number following Allen’s New Concordance;
- between ( ): the spell number in Allen’s translation;
- the pyramids in which this spell version appears, with underlined the pyramid from which the actual text for this translation has come.

The texts have been split into numbered sections, roughly corresponding with Allen’s stanza’s. The first column gives the section number; numbers between ( ) refer to sections that are displaced.

<sup>1</sup> James P. Allen: *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts* (2005) (hereafter: *Allen 2005*).

For the first version (the 2<sup>nd</sup> column), all grammatical particulars are discussed in notes which follow immediately on the table. For subsequent versions, only new or changed matters are treated. All fully preserved versions from each spell are included in the comparison. For selected words, a transliteration is included in the text.

The commentary deals with anything other than grammar and the translation of individual words. For the first version to be discussed, the text is fully shown and commented on. For subsequent versions, only deviations from the foregoing text(s) are shown and discussed.

The spells are referred to with PT-number and a letter for the pyramid from which a text is drawn, such as PT 224-W = the Unas-version of PT 224. When the letter is omitted, all versions of a given spell are meant.

In grammatical terminology, I will mostly follow Allen (relative *s $\overline{d}$ m.f*, relative *s $\overline{d}$ m.n.f*, suffix participle, old perfective).

Words between [ ]: word, erroneously omitted by the scribe.

Words between ( ): not written in Egyptian, but added to clarify the sense.

Words followed by a (?): translation uncertain.

[...] = word of unknown meaning.

[.....] = section untranslatable or in disarray.

## 1. PT 258 and PT 259: Translation

PT 258 and PT 259 occur in the following kingly pyramids:

	Unas	Teti	Pepi I	Merenre	Pepi II
PT 258 (§ 308-311)	<u>258-W</u> A/W 32–36 (447–451)	<u>258-T</u> A/W 20–23 (256–259)			
PT 259 (§ 312-315)		<u>259-T</u> A/W 23–27 (259–263)			

Table 1 Locations of PT 258 – PT 259

Yellow: spells carved immediately after one another on the same wall.  
Underlined: spells, preserved completely.

In his publication, Sethe notes for PT 259: “Andere Fassung des Spruches 258” (“Another version of spell 258”). He regards these two spells as so similar, that he treats them together in his Translation and Commentary (*Komm.* I, p. 373 ff.) In his New Concordance, Allen even lists PT 259 as a version of spell 258: as PT 258-P<sup>b</sup>. Because the order of the lines in 259 differs from that in 258, he has to juggle a bit with the paragraph numbers. It’s all in order, but it requires some extra attention.

The coming discussion will show that there is enough ground to maintain the use of two separate spell numbers.

## 1.1. The different versions in translation, side by side

(Underlining serves to point out differences between versions.)

#	PT 258 (W 169) <u>W</u>	PT 258 (T 193) <u>T</u>	PT 259 (T 194) <u>T</u>
1	(§ 308a) <u>NN</u> is Osiris in a dust devil ( <i>zz.w</i> )(?) <sup>a</sup> . The earth <sup>b</sup> is <u>his</u> abomination: <u>NN</u> does not enter into Geb, for <u>he</u> will be destroyed <sup>c</sup> if he sleeps in his mansion ( <i>hwt</i> ) on earth,  (§ 308d) and <u>his</u> bones will be broken ( <i>sd</i> ).	(§ 308a) <u>This NN</u> is Osiris in a dust devil ( <i>zz.w</i> )(?). The earth is <u>this NN's</u> abomination: <u>this NN</u> does not enter into Geb, for <u>this NN</u> will be destroyed if he sleeps in his mansion ( <i>hwt</i> ) on earth.  (§ 308d) (But now) <u>this NN's</u> bones have been made firm ( <i>srwd</i> ), and his evils ( <i>sdb.w</i> ) are removed ( <i>dr</i> ): <u>this NN</u> has been purified through Horus's Eye.	(§ 312a) <u>This NN</u> is Osiris in a dust devil ( <i>zz.w</i> )(?). The earth is <u>this NN's</u> abomination: <u>he</u> does not enter into Geb, for <u>this NN</u> will be destroyed if he sleeps in his mansion ( <i>hwt</i> ) on earth.  (§ 312d) (But now) <u>this NN's</u> bones have been made firm ( <i>srwd</i> ), and his evils ( <i>sdb.w</i> ) are removed ( <i>dr</i> ): <u>this NN</u> has been purified through Horus's Eye.
2	(But now) his evils ( <i>sdb.w</i> ) <sup>d</sup> are removed ( <i>dr</i> ): <u>NN</u> has been purified through Horus's Eye.		
3	His evil ( <i>sdb</i> ) is removed ( <i>dr</i> ) through ( <i>m</i> ) Osiris's Two Kites, <sup>e</sup> and <u>NN</u> has released ( <i>sft</i> ) his outflow ( <i>rdw</i> ) in Qus to the earth.	His evil ( <i>sdb</i> ) is removed ( <i>dr</i> ) through ( <i>m</i> ) Osiris's Two Kites, and <u>this NN</u> has released ( <i>sft</i> ) his outflow ( <i>rdw</i> ) in Qus to the earth.	His evil ( <i>sdb</i> ) is removed ( <i>dr</i> ) through ( <i>m</i> ) Osiris's Two Kites, and (§ 312f) [...in disarray...] <sup>o</sup>
4	(§ 309a) <u>His</u> sister Wadjet, Lady of Pe, is the one who bewept ( <i>rm.t</i> ) <sup>f</sup> him, (crying):  (§ 309b) " <u>NN</u> is off to the sky, <u>NN</u> is off to the sky, on the wind, on the wind." <sup>g</sup>	(§ 309a) <u>This NN's</u> sister Wadjet, Lady of Pe, is the one who bewept ( <i>rm.t</i> ) him, (crying):  (§ 309b) " <u>This NN</u> is off to the sky, <u>this NN</u> is off to the sky, on the wind, on the wind."	(§ 313a) <u>This NN's</u> sister Wadjet, Lady of Pe, is the one who bewept ( <i>rm.t</i> ) him, (§ 313b) and the two guardians <sup>p</sup> who mourned Osiris have mourned him, (crying): (§ 313c) " <u>This NN</u> is off to the sky, <u>this NN</u> is off to the sky, on <u>Shu</u> , <sup>q</sup> <u>with Re</u> ."
5a	(§ 309c) <u>He</u> is not obstructed ( <i>hm</i> ), and there is nothing through which he can be obstructed ( <i>hmw.t.f im.f</i> ). <sup>h</sup>	(§ 309c) <u>This NN</u> is not obstructed ( <i>hm</i> ), and there is nothing through which he can be obstructed ( <i>hmw.t.f im.f</i> ).	(§ 313d) <u>This NN</u> is not obstructed ( <i>hm</i> ): he is <u>one who can not be obstructed</u> ( <i>hmw.t.f</i> ) <sup>r</sup> ,
(5c)			(§ 313e) <u>for this NN</u> is the one who rages (?) <sup>s</sup> , <sup>5</sup> eldest ( <i>sms.w</i> ) of the gods,
5b	(§ 309d) <u>He</u> shall not sit (to be judged) in the god's tribunal,	(§ 309d) <u>This NN</u> shall not sit (to be judged) in the god's tribunal,	(§ 313f) and <u>this NN</u> shall not sit (to be judged) in the god's tribunal.
5c	(§ 309e) <u>for NN</u> is the one who was on his own, <sup>i</sup> eldest ( <i>sms.w</i> ) of the gods.	(§ 309e) <u>for this NN</u> is the one who was on his own, eldest ( <i>sms.w</i> ) of the gods.	
6	(§ 310a) <u>His</u> loaf of bread is up above ( <i>ir hr</i> ) with ( <i>hn</i> <sup>c</sup> ) Re, <u>his</u> meal <sup>l</sup> is (down below) in ( <i>m</i> ) Nu. (§ 310c) <u>This NN</u> is the one who moves about <sup>k</sup> ( <i>nnw</i> ): <u>he</u> goes and <u>he</u> comes with Re, and <u>he</u> has assumed ( <i>zhn.n</i> ) <sup>l</sup> his mansions ( <i>hwt.w</i> ).	(§ 310a) The loaf of bread <u>of this NN</u> is up above ( <i>ir hr</i> ) with ( <i>hn</i> <sup>c</sup> ) Re, <u>this NN's</u> meal is (down below) in ( <i>m</i> ) Nu. (§ 310c) <u>This NN</u> is the one who moves about: <u>this NN</u> goes with Re, <u>this NN</u> comes with Re, and <u>this NN</u> [has] assumed ( <i>zhn[.n]</i> ) <sup>n</sup> his mansions ( <i>hwt.w</i> ).	(§ 314b) The loaf of bread <u>of this NN</u> is up above ( <i>ir hr</i> ) with ( <i>hn</i> <sup>c</sup> ) Re, <u>this NN's</u> meal is (down below) in ( <i>m</i> ) Nu. (§ 314c) <u>This NN</u> is the one who moves about: <u>this NN</u> goes with Re, <u>this NN</u> comes with Re, and <u>he</u> <sup>l</sup> has assumed ( <i>zhn.n</i> ) his mansions ( <i>hwt.w</i> ).

#	PT 258 (W 169) <u>W</u>	PT 258 (T 193) <u>I</u>	PT 259 (T 194) <u>I</u>
7	(§ 311a) <u>NN</u> assigns ka's, and he takes ka's away, he sets evil ( <i>sdb</i> ) and he removes ( <i>i.dr</i> ) evil. (§ 311c) <u>NN</u> spends the day, he spends the night, pacifying ( <i>s.htp</i> ) the <sup>m</sup> (ones who fight with) adzes in Hermopolis.	(§ 311a) <u>He</u> assigns ka's, and he takes ka's away, he sets evil ( <i>sdb</i> ) and he removes ( <i>i.dr</i> ) evil. (§ 311c) <u>This NN</u> spends the day, he spends the night, pacifying ( <i>s.htp</i> ) the (ones who fight with) adzes in Hermopolis.	(§ 315a) <u>He</u> sets evil ( <i>sdb</i> ) and he removes ( <i>i.dr</i> ) evil, he assigns ka's and he takes ka's away. (§ 315c) <u>This NN</u> spends the day, he spends the night, [...in disarray...] <sup>u</sup> the (ones who fight with) adzes in Hermopolis.
8	(§ 311d) <u>His</u> foot will not be crossed, <u>his</u> heart will not be barred!	(§ 311d) The foot of <u>this NN</u> will not be crossed, the heart of <u>this NN</u> will not be barred!	(§ 315c) The foot of <u>this NN</u> will not be crossed, the heart of <u>this NN</u> will not be barred!

Table 2 The complete versions of PT 258 and PT 259

### 1.1.1. Notes on translation

PT 258-W, section 1

- zz.w*: translation uncertain: see the discussion of this section on page 11 below.
- In the W-version the sign for *t3* is replaced with *n*: a misunderstanding of a hieratic original. T has the correct sign (N16).<sup>2</sup>
- htm* is to destroy, not to end (with Shmakov<sup>3</sup>, and with the *TLA*<sup>4</sup>.)

PT 258-W, section 2

- “(But now) his evils (*sdb.w*) are removed.” Allen: “his obstructions are removed.” The *TLA* has: *sdb* = Schaden; Unheil; Böses (Lemma 150450).

PT 258-W, section 3

- The Two Kites (birds, not toys): a manifestation of Isis and Nephthys, as mourners and helpers of Osiris.

PT 258-W, section 4

- Active perfective participle.
- Allen: “in the wind, in the wind.” Perhaps “on the wind” better brings out the active support that the wind (a manifestation of Shu) gives to the deceased on his journey to the sky.

PT 258-W, section 5a

- Suffix participle (*sdm.ty.fy*): an emphatic repetition of the statement just made with a simple *sdm.f*. The *sdm.ty.fy* generally has future sense<sup>5</sup>, which means that a literal translation would be: “there is nothing that *will* obstruct him.” I think however that “there is nothing that *can* obstruct him” better conveys the sense (see also note *r*) on page 8 below).

PT 258-W, section 5c

- Literally: “on his oneness.”

PT 258-W, section 6

- Allen: “his feast.”
- For this translation, see *PT224/5-1*, note *c*) on page 6. (The writing of this verb varies: in PT 224, it is *nini*, here it is *nww*)
- Literally “embrace”, in the sense of “gladly accept.”

<sup>2</sup> See *Komm. I*, p. 377. Sethe remarks that the same occurs in the T-version, but his publication shows differently.

<sup>3</sup> Timofey T. Shmakov: “*New Readings in the Pyramid Texts*”: updateable working version, update of 26.07.2015. (Hereafter: *New Readings*.)

<sup>4</sup> *TLA* = Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae (aaew.bbaw.de/tla)

<sup>5</sup> See James P. Allen: “*The inflexion of the verb in the Pyramid Texts*”, 1984 (hereafter: *Inflexion*), § 642-643.

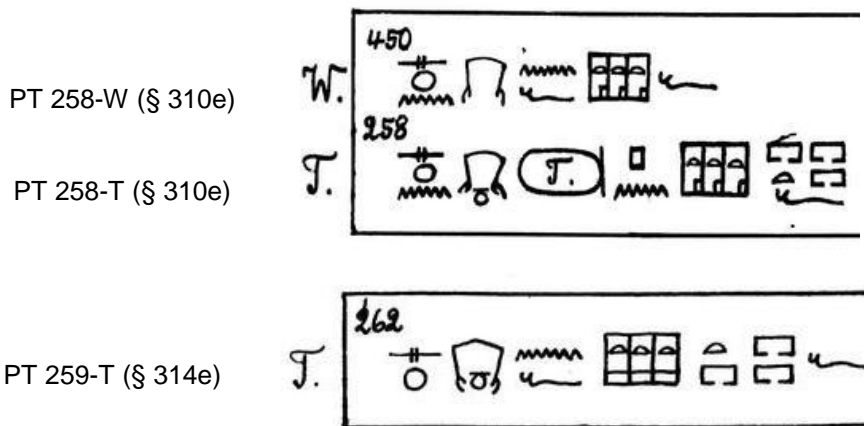
PT 258-W, section 7

m) In the W-version, the writing unambiguously shows a dual: two times the sign for the adze, each with one vertical stroke (Z1) below it. Allen therefore translates as “the two (contestants with) adzes.” In PT 258-T and in PT 259-T, the writing is however equally unambiguous with three determinatives: plural. See page 15 below, s.v. “pacifying the (ones who fight with) adzes in Hermopolis” for my reasons for assuming the latter writing to be the correct one.

PT 258-T, section 6

n) The verb *zḥn* (embrace) is here in the *sdm.f*, while it is in the other two variants in the *sdm.n.f*. It seems to me that this was not a conscious choice: the *n* may have been lost by accident in replacing the pronoun by the cartouche.

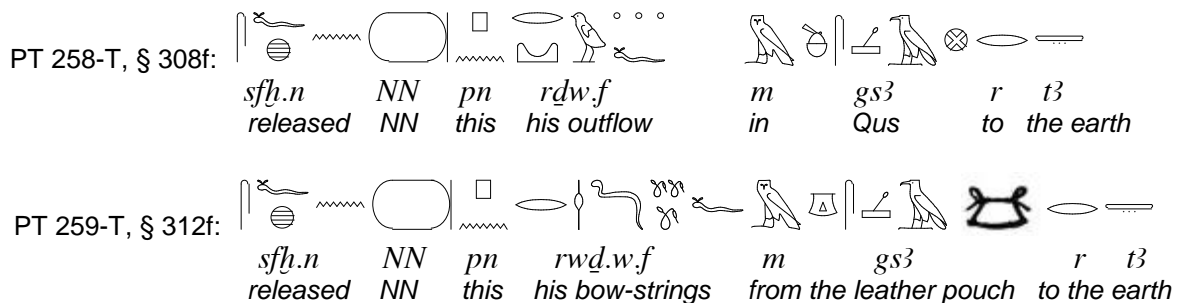
Below are the relevant text portions from Sethe’s publication:



Here, the texts are in rows, not in columns as in the original, but in columns the space for *n.f* will also have resembled that of the cartouche.

PT 259-T, section 3

o) Allen: “This NN has released to earth his leather kilt’s ties.” I’m not sure how he got to this result, but if we are to take the text seriously, I would propose the following: “This NN has released his bow-strings from the leather pouch to the earth.” However, it seems best *not* to take it seriously at all. Compare the texts from 258-T and 259-T:



In transliteration, the texts are almost identical: *rdw.f* has been replaced with *rdw.f*, while *gs3* has just been written with different signs. It looks as if someone had read the text out loud, while someone else wrote it down – not knowing what it was about.

Simply translating – as Allen does – manifest errors like these is in my opinion not helpful for understanding a text.

PT 259-T, section 4

p) Allen: “attendants.” Isis and Nephthys are meant.

- q) “On Shu” (with god-determinative) is a parallel for “on the wind” in the same section in PT 258: see note g) above.

PT 259-T, section 5a

- r) The addition *im.f* that was present in both versions of PT 258 is here missing. If this is not an oversight (which is how Allen treats it), then it means that the *s<sub>d</sub>m.ty.fy* is here used as a noun: “he who can not be obstructed.”

PT 259-T, section 5c

- s) Literally: “the one who is on his foot.” English has an expression: “to put your foot down,” meaning: to strongly assert your authority. Dutch has something similar: “op zijn poot spelen” (“to play on one’s foot”), meaning: to rage. Something like this would fit the context extremely well: “He is the one who rages (?), eldest of the gods.”

PT 259-T, section 6

- t) “He (...) his mansions.” Allen: “This NN (...) his mansions.”

PT 259-T, section 7

- u) Allen: “releasing the two (contestants with) adzes.” The verb is *sfl*, which is also used in section 3 of 258-W and 258-T: “NN has released his outflow in Qus to the earth.” In 259-T, section 3 is in disarray: see note o) above. Here in section 7, we find a new problem, again in connection with this verb. The expression “he spends the day / he spends the night” is always followed by an activity that is being performed during that time. With the verb *sfl* this is difficult to imagine; the connection between *sfl* and “the (ones who fight with) adzes” is moreover quite obscure. The writing of *sfl.n.NN (pn)* in this spot is however exactly the same as in the writings of section 3: the best possible explanation seems to be, that the text here in PT 259-T was supposed to be the same as in PT 258-T, but that by accident a word group from section 3 was inserted: this would make it a displaced piece of text.

### 1.1.2. Translation inconsistencies Allen

#	PT 258 (W 169) W	PT 258 (T 193) T	PT 259 (T 194) T
5c	<i>sms.w ntr.w</i> = senior of the gods	(not translated separately) <sup>6</sup>	<i>sms.w ntr.w</i> = eldest of the gods
6	<i>p3d</i> = cake of bread	(not translated separately)	<i>p3d</i> = loaf of bread

Table 3 Translation inconsistencies Allen in PT 258 - PT 259

There is nothing wrong with any of these translations, but in texts that are identical, different translations raise unnecessary questions.

<sup>6</sup> As a rule, Allen translates only one version of every spell. Variants are specified in a separate chapter, without repeating the rest of the spell.



## 2. PT 258 and PT 259: Commentary

When reading this spell, we encounter a change of atmosphere when we arrive at section 5. Until then, the narrative follows a clear path: we learn what the deceased will not do, what has happened to him instead, and that he now has gone to the sky. The tone is solemn, and restrained. Section 5 however (“He is not obstructed, and there is nothing through which he can be obstructed ...”) shows an entirely different mood. We now hear of dangers that he will not face, in a tone that is suddenly defying, even frantic. If we leave this section out, and go straight to section 6, it feels a lot more natural – and the end of section 6 moreover makes a perfect ending for the spell.

Sections 7 and 8 again have the defying, belligerent tone of section 5.

Matters are somewhat reminiscent of the situation in PT 224-225, where it was found that some sections originated in the kingly sphere, and others in the sphere of court officials.<sup>7</sup> For those spells it can however be demonstrated that they were formed by joining two short, but complete spells: one from each sphere. Putting sections 5, 7 and 8 from PT 258 immediately after one another does however not produce a recognizable whole: it clearly lacks an introduction, and a sequence of 7 – 5 – 8 would be more convincing than 5 – 7 – 8.

For the particular make up of PT 258-259, we have to look in a different direction. Both in W and in T, PT 258 is immediately preceded by a group of four spells: PT 254-255-256-257.<sup>8</sup> These four share a distinct atmosphere, characterized by particular type of grandiose aggression. Some excerpts (in the translation of Allen):

If you (a god) do not make a place for Unis, Unis will make a curse on Father Geb, saying: “The earth has no spokesman, Geb has no guard,” and anyone Unis finds in his way he will devour. (PT 254)

If you (a god) do not remove yourself from your place and lay down your insignia, Unis will come with his face of the great god who is lord of wrath. (...) He will strike Shu’s arms from under Nut,<sup>9</sup> and Unis will put his shoulder to the bulwark that you depend on. (PT 255)

Unis has put fear of him in their (the gods’) hearts by making discord (*h3c.(y)t*) among them, for Unis has seen the gods naked<sup>10</sup> and bowing to Unis in praise. (PT 256)

When Unis sets in the west, those of the Duat will follow him; when Unis shines anew in the east, he who parted the two contestants will come to him in obeisance. The gods will terrorize for Unis, since he is senior to the great one (...) (PT 257)

The language of these spells is the language of raw power, without the slightest restraint from religious humbleness. These four spells occur only in the pyramids of Unas and Teti: the same in which also the infamous Cannibal Hymn occurs (PT 273-274). It seems that the relationship of these two kings with the gods was a particularly uneasy one; the scarcity of divine names in their titlatures is also quite remarkable.

Sections 5, 7 and 8 of PT 258 tap into the same atmosphere of aggressive power play – but with some strange intrusive elements. Sections 5a and 5b display aggression all right, but not exactly of a kingly nature. Their tone is quarrelsome, and their subject matter derived from the milieu of the administration:

5a: He is not obstructed, and there is nothing through which he can be obstructed.

5b: He shall not sit (to be judged) in the god’s tribunal.

<sup>7</sup> See *PT224/5-1*.

<sup>8</sup> Together with PT 258, they form what Hays refers to as subsequence 114 (*Hays 2012*, p. 477).

<sup>9</sup> This refers to the mythical image of the god Shu (the air, or the wind) who supports with his arms the goddess Nut (the sky). The king threatens to have the sky collapse on the earth.

<sup>10</sup> Naked: vulnerable and defenseless.

Being obstructed, or being judged, are not the worries of a king. It seems that the editor wanted to upgrade spell 258 by adding some more forceful phrases, but that he failed to put himself entirely in the king's position, and instead partially drew on his own experiences as a court official.

### Atum and Hermopolis

Although Allen's translations of PT 254-7 suffice to demonstrate the atmosphere, we need to have a closer look at the last part of the quotation from PT 257, because this shows up a special connection with PT 258. Shmakov gives a better translation:

He Who Settles (i. e. puts an end to) disturbance will come to him in obeisance (lit. bowing). Frighten for Unis, gods, being elder than the great (god).<sup>11</sup>

I would prefer the following:

The One Who Ends Turmoil (*hnnw*) comes to him in obeisance; Unas, elder (*smsw*) than the Greatest One, has made the gods tremble (*snhd*).

Ancient Egyptian regularly does not indicate the superlative: "great" may on occasion also mean "greatest."<sup>12</sup> Here, the context shows that the greatest of the gods is meant – "whoever he may be."<sup>13</sup> In the present sentence, The One Who Ends Turmoil is the same as the Greatest One; more specifically: Atum. This follows from PT 229, one of the spells that had to protect the king against snakes and other vermin:

This is the fingernail of Atum which was (pressed) on the spine of Neheb-Kaw, and which ended (*sz3.t*: literally: stripped away) the turmoil (*hnnw*) in Hermopolis: fall down, crawl away!<sup>14</sup>

The "this" may have been a knife that was thus consecrated to help protect the deceased against snakes. The last part ("Fall down, crawl away!") is addressed directly to the snake. Whenever in the Pyramid Texts the god Atum is mentioned in a lead role, he is the creator god of Heliopolis: the first god, who came into existence by himself, and who created the gods of the Ennead of Heliopolis.<sup>15</sup>

We may now insert the name of Atum in the text from PT 257, as follows:

The One Who Ends Turmoil (*hnnw*) [in Hermopolis] (=Atum) comes to him in obeisance; Unas, elder (*smsw*) than the Greatest One (= Atum), has made the gods tremble (*snhd*).

Or:

Atum comes to Unas in obeisance; Unas, elder than Atum, has made the gods tremble.

So the deceased here claims to be superior to Atum in the latter's role as Greatest God. That's a pretty steep claim, even for a king of ancient Egypt, but it's completely in line with making threats such as denying the earth a voice, or bringing down the sky.

It is from this stratum that the editor of PT 258 draws in sections 5 and 7.

Section 5: "NN is the one who was on his own, eldest of the gods." Meaning: NN is Atum.

Section 7: "NN (...) pacifies the (ones who fight with) adzes in Hermopolis." Meaning: NN assumes the role of Atum in ending turmoil in Hermopolis.

<sup>11</sup> *New Readings*, p. 106.

<sup>12</sup> See *EAG*, § 374.

<sup>13</sup> In various contexts, various gods could be "the greatest." In the Pyramid Texts, Atum, Re, Geb, Horus and Osiris take turns. The occasional use of "Greatest One" seems to suggest that the Egyptians were aware of a certain degree of interchangeability for this position (cf. *ntr niwt*: "city god.")

<sup>14</sup> *TLA*: "Dies ist der Fingernagel des Atum, der auf dem Rückenwirbel des Nehebkau war und den Aufruhr in Wnw (Hermopolis) beendete."

<sup>15</sup> For Atum in the position of the first god, see PT 527, § 1248; PT 577, § 1521; PT 600, § 1652-1655.

## 2.1. PT 258-W

This is the full text of PT 258 in the pyramid of Unas:

- 1 NN is Osiris in a dust devil(?). The earth is his abomination: NN does not enter into Geb, for he will be destroyed if he sleeps in his mansion on earth, and his bones will be broken.
- 2 (But now) his evils are removed: NN has been purified through Horus's Eye.
- 3 His evil is removed through Osiris's Two Kites, and NN has released his outflow in Qus to the earth.
- 4 His sister Wadjet, Lady of Pe, is the one who bewept him, (crying): "NN is off to the sky, NN is off to the sky, on the wind, on the wind."
- 5 He is not obstructed, and there is nothing through which he can be obstructed. He shall not sit (to be judged) in the god's tribunal, for NN is the one who was on his own, eldest of the gods.
- 6 His loaf of bread is up above with Re, his meal is (down below) in Nu. This NN is the one who moves about: he goes and he comes with Re, and he has assumed his mansions.
- 7 NN assigns ka's, and he takes ka's away, he sets evil, and he removes evil. NN spends the day, he spends the night, pacifying the (ones who fight with) adzes in Hermopolis.
- 8 His foot will not be crossed, his heart will not be barred!

### Commentary per section

PT 258-W, section 1

*NN is Osiris in a dust devil(?). The earth is his abomination: NN does not enter into Geb, for he will be destroyed if he sleeps in his mansion on earth, and his bones will be broken.*

*...in a dust devil(?).*

Seth: "Staubwirbel" (*Komm. I*, p. 373). Both Faulkner and Allen go along: „dust devil". This translation is no more than a guess, but the reference to Shu later on in the spell as the one who lifts the king to the sky does point towards the wind.

*The earth is his abomination: NN does not enter into Geb....*

The king will go up to the sky, because if he doesn't, he will perish in his tomb. Although the deceased is flatly identified as Osiris ("NN is Osiris"), Geb is here not shown in his capacity as Osiris's father; instead he is – as often – treated as the god of the earth: he is here in fact equated with the earth.

...for he will be destroyed if he sleeps in his mansion on earth, and his bones will be broken. We have here a clear and unambiguous statement about the undesirability of spending the Afterlife in the tomb: for a detailed explanation, see the discussion of section 5 from PT 224-W.<sup>16</sup>

....and his bones will be broken.

The verb here used for “broken” is *sd*: it produces a meaning that is vastly different from that of the verb *srwd* in “his bones have been made firm” in PT 258-T and PT 259-T. Use of “broken” results in this sentence being part of the foregoing enumeration of misery to be avoided, while “made firm” makes it part of the following good news (see the bold lines in the table on page 5 above that mark the switch).

PT 258-W, section 2

*(But now) his evils (sdb.w) are removed (dr): NN has been purified through Horus’s Eye.*

....his evils are removed:

This appears to be a variant of another expression: “This bad (*dw*) which is against him has been removed (*dr*).”

Horus has removed (*dr*) the bad (*dw*) that was against NN on his fourth day, Seth has negated what he had done to NN on his eighth day (PT 419, § 746b-c).

“O NN, gather your bones, take your head,” says Geb, “It shall remove (*i.dr*) the bad (*dw*) that is against you, NN,” says Atum (PT 451, § 840a-c).

The bad / the evil is a deliberately veiled reference to death.

*NN has been purified through Horus’s Eye.*

As mentioned before<sup>17</sup>, “Horus’s Eye” stands for everything that has been given to the deceased in the way of offerings: everything he needs, everything that is rightfully his – just like Horus needs his Eye, which is rightfully his. Part of these offerings are the necessities for purifying the deceased: water, natron, incense and oils – which is what the king has received – and what has been used for him during the funerary rites. So, yes: the king has been purified through Horus’s Eye.

PT 258-W, section 3

*His evil is removed through Osiris’s Two Kites, and NN has released his outflow in Qus to the earth.*

*His evil is removed through Osiris’s Two Kites...*

The Two Kites are Isis and Nephthys; perhaps the eerie screech of birds of prey prompted an association with cries of grief. That they removed the deceased’s “evil” means, that they restored him to life again, as once they did for Osiris.

In the Osirian myths, it is often Isis, together with her faithful assistant Nephthys, who has found Osiris. She then restored him to life, in her role as the Great Sorceress. Mostly this is not mentioned explicitly though: the present description is relatively candid.<sup>18</sup>

(One of the vignettes of spell 17 of the Book of the Dead shows the goddesses in the shape of kites, with their names in hieroglyphs on their heads, on either side of the mummy. Isis is always at the deceased’s feet: when he looks up (after she has brought him back to life), she – his beloved sister-wife – will be the first thing he sees.)

<sup>16</sup> PT 224/5-1, p. 9 and p. 14.

<sup>17</sup> See PT 224/5-1, p. 18, s.v. PT 225-N, *Postscript*.

<sup>18</sup> See also the discussion of section 3 of PT 33-N<sup>b</sup> (PT 33/423, p. 10-11).

*....and NN has released his outflow in Qus ....*

For the concept of the outflow, see the discussion of section 3 from PT 33.<sup>19</sup> In one of the many variants of the Osirian myth, Osiris died in Qus, “releasing his outflow to the earth.” By now stating that the deceased released his outflow in Qus, he is equated with Osiris. Qus was a town in the 5<sup>th</sup> nome of Upper Egypt, in Greek times known as Apollinopolis Parva.

*...to the earth.*

Whenever it is said of Osiris that he is lying on the earth (or that he is lying on his side), the meaning is that he died: this is again one of the many circumspect ways that are used to refer to the god’s dying.

Events are here again (as in sections 2 & 3 of PT 33: see *PT33/423*, p. 11) described in the “wrong” order: first NN’s “evil is removed,” and then “NN has released his outflow”. The actual order is of course the inverse: die first, be resurrected later; it was deemed “safer” to state first the happy end, before mentioning the great risk that had been overcome.

Between section 2 and section 3 of the present spell, there is a subtle shift in standpoint. Section 2: *(But now) his evils are removed: NN has been purified through Horus’s Eye.* Section 3: *His evil is removed through Osiris’s Two Kites, and NN has released his outflow in Qus to the earth.*

Section 2 is a recapitulation of the funerary rites, while section 3 views the same matter from a mythological angle.

PT 258-W, section 4

*His sister Wadjet, Lady of Pe, is the one who bewept him, (crying): “NN is off to the sky, NN is off to the sky, on the wind, on the wind.”*

*His sister Wadjet...*

Wadjet and Nekhbet are the titulary goddesses of Lower and Upper Egypt, respectively – the Cobra and the Vulture on the king’s brow – as well as the rubric for the second royal name: the Nebty-name. Mentioning Wadjet here serves to underscore the position of the deceased as king.

Pe is the name of a town in Lower Egypt which figures as capital of a mythical Lower Egyptian kingdom. So immediately after referring to Qus in Upper Egypt as the place where the king / Osiris has died, he is here addressed as king of Lower Egypt: an expression of the powerful Egyptian desire for symmetry and equilibrium.

*...on the wind, on the wind.*

The wind is a manifestation of the god Shu: in PT 259, “on the wind” is replaced with “on Shu”.

PT 258-W, section 5a and 5b

*He is not obstructed, and there is nothing through which he can be obstructed. He shall not sit (to be judged) in the god’s tribunal, ....*

As already mentioned on page 9 above, this part represents a radical break, in mood as well as perspective; the mood changes from lofty to quarrelsome, the perspective from royal to bureaucratic.

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<sup>19</sup> *PT 33/423*, p. 9.

PT 258-W, section 5c

... *for NN is the one who was on his own, eldest of the gods.*

This one immediately harks back to PT 257: see p. 10 above, s.v. *Atum and Hermopolis*. It is about being the first god who came into existence – when there still was only *one* god.<sup>20</sup> This is why I translate here in the past tense (“who was on his own”): this clause refers to the beginning of time.

PT 258-W, section 6

*His loaf of bread is up above with Re, his meal is (down below) in Nu. This NN is the one who moves about: he goes and he comes with Re, and he has assumed his mansions.*

We are now back again to the more restrained tone of the first four sections of this spell. This section describes the deceased’s existence in the Afterlife, after he has gone “off to the sky”(section 4).

...*his meal is (down below) in Nu.*

After mentioning that the king’s bread will be in the sky (“up above”), it is added that “his meal” will be down below: “in Nu” (also known as Nun).<sup>21</sup> This taps into the picture of the journey of the sun, who travels in daytime along the sky, and at night through the Underworld (Nu). The meaning is, that the deceased will follow the sun – and that his sustenance will be waiting for him on either leg of the daily journey.

*This NN is the one who moves about:...*

Allen: “the one who turns back.” The sense is though, that he goes *and* returns.<sup>22</sup> This follows from the next clause: “he goes and he come with Re.”

...*and he has assumed his mansions.*

“His mansions” refers to his abode in the sky and that in Nu. In section 1, the deceased has rejected “his mansion on earth”, here he “embraces” his mansions in the sky and in Nu.<sup>23</sup> This appears to have been the original end of the spell; sections 7 and 8 revert again to the aggressive stance of PT 254-257.

PT 258-W, section 7

*NN assigns ka’s, and he takes ka’s away, he sets evil, and he removes evil. NN spends the day, he spends the night, pacifying the (ones who fight with) adzes in Hermopolis.*

The “ka” is a complex concept: perhaps it is not even just *one* concept. One aspect of the ka is in any event that of the force of life, or, more precisely: life as sustained by the consumption of food. One of many terms for food was in fact the word ka or kaw.<sup>24</sup>

To assign ka’s, or to take ka’s away, therefore means: to give (continuation of) life, or take it away. The sense therefore is, that the king decides on who will live, and who will die – a theme that occurs with some regularity in the Pyramid Texts.<sup>25</sup> It is then added that the king sets and removes “evil” (*sdb*). In section 3, we have read: “his evil is removed”, meaning: he is no longer dead. So this is once more the same assertion: the king decides on who will live, and who will die.

<sup>20</sup> See the quotations in note 15 on page 10 above.

<sup>21</sup> Nu is thought to be below the earth: see Bonnet, *Reallexikon der ägyptischen Religionsgeschichte*, (hereafter: *Reallexikon*), p. 535-6.

<sup>22</sup> Faulkner has: “the one who goes to and fro.” See also note *k*) on page 6 above.

<sup>23</sup> In both sections, the same word for “mansion” is used (*hwt*), written exactly the same way.

<sup>24</sup> See *TLA*, s.v. *k3*. In more extended offering texts, the (food-) offerings are often said to be “for the ka of NN.”

<sup>25</sup> See e.g. PT 217: “This Unas has come, an imperishable akh. Should he want you to die, you will die; should he want you to live, you will live.”

....*pacifying the (ones who fight with) adzes in Hermopolis.*

In PT 258-W, the actual writing shows a clear dual, and Allen therefore translates as such: “the two (contestants with) adzes.” In note 56, he adds: “Horus and Seth.” In PT 258-T and PT 259-T however, the dual is just as clearly replaced by a plural. So which is the correct reading? Allen assumes the dual to be correct, for he translates this part also in PT 259-T with “the two (contestants with) adzes.”

Whenever there are two who fight, it’s mostly Horus and Seth, but the town of Hermopolis had its own, not all that well known, mythology. As explained on page 10 above (s.v. *Atum and Hermopolis*) the present text is a reference to the “turmoil” in Hermopolis, which was ended by Atum – which means that the king here assumes the role of that god.

We don’t know what the “turmoil” was about, or who were involved: this is never specified. It is however precisely this vagueness which makes it improbable that it concerned two opponents: given the predilection of the Egyptians for dichotomy and duality, we would in that event almost certainly have been better informed. From the little background we have, it seems more likely that the “turmoil” involved a general upheaval, which had to be stilled by Atum. The fact that PT 258-W has: “the two (who fight with) adzes”, therefore seems to have been a one-time copying error, possibly brought about by confusion – on the part of the editor or the draftsman – with the ubiquitous motif of Horus and Seth as the combating duo.

PT 258-W, section 7

*His foot will not be crossed, his heart will not be barred!*

Meaning: “He can go where he wants, he can do what he wants.”

## 2.2. PT 258-T

PT 258-T, section 2

*(But now) this NN’s bones have been made firm, and his evils are removed.*

Compare PT 258-W, section 1 on page 12 above, s.v. ....*and his bones will be broken.* The editor of Teti may have wanted to shift the narrative a bit sooner from disaster to success, perhaps spurred by superstition: “Let’s not get too deep into this, lest it becomes real...”

## 2.3. PT 259-T

PT 259-T, section 4

*This NN’s sister Wadjet, Lady of Pe, is the one who bewept him, and the two guardians who mourned Osiris have mourned him, (crying): “This NN is off to the sky, this NN is off to the sky, on Shu, with Re.”*

Compared to PT 258, this section is further enhanced in two ways: by adding the clause about the guardians, and by replacing “on the wind, on the wind” with “on Shu, with Re.” The guardians who mourned Osiris are again Isis and Nephthys – the same who are in section 3 referred to as “the Two Kites.” Referring to these goddesses again further intensifies the magical effect of their presence.

Shu is the god of the wind, so the message remains the same, but use of the god’s name instead of the natural phenomenon in which he becomes manifest, intensifies it. The addition “with Re” (*hn<sup>c</sup> R<sup>c</sup>*) looks a bit like an afterthought.

The net effect of all of this is, that the section – and thereby the spell – gains in magical effectiveness.

## PT 259-T, section 5

*This NN is not obstructed: he is one who can not be obstructed, for this NN is the one who rages (?), eldest of the gods, and this NN shall not sit (to be judged) in the god's tribunal.*

Compared to the two PT 258-versions, the structure of this section has changed: from 5a-5b-5c to 5a-5c-5b. Sethe comments that this order in PT 259 is “completely wrong”<sup>26</sup>, but that is too simple. In PT 258, the order is as follows:

He is not obstructed;  
And he will not be judged,  
For he was the eldest of the gods.

So we have two matters that will not occur, with one motivation: the king is the eldest of the gods.

In PT 259, we find:

He is not obstructed;  
For he is the one who rages,  
And he will not be judged.

It is true that PT 258 has the more accomplished structure, but 259 is not “wrong”: it just shows other priorities. The editor here apparently wanted to emphasize that the king would not be obstructed, and he did so by moving the motivation one line up, and tailoring it to fit the sense of not being obstructed: he is the one who rages.

Note that the (implicit) time standpoint of the motivation changes from the past (he *was* the eldest of the gods) to the present (he *is* the one who rages). This helps to make the statement more acute.

## PT 259-T, section 7

*He sets evil and he removes evil, he assigns ka's and he takes ka's away. This NN spends the day, he spends the night, [...in disarray...] the (ones who fight with) adzes in Hermopolis.*

*He sets evil and he removes evil, he assigns ka's and he takes ka's away.*

This is the inverse order from the PT 258 versions. This does not produce a striking reinforcement of the text, but a zealous editor might just try with such relatively simple changes to show his superiors that yes: he's on the ball!

For the part in disarray, see note *u*) on page 8 above.

<sup>26</sup> *Komm. I*, p. 386: “sehr zu Unrecht.”



## 2.4. Textual variations in PT 258 – PT 259

At a first glance, there are not that many differences between the three discussed versions of this text, but when we write out only those differences, we see that they still amount to a substantial number.

The following table shows all textual variations – excluding those from (probable) errors.

#	PT 258 (W 169) W	PT 258 (T 193) T	PT 259 (T 194) T
1	NN His NN He	This NN This NN's This NN This NN	This NN This NN's He This NN
	His bones will be broken	This NN's bones have been made firm	This NN's bones have been made firm
2	NN	This NN	This NN
3	NN	This NN	[This NN] <sup>27</sup>
4	His	This NN's	This NN's
	NN NN on the wind, on the wind.	This NN This NN on the wind, on the wind.	and the two guardians who mourned Osiris have mourned him  This NN This NN on Shu, with Re.
5a	He nothing through which he can be obstructed	This NN nothing through which he can be obstructed	This NN one who can not be obstructed
5b	He	This NN	This NN
5c	NN who was on his own	This NN who was on his own	This NN who rages
6	His	This NN	This NN
	His	This NN	This NN
	This NN	This NN	This NN
	He	This NN	This NN
	He	This NN	This NN
7	NN assigns ka's (etc) sets evil (etc) NN	He assigns ka's (etc) sets evil (etc) This NN	He sets evil (etc) assigns ka's (etc) This NN
8	His	This NN's	This NN's
	His	This NN's	This NN's

Table 4 The variable parts of PT 258 – PT 259

(Section 5c from PT 259 for this comparison moved to the same location as in PT 258.)  
(He/his is only included for instances where other versions have NN or This NN)

<sup>27</sup> From the piece in disarray of this section.

The following variations from (probable) errors have been ignored:

PT	Sections	Content	Discussed	(Probable) cause
258-W	7	"The <u>two</u> who fight with adzes".	p. 7, note <i>m</i> )	Confusion of mythology
258-T	6	"This NN <u>assumes</u> his mansions": <i>sdm.f</i> instead of <i>sdm.n.f</i>	p. 7, note <i>n</i> )	Writing error
259-T	3	Corruption: "bow-strings / leather pouch."	p. 7, note <i>o</i> )	Confusion of spoken text
259-T	7	" <u>Releasing</u> those who fight with adzes".	p. 8, note <i>u</i> )	Displaced text

Table 5 Probable errors in PT 258-259

In the previous article from this series – about spells 33 and 423<sup>28</sup> – we encountered a whole series of intensifications in the texts: enhancements that were present in some, but not in all versions. So far, we only discussed two of those, both in section 4 of PT 259-T: the presence of an extra mention of Isis and Nephthys, and the substitution of "on the wind, on the wind" with "on Shu, with Re". Table 4 however brings one more to light: a quite remarkable difference in the way the deceased is referred to. The following table gives the numbers:

	PT 258 (W 169) W	PT 258 (T 193) T	PT 259 (T 194) T
Σ	He/his: 13 NN: 9 This NN: 1 } 23	He/his: 1 NN: 0 This NN: 22 } 23	He/his: 3 NN: 0 This NN: 20 } 23

Table 6 Totals for he/his, NN and This NN in PT 258-259  
(He/his is only included for instances where other versions have NN or This NN)

Replacing a pronoun by a name strengthens the connection of the text with the person of the beneficiary: it makes the spell more personal, and therefore more effective (from a magical-religious point of view). Adding a demonstrative pronoun to the name – "this NN" – adds a further element of intensification: reinforcing the text, enhancing its effectiveness.

### Why two versions in one pyramid?

PT 258-T and PT 259-T appear at the same time, in the pyramid of Teti. They stand moreover right behind one another on the same wall. Apparently, both versions were perceived as having their merits. For PT 258-T, this may have been that it stayed closer to the original text; for PT 259-T that it possessed a greater number of enhancements. They may therefore have been included both, as complementary versions.

Given the considerable number of parallels between the two versions, they were in any event not drafted independently from one another.

<sup>28</sup> PT33/423, available for download at the same locations as the present article.